

Critical Mourning, Entangled Legacies of Violence, and Postcolonial Discontent in Selected 21st Century First World War Novels in English and French

The aim of the project is to collect materials, analyse and interpret in a comparative perspective the representations of the First World War in 21st century fiction published in English and French which depicts the 1914-1918 conflict from the point of view of coloured troops and/or communities. The applicant proposes the following research hypotheses: (1) the novels and short stories under consideration expose the trauma caused by the First World War as an important site of identification at the war's centenary; (2) this fiction explores the continuities between earlier and later eruptions of violence and the First World War; (3) the selected works show how the Great War triggered the fight for independence in various parts of the British and French empire. This generates a number of questions: How do the authors under consideration represent the colonial experience of the First World War? Does remembrance imply forgiveness and forgetting or, on the contrary, the refusal to forget, anger, and dissent? Which theatres of war apart from the Western Front are represented in this fiction? How are colonial loyalties represented in the novels under consideration? How do the studied authors respond to the legacy of racist stereotypes?

The corpus established so far includes ten texts published in Britain, France, Canada, the US, South Africa, Algeria, at the (broadly conceived) centenary of the First World War: *Three Day Road* (2005) by Joseph Boyden, "Uriah's War" (2014) by Andrea Levy, *A God in Every Stone* (2014) by Kamila Shamsie, *Blue Ravens: Historical Novel* (2014) by Gerald Vizenor, *Dancing the Death Drill* (2017) by Fred Khumalo, *Le temps de la douleur* (2003) by Bahia Kiared, *Galadio* (2010) by Didier Daeninckx, *Le bataillon créole (guerre de 1914-1918)* (2013) by Raphaël Confiant, *Souviens-toi de moi* (2014) by Martine Laffon, and *Frère d'âme* (2018) by David Diop.

The project will draw on First World War studies, postcolonial studies, comparative studies, as well as trauma studies. The problem of remembrance will be explored in a transcultural framework, based on recent developments in memory studies. This theoretical framework will help elucidate what it means to revive the trauma of the First World War as a significant site of identification in different postcolonial contexts at the war's centenary.

The years of the Great War centenary have generated new forms of remembrance. A hundred years after the conflict, the First World War is the object of new interpretations, which have a powerful aesthetic and ethic potential. Significantly, the decade preceding the centenary of the outbreak of the war and the very years of the centennial saw the publication of several historical novels which depict the Great War from the point of view of coloured troops and/or communities. These texts have not attracted much critical attention. The project will therefore provide the first comparative analysis of postcolonial fiction in English and French published at the (broadly conceived) Great War's centenary. The comparative framework will help identify similarities and differences between the traumatic war experience of various racialized groups and between earlier and later legacies of violence which echo in the studied texts.

The applicant plans to disseminate the results of the project in a monograph and several research articles in English, which will be published in prestigious monographs and peer-reviewed journal. The results of the project should be interesting for scholars and students of postcolonial literatures in English and French, to historians, as well as readers interested in cultural memory and (overlapping) legacies of violence.