

**TRANSLATION
IN CULTURE**



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TRANSLATION IN CULTURE

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Contents

Translations in Culture (Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech, Marta Mamet-Michalkiewicz) 7

Tamara Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz

The Translational Turn in Modernism Studies 13

Aniela Korzeniowska

Award-Winning Scottish Poet and Writer Jackie Kay and the Translation of Her Multiple Voices 39

Anna Szczepan-Wojnarska

Translating Translation – Thoughts on *Lost in Translation* by Eva Hoffman 59

Paweł Marcinkiewicz

The End of Translation as a Culturally Significant Activity: The Polish Poetry Collections of W. S. Merwin and Jorie Graham 79

Tomasz Markiewka

Scripture's In-difference Inclusive Bible Translations and the Mechanisms of Gender-Related Manipulation 103

Marta Mamet-Michalkiewicz

Open Sesame! The Polish Translations of *The Thousand and One Nights* 119

Agnieszka Pokojaska

Proportions of the Familiar and the Strange in Jasper Fforde's Fictional World, from the Perspective of the Reader of the Original and the Polish Translation 135

Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech

Revisiting G. B. Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession*. Differences in Cultural Reception and Translation in England, the United States, and Poland 151

Kinga Lis

Why Differ? – Divergent Lexical Choices in Two Middle English Prose Psalter Translations and Their *raison d'être* 173

Notes on the Authors 193

Index 197

Translations in Culture

Since the cultural turn in translation studies, formulated by Susan Bassnett and André Lefèvre (Bassnett and Lefèvre 1990), we have witnessed a flourishing of interest in the area of translation perceived as cultural phenomenon, a mediator between the Same – the source language/culture and the Other – the target language/culture. This awareness of perceiving an act of translation in terms of cultural transposition brings new perspectives and dilemmas and situates literary translation in the spotlight of literary studies. The translation of a literary text in the light of cultural awareness in translation studies has become, as Trivedi writes, “a transaction not between two languages, or a somewhat mechanical sounding act of linguistic “substitution” [...], but rather a more complex negotiation between two cultures” (Trivedi 2005). In the light of the above, we can trace the specific areas in which changes induced by the growth of translation studies can be identified, to quote Lawrence Venuti:

Translation changes the form, meaning, and effect of the source text, even when the translator maintains a semantic correspondence that creates a reliable basis for summaries and commentaries. Translation changes the cultural situation where the source text originated through an investment of prestige or a creation of stereotypes. Translation changes the receiving cultural situation by bringing into existence something new and different, a text that is neither the source text nor an original composition in the translating language, and in the process it changes the values, beliefs, and representations that are housed in institutions. (Venuti 2013, 10)

Indeed, translation does change us and the world around us in an immense, though very often imperceptible way. Its influence is all-embracing and overarching. Yet, the changes it causes are an indispensable element for a group of people/nation's development and survival. It has been wrongly assumed that there is a solid indivisible cultural repertoire that constitutes the core of the group's identity (Even-Zohar 2010, 177). Paradoxically, as Itamar Even-Zohar argues, it is change that maintains the continuity of a group of people or nation:

The gist of the argument is that since it is the multiplicity of repertoires which co-exist as permanent competitors that makes it possible for a system to change; and since change is necessary because systems necessarily clash and conflict with other systems, heterogeneity allows systems to carry on. (Even-Zohar, 178)

Thus translation may be viewed as one of the forces that (re)shape the cultural repertoire of a collective entity and through the introduction of the new and foreign buttress its evolution and growth.

The once provocative and now obvious claim made by Susan Bassnett and André Lefèvere that there had been a shift of focus in translation studies from linguistically to culturally-oriented research is a fact. Harish Trivedi aptly observes that “it was precisely the formulation and recognition of this cultural turn in translation studies that served to extend and revitalize the discipline and to liberate it from [linguistics]” (Trivedi 2005, 12). Since the 1990s we have witnessed a growing interest in the fledgling discipline of translation studies: a series of monographs and encyclopaedias have been published, new journals and a new publishing house exclusively devoted to the new subject have been founded. In line with recent developments of the discipline, this volume also explores the theme of translation against cultural backdrop. It collects chapters which analyse different functions that translation performs in culture and its aim is to stimulate further discussion on the current stage and future perspectives of translation studies.

Our volume opens with a comprehensive examination of the genesis of the cultural turn in translation studies and translational turn in cultural studies by Tamara Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz. Tracing the development and evolution of cultural and translation studies Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz argues that due to methodological changes gradually translation has moved from the peripheral to the central position in transnational Modernist studies. On the basis of a broad survey of recent publications on Modernism she recognizes a translational turn in Modernist studies:

Modernist studies has undergone all the stages necessary to diagnose a “translational turn” in a given discipline: the expansion of the thematic field of research to encompass the history and poetics of literary transla-

tion, the increasing metaphorization of the notion of translation in the narratives on intercultural expansion, transmission and transformation of Modernist art and the methodological refinement in the course of which the category of translation acquired an epistemological value and transdisciplinary application. (Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz in this volume)

Against this theoretical backdrop of cultural turn in translation studies a case study may be placed: Aniela Korzeniowska's exploration of the literary output of a Scottish writer Jackie Kay. This paper attempts to answer two questions: how to translate multivoicedness of Kay's poetry and why such a significant contemporary poet has hardly been known in Poland. To find the answers, Korzeniowska outlines the main themes of Kay's works, such as identity, racism, gender, sexuality, and cultural difference. She accentuates the fact that Kay is a culture-specific writer since she uses both standard and nonstandard forms of English and Scottish English (Glaswegian, among others), which definitely pose a challenge to translators, and adds that almost all her poems translated into Polish were written in standard English. Yet, one could surmise, "it is not so much the languages or the multiple voices Jackie Kay adopts in her writing that are truly problematic for the translator, but rather the frequent lack of detailed knowledge about why the given language or variety is being used in the given context." Korzeniowska concludes that Kay's "choice of voice is culture-specific in itself and this is what may – but does not have to – defeat many a translator" (Korzeniowska in this volume).

Similarly to Jackie Kay, Eva Hoffman writes in a plurality of voices in search of a new identity as a Polish immigrant in Canada and the USA, which is perceptively analysed by Anna Szczepan-Wojnarska. For Hoffman, "the idea of writing as an integral part of herself is a consequence of her ontological attitude towards a language. To articulate herself means for her to exist" and "writing is for her a part of understanding herself, being herself, and some kind of *translation therapy*" (Szczepan-Wojnarska in this volume). There are other similarities between Kay and Hoffman. Both feel different, ostracised by the society, they share the guilt of being a stranger. As regards Hoffman, "the guilt of being a stranger is obviously visible in many ways, for example in the language (very limited or in the lack of language); in behaviour which might be taken as rude or even vulgar (such

as a way of dancing); in the way of wearing clothes.” The impossibility of mediation between cultures is poignantly spelt out by Hoffman: “art of reality, keep going back and forth over the rifts, not to heal them but to see that I – one person, first-person singular – have been on both sides” (Hoffman 1998, 273). Both authors, Kay and Hoffman, base their writings on autobiography, yet as Korzeniowska and Szczepan-Wojnarska show in their articles, these women transform personal experience into universal reflection on the themes of identity and racism, of being culturally different from the majority and searching for acceptance.

The impossibility of mediation between cultures is also a subject of Paweł Marcinkiewicz’s article titled “The End of Translation as a Culturally Significant Activity: The Polish Poetry Collections of W. S. Merwin and Jorie Graham.” Yet Marcinkiewicz, analysing the Polish translations of Merwin and Graham’s poetry collections, indicates the impossibility of mediation between cultures in a different light. Marcinkiewicz accentuates the issue of insufficient interpreting the polysystem of the source text which in consequence renders translation as “an arena of controversy between – as Stanley Fish calls them – “interpretive communities,” whose cultural and poetic principles make literary text less meaningful” (Marcinkiewicz in this volume). In the polysystem of translation into Polish Marcinkiewicz also discusses translators and editors who insufficiently interpret the polysystem of Polish literature. Depicting a decreasing influence of cultural significance of translation in the polysystem of Polish literature and its contemporary peripheral position, Marcinkiewicz concludes his article with a statement that translation needs a generation change due to the fact that nowadays it functions differently than a decade ago.

Tomasz Markiewka, tracing the developments in the field of Bible translation, also indicates the necessity of change in translation. Yet, when Marcinkiewicz focuses more on a generation change of translators, Markiewka proposes a change of translation strategies in order to tackle the problem of cultural differences. The author of “Scripture’s *In-difference*. Inclusive Bible Translations and the Mechanisms of Cultural Manipulation,” analysing the so-called “inclusive translations” of the Bible, comes to a conclusion that the inclusive strategy of translation is an example of cultural manipulation which aims at silencing the masculine elements when assuring gender inclusivity.

Cultural manipulation is likewise the subject of the next chapter. In “Open Sesame! The Polish Translations of *The Thousand and One Nights*” Marta Mamet-Michalkiewicz discusses the twentieth-century Polish translations of *The Thousand and One Nights*. Her comparative study of translations of the book reveals its shortcomings and also the peripheral position in the polysystem of Polish literature. Mamet-Michalkiewicz indicates that the popularity of Scheherazade’s stories, such as about Sinbad or Aladdin, does not project onto at least superficial knowledge of the book. Undiminished fascination with *The Arabian Nights* and exotic-fairytale-like Orient is the result of plethora of children’s adaptations of the book and Walt Disney’s popular productions. Michalkiewicz, analysing the Polish translations of the book, describes the process of ‘fairyrealisation’ of *The Thousand and One Nights* in the Polish culture and signals a need of retranslation of the work.

From the fictional world of the tales of *The Thousand and One Nights* Agnieszka Pokojka moves the reader of the present volume to the fictional world of Jasper Fforde. In “Proportions of the Familiar and the Strange in Jasper Fforde’s Fictional World, from the Perspective of the Reader of the Original and the Polish Translation” Pokojka analyses the difficulties of translation and reception of the Thursday Next books. She shares a conviction that the above do not constitute a continuum but distinct categories. Analysing the proportions between the familiar and the strange in the original and the Polish translation, Pokojka notes significant differences, concluding that the reception of Fforde’s novels in the Polish translation does not have the same effect as in the original.

The issue of reception of the original and the translation is also raised by Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech in the article “Revisiting G. B. Shaw’s *Mrs Warren’s Profession*. Differences in Cultural Reception and Translation in England, the United States, and Poland.” She perceives the play as a means of propagating the then-revolutionary views on the role of women in society. *Mrs Warren’s Profession* was censored to stifle social debate in Britain and the US. Adamowicz-Pośpiech juxtaposes the downright condemnation of the play on the Isles with its reception and translation on the Continent which was much more favourable and popular. In Poland, though the drama was not censored, nonetheless its performance was abandoned due to political and ideological causes. The paper outlines the differences of the

play's reception and translation against the historical and cultural backdrop of the first decades of the twentieth century. Indirectly it is concerned with the debate over marriage and women's legal rights that swept through Europe at that time.

The final article consists in a linguistic rather than cultural analysis of psalter translations. In "Why Differ? – Divergent Lexical Choices in Two Middle English Prose Psalter Translations and Their *raison d'être*" Kinga Lis proposes to analyse the lexical divergences between supposedly uniform fourteenth-century Middle English Psalter renditions from Latin. Analysing apparent divergencies between the first fifty Psalms of the Early and the Late Wycliffite Psalters, Lis indicates intra- and extratextual variations signalling that these variations are translator-dependent.

The present volume offers a wide range of methods of analysis of literary translation, divergent views on the place of translation in culture and how translations impact the receiving culture. Yet, we hope that the essays as a whole, will enrich and stimulate the development of cultural translation studies with new ideas and compelling interpretations.

Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech
Marta Mamet-Michalkiewicz

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Notes on the Authors

Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech Assistant professor of English literature and translation studies at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. She has published four books on Joseph Conrad, British Modernism and translation studies, as well as a number of texts on R. Browning, T. S. Eliot, and W. Golding. Her research focuses on descriptive translation studies, British Modernism, modern and contemporary British drama. She is currently involved in the project *Reception of British and Irish Writers in Europe*.

Agnieszka Pokojka Holds an MA in English philology from the Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland. She is an acclaimed literary translator from English into Polish, most recently of works by Alice Munro, Colin Barrett, and Nathan Englander. She has been teaching literary and applied translation since 2001, at such higher-education institutions as the UNESCO Chair for Translation Studies and Intercultural Communication at the Jagiellonian University, the Tischner European University, Cracow, and the Institute of English Philology at the Jagiellonian University.

Aniela Korzeniowska Professor in translation studies as well as head of the Department of Applied Linguistics and of the Scottish Studies Research Group at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw. Over the last years she has been combining her interest in translation with issues concerning Scotland's languages and literature, with emphasis on identity. Besides numerous articles published within both translation and Scottish studies, her publications include *Successful Polish-English Translation. Tricks of the Trade* (co-authored by Piotr Kuhiwczak, 3rd ed. 2005), *Explorations in Polish-English Mistranslation Problems* (1998), *Translating Scotland. Nation and Identity* (2008), *Scotland in Europe / Europe in Scotland. Links – Dialogues – Analogies* (2013), *Facets of Scottish Identity* (2013), and *Scottish Culture. Dialogue and Self-Expression* (2016), the last three co-edited with Izabela Szymańska.

Anna Szczepan-Wojnarska (MA, Ph.D. and habilitation, Jagiellonian University, Cracow as well as MA, The Woolf Institute, Cambridge). Associate professor in literature studies at Cardinal Wyszyński University in Warsaw. Since 2012 – Head

of Institute of Polish Philology and since 2014 Chair of Ph.D. Studies at Faculty of Humanities. Books published: "...you will get married to a fire" J. Liebert. *The Experience of Transcendence in the Life and the Works of Jerzy Liebert* (Cracow: Universitas, 2003); *To Forgive God. A figure of Job in the literature related to WWII* (Cracow: Universitas, 2008). Books edited: *Biblical Job, Job in Culture* (Warsaw: Cardinal Wyszyński UP, 2010), *Translating Poetry – Negotiating Imagination* (Warsaw: Cardinal Wyszyński UP, 2014). Research interests include: relations between literature and religion, literary anthropology and transcultural literary studies, translation theory, poetry of the twentieth and twenty-first century, Joseph Conrad's and Jerzy Liebert's oeuvre.

Kinga Lis Ph.D. candidate in the Department of the History of English and Translation Studies at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. She works on historical psalter renditions, dealing with the lexical and etymological aspects of Middle English and Anglo-French psalter translations, their interdependencies and place with respect to the linguistic panorama of medieval England.

Marta Mamet-Michalkiewicz Assistant professor at the University of Silesia, Centre of Postcolonial Studies and Travel Literatures. She is the author of the book *Between the Orient and the Occident: Transformations of "The Thousand and One Nights"* (2011 & 2015), co-editor of the volume *Urban Amazement* (2015). She published in *Przekładaniec* and *Rodopi/Cross Cultures Series*. Her research interest include: literary translation and theory, postcolonial literatures and studies and also Orientalism in western humanities.

Paweł Marcinkiewicz Associate professor at Opole University. His interests focus on American poetry and translation theory, and he is also a poet and translator. Recently he has published a monograph on John Ashbery's poetry "*Colored Alphabets' Flutter.*" *John Ashbery and the Twentieth-Century American Avant-Gardes* (Opole University Press 2012). In 2014, the New York Publishing House Spuyten Duyvil printed his selected poems *The Day He's Gone* translated into English by Piotr Florczyk. His honors include the Polish Cultural Foundation Award and the Czesław Miłosz Award.

Tamara Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz Literary theoretician, translation scholar and translator. Assistant professor at Historical Poetics Department, Institute of

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Tomasz Markiewka Studied Polish philology at the Catholic University of Lublin. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Silesia (2002); since 2007 he has worked at the University of Bielsko-Biała (Akademia Techniczno-Humanistyczna); in 2015 he worked at Cleveland State University (USA) as a Kościuszko Foundation grantee. He has published numerous articles on literary theory, comparative literature, translation, and the literary oeuvre of the Polish historical novelist Teodor Parnicki. His publications include critical editions of Parnicki’s *Diaries from the 1980s* (2008) and his never before published debut novel from 1929 *Three Minutes past Three* (2015).

Index

- A**church, Janet 153
Adamowicz-Pościech, Agnieszka 11, 12,
151–173, 193
Adams, Michael 183, 190
Adorno, Theodor 72, 76
Ammons, Archie 93
Apter, Emily 21, 30
Aristophanes 156
Armantrout, Rae 92
Armitage, Simon 84
Ashbery, John 81, 84, 194
Ashley, Katherine 49, 50, 56
Auerbach, Erich 21
Austen, Jane 147, 148
Avtonomova, Natalia 27, 30
- B**achmann-Medick, Doris 17, 18, 19, 28,
30, 31
Bahun, Sanja 31
Baker, Mona 79, 80, 81, 100, 101, 116
Balakian, Anna 35
Balzac, Honore 156
Bammer, Angelika 66, 76
Bantleon, Katharina 37
Barańczak, Stanisław 34, 82, 83, 84, 85, 99,
100, 145
Barnes, Djuna 26
Barret, Colin 192
Barrett-Browning, Elizabeth 143
Bassnett, Susan 7, 8, 12, 14, 17, 20, 31, 166,
168–169
Bauman, Zygmunt 62, 67, 68, 76
Beasley, Rebecca 13, 27, 28, 31
Beaumont, Daniel 120, 129, 131
Begam, Richard 22, 31
Benveniste, Émile 71, 76
Bérard, Victor 26
Bergson, Henri 26, 93
Berman, Jessica 21, 22, 31
Bermann, Sandra 21, 31
Bernard, Jessie 169
Bernheimer, Charles 21, 31
Bernstein, Charles 84, 92
Besemeres, Mary 70, 71, 76
Biedrzycki, Miłosz 91, 93, 96, 101
Bilczewski, Tomasz 21, 31
Birkett, Jennifer 27, 32
Bishop, Elizabeth 83, 99
Blair, Tony 80
Bloch-Rozmej, Anna 191
Bocola, Sandro 32
Boehmer, Elleke 22, 32
Bolecki, Włodzimierz 19, 20, 32
Booth, Howard J. 22, 32
Brecht, Bertold 154, 169
Brodsky, Joseph 79, 82
Brough, Fanny 155
Broeck, R. van den 34
Brontë, Charlotte 145, 148
Brooker, Peter 22, 32, 34
Brown, George Mackay 50
Brown, J. Dillon 22, 32
Browning, Robert 193
Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz, Tamara 8,
9, 13–38, 194

- Buber, Martin 60
 Buchanan, George 80
 Buchta, Magdalena 50
 Buden, Boris 31
 Bukowski, Charles 100
 Bullock, Philip Ross 13, 31
 Burns, Robert 46, 47, 56
 Burton, Richard Francis 123, 129, 131
- C**
 Cage, John 84, 85, 101
 Caneda-Cabrera, M. Teresa 27, 28, 32
 Carroll, Lewis (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) 144
 Carson, Donald Arthur 109, 110, 116
 Catford, John Cunnison 15, 32
 Caughie, Pamela L. 33
 Cejpek, Jiri 122, 131
 Charzyńska-Wójcik, Magdalena 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 182, 189, 190
 Chaucer, Geoffrey 100, 156
 Chaudhuri, Supriya 29, 30, 32
 Chekhov, Anton 26
 Chmieliński, Józef 160
 Chojnacka, Anna 162, 169
 Chrobak, Marzena 136, 148
 Chruściel, Ewa 91, 93, 94, 96, 100, 101
 Clifford, James 48
 Comstock, Anthony 156
 Cowie, Anthony Paul 180
 Craig, Edward Gordon 26
 Crocus, Cornelius 80
 Culler, Jonathan 27, 33
 cummings, e.e. 84
 Czapkiewicz, Andrzej 124, 125, 131
- D**
 Dalgarno, Emily 24, 25, 33
 Daly, Arnold 156
 Damrosch, David 21, 33
 Dante, Alighieri 67, 80, 148
 Davis, Norman 191
 Dehnel, Jacek 84, 85, 99
 Delanty, Gerard 76
 Delisle, Jean 173, 190
 Denby, Edwin 81
 Derrida, Jacques 61
 Dębnicki, Antoni 160, 169
 Dickens, Charles 146, 147
 Dizdar, Dilek 18, 19, 33
 Donchin, Georgette 33
 Donovan, Anne 56
 Doorslaer, L. van 33
 Dostoevsky, Fyodor 148
 Doucette, Erica 31
 Doyle, Laura 22, 33
 Drawicz, Andrzej 82
 Du Gay, Paul 62, 76
 Dujardin, Edouard 26
 Durkheim, Émile 76
- E**
 Eatough, Matt 31, 37
 Edwards, Brent Hayes 22, 33
 Eliot, George (Mary Ann Evans) 143
 Eliot, Thomas Stearns 25, 26, 43, 193
 Elmslie, Kenward 81
 Eltis, Sos 169
 Engelking, Leszek 50, 100
 Erasmus, Desiderius 104
 Espasa, Eva 166, 169
 Even-Zohar, Itamar 7, 8, 12, 14, 21, 33, 52, 53, 56, 79, 81, 91, 100
 Eysteinnsson, Astradur 32
- F**
 Featherstone, Mike 60
 Feldman, Ferdinand 160

- Fforde, Jasper 11, 135, 137, 138, 139, 140, 142–149
- Field, Bradford S. 169
- Figiel, Izabela 50
- Flint, Frank Stewart 26
- Forshall, Josiah 174, 190
- Freud, Sigmund 61
- Friedman, Jonathan 60
- Friedman, Susan Stanford 22, 24, 28, 29, 30, 33
- G**
- Gambier, Yves 33
- Gaonkar, Dilip Parameshwar 22
- Genette, Gerard 64, 65, 76
- Gentzler, Edwin 14, 17, 33
- Gerhardt, Mia 120, 124, 126, 132
- Gibert, Miriam 169
- Gillies, Mary Ann 22, 33
- Godyń, Mieczysław 50
- Goffman, Erving 76
- Gold, Victor 111
- Goldsmith, Kenneth 84
- Golding, William 193
- Goodhart, George 155
- Gourmont, Remy de 26
- Górnicki, Łukasz 80, 160
- Górski, Ryszard 168
- Granville-Barker, Harley 155
- Graham, Jorie 10, 79, 86, 91–95, 97–102
- Green, Jonathon 156, 169
- Greenblatt, Stephen 80
- Grudem, Wayne 111, 116
- Gutorow, Jack 84, 85
- H**
- Hall, Stuart 62, 76
- Hardy, Thomas 146
- Hargreaves, Henry 174, 176, 189, 190
- Hart, Matthew 34
- Hass, Robert 85, 88
- Hathaway, Anne 144
- Hawley, John C. 35
- Heaney Seamus 83, 84, 99
- Heidegger, Martin 60, 61
- Hemingway, Ernest 156
- Herbert, Zbigniew 86, 87, 102
- Herbrechter, Stefan 34, 37
- Herder, Johann Gottfried von 73
- Hermans, Theo 14, 15, 22, 34, 168
- Heydel, Magda 15, 16, 17, 34, 55, 56
- Hirsch, Edward 101
- Hirsch, Marianne 66, 86
- Hobson, M. Barbara 159, 169
- Hoffman, Eva 9, 10, 12, 59–78
- Holmes, James S. 34
- Hołobut, Agata 88
- Honet, Roman 99
- Hugo, Victor 156
- Huyssen, Andréas 34
- I**
- Ibsen, Henrik 26, 152, 154, 156, 158, 168
- Infante, Ignacio 23, 24, 25, 34
- Innes, Christopher 169
- Irwin, Robert 120, 132
- J**
- Jacobus, Lee A. 156–159, 169
- Jarniewicz, Jerzy 50, 53, 55, 56, 84, 85, 86, 100
- Jarnot, Lisa 84
- Jay, Martin 27, 34
- Jay, Paul 22, 34
- Jerome, St. 103, 104

Jettmarová, Zuzanna 34
 Johnson, Samuel (doctor) 142
 Joyce, James 25, 26

Kaczorowska, Monika 25, 34
 Kafka, Franz 147
 Kaindl, Klaus 34
 Kalinowski, Marian Leon 127, 131
 Kałwa, Dobrochna 168, 169
 Kar, Prafulla C. 36
 Karátson, André 30, 35
 Karolides, Nicholas J. 169
 Katz, Daniel 24, 25, 35
 Kay, Jackie 9, 10, 39, 40–57
 Kennedy, Maev 148
 Kibbee, Douglas A. 177, 191
 Klaus, Carl H. 169
 Klata, Jan 167
 Kleinzahler, August 84
 Knight, Julius 155
 Koch, Kenneth 84
 Kochanowski, Jan 80
 Koelb, Clayton 33
 Kołodziejczyk, Elżbieta 50
 Korzeniowska, Aniela 9, 10, 39–58
 Kraskowska, Ewa 32
 Krechowicki, Adam 162, 169
 Krishnaswamy, Revathi 23, 24, 35
 Kristeva, Julia 64, 77
 Krupnik, Mark 66
 Krynicki, Ryszard 82
 Kubiak, Władysław 121–123, 125, 131
 Kuchtówna, Lidia 168, 169
 Kumor, Stanisława 159, 161, 162, 168
 Kundera, Milan 72
 Kurath, Hans 191

Lahoda, Vojtěch 30, 35
 Lambert, Jose 34
 Lampe, Geoffrey William Hugo 190, 191
 Larkin, Philip 84, 85, 99, 101
 Lash, Scott 60
 Lawrence, David Herbert 26
 Lefèvere, André 7, 8, 12, 14, 17, 20, 31, 36, 168
 Levinas, Emmanuel 61
 Lewicki, Tadeusz 120–122, 124, 125, 132
 Lipińska, Dorota 50
 Lis, Kinga 12, 173–192
 Liska, Vivian 32
 Lupa, Krystian 167
 Luther, Martin 103, 104
 Lyn, Hejinian 84
 Lyra, Nicholas of 189, 191

MacCaig, Norman 50
 Mackay, Brown George 50
 Madden, Frederic 174, 190
 Maeterlinck, Maurice 26
 Maj, Bronisław 91
 Mamet-Michalkiewicz, Marta 11, 12, 119–133
 Mansfield, Katherine 26
 Mao, Douglas 15, 22, 35
 Maresz, Barbara 165, 170
 Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso 26
 Maupassant, Guyde 153
 Maurier du, Daphne 146
 Maurras, Charles 26
 McAllister Kuhn, Sherman 191
 McInstosh, Madge 155
 Merwin, W. S. 10, 79, 86–91, 94, 101, 102

- Meyerhold, Vsevolod 26
 Mill, John Stuart 158, 168, 170
 Mina, Loy 26
 Moore, Marianne 93
 Moretti, Franco 21, 35
 Morgan, Edwin 50
 Moses, Michael 22, 31
 Mroczek, Aleksandra 53, 56
 Mueller, Joanna 98
 Muhsin, Mahdi 128, 129, 132
 Müller, Ina 20, 35
 Munday, Jeremy 15, 35, 107, 116
- N**
 Naogeorgus, Thomas 80
 Nida, Eugene 35, 105, 107
 Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm 60, 81
 Noakes, Susan 33
 Nord, Christiane 96, 101
 Norwid, Cyprian Kamil 100
 Nycz, Ryszard 16, 27, 35
- O**
 O'Hara, Frank 81, 82
 Olasik, Marta 51, 53, 57
 Olszewska, Izabela 32
- P**
 Padgett, Ron 84, 85
 Parry, Amie 35
 Paues, Anna Carolina 182
 Perelman, Bob 84
 Perloff, Marjorie 86, 101
 Peters, Sally 152, 170
 Piette, Adam 26, 27, 35
 Pinault, Daniel 125, 128, 132
 Plato 93
 Plutarch of Chaeronea 80
 Pokojaska, Agnieszka 135–149
- Pound, Ezra 25, 26, 37, 86, 93
 Powell, Kerry 155, 156, 169–170
 Proust, Marcel 26
 Puchner, Martin 22, 35
- R**
 Rabaté, Jean-Michel 34, 37
 Rebelais, François 156
 Radziwiłł, Krzysztof 125, 126, 131
 Ramazani, Jahan 22–24, 35
 Reid, Richard 25
 Rej, Mikołaj 80
 Riccardi, Alessandra 34
 Rigby, Nigel 22, 32
 Rivkin, Julie 60, 61
 Roditi, Edouard 35
 Rothko, Mark 92, 93
 Rothwell, William 176, 191
 Ross, Joe 84
 Rotterowa, Amelia 161
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 61
 Różewicz, Tadeusz 83
 Rushdie, Salman 77
 Ryan, Michael 60, 61
- S**
 Said, Edward W. 68, 69, 77
 Salevsky, Heidemarie 20, 35
 Santos, Irene Ramalho 22
 Sarup, Madan 65, 77
 Saussure, Ferdinand de 60, 71
 Schleiermacher, Friedrich 104, 123
 Schlesinger, Miriam 80
 Schuyler, James 81, 85
 Seneca 80
 Shakespeare, William 137, 138, 144, 145
 Shaw, Bernard 11, 151–171
 Shepherd, Geoffrey 176, 191

- Silberman, Marc 154, 168
 Silliman, Ron 84, 92
 Simon, Sherry 107, 116
 Simpson, John 191
 Singh, Rajendra 18, 36
 Słomczyński, Maciej 85
 Słowacki, Juliusz 100
 Smith, Ali 47
 Smith, Bessie 51
 Smith, Stan 27, 32
 Snell-Hornby, Mary 14, 17, 30, 34, 36
 Sollors, Werner 68, 77
 Solski, Ludwik 160, 170
 Sommer, Piotr 81–86, 99, 101
 Sosnowski, Andrzej 81, 82, 99
 Spahr, Juliana 84
 Staff, Leopold 99
 Stanislavsky, Konstantin 26
 Stein, Gertrude 26
 Steiner, George 107
 Stevens, Wallace 85
 Steyn, Juliet 77
 Stiller, Robert Reuven 127, 128, 131
 St-Pierre, Paul 36
 Strindberg, August 158, 168, 170
 Stuart, Cosmo 155
 Sturge, Kate 31
 Sword, Helen 22, 33
 Szczepan-Wojnarska, Anna 9, 10, 59–71,
 194
 Szczepkowska, Joanna 167
 Szydłowska, Mariola 169
 Szymańska, Izabela 193
 Szymańska, Katarzyna 85

Święch, Jerzy 14, 36

Tabakowska, Elżbieta 79–81, 101
 Taber, Charles R. 35
 Tarnowski, Marcelli 131
 Thacker, Andrew 22, 32, 34
 Theune, Michael 87, 101
 Thoss, Jeff 37
 Thullie, M. 161, 170
 Tkaczyszyn-Dycki, Eugeniusz 83
 Toury, Gideon 15, 16, 21, 33, 36, 80
 Trapszo, Irena 160
 Tristan, Flora 159, 170
 Trivedi, Harish 7, 8, 12, 14, 17, 21, 36
 Turner, Tina 143
 Turska, Marta 32
 Tymoczko, Maria 15–17, 36

Vaughan, Henry 83
 Venuti, Lawrence 7, 12, 94, 100

Walcott, Derek 84, 99
 Walkowitz, Rebecca L. 15, 22, 35, 36
 Wansley, Sarah 154, 170
 Watkins, Dudley D. 43
 Watson, Roderick 40, 56
 Webb, Beatrice 153
 Webersfeld, Edward 160, 162, 170
 Weiner, Edmund 191
 Weintraub, Rodelle 152, 170
 Werner, Michael 29, 36
 West, Russel 18, 37
 Whitaker, William 177, 178, 191
 Wilde, Oscar 156
 Wilkins, David 173, 191
 Wilson, Fiona 40–42, 57
 Winkiel, Laura 22, 33

- Wirpsza, Witold 82
Wolf, Werner 37
Wollaeger, Mark A. 28, 31, 33, 37
Wood, Michael 21, 31
Woodsworth, Judith 173
Woodward, Kathryn 77, 191
Woolf, Virginia 24, 26, 33
Wójcik, Jerzy 191
- X**ie, Ming 37
- Y**ao, Steven G. 14, 22, 24–26, 33, 37
Yeats, William Butler 26
- Z**adura, Bohdan 81, 82
Zagajewski, Adam 82, 91
Zawadzki, Jarek 100
Zimmerman, Bénédict 29, 36

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