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**POLITICS AND POETICS OF DIFFERENCE:
AN INTRODUCTION**

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"it is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is
rather our refusal to recognize those differences ..."
(Audre Lorde)

It is our great pleasure to deliver the tenth issue of *CURRENTS. A Journal of Young English Philology Thought and Review*. The central concern of this year's issue of *Currents* is the poetics and politics of difference and their conceptualisations, representations and manifestations in Anglophone literature, culture, and linguistics.

Difference and diversity have a profound impact on every aspect of human activity. However, society's response to them can be varied, ranging from outright elimination to assimilation and affirmation. Differences can spark new trends, inspire innovative research, and bring fresh perspectives to the arts and sciences. Politics of difference highlights, among many other issues, social inequities that give rise to movements for change. Feminism, for example, emerged as a response to gender inequalities and the exploitation of women.

Postcolonial studies, in turn, arose from the tensions between European and Indigenous cultures. Even collective experiences of nationhood, community, and cultural values originate, as Homi Bhabha argues, from “the overlap and displacement of the domains of difference” (2). Poetics of difference denotes strategies and modes of expression used for communicating diversity and otherness. It might, for example, include subversive and disruptive forms, experimental styles or deconstructive discourses. Poetics of difference can also involve embracing a multiplicity of voices as polyphony (Bakhtin), where “a variety of conflicting ideological positions” are presented as equally important without being subjected to authoritative judgment (Lodge 86). The examples in which different perspectives on social and cultural issues changed our thinking are diverse. In this volume, we explore the ways in which difference shapes our world and try to understand the challenges and opportunities it presents.

The articles gathered in this volume examine various aspects of politics and poetics of difference in the areas of linguistics and literary and cultural studies, from the metaphorical conceptualisations of conflict, to technological and posthuman otherness, to racial, cultural, mental and class distinctions.

Politics and poetics of difference in linguistics

In the opening article “Metaphorical enhancements of the us/them asymmetry in war speeches of American presidents in the years 1917–1972,” **Barbara Chmielewska** examines the use of metaphors in presidential speeches during times of conflict (World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War). Building upon the theories developed by George Lakoff and Esra Sandikcioglu in reference to the Gulf War, the author argues that similar strategies were employed by American presidents in these earlier military conflicts and that they largely consisted in increasing the antagonisms between the opposing sides.

Politics and poetics of difference in literary and cultural studies

The article entitled “Through the eyes of the machine: rethinking humanity, language, and the societal status quo in *The Murderbot Diaries*” opens the literary/cultural section. Its author places Martha Wells’s award-winning series of novellas in the tradition of science fiction literature that uses the trappings of this genre to question social assumptions about gender and sexuality. **Anna Temel**’s queer reading sees in the series a means of critique of not only heteronormativity, but also binary gender and amatonormativity, enabled by its first-person point of view of a non-human, agender and asexual protagonist.

In “Technoapocalypse: the effects of the technological disaster on the human subject in Don DeLillo’s *The Silence*,” **Barbara Pawlak** discusses the profound impact of technology on contemporary people’s lives. Kevin Warwick’s concept of *Homo Technologicus*, used by the author in her article, serves to reveal the novel’s representation of the deep connections between technology and basic human skills like perception and communication.

In “Redefining boundaries between human and nonhuman in *The Stone Gods* by Jeanette Winterson,” **Agnieszka Jagła** discusses the depiction of the human-nonhuman relationships through the transhumanist and posthumanist lens. The author argues that, through blurring the boundary between human and technological nonhuman, Winterson showcases how such encounters influence and transform the understanding of the concept of the human.

Wiktoria Rogalska’s article “From Necromancer to Mother: the analysis of a cyborgian female in *Raised by Wolves*” draws upon Rosi Braidotti’s analysis of maternal monstrosity and Donna Haraway’s figure of the cyborg to examine the representation of posthuman motherhood in a recent television series. The author draws attention to the intrinsic connection between mothering and death, highlighted by the fact that the cyborgian mother of the series is a reprogrammed Necromancer, a death-bringing machine of war, and contemplates the ways in which even the figure of a cyborg, seen as liberatory by Haraway, becomes entangled in gendered stereotypes of victimization.

Hanna Stelmaszczyk's "Queer Gothic Otherness of Truman Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* and Rendall Kenan's *A Visitation of Spirits*" examines the motif of otherness in two Southern Gothic novels. The article explores how the motif in question is used in the analysed texts to describe the feelings and experiences of queer characters and the way other members of their communities react to their otherness.

"American literature in the eyes of African students" by **Merci Robbie Onyango** provides a glimpse into feelings and reactions of African students to American literary texts they are asked to read as a part of their curriculum, often at the expense of their own literary traditions. The author argues that the complex mix of emotions experienced by African students stirred by American literature can be seen as one of the long-lasting impacts of colonialism on Africa as diverse literatures of the continent are replaced by mainstream American fiction.

In "'There ought to be a place for people without ambition': the American Dream as a divisive force in Charles Bukowski's *Factotum*," **Piotr Matczak** discusses the problematic nature of the American Dream in the 1940s and its role in increasing social divisions. Against this historical background, the author develops his analysis of the main character in Bukowski's novel, focusing on the depiction of Henry Chinaski's troubled mind and his failure to accept—and thus reconcile with—the social reality of the war period.

The last article in this section—"Trauma and literature: Virginia Woolf's contribution to the study of PTSD" by **Daniela Anisie** and **Mihaela Culea**—revisits Woolf's oeuvre to comment on the significance of its autobiographical content. Beginning with a critical discussion of trauma literature and theory and their significance after World War I, the authors identify several ways in which Woolf's writing, described here as scriptotherapy, contributed to the study of trauma—her own, war veterans' and other survivors'.

Students' corner

The students' corner in this issue of *Currents* features two artistic projects by NCU students, devised for the courses in: "Intertextuality and Adaptation" taught by Edyta Lorek-Jezińska and "Introduction to Literary Theory" taught by Katarzyna Więckowska (both part of English Studies, BA programme, 2nd year). The intertextuality projects are the effect of the students' engagement with the circulation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in contemporary culture, presenting a variety of forms and themes, from a comic strip to transformative fiction, with photos and pictures in between. The literary theory project is a collection of haiku—a very disciplined and highly evocative form of Japanese poetry—written in English by the course participants.

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