

Preface

One of the foundations of science and scholarship is probing into areas unknown or barely chartered as well as crossing the borders of the known. Scholars are also expected to shed a new light on what is already apparently known and researched. Furthermore, they often venture to combine different approaches in order to achieve novelty in their investigations. Commonplaces as these observations are, they nevertheless remain a binding prescriptions for any researcher. No surprising then that the present volume attempts to, on the one hand, discuss literary and cultural phenomena which have not enjoyed a wide scholarly attention so far and, on the other, look at canonical works of literature in English and acknowledged, groundbreaking cultural events from new perspectives. In a nutshell, this is what constitutes the present crossroads in literature and culture, a space where different approaches and different walks of scholarly activity cross and enter into a dialogue with one another.

This volume consists of eight chapters of various lengths, each devoted to a specific aspect of crossing, traversing and mingling in the area of literary and culture studies. Consequently, Part I explores the genuinely unfathomable and forking paths of theoretical considerations, opening with a brilliant essay by Małgorzata Grzegorzewska on prosopopeia and its deployment in Renaissance literature, illustrating her discussion with references to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In turn, Tymon Adamczewski in a somewhat self-reflexive manner treats literary criticism as yet another ... literary genre practiced by clandestine writers, or perhaps critics who have always yearned to achieve the status of writers? Grzegorz Koneczniak and Robert Kielawski employ in their readings of, respectively, Irish literature and Ravenhill's drama quite recent and critically acknowledged methodologies, revising their usefulness in critical practice: the former reaches for postcolonial studies, the latter for Slavoj Žižek's ideas. The chapter concludes with Katarzyna Więckowska's interpretation of two works by Doris Lessing, which adopts and adapts psychoanalytical tools, posing significant questions about their presence in scholarly debate.

Part II focuses on the issue of female writers and characters crossing moral and/or social borders and expanding the limitations imposed by patriarchal order. The

works discussed range from Victorian fiction (essays by Aleksandra Budrewicz-Beratan, Agnieszka Setecka, Małgorzata Łuczyńska-Hołdys, and, to a degree, Magdalena Pypeć), to American popular fiction of the 1920s and 1930s (Barbara Leftih), to a modern rewriting of Victorian prose, be it in the Canadian context (Ewa Urbaniak-Rybicka) or British one (Barbara Braid and Malwina Degórska) as well as a contemporary novel addressing sexual anxieties in the era of Margaret Thatcher (Przemysław Uściński). Thus, Budrewicz-Beratan and Setecka explore the ways in which nineteenth-century female characters were trying to go beyond the prescribed social role, characteristically in the works written by canonical Victorian men-writers (Dickens and Trollope, respectively). Łuczyńska-Hołdys investigates how Victorian female gender identity undergoes subversion and transformation in the works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, whereas Pypeć relates Victorian gender issues contained in a specific genre—dramatic monologue—to its contemporary equivalent, Carol Ann Duffy's volume. Likewise, vibrant problems of the nineteenth-century presentation and treatment of women find their continuation in how the characters are revised and redesigned in contemporary times, which has long challenged the traditional (?) sex/gender division. Urbaniak-Rybicka poses an important question of who the real 'outlander' is in Gil Adamson's novel, the heroine, capable of committing worst crimes and coming to terms with her life, thanks to the Gothic convention, or the crumbling, divided, patriarchal society in which she has to live? Braid further develops the exploration of Gothicism, this time without delving into gender-related issues, in a contemporary novel by Sarah Waters, while Degórska—also looking at a novel by Sarah Waters—approaches the crossing of the *gender frontier* from a male rather than female perspective. The essays by Leftih and Uściński avoid overt references to the Victorian era, although they appear inevitable in a discussion concerning the liberation of rigid social roles of American women conquering the Wild West and their literary counterparts in popular fiction (the former) and the problems of sexuality in Thacherite Britain (the latter).

Part III is the shortest chapter of the volume as it includes only one article—Marcin Jurkowicz's—which, however, addresses a significant issue of translation practices whereby translators, to a better or worse effect, attempt to cross languages and cultures linked with them. Jurkowicz illustrates such strategies in a discussion of a Polish rendering of Alice Walker's *The colour purple*. In Part IV linguistic quibbles yield way to a more 'spatial' issue: the liminal area and constant traffic between variously conceived ideas of the 'Old' and the 'New' worlds. Quite a number of articles in this section are devoted to 'new' literatures—the literatures of the post-colonial cultures remaining in the shade of the 'old' world. As a result, Anna Branach-Kallas and Dagmara Drewniak discuss the problem of Canadian identity in the context of, respectively, Canadian ethos of pioneers and the space for women in it, and the survivors of Holocaust. Brygida Gasztold addresses similar issues from a Dominican perspective: how to establish one's sense of belonging in an immigrant community in the U.S. Ryszard Wolny approaches from the post-colonial perspective India's national problems on the basis of Vikas Swaruo's *Slumdog millionaire*. Maciej Sulmicki adopts an

analogous stance in looking at the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized in *English passengers*.

The next section of the volume contains essays exploring the borderline and the sphere between the private and the public or the social. The articles range from scrutinies of (semi)biographical texts to analyses of characters finding it difficult to draw a line between their private and social selves. Teresa Bruś's work definitely belongs to the former: she is looking at Louis MacNeice's diary in the context of Philip Lejeune's treatment of such liminal forms of writing. A similarly amorphous genre is scrutinised by Joanna Jodłowska, who delves into Aldous Huxley's ideas about social changes contained in his essays. In turn, Dominika Lewandowska looks at the way Iain Sinclair represents London as an urban text, which quite drastically changes the perspective on what is private and public. Artur Skweres's and Natalia Brzozowska's articles touch upon the complex issue of characters' relations with the outer world, of how the social/real affects their private/mental identities. Skweres, importing Philip K. Dick's own anxieties, illustrates the problem with reference to fictitious figures from the writer's oeuvre, whereas Brzozowska looks at the social ramifications of excessive ambition in the case of two Shakespearean tragic characters: Coriolanus and Lady Macbeth.

If Part IV was devoted to spatial 'travels', Part VI is a kind of time travel. Articles collected in this section attempt to compare writers from different, sometimes quite distant, literary periods showing the significance of intertextuality. Anna Budziak considers the ups and downs of Blake's poetry in the eyes of other poets-turn-critics, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Butler Yeats, respectively, both trying to explain the 'genius' behind Blake's verse. Joanna Bukowska explores a specific dialogue between the canonical text of English Medieval letters—Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*—and a contemporary novel by Peter Ackroyd: *Clerkenwell Tales*, tracing the treatment of literary conventions 600 years after Chaucer. A similar dialogue between a canonical work and its modern version is investigated by Edyta Lorek-Jezińska in her analysis of Deborah Levy's post-modern, post-twentieth-century *Macbeth–False Memories*. Contrary to these three essays, Waław Grzybowski does not compare texts temporally distant, although he does bring together—like Budziak, Bukowska and Lorek-Jezińska—two artists: Thomas MacGreevy and Samuel Beckett, shedding a new light on their sometimes stormy artistic relationship.

In Part VII borders of literary conventions and genres are reshuffled. Thus, Wojciech Dług discusses a most important issue of realism/non-realism/surrealism in Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans*. Anna Kędra-Kardela looks at a rather obsolete and critically neglected genre of the eighteenth-century 'fragment', employing a respectable variety of tools, the most significant of which is cognitive poetics. Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska considers the afterlife of Edgar Allan

Poe's arguably most famous short story: *The Fall of the House of Usher* in popular culture and present-day media, tracing the ways in which adaptation ushers in new formats for modern conventions and genres. Adaptation is also the subject of Jadwiga Uchman's essay, albeit in a rather unorthodox way since the scholar includes in her investigations the issue of authorial rights to Beckett's works and what happens in the process of adaptation with both the rights and the works. Finally, Ewa Kębłowska-Ławniczak ruminates on the self-referential issue of art as a conventional subject matter of (non) experimental contemporary English plays.

The concluding part of the volume can be treated as a résumé of what has been explored so far: art extending its limitations across space and time in broadly understood culture. Krzysztof Fordoński interprets the poetic works in Latin by a Polish Jesuit, Maciej Sarbiewski, as a vehicle for political propaganda in English late Renaissance, appropriated by the Catholically-oriented Metaphysical poets. Olga Grądziel contextualizes Thomas More's *Utopia* in the receptive culture of the sixteenth-century England, while Bożena Kucała analyses a modern version of what might have been memoirs of the members of Robert Scott's expedition to the South Pole as rendered in Beryl Bainbridge's novel. Aniela Korzeniowska attempts to face the problem of one's complex, contemporary identity in her search of an answer to the question of what it takes to be a Black Scot (woman) in present-day Glasgow on the basis of the oeuvre of the poetess Jackie Kay. Joanna Mstowska in her essay assumes a historical perspective on the myth of the Flying Dutchman, scrutinising it in the work of a nineteenth-century writer, Frederick Marryat, in light of both the Faustian myth and René Girard's twentieth-century theory. Stankomir Nicieja's essay addresses the issue of the relationship between science and humanities as rendered in contemporary British fiction, illustrated in two novels by the celebrated writer Ian McEwan. A relationship between the country of one's origin and the manner one is framed in the country of one's choice is the focus of Anna Tomczak's article centering on Rose Tremain's novel, *The road home*. Justyna Stępień discusses in her article the crossroads of British popular art, tracing the relationship between the 'high brow' and 'low brow' forms of art. Katarzyna Kociołek, too, looks at British art, albeit from a different perspective: adopting postmodern discourse she analyses documents regulating art in Britain in the 1980s. Postmodern lens is also deployed in Jakub Ligor's reading of the Coens' films, in which he applies the idea of McHalean 'zones'. Agnieszka Rasmus, too, considers films in her essay, focusing however on the borderline between an original movie (a British one, in this case) and its remake (a Hollywood one). Michał Różycki is yet another scholar who in his article looks at films, but he focuses on the concept and figure of conspiracy theorist, both a fictitious character and a historical person. Finally, Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga's essay is devoted to a different area of cultural studies: she considers the future of humanities in Poland in the context of the 'cultural turn'.

The articles collected in this volume analyse liminal spaces of widely understood cultural studies, showing various intersections and forking paths of research into English letters and culture. Naturally, we can only hope that the essays will provoke and inspire further scholarly debate in the area of the crossroads of literature and culture.

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