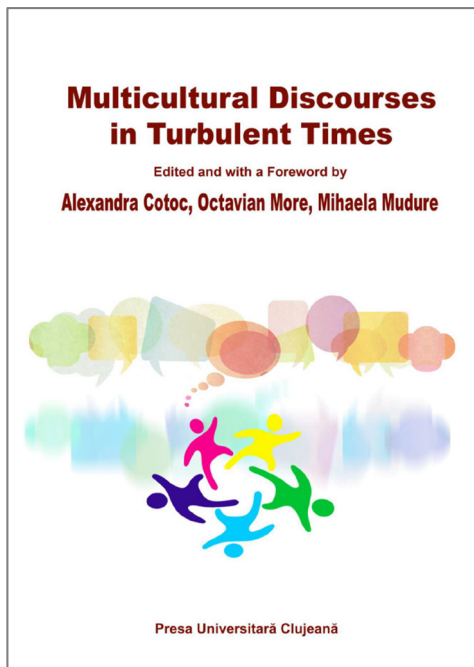


BOOKS

**Cotoc, Alexandra, Octavian More and Mihaela Mudure (eds.)
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In a world increasingly aware of the language used to articulate the complexities of reality, multiculturalism has become more and more important to both academic and non-academic debates. The collaborative volume *Multicultural Discourses in Turbulent Times* is a product of academic inquiry, compiling papers from multiple areas of research with the purpose of interrogating the epistemic and paradigmatic processes that have led to current dominant cultural discourses in various communities around the globe.

The volume consists of eighteen contributions from the 7th *International Conference on Multicultural Discourses* co-hosted in October 2020 by the English Department of the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania, and the School of Contemporary Chinese



Communication Studies, Hangzhou Normal University, China. As indicated in the Foreword to the volume, the conference “reinforced the importance of the notion of cultural discourses” (7) through discussions of culture, literature, language, and education in today’s complicated social and political climate; (anti)globalization, connectivity, conflict, immigration, and racism guide the discussion proposed by the volume. As such, the selected papers have been divided into three sections, which furthermore reflect the elaborate and interdisciplinary nature of the study: Cultures and Discourses, Literature and (Multi)cultural Discourses and Linguistics and Education.

The first chapter, Cultures and Discourses, begins with “Multicultural Discourses on the Connections between

Native Americans and Europeans in the Long Eighteenth Century.” This contribution by Begoña Lasá-Álvarez provides a diachronic analysis of the discursive tendencies regarding Native Americans in the context of the European fascination not only with interethnic amorous relationships, but also with the habits and behaviour of the ‘Noble Savages’ that the Native Americans were mythified into. Lasá-Álvarez anchors the research of this paper in the story of St. Castin, French noble and military man who lived among the natives and married a native woman. The analysis investigates the distinct stages of St. Castin’s story being adapted and published in different forms and Western reiterations, to highlight that “European culture was all-encompassing with regard to Native Americans” (28) as the natives were forced to adopt Western norms and values such as the institution of marriage. Lasá-Álvarez concludes with comments on the vanishing Indian in the Western discursive culture.

The second contribution in this chapter is Sharon Diane King’s analysis of religious and political intersections in 2019 comedy/fantasy BBC miniseries *Good Omens*. “The Face of the Other at the End of the World: The TV Series *Good Omens*” tackles the exploration of race, gender, and instances of ‘Other’-ing in the miniseries. As King points out, the subversive depictions of Adam and Eve as black, or the role of Archangel Michael played by a woman, serve to challenge centuries-old Western visual and ideological stereotypes. As such, the paper concludes by asserting that *Good Omens* utilizes the very tools provided by established Western structures (race, gender, colonial, and religious values) to destabilize

the structures themselves: it is through these processes of “using the system’s embedded tools against it” (42) that the system of separating, labelling and subjugating communities is discovered as faulty.

The next contribution undertakes a similar approach in analysing the manner in which a visual production uses the system’s established tools in order to expose its flaws. In “The Monsters among Us, or Decentering Whiteness in Contemporary American Visual Culture: Jordan Peele’s *Get Out*,” Loredana Bercuci points out the subversive nature of the 2017 film *Get Out* and many of its artistic choices that lead to theorising whiteness “as discursively visual” (57) and terrorising, as opposed to ‘invisible.’ Bercuci draws upon this idea of ‘invisible whiteness’ from recent work in Critical Whiteness Studies and bell hooks’ argument that whiteness is perceived as the subject, while non-whites are robbed of this position; this can also be correlated with the “lack of awareness of the white presence in non-white life and discourse” (47) that can be seen in cultural discourses. The paper remarks that these characteristics allow whiteness to “give the impression of it being the norm” (48), a false universality that excludes it from categorizations of race – “race as physicality is more often than not attributed to non-whites” (49).

The last contribution in this section is Tarek Musleh’s “Multiculturalism and Religion: Between East and West.” The paper follows and compares the discourse lying at the core of Christian and Muslim paradigms, with a particular focus on exposing the refusal of multicultural inclusiveness in religious texts.

Muslehn notes that violence and cruelty fuel discourses concerning communities outside one's religion, which in turn encourages the representatives of most religions to negate the validity of others. The paper thus calls into question discursive practices between the East and the West, by pointing out the difficulty of fostering a multicultural spirit in a world that should be "liberated from the domination of men of religion" (69) – a liberation which is, according to Musleh, still too difficult to achieve in practice.

Questions of identity, gender, nationality, and ethnicity open the second section of the volume and find their articulation in María Jesús Lorenzo-Modia's paper on George Eliot's *The Spanish Gypsy: A Poem* (1868). The multicultural approach undertaken in "George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Approaches to Multicultural Discourses" is informed by postcolonial studies, which make the theoretical framework for an insightful analysis of *The Spanish Gypsy* focusing on otherness, multiculturalism in Spain, and consequently George Eliot's plea for peaceful coexisting religious creeds.

Modia's study is followed by Cristina Chevereşan's "The Imposter in Jerusalem. Cultural (Re)Mappings and Re(Locations) in Operation Shylock." Chevereşan proposes here an analysis of the "literal and symbolical blurring" (88) of Jewish boundaries within Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock* (1993), as well as an examination of the novel's reception with all its "underlying controversies" (88). The paper discusses Jewishness and pluricultural identities, communal, personal, and public authenticity, and the implications a title such as 'A Confession' could suggest to Roth's readership (Chevereşan extrapolates on this markedly).

"Hari Kunzru's *Transmission: A Novel for Our Liquid Times*" by Gönül Bakay examines the impact of globalization and fragile "interconnected systems" (103) in Hari Kunzru's novel *Transmission* (2004). The paper seeks to provide insights into the ways in which entities interact in increasingly globalised and interconnected societies. Bakay draws upon Zygmunt Bauman's conceptualisations of 'liquid life' and 'liquid modernity,' terms which can be used to refer to a precarious life led under constantly shifting conditions. By applying these concepts to Hari Kunzru's novel, Bakay offers not only an analysis of a society heavily relying on technology, but also a critique of contemporary reality, as the world too is becoming increasingly fluid: "distances have lost their meaning, our jobs, lives and relationships are fluid" (114).

The chapter continues with "Civil Rights and the Identity Struggle in George Takei's *They Called Us Enemy*" by Raluca-Andreea Petruş. This paper proposes an examination of the discrimination faced by the Japanese community on American soil, as problematised in *They Called Us Enemy* (2019) by George Takei. In order to pinpoint the socio-cultural as well as identity troubles of the Japanese-American community after the armed conflict between Imperial Japan and the United States, Petruş makes use of several theoretical notions such as 'tribalism' (in alignment with Amy Chua's perspectives) and 'double consciousness' defined by Du Bois. What *They Called Us Enemy* reveals, according to Petruş, is not only a strong case of political and social tribalism caused by the refusal of the American establishment to "respect the unalienable rights of Japanese Americans, be they citizens or not" (127), but also a case of

'two-ness' as these communities struggle to "reconcile their double consciousness" – the one imposed by anti-Japanese prejudice and their self-perceived identity.

The next paper examines the socio-cultural implications of contemporary Zimbabwean literature, with a focus on a generation of women who attempt to give voice to African women and communities that have long been left unrepresented. Luiza Caraivan's "Restoring Difference: Reading Zimbabwean Contemporary Literature" explores the phenomenon of diaspora narratives and writers, of Southern African multiculturalism and the multicultural context that engenders 'dual' literatures, as writers struggle to find the middle ground between being authentically African or rather "an external body that seeks to penetrate the Anglophone European literary tradition" (131).

Kamila Mirasova's paper "Ayn Rand in the Global World" employs Zygmunt Bauman's *Retrotopia* and the works of De Loughry and Fisher in order to explore the positive and negative ways in which the literature of (anti)globalization has been referencing Ayn Rand thus far. Mirasova also examines political discourses (right-wing, in particular) that have been influenced and owe most of their rhetoric to Rand's philosophy of objectivism: Donald Trump and the 'Make America Great Again' campaign among the most notable of them.

Constantina Raveca Buleu's contribution on the discursive phenomenology of utopias within a multicultural framework, "Rhetoric and Transposition: From the Utopian Monologue to the Dystopian Multicultural Approach. A Case Study," closely examines dystopian patterns in

works such as Gheorghe Săsărman's *Alphabet of Dystopias* to assert that although utopias might seem to foster a multicultural discourse, they actually end up shrinking into a "mono-cultural ideology" upon full actualization. Buleu further extrapolates on the nature of utopias to assert, in alignment with the perspectives of G. Kateb and Merlin Coverley, that "there is no utopia without a latent dystopian kernel" (168) and that mutations exist in any utopian discourse.

This section concludes with a reflection on the cultural, historical, and literary implications of a revisited, multicultural history of Romanian literature. Monica Manolachi's "How Multicultural is the History of Romanian Literature?" provides a diachronic overview of the literary histories that have contributed to the current understandings of multiculturalism in Romanian literature – the most significant provided by Eugen Lovinescu and George Călinescu – demonstrating that this journey has been "a latent work in progress" (185) and that it has "depended very much on the rapport between the literary domain and cultural politics, [...] ethics and aesthetics" (185).

The final section of this volume, *Linguistics and Education*, provides interdisciplinary contributions at the intersection of applied linguistics (channeled through various discourse analysis methodologies), psychology, pedagogy, and cultural studies. The section opens with María Laura Pardo's paper which analyses the COVID-19 anti-homelessness discourse in digital spaces, with a particular focus on social media. "Violence and Hate Speech Against the Homeless in Social Media During the Covid-19 Pandemic" examines the ways in which

digital audiences react to news concerning the homeless population in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, by drawing upon notions such as ‘invisible violence’ (Bourgois), aporophobia (fear of the poor) and analyzing online hate speech through the Synchronic-Diachronic Method for the Linguistic Analysis of Texts.

Just as insightful is Elizabeth Woodward-Smith’s “Multiculturalism and Discourse Awareness in the Media,” which examines the “growing awareness of changing linguistic and social usage” (211) in recent news items from the British media. Woodward-Smith combines two theoretical approaches – Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Critical Language Awareness (CLA) – to explore recent linguistic challenges to power relations, ideologies, and current customs with focus on the linguistic repertoires of health and well-being, matters of commercial jargon and corporatese, of issues pertaining to gender, culture, ethnicity, and colonialism.

The next paper, “Transmale Models: A Discursive Analysis on Porn Ads” studies queer identity negotiation in the digital arenas of Brazil. Dánie Marcelo de Jesus and Vicente Tchalian analyse the discourse construction of 76 profiles on the adult website *Câmera Privê* in order to explore how transmale bodies are allowed to negotiate their appearance (in alignment with Judith Butler’s theories of gender) through linguistic strategies. The implications of this are multifaceted: on the one hand, pornography websites have become spaces that “legitimize these bodies” (242) while on the other, they commodify these bodies into mere objects to be bought and sold, as a consequence of the merchandise-oriented, marketable discourse.

The next two contributions are complementary, in that both “Critical Language Teacher Education: Postmemory as Resistance” by Andréa Machado de Almeida Mattos, Mariana Adriele Coura and “*Challenges and Possibilities for the Development of English Teachers’ Agency in the North of Brazil*” by Denise Silva Paes Landim examine the impact of critical discourse in the fields of pedagogy and education in Brazil. The former provides a study on the impact and importance of collective and individual (post)memory in promoting critical awareness in class. The latter analyses the implications of learning and teaching English in a “neoliberal and globalized society” (270), revealing a recent tendency to shift towards a “more critical positioning entitled to teachers” (270) rather than the traditional technical role, where “little to no room for reflection and authorship is given to teachers” (270).

Jing Yu’s contribution concludes the volume and aims at exposing the “long-standing patterns of the Western totalizing discourse” in relation to Chinese communities in higher education contexts by applying the theoretical framework proposed by Chinese Discourse Studies (in alignment with Shi-xu’s conceptualization). “Chinese International Students and the COVID-19 Crisis” takes into consideration the Chinese cultural heritage and customs to assert that Chinese discourses have long been misinterpreted by “Western-centric perspectives, models, approaches, and paradigms” (289).

The volume successfully explores multicultural discourse from a variety of interdisciplinary and methodological approaches, from the multicultural values of the digital space to discourses pertaining

BOOKS

to the literary and the cinematic. As the editors Alexandra Cotoc, Octavian More and Mihaela Mudure remark in the Foreword of the volume, this is also on account of the remarkable selection of contributions from scholars in different stages of their academic careers and also with a variety of linguistic, cultural, and

political backgrounds. Indeed, all of these factors render *Multicultural Discourses in Turbulent Times* into an outstanding study and contribution to the research field of cultural discourses, accessible not only to students and scholars, but also to wider readerships due to its pluralist, multimodal nature.

MARIAN-RĂDUCU TODERIȚĂ

MA Student, Babeş-Bolyai University

Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Email: marian.toderita@stud.ubbcluj.ro