

## INTRODUCTION

This special issue is the outcome of an international conference “Europe and Down Under: Bridging Gaps and Fostering Connections” that was held on July 1–2, 2016 at the Faculty of English at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. The conference was inspired by the students of the “Australia and New Zealand” MA program run by the Faculty since 2014.

One of the aims of the conference was to bring together Polish and international scholars working in the fields of Australian and New Zealand Studies and to foster future cooperation. The connections among Polish scholars that were strengthened at the conference have led to the organization of a subsequent conference by prof. Ryszard Wolny at the Institute of English, University of Opole in November 2017, and to the founding of the Polish Association for the Study of Australia and New Zealand in 2018. We may, therefore, state that the conference was successful in promoting Australian and New Zealand studies in Poland and in formalizing cooperation among the scholars in the field.

The issue presents diverse research of five Polish and European scholars of literature, history, cultural studies, and linguistics. The first article, “‘Gold... was certainly very attractive; but he did not like New South Wales as a country in which to live’. The representation of Australia in Trollope’s fiction”, written by Agnieszka Setecka, analyzes the presentation of Australian life as seen by an English gentleman in John Trollope’s *John Caldigate*. The author offers an interesting look on how the lack of clear class hierarchy in Australia, which was characteristic of the social organization in Victorian Britain, is perceived by the titular protagonist.

The second literary article in this issue, “Misfits of war: First World War Nurses in the *Daughters of Mars* by Thomas Keneally”, was written by Anna Branach-Kallas. *Daughters of Mars* is a fictionalization of the lives of two nursing sisters during World War I in the Middle East. Branach-Kallas analyzes the book in the context of historical research on the First World War and the Australian Anzac myth. She makes the claim that the book celebrates the achievements of “Anzac girls”, at the same time including them in the “manly” world of Anzac values. The author concludes that the heroines consequently become “misfits of war”, accepting imperial and nationalist ideologies.

The following article also concerns issues of commemoration of war and national values. In “Between Anzac Day and Waitangi Day”, historian and anthropologist Anna Czerwińska discusses the historical background and

significance of two important national holidays in New Zealand. Basing her analysis on a selection of online articles from *New Zealand Herald* and *Stuff*, the author analyzes the national discourse around the two holidays and sheds light on how the official State rhetoric about national unity is deconstructed.

The next article, “The burden of ‘white’ sugar: producing and consuming whiteness in Australia” by Stefanie Affeldt, draws an interesting history of the development of the Queensland cane sugar industry and its meaning for Australian culture and politics. The article focuses on the transformation of the understanding of sugar cane as a plantation crop cultivated by unfree labor into a symbol of “white Australia”, steeped in the nationalist ideology of the time.

The issue closes with an article that draws a more direct connection between Australia and Europe. In their study of Italian dialects in Australia, “Dialects among young Italian-Australians”, linguists Ruben Benatti and Angela Tarantini analyse the relationship that second and third generation Italian migrants in Australia have with the Italian dialects of their families. The scholars interpret the results of a survey that they had conducted among young Italian-Australians, focusing on such issues as the motivation behind learning Italian as a heritage language, the self-evaluation of their competence in the respective dialects, and the perception of the dialects in relation to the speakers’ social identities.

Despite its seemingly humble content, the issue comprises a fairly broad spectrum of research in Australian and New Zealand social sciences and humanities, and offers a variety of perspectives on the present and past of the social, national, literary, and linguistic constructions of the societies of the two countries and their relations with Europe.

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