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**GLOBAL—LOCAL—GLOCAL:
AN INTRODUCTION**

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It is our great pleasure to deliver the double issue of *CURRENTS. A Journal of Young English Philology Thought and Review* (issues no 7 and 8), edited by members of the Academic Association for Doctoral Studies of English at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. This year's issue gathers the articles largely inspired by the international conference organized by our Association in March 2021 and its major theme defined by the concepts of Global—Local—Glocal. The scholarly articles collected in this volume aim to tackle the questions of the global and the local, the ways these two categories intersect and engage in a meaningful exchange in the contemporary world, as well as the tensions that emerge at their crossroads.

In the Anglophone context, the process of colonization constitutes a point of departure to think about the world beyond the local. Both the processes of colonization and decolonization on local and global scale problematize the relationships between communities and cultures. In contemporary multicultural societies, these tensions are difficult to ignore as individuals are constantly confronted with the liminality of their identities: on the one hand being citizens of the globalized world, while on the other expressing desire to belong to their national and local communities. The recent rise of fundamentalisms and mass movements contesting them, such as Black Lives

Matter and Idle No More, demonstrate that these trends are still tangible and persistent in contemporary societies.

Postmodern and postcolonial theories provide conceptual frameworks to describe the contemporary human interstice between the local and the global. In the present world, time and space emerge as compressed. We live fast and enjoy the assets of the global village in our own houses through the connection to the internet and the media. The current COVID-19 pandemic further blurs the boundaries between the local and the global. Remote working, e-learning, as well as social and cultural activities being relegated online exacerbate people's alienation from their immediate communities in favor of virtual globalized realities. At the same time, the coronavirus crisis, quite to the contrary, evokes local responses and actions, providing a sense of community building and solidarity.

The articles published in this volume examine complex interactions and negotiations between the local and the global in three major areas: linguistics, literary and cultural studies.

Global—local—glocal in linguistics

The section devoted to the exploration of the local and the global in linguistics starts with an article written by **Lucia La Causa**. In *"Egyptian English" as an Emerging Glocal Language*, La Causa investigates a glocal variety of English which has developed as a result of linguistic and cultural cross-influences between English as a global language and Egyptian Arabic. The article argues that Egyptian English is an effect of the negotiation between two important tendencies and motivations: to be part of the globalized world and to preserve one's local identity. In her sociolinguistic analysis, La Causa examines a variety of language samples produced by young Egyptian users of English, such as message-texts, audio clips or YouTube videos, arriving at the conclusion that the EgyE variety has a potential to evolve into a new English variety in the future.

Miriam Kobierski's *The Reality of Living in a Pandemic World. Analyzing Reading Preferences and Language Usage* presents an early attempt at diagnosing some linguistic processes and changes in reading habits occurring as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In her article, Kobierski presents existing literature on the subject, which concerns a clear distinction in new vocabulary used depending on people's attitudes to the virus and preventive measures. She also introduces her own survey, conducted on a small sample of respondents, that appears to uphold the theories concerning increased time spent reading, changes in selected genres of literature as well as use of new pandemic-related vocabulary.

Global—local—glocal in literary studies

The literary section of the seventh and eighth issue of *CURRENTS* opens with **Magdalena Dzierżyńska's** article entitled *Queering History: Alternate Timelines and the Effects of Queer Divergence in Connie Wilkins' Time Well Bent*, exploring the volume in terms of its effort to queer the genre of alternate history. The article offers an analysis of two short stories from Wilkins' volume: Barry Lowe's "Sod'Em," which revises the Biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and "A Spear Against the Sky" by M. P. Ericson, which rewrites the history of Roman Britain. Dzierżyńska proposes the concept of *queer divergence*—a literary device that marks a deviation from the commonly accepted (hi)story and introduces queer elements into the narrative—to explore the means of queering the genre that traditionally overlooked non-heteronormativity. The author argues that by queering timelines, *Time Well Bent* not only reimagines the generic conventions of the speculative past but also reclaims the erased presence of queer individuals in the writing of history.

Karolina Kordala's reading of Neil Gaiman's *The American Gods* (2001) revises previous criticism on the novel by focusing on the figures of deities as represented in the narrative. Her article entitled *Corporeal Vessels: Gods as Personifications of American Anxieties in Neil Gaiman's American Gods* puts

forward the interpretation of Gaiman's characters that focuses on their construction as the personifications of contemporary American anxieties. Kordala argues that by juxtaposing the novels' old gods, who embody religious values brought from the Old World by settlers and immigrants, and the new gods, who epitomize the contemporary American ethics driven by capitalism and secularization, *The American Gods* questions the construction of American identity and its historical legacies rooted in colonialism.

In her article *Masculinities in Selected Stories by Raymond Carver*, **Agata Rupińska** analyzes different models of masculinity in short stories by Raymond Carver. By referring to theoretical writings of R. W. Connell, Rupińska distinguishes and compares two portrayals of masculinity present in the analyzed texts—a traditional model of masculinity and models which question this hegemonic understanding of masculinity. In addition, Rupińska notes that, despite being published in the 1970s and 1980s, Carver's stories address issues concerning masculinity that still resonate with the twenty-first century audiences.

In his article on *Dialectics of Utopia and Dystopia in Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro*, **Paweł Oleksak** argues that utopian and dystopian aspects are so closely woven together in Ishiguro's novel that the ultimate interpretation of the text as either a utopia or a dystopia becomes impossible. Referring to the history and definitions of both genres, the author claims that the fundamental dilemma on which the readers' interpretation rests is the question about the human nature of clones. However, the openness of this interpretation is only illusory as a number of narrative strategies used by Ishiguro seem to direct the reader towards the dystopian reading.

Ambika Raja's article *Return to Homeland: Search for Identity through Ecological Memory in Romesh Gunesequera's Heaven's Edge* explores the depiction of ecological memory. Raja argues that in his novel Gunesequera, an award-winning Sri Lankan author, presents ecological memory as an essential element in the identity-formation process, the importance of which only grows

in the era of globalism. Furthermore, Raja also draws a connection between colonial and postcolonial experiences and ecological memory, highlighting that only through triggering emotional memories it is possible for the characters to reconnect with their lost homelands and gain a better understanding of their identities.

In her article *Engaging Story or Valuable Message? The Anthropocene in Anne Bishop's Others Book Series*, **Katarzyna Szyszka** sets out to examine Bishop's fantasy novels according to the concepts and premises of ecocriticism. In her analysis, the author tries to establish the extent to which the series seriously engages with the critical discussion on the Anthropocene and possible ways of solving the crisis and how this ecological commitment interacts with the need to meet the demand for an engaging story for the readers' enjoyment and immersion. Despite her critical assessment of the novel's realisation of ecocritical themes, the author arrives at the conclusion about the potential value of Bishop's presentation of the relation between humans and nature for raising ecological awareness.

Katarzyna Stępień's article entitled "*The future's (not) ours to see*"—*Visions of Forthcoming Humanity in Solarpunk* examines Solarpunk as a movement, presenting it as the descendent of Transcendentalism, strongly influenced by Murray Bookchin's social ecology. In her analysis of Solarpunk literature—represented by Ursula LeGuin's *The Dispossessed* and short stories by Daniel José Older, Jaymee Goh, T. X. Watson, Megan Reynolds, Lev Mirov and A. C. Wise—Stępień claims that Solarpunk presents a vision of a better future, one in which societies are characterised by equality and understanding. Focusing on the depictions of gender identity in the aforementioned text, Stępień argues that such representations have a potential to challenge the already existing attitudes towards gender and, in consequence, become a catalyst for a change.

Global—local—glocal in cultural studies

The cultural studies section comprises four articles, of which the final two were inspired by the conference on dystopias, utopias and feminism “(Im)perfect omen in (im)perfect worlds” organized by Student Feminist Society in May 2021. The section opens with the article entitled *Ruins and Weeds: An Ecocritical View on Romain Veillon’s Green Urbex Collection*, in which **Edgar James Ælred Jephcote** examines a series of the French photographer’s urban exploration images published in the photobook *Green Urbex: Le Monde Sans Nous* (2021). The book presents photographs of dilapidated buildings at various stages of deterioration, in the process of being gradually reconquered by nature. The article comments on the complex relationship between human-made ruins and what comes to be called weeds within the anthropocentric cultural framework. Placed in the context of ecocritical theories, weeds and ruins, as the author argues, epitomize Donna Haraway’s naturecultures, representing their processual and dynamic continuity and mutual transformation. Veillon’s photographs also register the vibrancy of matter and its storytelling potential, which, according to the author’s discussion of Iovino and Oppermann, can be seen as “sites of narrativity.”

Agnieszka Staszak’s article “*You can’t let yourself be defined by the parts that are broken*”: *Immersion, Traumatic Memory and the Representation of PTSD in Tell Me Why* analyzes the way in which this narrative game represents effects of trauma on a person’s identity and memory. Staszak argues that the game is highly original not only in its subject matter, as one of the few game productions to prominently focus on a playable trans character, but also in its approach to using game mechanics to showcase the way in which trauma can affect memories, and its sophisticated narrative structure employing flashbacks, unreliable memories and unreconcilable points of view. In addition, Staszak discusses the potential reasons for playing games that feature trauma as their subject matter and their potential beneficial or negative effects on players.

In *The Evolving Female Narrative in Dystopian Video Games: Bioshock Infinite, The Last of Us, and Horizon: Zero Dawn*, **Dagmara Solska** examines the representation of female characters and their narrative agency in selected games against the background of the male-dominated discourse of the video game industry. Solska's analysis focuses on three female protagonists in dystopian narratives in order to trace the gradual subversion of gender-stereotyped narrative tropes and the growth of fully-realized independent female protagonists. Significantly, the article approaches video games as "texts which reflect and construct socio-cultural discourse" (Solska) thus highlighting the connections between the storyworld and the users' world and the transformation of gender patterns in both of them.

Paulina Szczepaniak's *"Instagram Face": Deconstructing the Seemingly Utopian and Idealized Image of Women Promoted by Social Media* examines the social and cultural effects of social media by focusing on Instagram's role in reinforcing prescriptive models of feminine beauty and identity. The article places the discussion of the image of women as perfect wives, ideal mothers and successful entrepreneurs in the context of consumerist capitalism, patriarchy and postfeminist media culture and links the cult of beauty with the growing number of teen plastic surgeries and increasing frequency of depressive episodes among girls. As Szczepaniak convincingly argues, the single type of face, behavior and identity promoted by social media not only deprives women of agency but also exploits them financially, thereby turning a utopian promise into a scenario of subjugation.

Book reviews

This year's issue of *CURRENTS* features **Kacper Marchlewski's** review of *Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect, and Depth After Postmodernism* (2017), which constitutes an overview of a collection of essays edited by Robin van den Akker, Alison Gibbons and Timotheus Vermeulen. The volume attempts to provide a framework through which to view culture in the twenty-first century,

drawing attention to significant ways in which contemporary texts depart from postmodernist aesthetics and conventions. As Marchlewski demonstrates, while the authors of the collection are united by their understanding of metamodernism as a “structure of feeling” best described through a comparison to a “pendulum that reaches both the postmodern and pre-postmodern, yet remains with neither” (Marchlewski), the essays themselves vary in theme, showcasing how metamodernism can be used to approach diverse types of media and genres of texts.

Conference reports

This section contains a report from the conference “Masculinity: Theories and Practices” organized by the Faculty of Humanities at Nicolaus Copernicus University and the Institute for Prevention of Exclusions, which took place on the 26th and 27th May 2022 (online). Featuring lectures by four keynote speakers: Prof. Urszula Kluczyńska (Collegium Da Vinci, Poznań), Dr Michał P. Garapich (University of Roehampton, London), Piotr Maroń (University of New South Wales, Sydney) and Kamil Błoch (the Boys Performative Group) and many scholars from Poland and abroad, the conference explored “different aspects of male identity and discovering the alternatives to the standardized and hegemonic conceptions of masculinity” (Stepak).