

## Extraordinary Ewa



Ewa Machut was born in Warsaw on April 9, 1946. Having completed her high school education here, she became a student of the Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw. She graduated in 1969 and immediately after that started a yearly training in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies. Soon the Polish Writers' Association granted her a scholarship in Cairo, which proved to be a turning point in Ewa's scholarly career. During the year-long stay in the Egyptian capital she not only mastered the Egyptian dialect but also had a chance to meet many Egyptian writers which, in turn, made her fall in love with Egyptian literature and theatre.

Back in Warsaw, Ewa joined the team of the Polish Radio, where she worked for the Public Opinion Research Centre as the English language translator. As for her academic career, it reached a new phase in 1972, that is a year when Ewa was offered a post of assistant and the Arabic language teacher at the Institute of African Studies which was then run by prof. Bogodar Winid. In the same year Ewa married and from that moment on she has been using the name Machut-Mendecka.

In 1976 Ewa moved to Cairo once again, this time for the scholarship granted her by the University of Warsaw. When after a year she returned to Warsaw, she could witness her Institute of African Studies being transformed into the Institute of the Geography of the Developing Countries. As the new institution changed its academic profile, Ewa

moved to the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Institute of Oriental Studies. The same year her son was born.

Despite the new duties resulting from the requirements of the family life, in 1979 she managed to defend her Ph.D. The thesis, inspired by her two stays in Egypt, was titled *Przemiany polityczne w dramaturgii arabskiej w latach 1952–1979* [“The Political Change as Reflected in Arabic Drama, 1952–1979”]. At the same time, she started to teach the Egyptian dialect and had a seminar on Arabic theater and drama.

As her research interests were focused on Arabic-language literature and drama, most of her publications deals with these topics. She contributed to the volume on contemporary Arab literature *Nowa i współczesna literatura arabska 19 i 20 w.: literatura arabskiego Maghrebu*, Warszawa: PWN 1989 [“New and Contemporary Arab Literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Literature of the Arab Maghreb”] – the chapters she prepared discussed the history of drama in Libya, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. Some years later she completed her habilitation thesis, which was published as *Główne kierunki rozwojowe dramaturgii arabskiej* (Warszawa: WUW 1992) [“Main Directions of Development of the Arabic Drama”]. Then followed *The Art of Arabic Drama: a Study in Typology* (Warszawa: Dialog 1997) and *Studies in Arabic Theatre and Literature* (Warszawa: Dialog 2000). She also translated into Polish a novel by Rašīd aḍ-Ḍaʿīf titled *ʿAzīz as-Sayyid Kāwābātā* (*Kochany Panie Kawabato*, Warszawa: Dialog 1998).

In the late 1980-ties Ewa became interested in the theory of psychology and psychotherapy as developed by Karl Gustav Jung. This fascination proved deep enough to make her join the editorial board of the quarterly *Albo, albo: inspiracje jungowskie*, which is devoted to studies inspired by the Jungian thought. Apart from essays which she published in the quarterly, Ewa’s focus on the theory of Jung resulted also in her publishing of a book titled *Archetypy islamu* [“Islamic Archetypes”] (Warsaw: Eneteia 2003). Her most recent work, *Na szlakach Sindbada: koncepcje współczesnej prozy arabskiej* [“On the Roads of Sinbad: the Concepts of Contemporary Arabic Prose”] (Warszawa: WUW 2009) deals with aspects of contemporary Arabic-language literature.

In recognition of her academic achievements, in 2006 Ewa Machut-Mendecka was honored with a title of Professor of Humanities. In the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies Ewa has been teaching topics such as grammar of the Egyptian dialect and the history of modern Arabic literature. Under her supervision numerous MA theses and a number of Ph.D. theses were written. In the years 1997–2011 she also worked for the Higher School of Social Psychology (currently named SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities), where she held a post of the head of the Department of World Cultures.

From the very beginning of her academic career, Ewa has actively participated in conferences and academic meetings, both in Poland and abroad. As an active member of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, she attended this organization’s international congresses on regular basis (such as those held in Sassari, Napoli, or Helsinki for example). For many decades she is a member of Polskie Towarzystwo Orientalistyczne.