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**NEW TRENDS IN ENGLISH STUDIES FOR THE 2020s:
AN INTRODUCTION**

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It is our great pleasure to deliver the sixth issue of *CURRENTS. A Journal of Young English Philology Thought and Review*, edited by members of the Academic Association for Doctoral Studies of English at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. Revisiting the theme of the first issue of the journal published in 2015, this issue aims to explore existing and new trends in the interdisciplinary field of English studies that prove to be an important point of reference for Anglophone linguistics, literary and cultural studies in the coming years.

As George Bernard Shaw once stated, “science never solves a problem without creating ten more,” which demonstrates its never-ending evolution. New trends emerge as the old ones are amended or abandoned, frequently owing to the fact that they are no longer suitable for the changing world.

Particularly at the beginning of a new decade, this exchange and traffic in ideas appears to be worth examining. New trends are comprehended hereby as these that have lately developed or are just being introduced to the field in question, including currently examined topics, applied methods, recently advanced theories and formulated concepts, as well as potential directions in which English studies could further expand.

These new currents transgress the boundaries between the humanities and the sciences, as well as dominant and peripheral worldviews. Responding to the

current social and cultural issues, research within different areas of humanities, including English studies, attempts to analyze and, potentially, transform our globalized realities. Referring back to the first issue of the journal, this volume reiterates its aspiration to provide space for the discussion of new trends, opening up the opportunity to observe transitions in what is considered new currents at the beginning of the 2020s.

Trends in linguistics

The section devoted to the exploration of current trends in linguistics starts with an article written by **Aleksandra Ewa Poniewierska**, *Accent and trust: a perception experiment with Polish users of English*, which aims at proving the hypothesis that there is a significant correlation between accents and trust level. After providing the theoretical background crucial for the subject matter of the study, the author describes the experiment, the goal of which is to test whether a Polish speaker (who moved to or visited the United Kingdom) would be prone to trust more a native or a non-native speaker of English. As a concluding remark, the author indicates that accents may affect the perception of others and the level of trust people have and emphasizes the need for further studies on this topic.

The second article in this section, *A contrastive study of theme-based instruction and grammar-translation method in teaching English to young learners* by **Umut Alintas**, is dedicated to the comparison of two well-known methods of teaching English with a view to offering a reference point to the main objective of this study, i.e., the analysis of students' attitude towards the aforementioned approaches. Based on the questionnaires conducted among Turkish students, the results allow for stating that the Grammar-Translation Method, apart from having its advantages, is not considered a suitable teaching procedure for young learners.

Trends in literary studies

The literary section of the sixth issue of *CURRENTS* opens with **Robert McParland's** *Victorian popular science and the sensation novel*, which explores the Victorian fascination with the sensational. Referring to a variety of texts circulating at the time, McParland outlines the growing popularity of sensation stories and their progression alongside popular science in the second half of the nineteenth century. The article provides a comprehensive overview of the genre, highlighting the intersections between the development of scientific thought and cultural production.

In his article entitled *The physical revenge of the book: the role of physicality in literature*, **Riccardo Cipollari** reevaluates the status of the book as a medium in times of rapid technological advancement. Cipollari approaches the validity of the book as a medium, presenting ways in which its physicality affects storytelling. The article discusses works of fiction that experiment with form, transgressing traditional physical boundaries of the book as a medium.

Katarzyna Stępień in her *'Be kind to strangers, they are your entanglement': interconnections, trans-corporeality, multiplicity, and hominid ecologies in Anne Waldman's poetry* examines Waldman's verse from the perspective of recent theories developed in the fields of ecocriticism and posthumanism. Stępień explores the poet's strategies of decentering the human subject. The reflection focuses on the transgression of traditional boundaries between the human and the non-human in Waldman's poetry, which proposes an alternative ecology based on interconnectedness.

The final article in the literary section—*The philosophy behind the addictive sports routines in David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest* by **Paweł Oleksak**—discusses similarities in the presentation of sport and addiction in Wallace's novel. The discussion is placed within the theoretical context of William James's, Søren Kierkegaard's and Pierre Janet's theories throwing light on Wallace's reflection on self-improvement and choice-making.

Trends in cultural studies

The cultural studies section opens with **Dawid Smyk's** article *Afro-Surrealism—a new language for discussing the Black Experience? An exploration of the trend in recent films, TV series, and music videos*, which examines the concept of Afro-Surrealism developed alongside the Black Lives Matter movement in American popular culture (TV series, films and video clips). The author implements different features of Afro-Surrealism in his analysis of selected, current works by African American authors in order to discuss how they connect the social critique with their entertaining function.

Agnieszka Staszak in *Representation of trauma and PTSD in the Netflix Series BoJack Horseman: the case of Gina Cazador* analyses the phenomena of traumatic experiences and post-traumatic stress disorder on the basis of one of the characters of *BoJack Horseman* animated series, Gina Cazador. By including various concepts of trauma theory and memory, the author explores the changes in Cazador's behaviour that might have resulted from repressed painful emotions.

In *Approaching the sublime in Chernobyl (2019)*, **Barbara Pawlak** analyses the concept of sublime on the basis of HBO mini-series *Chernobyl*. The article introduces some key aspects connected with the sublime (among others David Nye's definition and Kant's division into the mathematical and the dynamic sublime). Then, the author discusses selected images connected with nuclear power and Chernobyl catastrophe shown in the series to represent it as the "dynamic sublime," both frightening and delighting its spectators.

Natalia Anna Bracikowska in *Environmental storytelling—the liminal space between embedded and emergent narrative* discusses the connection between game environment and narrative based on environmental storytelling. The author introduces other theories referring to environmental storytelling as well as the three-level conceptual model and analyses particular features of games in order to present environmental storytelling as set between the emergent and embedded narrative.

Book reviews

This year's issue of *CURRENTS* features a review written by **Bernadetta Jankowska**—*Irish identity and trauma: a review of* *Trauma and Identity in Contemporary Irish Culture* by *Melania Terrazas-Gallego (ed.)*. The reviewed book, published in 2020, testifies to the continuing relevance of trauma research in cultural studies.

Conference reports

This section contains two reports from international online conferences organised by doctoral and MA students from our faculty. The first report, written by **Julia Siepak**, presents the participants and main concerns of the International Emerging Scholars Conference “Global—Local—Glocal in Anglophone Literature, Culture, and Linguistics,” which took place on the 26th and 27th of March 2021 and gathered more than thirty young scholars from Polish universities and abroad (e.g. Spain, Brazil, Italy, Germany). The second report, written by **Katarzyna Stępień**, describes the students' conference “(Im)perfect women in (im)perfect worlds: Dystopias, utopias, and feminism at the beginning of the 21st century,” organised on the 14th and 15th of May 2021.

Students' corner

This section presents three short stories written by international students as part of their course in Polish retro-style crime fiction, which they attended at our faculty in 2019. Introduced by the tutor—**Dariusz Pniewski**, the stories by **Yann Stephan**, **Julien Geffroy**, and **Kadir Azlak** take the readers on an intriguing journey into the past.