

CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES
in Literature and Language

CROSS-CULTURAL P E R S P E C T I V E S

in Literature and Language

Joanna Stolarek and Jarosław Wiliński
(Editors)



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Æ Academic Publishing
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22 21 20 19 18 17 2 3 4

Table of contents

Preface	VII
---------------	-----

PART I. LITERATURE AND CULTURE

Iwona Filipczak,

<i>University of Zielona Góra, Poland</i>	2
---	---

Reclaiming the Multicultural Past in the Global Context
in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Holder of the World* and Toni
Morrison's *A Mercy*

Anna Gaidash

<i>Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Ukraine</i>	23
--	----

"The Years are Coming Up Fast Behind Us": Representations
of the Elderly Characters in Three Plays by Naomi Wallace

Joanna Stolarek

<i>Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities, Poland</i>	45
--	----

American South in the Face of European Fascism
in Katherine Anne Porter's *Ship of Fools* and Carson
McCullers's *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*

Michaela Weiss

<i>Silesian University in Opava, Czech Republic</i>	67
---	----

Multilingualism in American Jewish Literature: Irena
Klepfisz's Yiddish Revival

Anna Wortman

<i>An independent scholar</i>	88
-------------------------------------	----

The United States – A Nation of Immigrants: Multicul-
turalism and the American Democracy

PART II LINGUISTICS AND METHODOLOGY

Judit Baranyiné Kóczy

Széchenyi István University, Hungary 106

Cross-cultural Variation of Metaphors in Folksongs

Oleksandr Kapranov

University of Bergen, Norway 137

Bicultural and Language-related Narratives of USA-born
Female Future Teachers Permanently Residing in Sweden

Jarosław Wiliński

Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities, Poland..... 157

Cognitive Motivation for Idiom Variation in a Learner's
Dictionary: Explaining Cross-cultural and Cross-linguistic
Differences in the Use of British and American Idioms

Agnieszka Wróbel

Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities, Poland..... 184

Culture Awareness as a Key to Successful Communication
in English as a Foreign Language

Index 203

Preface

This volume collection of articles published under the title Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Literature and Language aims at demonstrating a complex, multifaceted character of multicultural relations, on the basis of studies dealing with various aspects of contemporary Anglophone literature, culture, linguistics, and methodology of teaching foreign languages. The monograph provides an international forum for the discussion and exchange of ideas related to the following issues: multiculturalism, multi-ethnicity, cross-cultural perspectives in literature, art and politics, integration versus cultural shock, racial, ethnic and religious problems in the world in the 21st century.

As the editors, we hope that the articles published will prove stimulating and inspiring to their readers, be it specialists in literature, culture, linguistics, and didactic studies or students of English.

The volume, encompassing nine articles, is divided into two sections, i.e. Part 1: Literature and Culture, and Part 2: Linguistics and Methodology. The articles are ordered alphabetically by authors' surnames. The contents of each section is briefly introduced in the paragraphs which follow.

Part 1: Literature and Culture includes a collection of five articles focused on Anglophone literary and culture works which examine diverse facets of multi-ethnic and multinational perspectives in literature, art and politics of the 20th and 21st centuries. The essay by Iwona Filipczak discusses the topic of the multicultural past in the global context in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Holder of the World* and Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*. The author argues that contemporary American writing frequently shifts the interest from domestic affairs to placing America in the global context. Filipczak's article elaborates on the question of multiculturalism in a broader context: the author asserts that Bharati Mukherjee's and Toni Morrison's novels revive the multiculturalism of the prenational American beginnings and place it against globalization processes, accentuating the 17th

century interconnectedness of the world in order to make references to the contemporary reality.

Anna Gaidash examines the portrayal of the elderly characters in selected plays by Naomi Wallace: *Slaughter City*, *One Flea Spare*, and *The Inland Sea*. The author underlines the impact of the inter-generational relations which establish the jumping-off base for the construction of late adulthood imagery in the analyzed plays. Gaidash remarks that old age in Naomi Wallace's dramas is represented as "Other" and thus is simultaneously inherent in the broader age continuum subverting ageist gerontophobia.

The article by Joanna Stolarek addresses the problem of alienation and marginalization in the face of social and political hegemony in Europe and its reverberations in the southern states of the USA in Katherine Anne Porter's *Ship of Fools* and Carson McCullers's *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*. The author focuses on the examination of the two novels with reference to their exploration of the roots of European Fascism and the conditions that favored its rise. The paper analyses the issues of ethnic discrimination and social exclusion in *Ship of Fools* versus racial conflicts, and the problem of hegemony reflected in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, along with the books' central motifs, such as search for identity, crisis of intercultural dialogue, and social dislocation.

The article by Michaela Weiss explores the functions and importance of multilingualism in American Jewish literature, with special attention paid to the poetry of an American Jewish poet of Polish origin, Irena Klepfisz, who intertwines Yiddish and English. The author underlines that for Klepfisz America is a linguistic and cultural exile, and therefore the poet started to fuse these languages. In the paper, it is argued that Irena Klepfisz is reluctant to use English, which, as the language of immigrants, cannot depict the Holocaust and the world of Yiddishkayt correctly; thus, the poet retorts to multilingual poetry to transcend the borders between nations and cultures and to offer a mirror or a reference point for each other.

Finally, the main purpose of Anna Wortman's paper is to examine multiculturalism in the context of immigrants in the United States of recent years. The author argues that, although the ideolo-

gy of multiculturalism is a product of the twentieth century political thought and an ethical and political response to multiethnic societies, it appears that the American political system has long before accommodated and fostered the development of its own multicultural society with all its benefits and conflicts. Thus, the essay looks into the different approaches adopted in the United States throughout time in reference to the administration of the multicultural and multiethnic society.

Part 2: Linguistics and Methodology encompasses four articles concentrated on the studies in linguistics and teaching foreign languages which analyze cross-cultural perspectives in the 21st century. The main part of Judit Baranyiné Kóczy's article constitutes the examination of cross-cultural variation of metaphors in folksongs. This paper aims at exploring and comparing cultural metaphors and metonymies of Hungarian and Slovakian folksongs, in order to uncover where the conceptualization differences reside in. While analyzing the mapping system of metaphors, Baranyiné Kóczy takes into consideration some similarities and differences in source and target domain pairings. The empirical research reveals that there are a number of factors that ought to be explored in the comparison of cross-cultural metaphor variation, including universality, specification, conventionality, schematicity, and elaboration.

The article by Oleksandr Kapranov addresses the question of bicultural and language-related aspects of USA immigrants residing permanently in Sweden. The case study further presented in this article involves discourse narratives and semi-structured interviews with six American immigrants, who immigrated to Sweden after the age of 21. The findings reveal the presence of conceptual construals associated with bicultural and language-related aspects of the participants' life in Sweden.

The main purpose of Jarosław Wiliński's article is to demonstrate lexicographic applications of the concept of motivation for the explanation of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic differences in the use of British and American idioms.

Last but not least, Agnieszka Wróbel's work discusses culture awareness as a key to successful communication in English as

a foreign language. The article presents three aspects of culture: culture of achievement, culture of behavior and culture within the language itself. Wróbel's article stresses the importance of building cultural and inter-cultural awareness, which is increasingly important in English communication in of the globalized world.

With the contributors coming from six different universities in Poland and Europe (Ukraine, The Czech Republic, Hungary, and Norway), all that the editors of this volume could wish for is to reach a wider readership, believing a publication like this can be found beneficial in the didactic process, touching upon various aspects of multicultural dialogue and presenting diverse methodologies that can be applied in their analysis.

The editors wish to express their gratitude to all the contributors to this volume. Many thanks are due to the reviewers of this volume, Prof. Zofia Kolbuszewska and Prof. Krzysztof Kosecki, for their constructive comments and valuable remarks.

— Joanna Stolarek
Jarosław Wiliński

Part I

LITERATURE AND CULTURE

Reclaiming the Multicultural Past in the Global Context in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Holder of the World* and Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*

Abstract

The article argues that contemporary American writing often shifts the interest from domestic affairs to placing America in the global context. This tendency is illustrated by the two novels chosen for the study, Bharati Mukherjee's *The Holder of the World* and Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*, both focusing on American colonial past. So far, they have been read as attempts to retell the origins of the United States in order to defy the myths of homogeneity and purity imposed by the dominant discourses of power. The present article elaborates on the question of multiculturalism in a broader context; it is claimed that the novels revive the multiculturalism of the prenational American beginnings and place it against globalization processes – they highlight the 17th century interconnectedness of the world in order to make references to the contemporary reality, either overtly, as in *The Holder of the World*, or by analogy, *A Mercy*. Thus, the novels can be interpreted as attempts to dispel the fears of both the diversity of contemporary immigration and its disintegrative influence on the American society.

Keywords: multiculturalism, globalization, immigration, Dillingham Flaw, intertextuality

1. Introduction

In his article “From Multiculturalism to Immigration Shock,” Lauter (2009) delineates a new route for American studies. Although he can

still see multiculturalism as a central feature of American society, he now notices unwelcoming attitudes towards multiculturalism which make him expect “a new historical moment,” that is, globalization as the primary paradigm for analyzing political and cultural trends. Lauter lists possible reasons for this situation, such as locating multiculturalism within the structures of western capitalism, as well as

the current harsh debates over immigration, the laws to make English the only legal language, the increasing conflicts between native minorities and incoming immigrant workers, the widespread attitude that *mi casa no es su casa*, and the worldwide dimensions of the current struggles. (Lauter, 2009, p. 8)

Consequently, Lauter (2009) argues that the focus in American studies has shifted “from a period of multiculturalism to that of globalization” (p. 8). Many writers understand, in Lauter’s words, that they “exist and create in a globalized culture, within which national boundaries are much less meaningful” (p. 8). The shift is from “a focus on domestic multiculturalism to a globalized ‘migrant’ culture” (pp. 8–9), which, as he argues, began with Gloria Anzaldúa’s emphasis on the “‘borderlands,’ the areas that are defined not by particular national cultures but by their very interculturality, hybridity, unsettlement” (p. 9). Lauter therefore sees a necessity of “understanding America in the world and the world in America” (p. 14), in other words, recognizing that certain phenomena, such as a crisis of immigration, cannot be considered in isolation, as the outcome of only internal cultural forces, but external forces as well. As a result, also multiculturalism can be seen from a different perspective – as an effect of global flows of people, involved in complex migration patterns, which clearly reflects the situation of the present epoch.

What Lauter (2009) describes in his article delivered for the *Journal of Transnational American Studies* has been theorized as the “transnational turn” in American studies. Pease (2011) notices that “the term ‘transnational’ has replaced ‘multicultural,’ ‘postcolonial,’ and ‘postnational’” (p. 1; see also pp. 12–16) and “bears a family resemblance to ‘globalization’” (p. 3). As Pease further elucidates, the

transnational “is itself a volatile transfer point that inhabits things, people, and places with surplus connectivities that dismantle their sense of a coherent, bounded identity” (p. 4). What is more, it can also “call forth different representations of the past. It does not negate the past, but it does foster a rethinking of the national in the light of newly invented spatial and temporal coordinates” (p. 5).

Contemporary American writing reflects the shift in interest from domestic affairs to placing America in the global context. This agenda aims at challenging American exceptionalism (Lauter, 2009; Pease, 2011) and at invoking the revisionist positions which critique America for neglecting the voices of minorities in the past and at present. Bharati Mukherjee’s *The Holder of the World* (1993) and Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy* (2008) have a similar goal: to retell the origins of the United States in order to show the heterogeneity of the early population and thus to confront myths of homogeneity and purity, which have dominated the cultural discourse for a couple of centuries. As they both restore the idea of the social complexity of American beginnings, which was for a long time erased from canonized narratives, they serve as a convenient background against which contemporary social phenomena can be placed. In this manner, they can be interpreted as texts which help to dispel the fears of contemporary multiculturalism, or, in other words, fears of the increasing diversity of the American nation due to the continuous immigration.¹ Thus, in their challenge of the well-established myths, both *The Holder of the World* and *A Mercy* may be considered as attempts to build a new consciousness in the present.

Both Mukherjee and Morrison find it important to focus on pre-national American beginnings, the colonial time of American history. The choice of this particular setting seems to be essential, since this is the time most often associated primarily with Puritanism. Often presented in this way, it suggests the homogeneity of

¹ In her essay “Beyond Multiculturalism: Surviving the Nineties,” Mukherjee (1996) identifies this problem to be on the rise in the US already in the 1990s, and she announces it as her own agenda to work against anxiety and hostility directed at newcomers.

the population which in about 150 years managed to establish an independent state and nation. The narrator of Mukherjee's novel highlights this problem, observing that "the past presents itself to us, always, somehow simplified" (Mukherjee, 1994, p. 6). *The Holder of the World* and *A Mercy* choose to complicate the past and to revise it. They not only show the multiculturalism of the early American period against its dominant representations but also, which seems to be not less important, both novels strongly emphasize the interconnectedness of the colonial world, the global net of interdependencies that characterized the period. As a result, the vision of American history is even further complicated, and the novels may be considered as texts which have references to the contemporary reality; the past as depicted in the novels does not go far from how we view the present time of global connectivities. This agenda is more clearly visible in *The Holder of the World* than in *A Mercy* for the reasons of the former novel's overt intertextuality, parallelism of the contemporary narrator's story with the recreated story of the woman from colonial America, and the narrator's metafictional comments.

The novels have already been interpreted as attempts to demythologize the American beginnings and revise the past. It has been shown that they debunk the myths of national homogeneity or whiteness by valorizing the histories of cultures marginalized in the narratives of the west, and by giving voice to those subdued, neglected, and silenced. Callahan (2013) observes that "Mukherjee's United States is ... a more complicatedly connected place than ... histories would tell us" (p. 64). He continues that "Mukherjee is trying to destabilize American myths about American history and also their cultural icons, claiming... that the consecrated sites of any 'national' culture are always more complex and multi-connected than we might imagine" (Callahan, 2013, pp. 66–67). It is the intertextuality of the novel, audacious rewriting of the Hawthorne's classic, that is a direct challenge of the myth of purity and whiteness.

A similar interpretation emerges as regards Morrison's novel. According to Babb (2011), in its portrayal of the colonies that would eventually become the United States, *A Mercy* presents "an

expansive version of the prenatal world, one that reveals the heterogeneity that characterized settlements then and the nation today” (p. 149). A novel about various individuals negotiating a life together on Jacob Vaark’s farm, it offers a truly heterogeneous constellation of characters: Jacob is of English and Dutch origin, his wife Rebekka arrives from London, the three women who join the household belong to different races, Lina is a Native American, Florens – an African from Angola, and Sorrow a white girl of unknown roots. Other characters also contribute to the diversity in class, gender and cultural aspects. Another issue that scholars emphasize in their studies of the novel is the potential of creating a community. Tedder (2013) indicates that “the colonial period as represented here is composed of many different individuals in a complex network of power relations negotiating a life together” (p. 155), while Babb (2011) investigates the “dangers of selfish individualism” (p. 148).

It has to be noticed that while the scholars perceive the focus of the novels to be on the heterogeneity or diversity of the American colonial period, they seem to be a bit wary of referencing it as “multiculturalism.” Only Iyer (1996) mentions “multicultural aspects” in the history of the American nation exposed by the intertextuality of Mukherjee’s novel (p. 42). This avoidance shows that multiculturalism, as a relatively new term, is still not willingly used in relation to the earlier epochs of American history. However, it is justified to speak of multiculturalism even when describing the diversity of peoples that inhabited the colonial United States.

2. Intertextual Revision of the Past

As Parillo (1994) observes, multiculturalism, a relatively new term in the 1990s, is not a new social phenomenon. When understood as co-existence of various ethnicities and cultures and not as an ideological position, it is a continuing fact of American life: “multiculturalism has been an ongoing social reality in the United States, not just since its inception as a nation, but even in its primeval colonial cradle” (p. 523). The colonial period perpetuated and engraved in popular consciousness as the period of white settlers of Anglo-

Part II

LINGUISTICS AND METHODOLOGY

Cross-Cultural Variation of Folk Metaphors: A Comparative Analysis of Hungarian and Slovak Folksongs

Abstract

In the past years, considerable attention has been paid to the multitude of contexts which influence metaphorical language. This paper aims at exploring and comparing the cultural metaphors and metonymies of Hungarian and Slovak folksongs, in order to uncover where the conceptualization differences reside. The main focus of the present analysis is on the mapping system of metaphors, taking into account some similarities and differences in source and target domain pairings. The empirical research reveals a number of factors that should be discussed in the comparison of cross-cultural metaphor variation, including universality, specification, conventionality, schematicity, and elaboration.

Keywords: folksong, cultural conceptualization, cultural metaphor, Hungarian, Slovak

1. Introduction

It is linguistic evidence that a wide range of metaphors feature universal patterns and can be traced back to similar ideas cross-culturally (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Turner, 1989). But less attention has been paid to differences in metaphorical expression and thought, and, most importantly, to which aspects of conceptualization are responsible for those alterations. In past

years, a growing number of linguists have considered the multitude of contexts which influence metaphorical language. Prominent research on the issue was undertaken by Kövecses (2005, 2008, 2014, 2015), who mentions, among others, the determining function of the physical environment, the social context, the cultural context, and the communicative situation. Some scholars who are interested in the metaphor–conceptualization–language nexus even claim that culture has a crucial role above the other contexts. They emphasize that metaphors belong to conceptualizations that have a strong cultural ground (Palmer, 1996; Szilágyi, 1996; Sharifian, 2011, 2015; Frank, 2015). According to them, metaphors should be viewed as *cultural conceptualizations* (Sharifian, 2003, 2011, 2015), which are not restricted to linguistic activity but involve other cultural manifestations, and which are anchored in a particular cultural group's cognition. These issues of concern form the frame of a new multidisciplinary discipline called Cultural Linguistics.

Numerous studies have been conducted with the aim to compare the conceptualizations – schemas, categories, and metaphors – of different cultural groups, but the conceptualizations of *folk cultural groups* have been a rather neglected field so far. *Folk culture* is a term used to refer to the culture of traditional peasant communities that would be passed down to the next generations for centuries. Folk-songs emerged within folk culture, therefore they transmit the world view of their communities and represent the cultural conceptualizations of their folk cultural cognition. It must be noted that folk literature in many cultural groups' cognition still has considerable influence on, and shapes the representation of, present-day discourse, including pop songs and modern literature. This paper aims at exploring cultural metaphors in Hungarian and the Slovak folk cultural groups. It attempts to highlight the similarities and differences in cultural metaphors by comparing and contrasting the conceptualizations in the images of nature in the texts, meanwhile considering factors that should be applied to such comparative research on metaphors.

The literature of *folk cultural groups* is characterized by similar contextual factors, especially in the case of groups which live in close

proximity. Such characteristics are: the similarity of the natural environment in which they live, social and cultural customs, including ethics and morality, which may lead to the development of resembling discourse types. These factors can assume that certain cultural groups may have common experiences and therefore the conceptualizations in which their literature is grounded are also quite alike. However, as Kövecses (2008) points out, similar experiences can develop different conceptualizations by focusing on different properties of the same phenomenon. A main characteristic about folk cultural cognition is that it is collective, which means that the group creates and then preserves the schematic conceptualizations which it is ready to adapt to its already existing conceptualizations (Katona, 1998, p. 24).

Metaphor variation occurs cross-culturally, within-culture, individually, as well as historically and developmentally (Kövecses, 2014, p. 24). In terms of cross-cultural variation, either different cultural groups use a set of different source domains for certain target domains, or a particular source domain is used for conceptualizing a set of different target domains. Another kind of difference is based on the observation that the generic schema related to a metaphor is instantiated in specific ways (Kövecses, 2008, p. 58). The cultural context is defined by Kövecses in the following way:

The broader cultural context simply means all the culturally unique and salient concepts and values that characterize cultures, including, importantly, the governing principles and the key concepts in a given culture or subculture. The governing principles and key concepts have special importance in (metaphorical) conceptualization because they permeate several general domains of experience for a culture or cultural group. (p. 64)

A general cohesive property of cultural groups and also the ground of metaphors is *cognition*. When speaking of cognition, we should not only think of the one which defines individuals but also about a group-level cognition, which is shared by the members of a cultural group. *Cultural cognition* is characterized by several peculiarities, as Sharifian (2008) points out. One important issue is that it is an *emergent* system, by which he means that cognition results from the interactions of the members of a cultural group across time

and space. Hence, the diachronic aspect of cultural cognition. Another facet of this system is that it is *heterogeneously distributed*, and therefore negotiated and renegotiated across generations through communicative events. In this sense, cultural cognition is viewed as a dynamic and ever evolving system rather than a fixed set of representations. The notion *heterogeneity* refers to the diversity of the cultural knowledge of minds within the group, i.e., “some people know more than others about a given cultural model than some other members of the cultural group” (Sharifian, 2008, p. 124; cf. also Borofsky, 1994). This also means that cultural orientation should be imagined as a continuum.

A further notion about cultural cognition is that it is a *complex adaptive system* in that “an individual’s cognition does not capture the totality of their cultural group’s cognition” (Sharifian, 2008, p. 116; cf. also Frank, 2015). It also implies that it is an open system and within that system a circular pattern of cause and effect is observed: cultural cognition as a global order derives from interactions on a local level, while, in turn, the interactions are dependent on and rooted in cultural cognition. Cognition is self-organizing in that it is constantly constructed and reconstructed by its users, while it is characterized by distributed control (Frank, 2015, p. 495). Folk cultural cognition is characterized by collective control, which involves the importance of tradition and the restricted process of adaption. Dynamicity also exists here but in a constrained form: the conceptualizations are highly schematic.

2. Cultural Conceptualizations in Hungarian Folksongs

The nature images of folksongs feature special characteristics, as they are poetic, yet they do not express highly differentiated personal thoughts, nor are they “novel” (Lakoff & Turner, 1989), which is a general characteristic of poetic metaphor. They are *poetic* in the sense that they are specifically used in lyrical texts, and they are *conventional* in that they used to be understood in the folk cultural community where they emerged. It must be emphasized that the representation of nature never merely describes a landscape but it

nearly always conveys metaphorical – emotional, social – ideas in the folksongs. As Kövecses observes, “the content of emotion concepts can be best described as scenarios” and “these scenarios are probably represented simultaneously at several levels of abstraction,” depending on the audience. The natural images in folksongs are emotion scenarios in specifically elaborated forms (Kövecses, 2000, p. 187). The images of nature are similar to *image metaphors*, which map one conventional mental image onto another, instead of mapping one domain to another (Lakoff, 1987, 1992). Lakoff explains that “the images that image metaphors apply to are conventional images – images that are acquired largely unconsciously and automatically over the years by members of a cultural community” (Lakoff, 1987, p. 220). However, image metaphors are also described as “specific” and “one-shot” mappings, which is not relevant to folksongs. The folk cultural metaphors are more flexible and complex, and they seem to be *heterogeneously distributed* within the folksongs, being linked to each other by “family resemblance.”

The research on Hungarian folksongs from a cultural and cognitive semantic perspective has shown that cultural conceptualizations do not merely involve cultural metaphors but also feature typical construal schemas, which seem to recur from text to text. Regarding metaphors, some focused in-depth analyses have given evidence that the metaphorical conceptualizations set up a complex and systematic web, either from the viewpoint of a certain topic, such as LOVE (Szelid, 2007), or by unfolding the various conceptualizations related to certain concepts (Baranyiné Kóczy, 2011a). An example for this is the survey of the cultural conceptualizations related to the conceptual entity FOREST, which overviews the natural images of folksongs where the FOREST serves as a source domain. Figure 1 shows all the conceptualizations of FOREST which reflect their metaphorical/metonymical potential as well as the overlapping domains.

Figure 1 represents that the FOREST in most cases serves the function of a location so the spatial semantic properties of FOREST have a dominant semantic function. Unveiling the cultural conceptualizations of FOREST is one of the bulk of analyses which support the observation that the dimension of space has an outstanding im-