

# Elżbieta Ettinger (19.09.1925–12.03.2005)

novelist, literature professor, author of a biographies, member of the resistance movement during World War II



She was born on 19 September 1925 in Łódź, the daughter of Emmanuel Ettinger and Regina Stahl. In 1939 she was sent with her family to the Warsaw Ghetto, from which she escaped with her mother in 1942, shortly before the so-called Great Action. From the moment she got to the “Aryan” side, she used false documents in the name of Elżbieta Chodakowska and was active in the resistance movement. In 1943 she married a partisan named Gierek. She described her wartime experiences in the novel *Kindergarten* (1968) and the realities of life in communist Poland in *Quickstand* (1989).

In 1946 she earned a diploma from the Faculty of English at Jagiellonian University, and in 1949 she completed a master’s degree in English at the University of Warsaw. She began working at the Ministry of Foreign Trade from where she travelled on business to Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. In 1962 she gave birth to a daughter, Maja.

In 1966 she defended her doctorate in English and American literature at the University of Warsaw.

Faced with stagnation in her career, related to her rejection of a permanent position at Security Service and growing anti-Semitic sentiment in Poland, she emigrated to the United States with her mother and daughter in 1967. There she took a job as Senior Fellow at Radcliffe University at Harvard University. In 1975-1996 she was a lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where she initiated the establishment of the Institute of Literature and Humanities Studies and included the works of such writers as I. B. Singer, Bernard Malamud, and Elizabeth Bishop in the programme. Her biography of Róża Luxemburg was published in 1987 and a controversial publication on the relationship between Hanna Arendt and Martin Heidegger in 1994.

Elizabeth Ettinger died of a heart attack in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on March 12, 2005.

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