



# **EAST – WEST CULTURAL PASSAGE**

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## Preface

According to an on-line dictionary, the phrase “changing places” is defined as *exchanging places or roles*. There is an American comedy film entitled “Trading Places” (directed by John Landis) in which an upper class commodities broker and a homeless street hustler change places in life as part of an elaborate bet and, in the end, they both learn a great deal about living a life opposite of that to which they are accustomed. Such experiences can open our eyes to understand differences by providing an alternative perspective, and that, in turn, broadens our knowledge and enriches our lives.

As a business professional, my career focus and continual learning has always been business, but trading places with humanities scholars has expanded my mind and enriched my knowledge. It is true that knowledge is power, and reading to learn about other people, times and places provides a new vantage that, in turn, generates valuable new knowledge. For me, learning about the humanities has helped round me as a human being and has broadened my perspective by adding a deeper understanding of the world outside the business realm. The process of changing places provides opportunities to understand the diversity that exists in our world – the world in which we live and operate. In business, it is critical to understand your customer, and a global customer base is as diverse as a day is long. Understanding the culture, customs and history of one’s customers provides a significant business opportunity for a company to grow their customer base and to prosper. One way to accomplish that is to “trade places” with your customers by reading about their rich culture, customs and history – and by trading places with humanities academics and reading both non-fiction and fiction laced with historical facts and contexts.

But the unfortunate reality is that there is a plethora of “distractions” for the majority of our youth, so many of today’s students don’t read, and this is such a loss for them and for all of society. The majority of today’s young people would rather spend their time on social media or playing video games or texting or watching TV. As the world continues to shrink and the speed of life

accelerates, as a result of technology and many other things, it seems to me that it is all the more important that our youth read more to learn about where they and others in our global village came from (histories) – literally to “change places” and “times” in their consciousness. Such learning can plausibly help bring peace in the world or perhaps prevent conflicts because the youth, who will someday be our world leaders, will better understand many of the cultures of the world and thus the differences and similarities among the various peoples with whom we share our planet, developing in the process perhaps a more cosmopolitan stake as citizens of the world.

If our educational systems required students to take more humanities courses as part of their curriculum, students would gain more cultural knowledge and open up their horizons and imaginations. Many students may yet find that they enjoy reading more than playing video games or watching television, and – here’s a novel idea – they may even form “book clubs” where they gather to discuss various readings!

We may find that learning more of the humanities may lead people to come together instead of being divided by cultural differences – they may learn to embrace such differences. A snowball effect could occur – a virtuous circle – that might conduce to a wide range of outcomes, from reducing loneliness and even suicide rates to producing business opportunities that increase employment and reduce poverty and hunger as we work together and learn from each other. And, all that could conceivably come about by leading students to learn about the humanities – something many may find they enjoy. As the saying goes, you do not know what you are missing unless you try it. Including humanities courses as a central part of all curricula will broaden students’ base of knowledge, and, in the end, isn’t that what a well-rounded education is all about? After all, that is the original meaning of the word “educate” (from the Latin *e-ducere*, “to lead out of”). As educators, humanities scholars can play a large role in leading our youth out of the darkness of their current “attention deficit disorders” and into the light of a more cultivated understanding of who we are as human beings.

-- Irene Tienda-Rumbaut

Spaces on the Map, Places of the Mind:  
The Grand Tour and Classic Modernity

MIHAELA IRIMIA  
University of Bucharest

**Abstract**

Classic Modernity, aka the Enlightenment, can be regarded as a long *symbolic travel* of concepts, practices, values and institutions that are constitutive of our Western Civilization world. Newspapers and periodicals, the novel as “the” modern genre *par excellence*, the public sphere and its sense of conviviality, expanding roads and transport services, ever more diversified forms of domestic comfort, sartorial distinction and educational expectations are as many factors contributing to what we have inherited in the Long Modernity process of which the eighteenth century is a crucial interval. Such public spaces as the coffee house, the pub, the theatre, the opera or the spa, like the stock exchange and the post office, counterbalanced indoor activities favourable to individual assertion and social practices that homologate modern man and woman. Originating in the previous century, the Grand Tour facilitates ample mobility schemes, in principle of the educational-cultural type, but gradually as a form of relaxation. This article looks at how *spaces on the map* become *places of the mind* in the process, as well as at how *places of the mind* find their actual correspondents in *spaces on the map* and analyses the taxonomic categorization of the landmarks punctuating the Grand Tour. In so doing, it resorts to de Certeau’s theoretical stance for “everyday practices” and evaluates the passage of *homology* (in)to *heterology*.

**Keywords:** Classic Modernity, Grand Tour, public sphere, transport, space, place, map, mind, homology, heterology.

Crossing Borders, Changing Places:  
Immigrant America in a World on the Move

RUBÉN G. RUMBAUT  
University of California, Irvine

**Abstract**

The world is increasingly on the move. In 2013, the United Nations reported that there were 236 million international migrants worldwide, most of whom were born in the global South and migrated to the global North, reflecting widening global inequalities and intractable conflicts. These self-selected border crossers represent 3% of humanity; the other 97% are stayers, living in the countries where they were born. Their “changing places” are sites not only of cultural and demographic transformations, but also of social and political collisions that elicit predictable nativist responses. More immigrants — a fifth of the world’s total — go to the United States than to any other country. This essay will focus on the story of “Immigrant America” over the past half century—from its historic nadir in 1970 to its resurgence as a Nation of Immigrants and to Deportation Nation. The subtitle is a *double entendre*, referring at once to the country and to our book *Immigrant America*—new editions of which have been published in each of the past four decades (the newest comes out this summer) as we seek continuously to grapple with and to represent a vertiginously changing world and this “permanently unfinished” moving target of a society.

**Keywords:** Immigrant America, international migration, economic inequality, social and cultural change, nativism, deportation.



East-West in Academic Fiction:  
An Unequal Exchange?

MERRITT MOSELEY  
University of North Carolina at Asheville

**Abstract**

The East-West exchange in academic fiction is seriously unbalanced, with Anglo-American novels far more common and more widely read, even in Eastern Europe, than academic novels from cultures other than the US and the UK and languages other than English. Or so I will argue, with considerable evidence to support this claim. I will discuss this imbalance and offer some suggested reasons for it, including one obvious reason—disparity in multilingual readers—and some more speculative ones including posited differences between east and west in how seriously they take the university as a setting and subject for academic fiction. I argue that Anglo-American writers, by contrast with their Eastern European counterparts, paradoxically take the university *more* seriously—that is, seeing the university, professors, and academic life as entirely suitable for representation in fiction, despite dissenting voices—and *less* seriously—that is, showing a willingness to satirize and burlesque academic life that, at least to some observers, is not just irreverent but irresponsible. Examples to support these theses will be provided but, in a way that may demonstrate their truth, most of these will be from the Anglo-American literary world, with a much smaller number of European examples.

**Keywords:** Academic novel, multilingual, Eastern Europe, Anglo-American, university, irreverence, East-West exchange, professors, academic life.

Not Quite Changing Places:  
Iconic Remediations of the “Human Anatomy” Topos at  
the Turn of the Millennium

ESTELLA ANTOANETA CIOBANU  
“Ovidius” University of Constanța

**Abstract**

The final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the advent of theories and practices committed to radical revisionism of received epistemic paradigms. Whilst the impact of gender, race, postcolonial and subaltern studies has been felt beyond the academe in everyday interactions, the backlash has not been tardy, either. I investigate gender identity representations in two anatomical projects, the US National Library of Medicine’s Visible Human Project and Gunther von Hagens’s exhibition of plastinate cadavers, *Body Worlds*, both of which ostensibly reclaim women’s place in society and anatomical representation, and whose worldwide dissemination and/or popularity provides for the globalisation of western anatomical icons. The VHP prides itself in furnishing datasets for the scientific study of the human body as both male and female. Gunther von Hagens claims that his touring exhibition encourages the “democratization of anatomy” through its opening to the lay public. For all their merits, however, the projects can also be faulted for their biased identitary representations. Whilst examining the literature on the VHP and responses to *Body Worlds*, my comparative analysis aims to uncover and analyse gender-related conflicts and identity displacements at work within both, which testify to the enduring patriarchal view of women’s place in society and discourse alike.

Transcultural Narratives and Oriental Observers:  
Marana's and Defoe's *Turkish Spy*

ELENA BUTOESCU  
University of Craiova

**Abstract**

The rise of the novel in “classic” modernity<sup>1</sup> coincides with the invention of the native, usually Oriental, informant, who supposedly finds a manuscript in some secret drawer and decides to translate it and then have it published. In the seventeenth century, a mixture of personal remarks, political views, and historical as well as political observations was provided by Giovanni Paolo Marana's *Esploratore Turco* (1684), the first epistolary fiction which located an Oriental in Europe, namely the Turk Mahmut in Paris. This “bizarre ouvrage” generated the publication of Daniel Defoe's *Continuation of Letters Written by a Turkish Spy at Paris*, which came out in print in 1718. This essay aims to examine the ways in which both Marana and Defoe used and abused the image of the Oriental observer in their attempt to re-imagine/invent and translate/construct new cultural identities on the passage from Europe to the Orient. The success and great popularity these texts enjoyed can tell us something of how a European narrator disguised as the Oriental Mahmut became a fervent advocate of the advancement of learning.

**Keywords:** modernity, transcultural narratives, Orientalism, Oriental observer, Turkish spy, cultural identity, “imperfect” translations, paratextual elements

Spaces of Negotiation: Hybrid Identity  
in Ethnographic Narratives of Contemporary  
Asian-American Immigrant Women

ANCA-LUMINIȚA IANCU  
Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

**Abstract**

Each of the ethnographic narratives included in *The Chosen Shore: Stories of Immigrants* adds a unique layer to the collective history of immigration, as it describes the individual experience of changing familiar physical places and navigating new emotional and cultural spaces. For the most part, the stories illustrate the complex negotiations experienced both by the first-generation parents and the 1.5- or second-generation children during their processes of acculturation to the American mainstream. Thus, this essay looks at the immigrant experience of two 1.5-generation American immigrant women, Sarah Lee (Korean American) and Kamal Patel (Indian American), with a view to examining the complex familial, educational, and social contexts that have shaped their processes of carving out individual spaces of hybrid identities.

**Keywords:** American immigrant women, ethnographic narratives, 1.5 generation immigrants, physical places, ethnic, cultural, and academic spaces, hybrid identity.

Displaced Academe: Fictionalized Easts and  
Westes as Lieux de Mémoire

CORINA SELEJAN  
Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

**Abstract**

This essay engages with campus/academic/university novels (depending on the chosen classification) placed (conspicuously) outside the comic-satiric tradition of the genre: Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, Saul Bellow's *The Dean's December*, André Aciman's *Harvard Square* and Patrick McGuinness's *The Last Hundred Days*. It proposes to highlight the ways in which the idea of and obsession with memory is fleshed out in these novels by drawing on Pierre Nora's concept of "lieux de mémoire" and on Paul Ricoeur's *Memory, History, Forgetting*. The argumentation aims at evincing the self-referentiality at work in fiction, memory and language.

**Keywords:** campus novel, Saul Bellow, Azar Nafisi, Patrick McGuinness, André Aciman, metafiction, lieux de mémoire, Pierre Nora, Paul Ricoeur, displacement, East/West, cosmopolitanism.

“I miei libri sono i miei figli:” Self-Reflexivity in  
Richard Powers’ *Galatea 2.2*,  
an Academic Novel

MARTA LYSIK  
University of Wrocław

**Abstract**

Richard Powers, the protagonist and narrator of the academic novel titled *Galatea 2.2* and penned by a real Richard Powers, accepts a university appointment as a writer-in-residence. In addition, he becomes involved in an unrealistic research project to teach a computer program how to interpret literary works. *Galatea 2.2* manifests self-reflexivity at the level of style, characterization, and theme. It abounds in various representations of the processes of writing, reading, and teaching. This essay aims to highlight the self-absorption particular to academic fiction and to argue that academic fiction is not to literature what selfie is to Facebook, a shameless self-promotion. Such fiction is oftentimes viewed as an exercise of the ego, a narcissistic activity, but I would like to propose to treat it as a form of narrative introversion and self-analysis on the path to self-discovery when it comes to the community of scholars and writers.

**Keywords:** Richard Powers, *Galatea 2.2*, campus novel, academic novel, metafiction, self-reflexivity, writing, reading, teaching.

Power Relations  
between the University and Literature

MAX BESORA  
University of Barcelona

**Abstract**

This essay aims to illustrate how literature has had a critical attitude towards education, particularly towards the institutional university education, since the emergence of the first system of thought in favor of Reason and against myth. We will present a historical-sociological approach to see how there is a counter-hegemonic literary element in every period in the history of university education, which calls into question the games of *truth* and *education* of the university institution. To illustrate that point, we will establish a connection between Aristophanes' *The Clouds* and the Socratic-Platonic thought, given that it is in the *Academe* founded by Plato where we can find a precedent of the universities of our days. Next, we will focus on the development of the medieval university and the appearance of the Goliards, who play a very similar role to Aristophanes' *The Clouds* in relation to the institutional education. Finally, we will examine how American and European universities have been transformed by the entrance of the market and capitalist rationality in these institutions, while exposing the reflection of these changes in literature.

**Keywords:** University, Academe, academic novel, power, Aristophanes, Socrates, Plato, Paideia, Market, Humanities.

Return Migration in Anita Desai *Bye Bye Blackbird* and  
Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

ADRIANA-ELENA STOICAN  
Lumina, The University of South-East Europe

**Abstract**

The essay compares and contrasts the phenomenon of return migration as illustrated by literary works that present South Asian migrants to England and America in (post)colonial times. Considering the socio-economic triggers of migration, the essay investigates the characters' cultural evolution, interpreting their decision to return to India in relation to their ability to process foreign cultural norms. A layer of the analysis establishes whether the migrants' stay abroad is presented as an interval dominated by the occurrence of cultural clashes or processes of cultural translation. A second research focus is the interpretation of return migration as a response to the challenges of cultural adjustment or as an empowering action. A form of old transnationalism, return migration from Western destinations has not received enough attention in critical interpretations of the literature of migration. Therefore, the present essay seeks out to enlarge this section of literary studies by foregrounding the cultural and social factors that eventually shape the characters' decisions to give up their Western adventure. By comparing the two authors, the conclusion aims to establish the particular relations between South Asian characters, the American and British cultures and whether return migration functions similarly in these two different contexts.

**Keywords:** cultural translation, cultural clashes, ghettoization, immigrant, old transnationalism, return migration, South Asian, transcultural



Young Brides and Non-Resident Indians:  
Re-Interpreting the East/West  
A Sad Story of 'Home' and 'Back Home'  
in *Heaven on Earth*, by Deepa Mehta

IULIA RASCANU  
University of Mumbai

**Abstract**

The essay employs theories mainly from cultural studies, migration and diaspora studies, as well as feminist studies in order to approach the way in which the main female character handles (or not) her status as a new young bride from India to an NRI<sup>1</sup>. The analysis will look at her connection to the West, as well as the one to the East, while concomitantly trying to demonstrate whether the changing of places is indeed an immigrant's main reason of feeling displaced, dislocated, unhappy and alienated. What is it to be 'translated' (S. Rushdie) in the case of Indian brides who are sent away to the West to join husbands they barely know? How is their identity changed – if at all changed? Why do migrant women of the 'Third' world decide to go back to the East? Eventually, what is the real 'monster' to be fought and conquered when one is married, a female and an immigrant?

**Keywords:** Non-resident Indians, migration, diaspora, identity, women