

***The Discursive Construction of Class and Lifestyle: Celebrity Chef Cookbooks in Post-socialist Slovenia*, by Ana Tominc, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamin Publishing Company, 2017, 177pp., \$149, ISBN 978-90-272-0666-4.**

692 words

In her most recent book, Ana Tominc puts her strong academic background in social anthropology, cultural studies, and linguistics to good use, as she examines the globalization of celebrity chefs' discourse, particularly how it is represented in post-Socialist countries, such as Slovenia where she grew up.

In the initial chapters of this monograph, Tominc examines the transformation of what is recognized as "lifestyle" in the little-documented post-socialist Slovenia through an interdisciplinary Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. Tominc provides an initial background to "lifestyle media," in which the audience is entertained and educated while watching television programs in the hope of transforming their own lives. In Chapter Two, Tominc further develops her rationale for using CDA as an approach, before moving on to consider concepts of consumer culture and globalization as key factors in the understanding of celebrity chefs in terms of both television and cookbooks. In Chapter Three, Tominc links these concepts to the development of global brands with high cultural capital, using Jamie Oliver and his *Naked Chef* as a key example, alongside other European case studies. She explores how Oliver's brand has been translated in the Slovenian context, a distinct challenge given the embodiment of cultural traditions, customs, and experience in the original text. Subsequent chapters compare and contrast such examples to resources available in Slovenia and in the Slovenian language. She argues that food media is a representation of taste for those who are positioned to have sufficient cultural (and in this case culinary) capital, but also those who possess the power to establish "taste" itself as common sense.

Tominc takes as her basis for analysis "food media" broadly, including celebrity chef television cooking programs from post-socialist Slovenia, including celebrity chef couple The Novaks and their associated cookbooks such as *Simply Slovene* (2011), as well as texts such as *The Great Slovene Cookbook*, originally published in 1912. This book was itself based on the *Slovenska Kuharica* by Magdalena Pleiweis (1868), revived in the 1970s by Sister Vendelia, and subsequently updated in the 1990s. The update aimed to contextualize Slovene food on television as well as add to discussions on the wider global study of food media, consumption, class, and lifestyle.

The focus on post-socialist Slovenia is an interesting and valuable example, contrasting not only the changes in media representation of food, taste, and culture within the changing country, but also contrasting it with translated communication, language, and "message" from western European examples.

This work by Tominc is a welcome addition to the literature currently available on food media and the global reach of celebrity chefs, including television cooking programs, their associated cookbooks, and spin-off brands. Tominc aims this volume at scholars of CDA,

television and media, food, and gastronomy, as well as advertising and branding. Her wide net is successful, mirroring the interdisciplinary nature of the topic and methodology.

The author provides a convincing argument for the use of CDA in analyzing connected media texts across television and print, comparing rarely discussed archival Slovenian examples with more prominently discussed celebrity chefs, brands, and recognized names. In discussing the translation of texts (and therefore brands), such as those by Jamie Oliver, into the Slovene language, Tominc introduces a new approach for analyzing celebrity chefs globally. She looks across class, culture, and language in a number of media outputs (text and television based) with different contextual messaging present in different countries, languages, and cultures. Tominc considers the use of “Slovenicized” words in building the impression of a differentiated cultural intention. She considers a comprehensive catalogue of evidence to show how, in her opinion, chefs, cookbook writers, and television personalities construct authority culturally, morally, and ultimately successfully as “brands” selling ideas, lifestyles, advertising, and books.

This book will be of interest to a range of students and readers across disciplines with a broad interest in language analysis, food, and media. The text will be of particular interest to those looking at the currently popular topic of celebrity chefs and television cooking programs, providing an interesting perspective on their development globally. Tominc challenges some perceptions of brand and “celebrity,” which may differ from country to country, and in particular from translation to translation.

References

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