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*„...Do krainy snu, niedostępnej dla ludzkiej pamięci.
Z owej zatopionej krainy odzyskuję szczątki
Których nie potrafię zrozumieć do końca...”
Jorge Luis Borges*

IN THE DREAM LAND – INTRODUCTION

The Polish Sleep Research Society is honoured to have been invited to collaborate with KOSMOS Quarterly (the oldest magazine popularizing the science in Poland) Magazine in bringing out a special issue dedicated to sleep. This unique state, experienced primarily by birds and mammals, has always fascinated those studying the functions of the human body. Mysteriously, even though sleep renders us vulnerable by making us unconscious of our surroundings, it is indispensable for keeping the mind and body working properly while awake. Dreams are another intriguing feature of the sleeping state. The studies of sleep have a long and well-documented history. The vital importance of sleeping and dreaming for maintaining physical and mental well-being features prominently in works of literature such as the Bible and Aristotelian *About a dream*, Pedro Calderon de la Barca's play *Life is a Dream*, and Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

More recently, long-term monitoring of the brain's electrical activity has enabled us

to more closely observe the changes that this and other organs undergo when we sleep. Studies of neurotransmitters have revealed their instrumental role in wakefulness and in the different stages of sleep. The 1980s brought about the formulation of the two-process model of sleep regulation which has since become the most widely accepted theory of sleep regulation. The genetics of sleep is another burgeoning area of research. This issue features articles by leading Polish sleep researchers who have shared their findings on the sleep and wakefulness cycle, as well as sleep disorders, their consequences and treatment. We have gathered insights from the inventors of the theory of chronobiological and homeostatic sleep regulation, and the latest findings of interdisciplinary sleep studies. We hope that we have shown how a great progress has been made in the area of sleep research, and how much still remains to be understood.

