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Introduction

Wprowadzenie

The current issue of "Annales UMCS. Sectio N – Educatio Nova" presents the reader with papers on various subjects. The articles can be grouped into a number of sections.

The majority of the papers fall into the category of texts exploring topics which may be subsumed under the umbrella term of Polish studies.

Krzysztof Biedrzycki's paper is one of the articles that explore issues related to that subject. The paper addresses the problem of challenges facing the teacher of Polish in the context of the permanent "culture war" caused by the polarisation of modern society. The author focuses on three narratives, each reflected differently in the curriculum. Related to attitudes of celebration, promotion and emancipation, the three types of narrative may coexist peacefully side by side in a way that allows to discern not only their positive aspects, but also their drawbacks. This situation may only occur when the teacher takes on the task of teaching students how to "co-create society of successful communication and mutual understanding despite differences, the resolution of which lies beyond the teacher's capability."

Paweł Sporka's paper addresses the important question: *Quo vadis*, the Polish teacher? More generally, *Quo vadis*, Polish school? The problem concerns the present situation of the Polish school and the teaching of Polish, not least in relation to the fact that the subject has been used as a means of implementing the educational policy of the state, based on ideological foundations. The author argues that this way of using humanistic knowledge is inadequate for meeting the challenge of the present. The curriculum for the subject of Polish still puts strong

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emphasis on obligatory reading and related subject matter, which deepens the rift between those of their aspects which are perceived as native, national and therefore evaluated positively, and the aspects that are perceived as non-native, strange and therefore considered wrong. According to the author, this view of reality is not only simplistic, but it is also dangerous insofar as it may hinder the development of a better understanding of how different the world is in the 21st century. Therefore, it is necessary to make sure that the curriculum is supplemented and enriched with obligatory reading and subject matter showing not only cultural diversity and its advantages, but also different perspectives on how to perceive and understand the world, helping to elucidate the negative impact of any extreme views on the individual. Also, it seems worth considering the views of experts, i.e. teachers, who call for ensuring that reading and analysing texts from obligatory reading lists entail critical thought which fosters reflection and due consideration of the relevant historical and social context and which helps bring the relevant subject matter into dialogue with the reality of the 21st century.

Maria Kwiatkowska-Ratajczak is the author of two papers concentrating on the teaching of Polish. In the article *Dydaktyka humanistyczna – między solidarnością a sprzeciwem* (*Humanities Didactics – in-between Solidarity and Dissent*), the author indicates the characteristics of the teacher, the functions the teacher performs/should perform, as well as the challenges facing the teacher. Firstly, the teacher must transcend the boundaries of scientific sub-disciplines because their task is multidimensional as it entails issues such as teaching others, the question of how to teach and how to explore the teaching process itself, indicating the processes of education, as well as encouraging creative and imaginative ways of using that knowledge. Secondly, the teacher performs the function of a mediator between school and university, which today seems to be a particularly challenging task. The teacher's job also involves communicating knowledge in a manner embracing diversity and dialogue. This dialogue is necessary on a number of levels, including the level on which curricula and their implementation are considered. The author mentions many problems facing present-day school, to which the school's subjects, including pupils, teachers and parents, oppose. She suggests a way of dealing with the problems before changes fundamental to the improvement of the Polish school take place. The scholar refers to research offered by experts from the various disciplines of the humanities, who indicate the need for multidisciplinary cooperation so as to foster an openness to various theories and paradigms. She also proposes forming an alliance of sorts to facilitate necessary changes.

In the review article *O dydaktyce i pożytkach płynących z pewnej niebezpiecznej sprawności* (*On Didactics and the Benefits of a Certain Dangerous*

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Skill), Kwiatkowska-Ratajczak discusses Piotr Kołodziej's book *Literatura grozi myśleniem* (*Literature May Make You Think*). She presents both the positive aspects of the monograph and those that may seem less uncontroversial. The latter include issues such as the terminology used in the book and the fact that Kołodziej omits to refer to scholarly works, which, on Kwiatkowska-Ratajczak's account, are important and as such should be mentioned in the monograph (e.g. works by authors such as Zenon Uryga, Wiesława Wantuch or Stanisław Bortnowski). Still, she emphasises the advantages of Kołodziej's book, including his novel methodology meeting the challenges of the 21st century, which recognises the significance of creative thinking for learning and the fact that it invokes manifestations of the arts and culture outside the domain of language and literature as well.

In her paper, Maria Wacławek presents a specific way of conducting Polish classes aimed at creative composition of one's own text on the basis of a particular example. The author focuses on the significance of creative thinking and problem-solving and the special role the teacher has to play in this process. The teacher should not be seen as an enforcer of traditional rote learning, but ought to encourage students to act creatively. The author discusses the results of an experiment she carried out in her classes in March 2021. The date is significant because the experiment was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore it was conducted under lockdown conditions when distance learning was obligatory, which bore on the observations the author made. What served as a starting point for the classes was Zbigniew Herbert's poem *Pan od przyrody* (*Biology Teacher*). The aim of the workshops was to use the poem in accordance with Anna Dyduchowska's method of analysis and creative use of examples. For the purposes of her experiment, Wacławek followed the first two stages of Dyduchowska's method: reading and analysing the text and doing transformation exercises.

Aneta Grodecka seeks to outline the basis of a curriculum consistent with the fundamental assumptions of modern neuroscience. This task is extremely difficult and requires cooperation of scholars from three disciplines: Polish studies, biology and ethics. The aim is to offer a curriculum centred on integration, implemented jointly by the teachers of the three subjects. The author presents the reasons why offering such a curriculum is advisable or even necessary. She highlights various factors, including changes in young learner's needs, which must be addressed using methods different from the traditional ways of meeting such needs, which still dominate the educational landscape. She goes on to discuss the curricular assumptions underpinning the enterprise and the opportunities for their implementation in relation to the current regulations. The conclusions drawn from the analyses are moderately optimistic, with some of

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the items already being included in current educational regulations. If so, they may become the spur for making positive changes.

Recent years have witnessed an increase in studies related to the teaching of Polish which advocate using in class not only literary texts, but also foreign texts of culture that may enrich Polish lessons. These advances in Polish studies are illustrated by the three papers discussed below.

Aleksandra Nowak's paper discusses Jacek Kaczmarski's poetry. The author argues that, apart from the socio-political aspects, his poems have a more general, artistic dimension, which often goes unnoticed. Kaczmarski's poetry invokes the arts, painting/literature, as illustrated by the song *Wojna postu z karnawałem* (*The Fight between Carnival and Lent*). The song testifies to the poet's admiration for the paintings of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. It is an example of ekphrasis, i.e. a literary work depicting and interpreting a visual image. Kaczmarski uses words to paint images of socio-political and philosophical nature. Thus, from the socio-political perspective, the poem refers to the period of transformation in Europe after the fall of communism. From the philosophical perspective, the song aims to attract the listeners attention to the perennial dilemma between pursuing pleasure and meeting one's commitments. The song speaks to both carnality and spirituality, presenting them as conflicting forces influencing the individual. The author encourages the use of the text in Polish class in secondary school and, in so doing, she presents a lesson plan as a resource to be used.

In Grażyna B. Tomaszewska's paper, the main tenet and at once a point of departure for the article is the idea of being lost and the necessity to find one's way in life so as to discover one's true goal, as espoused by Henry David Thoreau, a writer and thinker of the Romantic period. From this perspective and in this light, it is possible to describe the condition of the modern individual by posing questions related to the forms of activity and reflection from the past which pertain to the dreams of harmony and true community free from any external force or authority. The inspiration the author used to present her interpretation of the human condition comes from two sculptures, Albert Giacometti's *The Walking Man* and Piotr Stepnowski's *Idący człowiek* (*The Walking Man*), the latter being an attempt at re-contextualisation of the work by the Swiss artist.

One of the tasks carried out in Polish class is to foster students' reflection and encourage them to participate in debates and critical analyses of different phenomena and attitudes. Such debates are frequently guided by analyses of literary works, both contemporary and old, but more and more often other cultural phenomena are invoked to serve that purpose. In her paper, Maria Dorota Szoska argues that topics related to the Roma, usually ignored in curricula, should be addressed in Polish class. She suggests devoting one teaching

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unit to the topic by bringing together two very different texts of culture. One is the film *Papusza*, directed by Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze, while the other is the project by Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, who prepared the exhibition representing the culture of the Roma at the Biennale Arte 2022 in Venice. The exhibition is of particular interest because it gives a different view of the Roma communities, re-enchanting the stereotypes underpinning the ways in which the Roma are perceived and presented.

The purpose of Maciej Wróblewski's paper is to discuss advances in humanism (transhumanism, posthumanism, new materialism) in education. In the first part of the article, the relationship between teaching Polish and Polish literature in primary and secondary school has been presented through a chronological lens. For the author, it is critical that curricula in schools acquire academic support. It is equally important that they are updated because we live in the very chaotic period which Zygmunt Bauman described as "liquid modernity." It comes as no surprise that the traditional ways of sense-making and respected authorities have been undermined for some time as a result of accelerated digitalisation and information overload. The second part of the paper discusses selected issues in the anthropology of literature, including transhumanism, posthumanism and new materialism, which allow to view humanity from a novel perspective. The teacher can use new tools employed in reading and literary text analysis to indicate natural ties bonding the human being and the environment: plants, animals, climate and the Earth.

When we think about science in relation to its history and development, paraphrasing the Bible, we may say: In the beginning was Philosophy. There is no discipline which could be seen as unrelated, whether directly or indirectly, to ancient philosophy and its concepts or paradigms. To risk an overstatement, it may be said that the mother of all science is philosophy and modern scientific disciplines are the offspring. This view might help elucidate the interdependencies between seemingly unrelated areas of study.

In the two texts that we want to mention, the authors raise the question of the relationships between scientific disciplines. Ryszard Horodecki's paper is a report on the panel discussion held during the Congress on Polish Language and Literature Teaching in Gdańsk. It traces the connections between the humanities and natural sciences. On the one hand, it is possible to notice increasing specialisation, creation of languages and communication codes accessible only to those who are engaged in the research carried out in a given discipline or even a sub-discipline. On the other hand, it may be claimed that there is a sense that a universally shared, stable platform is needed. The author's reflections on the relations between the literary, the linguistic and the artistic on the one hand

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and the so-called "real science" on the other lead him to the conclusion that there is a language which may be regarded as a holistic and even prophetic for all sciences. That language is quantum language.

In his interdisciplinary essay, Tomasz Szarek identifies a few points of convergence between mathematics and the disciplines of the humanities. Mathematics is one type of language allowing to name a new phenomenon. This may be compared to learning new words. The author examines relations between the phenomena, relating them to the process of constructing complex sentences on the basis of new words. From this perspective, learning mathematics resembles the process of learning a foreign language. Interestingly, the language of mathematical theories is a symbolic language, allowing the logic and exactitude of expression. This is the reason why mathematics might provide scholars of humanistic persuasion with the opportunity to reframe their conceptualisations so that the form of expression may become more comprehensive, clear and cogent. As he invokes the figure of the poet Joseph Brodsky, the author of the paper argues that mathematicians are like poets.

Another group of papers includes articles pertaining to various experiences of the coronavirus pandemic. This section contains four scholarly texts.

Who is a friend? Do the notions of friend and friendship mean the same in the time of social isolation as they did before, in the pre-pandemic days? Maria Groenwald has decided to put this question to six-grade pupils from schools in the Podlaskie region and compare the answers to the Aristotelian conception of friendship and the image of friendship emerging from the responses of the six-graders surveyed in 2007. For the pupils of primary school, it is the school that is the place in which they experience friendship extensively. Some of them even admit that they only go to school to have the opportunity to meet friends. The majority of pupils participating in the survey say that their relationships with friends have changed over the course of the pandemic and they cannot be perceived in the same way as they used to be. The author notices the emergence of novel concepts reflecting the change, i.a. *e-friend* and *e-relation*.

Małgorzata Gajak-Toczek's paper reflects on the experiences of Polish studies students, which they had during their teaching practice in online format due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper discusses the difficulties caused by the change of the way in which classes were conducted, focusing on the problem of having no opportunity for social interaction in school or at university. The author points out solutions following from a new model of education, indicating the dimensions of the model as well. The students participating in the study have emphasised many positive aspects of the new form of education. They have mentioned the following advantages: a significant increase in the number of IT

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tools and their variety, using the "flipped classroom" model, effective cooperation with tutors (in school, at university). Still, they have also indicated they faced considerable difficulties, including having no access to learning materials (which meant prolonged online search for the materials or asking other students for help), having not enough time to address pupils' needs on an individual basis, poor communication with parents, difficulty in giving quizzes and tests.

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted many quick and surprising changes to teaching methods, including those that pertain to teaching foreign languages. Once the difficult period of isolation was over, returning to normal, pre-pandemic routine entailed a surge of more significant challenges. On the one hand, it meant the need for revising academic practices used so far. On the other, the need for promoting humanistic education and creating a suitable educational sphere was widely felt. In their paper, Aleksandra Łukaszyk-Spryszak and Anna Sańczyk-Cruz suggest a number of theoretical and practical solutions for achieving the aforementioned goal in the area of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at the university level in Poland. Central to this approach is the assumption that narrative and the ability to tell stories may be a powerful tool in education. It enables students to develop their skills, encourages independent thinking and fosters empathy.

The current volume carries one paper which offers a linguistic analysis. Agnieszka Wlazło's article aims to examine selected words and expressions that appeared during the pandemic. In so doing, it seeks to establish whether, and, if so, to what extent, such words are frequently used by secondary school students. Firstly, the author elucidates the idea of fashion in general, and linguistic fashion in particular. She goes on to discuss the processes underpinning the creation of fashionable words and expressions, not least in the language used by young people, who are often inclined to use them more often than adults and, in the whole, demonstrate a great deal of creativity in creating such linguistic items. The author asked secondary school students to participate in a survey concerning the use of words related to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other epidemics and illnesses. On that basis, Wlazło compares the results of the survey with the results of another study, in which students of universities took part. The author concludes that secondary school students were less familiar with words and expressions related to the pandemic and other epidemics than university students.

Another group of texts this volume carries includes papers dedicated to literary studies. They concentrate on exploring contemporary literature for children and young people.

In her paper, Justyna Zając analyses the problem of loneliness in Polish literature for children and teenagers. The central theme interconnecting such books

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concerns economic migration and the impact parental absence may have on family life (of the so-called transnational families). The literary works examined by the author present emigration from the perspective of children and teenagers, who are a group of individuals most affected by the separation from their parents. Sadness, difficulty in adapting to parental absence and loneliness pose a risk to a child's/adolescent's developmental progress in terms of their emotional and psychophysiological well-being. Literature of this type may bring home to readers, including parents who migrate, the risks children and adolescents are exposed to as a result of the economic migration of their parents. The author's study is based on the corpus consisting of a literary text that includes the works of Anna Cieplak, Sarah Crossan, Barbara Kosmowska and Macin Szczygielski.

The paper by Karolina Kwak analyses the topic of adolescence and examines the images of the period in a number of works from contemporary Polish literature for young people. What these works share is the fact that they address young people's fundamental problems related to the quest for one's identity and self-acceptance. The questions that arise in this context concern issues such as: how to talk to teenagers about what is most important for them, how to bridge the gap between distant worlds by tapping into the possibilities narrative works offer, how to use the compensatory function of narrative. Addressing those questions is inevitable and the author aims to offer both theoretical and practical answers. She suggests using Caravaggio's painting *Narcissus*, as well as selected literary works (Eve Ainsworth's *Damage: Everybody Hurts*, Natalia Osińska's *Fanfik*) in Polish class so as to discuss issues important for teenagers, including the problems mentioned above.

Dorota Michułka's paper examines selected contemporary novels for young adults, which give an account of living in the times of the communist Polish People's Republic. They focus on social and moral issues and present some of the most important episodes of recent Polish history, including the rise of the Solidarity movement (The Independent and Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity") and the introduction of martial law in Poland. The author argues that the works may be important to the young reader insofar as they help gain a better understanding of history and encourage the reader to reflect on and discuss events from the recent past, fostering and supporting historical awareness and collective memory. The author refers to the following literary works: Katarzyna Ryrych's *Denim blue* (2015), Marcin Szczygielski's *Teatr Niewidzialnych Dzieci* (*The Theatre of Invisible Children*; 2016) and Zuzanna Orlińska's *Biały Teatr Panny Nehemias* (*Miss Nehemias's White Theatre*; 2017).

Anna Janus-Sitarz's paper falls into the aforementioned category of articles in that the author identifies four spaces of "indifference," or perhaps even

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"contempt," which coexist in present-day reality and affect particularly the four groups of people, including the elderly, young people with intellectual disability, people of low social and economic status, as well as nature and the natural environment, which are exploited and remain in danger of devastation. The author argues that it is in Polish class that the negative attitudes may be dealt with. She claims that, apart from classical works from the canon of Polish literature, contemporary works should be taken into consideration as well. Therefore, she goes on to recommend books of her own choosing, which, as she says, may help design new school and community open to dialogue: empathetic and inclusive.

Feliks Tomaszewski's paper seeks to reconstruct three specific ideological mechanisms which in the first decade after World War II were triggered to influence the collective consciousness. The three mechanisms, which the author calls "the turning of the screw," invoking the title of Henry James's famous novel, immobilised society. They also led to a systematic ideological "reconstruction" affecting in the first place immature entities and structures. The first mechanism was used by the press. It may be discerned through an analysis of the news carried by newspapers in 1947 in relation to summer camps organised in the USSR and other countries for Polish children. The second mechanism operated in the educational system and manifested itself, for instance, in the 1949 curriculum for Polish class in secondary school. The third mechanism appeared in Marian Brandys' book *Wyprawa do Arteku* (*Expedition to Artec*; 1953). It consisted in spreading propaganda by promoting the ideology that underpinned it through literary works for various social groups, including young people.

The following two papers do not concern children's literature or literature for young adults, but they address issues related to literary works and therefore they appear at the end of the section.

Dariusz Piechota's paper is a study of the images of old age in the work of Sylwia Chutnik. The theme underpins her first novel *Kieszonkowy atlas kobiet* (*A Pocket Atlas of Women*; 2008). Chutnik is an outspoken opponent of stereotyping old age. In the short stories from the collection *W krainie czarów* (*In Wonderland*; 2014), elderly people must face life challenges, including the trauma that results from wartime memories. The title of the volume invokes Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. However, for Chutnik's characters, the wonderland is not an alternative reality, but the reality immanent in the past. Chutnik's most interesting prose works are those in which we can observe the co-existence of generations and bonding between generations based on friendship, love and empathy, which is reflected in the novels *Cwaniary* (*Con Artists*; 2012) and *Tyłem do kierunku jazdy* (*Rear-facing*; 2022). As an author of socially

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engaged fiction, Chutnik calls for appreciating elderly people in the public sphere because they are the keepers of history at the local level of family history and at the global level of the history of the 20th century.

Dialogue between poets and literary scholars, as well as translators, might concern various problems, many of which are controversial, such as the issue of difficult relations between nations. In those cases, dialogue should help discover and establish true literary community and transnational culture, as well as facilitate communication and understanding between people of different origins and traditions. In this respect, the paper by Danuta Łazarska seeks to explore dialogues between two pairs of participants: Czesław Miłosz and Tomas Venclova, as well as Tadeusz Różewicz and Karl Dedecius. In each case, what provokes reflection is the exchange of ideas in written form between the individuals involved and the form of the discussion itself. Writers, experts studying the works of the four men, translators and readers such as secondary school students may find the dialogues both intriguing and inspiring.

Taking into consideration the fact that education is the key to the development of community, it is necessary to encourage international cooperation to improve educational systems in different countries. Andrianasy Angelo Djistera shows the positive influence of international cooperation on the development of education on the islands of the Indian Ocean, particularly in relation to the teaching of French in Madagascar. The paper consists of two parts. In the first part, the status of the French language in Madagascar's system of education is discussed relative to the issue of the country's independence. In the second part of the paper, the focus is on the necessity to emphasise the significance of the French language in the whole educational system, particularly at the level of primary school. The cooperation with the Francophone University Agency (AUF) seems to be very important and may be instrumental in achieving the said goals.

Janusz Waligóra is the author of the paper that concludes the volume. The article gives an account of the experimental studies of interspecies communication and their findings presented by Roger Fouts in the book *Next of Kin: My Conversations with Chimpanzees*. Although the work is academic in nature, Waligóra argues that it has a number of features typical of a literary narrative. For this reason, the author analyses the monograph using the concepts and analytical tools from literary studies, indicating that it is possible to identify in the monograph many references to various works and literary conventions. Fouts' academic work focuses on taking care of a young female chimpanzee, which involved communicating with the animal through the use of sign language. The monograph is a report of an experiment (successful in the eyes of its author), which demonstrates that effective communication is not a skill limited to humans

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and that using gestures, rather than communicating vocally, is the prime form of language, including human language.

To conclude, the reader will find many interesting papers on contemporary education in the current issue of "Annales UMCS. Sectio N – Educatio Nova". We hope the papers collected in this volume make for inspiring and interesting reading.

Beata Brzozowska-Zburzyńska
(Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin)

Angel Díaz-Pintado Hilario
(Universidad de Granada)

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