

# INTRODUCTION

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Roger BROMLEY (GUEST EDITOR)

Carmen CONCILIO (EDITOR)

Pietro DEANDREA (EDITOR)

The present issue of the monographic section of the Journal, called “CrOCEVIA”, that is crossroads, gathers contributions meant for or inspired by the past four editions of the international AISCLI Summer School, hosted by the University of Turin, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures and Modern Cultures.

The Summer School on World Literatures in English and postcolonial studies, organized and promoted by the Italian Association for the Studies of Cultures and Literatures in English is a platform and workshop where to test, compare and disseminate the results of international academic research, and at the same time – thanks also to the students’ participation and specific interests – it helps promoting new research, ideas and projects.

Amongst other topics, the School’s main concerns, normally debated within a one-week intensive course, have revolved around Human Rights, Environmental Humanities, and Well-being. Each article included here elaborates on the type of lectures offered at the School, and addresses at least one of those areas. The contributions are characterized by a strong commitment, openness to all genres, a high degree of hybridity and interdisciplinary approach, and an aspiration to connect different geographies, histories, peoples and stories. Given their shared focus, it is not surprising that many of these articles offer reflections on the concept of biopolitics.

In his opening essay, Roger Bromley focuses on two graphic novels (by Shaun Tan and Maya Neyestani) and on their visual techniques meant to convey the unsettling process of recognition of reality involved in the experience of migrancy – an extremely appropriate issue for the name of this journal and the founding concept behind it. Carmen Concilio’s environmental contribution concentrates on the topicality of the access to water as narrated by two famous novelists, Arundhati Roy and Anne Michaels, examining their literary strategies in the face of the power-ridden question of megadams. Centred on transcultural identities, Roberta Cimarosti’s contribution studies a literary classic such as *Heart of Darkness* from the lens of Joseph Conrad’s migrant identity, then moving to how the novel was read (or re-written) by four contemporary postcolonial writers such as Chinua Achebe, David Dabydeen, Derek Walcott and Caryl Phillips. Paola Della Valle’s focus on New Zealand engages with a wide range of literary texts to discuss different ideas of well-being; she emphasizes the colonial bias lurking behind the image of New Zealand as the country with the world’s highest life expectancy (until the 1940s), and how the picture changed with the rise of Māori forms of cultural resistance and alternative concepts of environmental and public health. Marta Cariello approaches another marginalized people, Palestinians, and more specifically the case of Palestinian refugees: through a biopolitical perspective on the gendered and racialised body, she analyses Susan Muaddi Darraj’s short stories and their crucial crossroads between the oppressed body and inter-generational memory; in its turn, this relationship is shown as impinging on the spatial interactions between the refugee camp and the exiled Palestinian community, and on the interaction of these spaces with the urban dimension of migrant communities in the US.

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Nicoletta Vallorani's contribution further develops this interest in urban spaces, in her case elaborating on the colonial implications they carry and on how they may be appropriated and re-signified (another significant connection with our journal's title) in the dimension of the so-called 'postcolony'; her main case study, the Ethiopian Abebe Bikila winning the 1960 Rome Olympic marathon, is analysed through the differing slants of an "Istituto Luce" historic document and a contemporary docu-film. Finally, many of the abovementioned issues re-appear in Pietro Deandrea's reading of David Bowie's lyrics and their concern for the dispossessed, in some cases inspired by key authors of British committed literature such as Alan Sillitoe and Keith Waterhouse; arguing that the interest in human rights pervades Bowie's oeuvre and consequently embodies the politically critical side of postmodernism, the article complements the dominant view of Bowie as an experimenting gender-bender and as a visual trend-setter.

Literature, then, is intended here in its widest and most composite sense, including cinema and documentary, graphic novels and pop music. It composes a varied picture which is highly appropriate to our idea of commitment in relation to human rights, environmental humanities and well-being: something that may aspire to reach out of academic literary studies, to engage with words and worlds in our specialized fields and in our everyday life at the same time.

A final word must be spent to illustrate the choice of the cover picture. We liked the idea of a library built on the basis of eco-sustainable principles. It stands as a symbol of the right to education and well-being, two of the driving concepts behind the Panafrikan policies of Kwame Nkrumah, to whom the library is dedicated. The brooding clouds seem to allude to climate change and extreme, uncontrollable weather conditions, while the vegetation offers a natural background to this artefact of human imagination.

#### THE SECTION EDITORS

Roger Bromley  
Carmen Concilio  
Pietro Deandrea

PS: As local 'section editors' we would like to thank all those who contributed to give the Summer School an international resonance: Roger Bromley (University of Nottingham), Christa Knellwolf (University of Vienna), John McLeod (University of Leeds), Radhika Mohanram (University of Cardiff). Besides, we would like to thank likewise the Italian colleagues who work abroad, Michela Borzaga (University of Vienna), Pier Paolo Frassinelli (Monash University, Johannesburg), Luisa Percopo (University of Cardiff), Tiziana Morosetti (University of Cambridge). To all the Italian and local scholars who also took part in the Summer School as teaching staff, headed by Annalisa Oboe, goes our renewed gratefulness and friendship.

(C. Concilio, P. Deandrea)