

*Tomasz Dobrogoszcz, Agata Handley,
Krzysztof Majer and Tomasz Fisiak*

Preface

The purpose of the present volume is twofold. Firstly, we aim to honor Professor Dorota Filipczak, whose untimely passing after more than thirty years of an energetic and fruitful academic career at the University of Lodz has left us in shock and sorrow. Secondly, we aspire to produce a valuable contribution to literary criticism and culture studies, the areas on which her own scholarly endeavors centered. From among the many possible themes we have selected that of the *woman artist* because of its special importance for Filipczak's research, as well as the connection to her own work as a poet. Importantly, all of the contributors—representing various fields of academia—are Dorota's friends, colleagues and collaborators, and the essays eloquently testify to her intellectual influence.

Dorota Filipczak's output firmly demonstrates that she succeeded in combining two roles: that of a female scholar and that of the eponymous *woman artist*. Although she devoted a large part of her research to male writers—including Malcolm Lowry and Brian Moore—an academic focus on women appears more central to her career. A quick glance at the titles of her scholarly publications demonstrates her genuine interest in the cultural role of female figures. Filipczak analyzed the oeuvre of such writers as Alice Munro, Jane Urquhart, Michèle Roberts and Margaret Laurence; she also wrote extensively on female biblical figures, Eve and Mary Magdalene. In addition, her choice of theoretical tools emphasizes her investment in the female cause—Filipczak frequently referred to other female scholars, thinkers and philosophers, including Mieke Bal, Alison Jasper and Pamela Sue Anderson. Anderson's feminist philosophy of religion turned out to be particularly significant for Filipczak's academic input; she was friendly with all three scholars, and these relationships were based on mutual academic respect.

However, Dorota Filipczak's discussion of the female experience was not limited to scholarly texts, lectures or seminars on literature (it must be remembered that she was an active academic teacher and a guest scholar who delivered lectures at universities around the world—at Oxford, Durham, Glasgow, Sheffield, Winnipeg, Barcelona, to name just a few). It was also discernible in her translations of numerous short stories and novels by female writers (e.g., Nadine Gordimer's 1998 *The House Gun*). Most of all, though, it showed in her deeply personal poetry, where she would address issues around the female body and sexuality, as well as female empowerment and the desire for knowledge. It comes as no surprise that the first issue of *Text Matters: A Journal of Literature, Theory and Culture* (2011), the interdisciplinary journal which Filipczak founded and developed, sought to "primarily engage in the relationship between women and authority, vested in literary and philosophical texts" (6), as she expressed it in the first editorial. Undoubtedly, the relation between womanhood and notions of power and desire remained recurrent subjects in her pursuits, both academic and poetic.

Scholar, writer, teacher, poet, translator—the list unequivocally proves Dorota Filipczak's versatility. A volume comparable in length to the present one could easily have been devoted exclusively to her achievements in these various fields. The intention, however, is different: the following texts go beyond remembrance and the honoring of an established scholar's remarkable achievements. Despite their undeniable commemorative function, the chapters included here attempt to carry Filipczak's academic endeavors forward, into the future.

The first section ("Creativity and Memory") contains more personal reflections and ruminations inspired by Filipczak's life and work. True to form, Aritha van Herk's text ("Aesthetic Modes of Attack: The Woman Critic-Artist, *Caractère unique*") bubbles with provocation, both stylistic and ideological, refusing to settle in rigidly prescribed academic boundaries: in more ways than one, van Herk attests to the uniqueness and transgressive potential of women's critical-artistic practice. The cultural theorist and video artist Mieke Bal, who was interviewed by Filipczak on a number of occasions, argues in "Untimeliness, Inter-ship, Mutuality" that Filipczak's interest in the work of woman artists was "a mode of being, thinking, and doing her academic work" (p. 27) and that her approach was "dialogic" (pp. 27–28): an ongoing engagement with, and unlimited curiosity about, "otherness" (p. 28). In this spirit, Bal has sought to make her own contribution as "dialogic" as possible, responding to Filipczak's ideas, as if she were interviewing her, continuing the mutually enriching conversation that had been cut short. David Jasper recognizes that "professionalism" tends to confine academics within the narrow boundaries of their own discipline and fields of research. Jasper argues that Filipczak,

on the other hand, pursued a rigorous interdisciplinarity—summed up, perhaps, by the title of a conference organized by her in 1998: *Dissolving the Boundaries*. Jasper focuses on two journals (*Literature and Theology* and *Text Matters*), as well as Filipczak's early research on Canadian literature, to show how "disciplined interdisciplinarity"—addressed directly in his title—becomes for her an important method of investigation.

Articles collected in the following section ("Multivocality and Interaction") investigate the tensions between the public persona and the private self as reflected in the work of a range of women artists. Serving as a prologue of sorts, as well as an inspiration, is Filipczak's own text, "'Alternative Selves' and Authority in the Fiction of Jane Urquhart." Filipczak borrows the central concept from Pamela Sue Anderson's call to reinvent ourselves as "other" in the face of dominant beliefs and epistemological frameworks. She focuses on texts by Lucy Maud Montgomery, Margaret Laurence, Alice Munro and Jane Urquhart, which explore the clash between female characters' social roles and their "secret" selves. In "What Is In the Picture (and What Is Not): Canada, Women, and Autobiography in the Work of Geraldine Moodie, Eva Hoffman and Alice Munro," Norman Ravvin examines different approaches to autobiography in the work of the three artists. He highlights the importance of place and time in their work, as well as the ambiguities and tensions inherent in their choices regarding that which is revealed and that which remains hidden. Philip Hayward and Matt Hill consider the work of music/video artist Elizabeth Bernholz ("Elizabeth Bernholz's *Gazelle Twin*: Disguise, Persona and Jesterism"). Hayward and Hill demonstrate how Bernholz's adoption of a performative persona—*Gazelle Twin*—offers subversive and parodic reworkings of traditional/folkloric imagery of Britishness in a way acutely relevant at the time of Brexit. In the section's final text, Mark Tardi engages with the work of the American poet Elizabeth Willis ("Vernacular Architecture: Posthumanist Lyric Speakers in Elizabeth Willis's *Address*"). Drawing on posthumanist thinkers such as Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti, Tardi examines Willis's moving between different levels—the human and the nonhuman, the self and the world, the private and the political.

The final section ("Spirituality and Embodiment") is an exploration of the interface between the body and religion. Again, a text by Filipczak—"Let me hear Thy voice': Michèle Roberts's Refiguring of Mary Magdalene in the Light of The Song of Songs"—serves as prologue and inspiration. Filipczak examines various scholarly attempts to redeem the figure of Mary Magdalene from her sexist portrayal as a "repentant whore" (p. 135). In Michèle Roberts's novel *The Secret Gospel of Mary Magdalene*—Filipczak claims—the relationship of Christ and Mary Magdalene is reframed through intertextual references to The Song of Songs, connecting with different levels of

female desire (sexual, maternal, spiritual). Jan Jędrzejewski examines two novels by George Moore ("the Irish Balzac"), *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa*, whose protagonist retreats from opera's worldly success to join a convent, where she sings the offices of the church rather than arias by Verdi or Wagner. Together, the novels constitute an extended meditation on the relationship between artistic and religious experience, sensuality and gender ("A Catholic New Woman Artist: A Contradiction in Terms? Sex, Music and Religion in George Moore's *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa*"). Another work by Roberts, *Playing Sardines* (2001), is explored by Marta Goszczyńska. Goszczyńska reads Roberts's collection through the work of theorists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Carol Wolkowitz, Elizabeth Grosz and Celine Leboeuf, who affirm the embodied character of human experience. Women in the stories are frequently shown as victims who internalize "objectifying" attitudes towards the body. However, Goszczyńska also highlights moments of liberation, when the characters move beyond the frameworks of discipline and control, as well as scenes depicting positive experiences of intersubjectivity ("Cherishing the Body: Embodiment and the Intersubjective World in Michèle Roberts's *Playing Sardines*").

On the cover of her first collection of poetry, *W cieniu doskonałej pomarańczy* [*In the Shadow of a Perfect Orange*] (1994), Filipczak declared: "I'm passionate about the sacred in poetry and prose, and ways of its unconventional interpretation. Writing poetry and literary criticism is like looking at one and the same landscape through two separate windows."¹ In the final article in this collection, entitled "On Spaces Within and Between: Dorota Filipczak's (Embodied) Visions of the Sacred," Monika Kocot considers Filipczak's "unconventional" interpretations of the sacred both in her poetry and in her academic writing, as well as the importance of places and spaces in her geopoetry. The "two windows" of poetry and criticism might, again, be seen as "a mode of being, thinking, and doing," which marks the entirety of Dorota Filipczak's life and work.

Works Cited

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¹ Translation by Monika Kocot.