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Table of Contents

Introduction 1

LITERATURES IN ENGLISH

Nick CERAMELLA
Myth of Cars in Literatures in English 9

Eva KOWALSKA
Typewriter Poetry in South Africa: An Overview with Reference to Three Artists 30

Armela PANAJOTI
"The Machine Stops": Divinely Human or Mechanical? 42

Edona LLUKACAJ
Techn(olog)ically 'the Others': Marginalization in Kazuo Ishiguro's "Never Let Me Go" 52

FILM STUDIES

Jacek MYDLA
Old-Type Hauntings by New Ghosts? Word and Image in the "Cybernatural Horror" 'Unfriended' 64

CULTURAL STUDIES

Elonora HODAJ
The Influential and Redefining Role of Technology in Society, Language and Literature at Large 85

Sava POPOVIĆ
For Real Men Only: the Influence of Media on Masculinity 95

Introduction

This volume of *in esse: English Studies in Albania* gathers together a selection of papers presented at the Third ASSE International Conference "In the beginning was the word ... and then ... technology", which was held in Tirana, Albania, 26-28 November 2015.

This issue contains papers which explore various connections between technology and language as observed and argued in various contexts, cultural and literary. Technology is discussed in its various forms, beginning with the car, the machine and the typewriter to continue with more advanced or virtual forms of technology. Many of the papers in this issue focus on the applications of technology in the field of communication in order to highlight how they have transformed and redefined different aspects of human life and at the same time emphasize the need to revisit several concepts and ideas related primarily to it. The papers collected here view these concepts from literary and cultural perspectives. They are divided into three sections, *Literatures in English*, *Film Studies* and *Cultural Studies*.

The first section, *Literatures in English*, contains four contributions, which bring to the focus how literature and technology are related, that is, how technology is represented in literature, namely how it completes characterization or inspires new literary genres on the one hand, and how literature represents human potential for technological advances on the other.

It opens with Nick Ceramella's paper, who draws on the myth of cars in literature and tries to capture the connection between the cars and the characters, especially how they inform the characters' development. By arguing that cars were more present in twentieth-century literature, Ceramella brings several examples from various novels written throughout the twentieth century in order to trace thematic and symbolic representations of cars in these novels.

Eva Kowalska highlights the contribution of the typewriter to the development of the concrete poetry, a Modernist genre of poetry, practised and published in South Africa by a few writers in small magazines in the 1960s, which rose as an interface between typewriter and text due to the increased use of the typewriter in the twentieth century. For her arguments, Kowalska draws on examples from the

work of three South African writers involved in the production of typewriter-created concrete poetry to discuss them as semantic and semiotic visual/literary texts, and place them within local and global contexts.

In her paper, Armela Panajoti turns to E. M. Forster's "The Machine Stops," a science-fiction short story written in a dystopian fashion that features a networked society engineered by the Machine, an invention of mankind, now revered as a god, to question the extent to which we should allow any form of technological commodification to usurp our physical, spiritual and emotional spaces. To argue about this, Panajoti looks into how technology links with religion and humanity. In viewing technology as a form of religion, namely in the way these underworld inhabitants revere the Machine, Forster wants to suggest that both cause dependence. By bringing the Machine and the humanity that revered it to an end, he hopes for a a new cycle for humanity in which neither technology nor humanity will have a privileged position.

Edona Llukacaj also examines the negative effects technology could have on humanity as represented in literature, but she takes a slightly different perspective. She draws on Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* to highlight how technology can reinvent oppression and marginalization in our age by viewing technology in relation to power, as an analogy with Foucault's theory on 'language and power.'

The second section, *Film Studies*, contains one paper written by Jacek Mydla, and again brings to attention the negative effects of technology. The author focuses on the "cybernatural" horror film *Unfriended* and discusses how computer technology and the internet affect interpersonal relations. The classic pattern of the revenge supernatural narrative is structured as a horror plot in which the revenger seeks to get even with her wrongdoers who led her to suicide through the abuse of the social media. The author examines the interplay between verbal communication in the environment of computer-generated, computer-mediated, and image-dominated reality in order to define the type of reality the "cybernatural" plot posits and to make sense of the implied redefinitions of the natural and of its extension into the supernatural.

The third section, *Cultural Studies*, contains two papers. In her paper, Elonora Hodaj examines the relationship between technology and language, namely the representations of technological language in literature and everyday life situations as concrete evidence of the ways in which we communicate in a world of cybernetics. The main purpose is to reflect a social phenomenon such as technology of communication in a linguistic context.

In his paper, Sava Popovic draws on the example of the popular Old Spice, an American cologne and aftershave brand to argue how with the surge of technology and mass media, Old Spice has become interdependent with consumers views on masculinity and has influenced what it means to be a man in the twentieth century. An overview of the many developments and changes of the Old Spice brand will be pointed out as associated with the attitude on masculinity throughout the twentieth century.

Finally, we would like to thank all our contributors for sharing their views and ideas in this volume. Special thanks also go to our reviewers for their tireless work in selecting and reviewing the contributions for this volume.