

From the Editor

Dear Friends and Readers,

Academic Twitter has recently exploded with a heated debate on the condition and character of “young people today,” with a special focus on young adults studying at universities. The majority of complaints addressed the impression that students today tend to be disillusioned and cynical: they seem to do the minimum of work and demand the maximum of rewards. They are neither mature nor literate individuals who would be interested in the modern world, save the very narrow subject they have chosen to study, presumably to qualify quickly and get a well-paying job. Worst of all, they are not critical thinkers and can be easily manipulated. Needless to say, there are also many misconceptions about students of the humanities and social sciences. In terms of academia, the stereotype is that they are incapable of hard work and reasoning; they have to be spoon-fed unit content; they do not know what they want to do when they graduate.

On the other side of the debate there are strong voices defending young people as victims of certain circumstances: a degraded schooling system, media technologies that have undermined human relationships and diminished the trust in science (through fake news and conspiracy theories), a precarious job market and the highest ever mortgage rates that make it difficult to prosper, a polluted and depleted environment that is on its way to a catastrophic climate change...

This volume is devoted exclusively to showcasing the work of young people, who, despite being “victims of certain circumstances,” have proven that they are not strangers to doing critical reading, to analyzing socially relevant issues, to delving into history, theory and methodology, and to presenting their reasoning and conclusions in a lucid and academically appropriate way.

The five articles collected in this volume have been methodically and meticulously developed from diploma papers submitted in a partial fulfillment for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 2019 following a few rounds of internal and external reviewing. The students whose work is publicized here graduated from English in Public Communication (some with honors) and English Philology. The two programs are offered by the Institute of Linguistics (formerly Institute of English) of University of Opole and are distinguished by different

foci: whereas EPC students explore the domains of culture, communication, journalism and public relations, EP students follow a more “classical” philological course of literature, linguistics, culture and history.

The articles in this collection explore contemporary issues based on a variety of types of data, both textual and visual: documentaries, press coverage, literary texts, a video commercial, an interview, a cartoon series. In the process of making their argument, the authors demonstrate a proficient application of a selected recognized methodological perspective: content analysis, semiotic analysis, discourse analysis, genre analysis, ideological criticism, literary criticism and film/narrative analysis. These students, now graduates, show that they have indeed been involved in contemporary political debates and are aware of the dilemmas that arise from the dominance of media-saturated consumer societies and the preponderance of technological advancements that make it increasingly difficult to follow the well-trodden intellectual paths of the previous generations of commentators and researchers.

As a guest editor of this issue, I hope that the readers of the journal will find these articles interesting and insightful, and will appreciate the attempts of these junior scholars to contribute to our understanding of the phenomena they have chosen to explore. Please mind that there are their very first independent published projects. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the reviewers who helped me to guide these young people through the meanders of academic publishing and gave them constructive advice and professional assistance much beyond the scope of what is considered to be routine peer review. You are the mentors who continue to ensure that the youngest generations do not end up the way the above Twitter conversation participants described them!

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