

EAST – WEST CULTURAL PASSAGE

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ABSTRACTS

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Planetary Novels?: Cosmopolitanism and Globality In and Out of a National Literature

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Abstract

The rhetoric of ‘Globalization’ is freighted with both multiple political agendas and with counter-terms like ‘anti-globalization’, such that concepts like globality, cosmopolitanism, and the planetary often work as useful acknowledgements in literary studies of cultural passages in which national boundaries are thought beyond and sought beyond. Writing in the late 20th century, Ulrich Beck avers that “Globality means that from now on nothing which happens on our planet is only a limited local event; all inventions, victories and catastrophes affect the whole world, and we must reorient and reorganize our lives and actions, our organizations and institutions along a ‘local-global’ axis.” Corporate and social media report the major-stage events, but the reorientation of literature on a local-global axis will involve taking the ordinary-local into new loci. There may be a temptation to say that this returns literary focus to a rhetoric of universalism, diminishing the primacy of difference in lived experience, but global, cosmopolitan or planetary fiction need function not as an aesthetic representation of the universal in the local but as a fiction staged against an awareness of the interconnected world. This paper will seek to outline some of the terms and literary investments at stake in this discussion, while using for illustration examples from contemporary British fiction significant to both a national and a global literature.

Keywords: globality, world literature, mondialization, cosmopolitanism, glocal, multitude, Empire, contact point, planetary fiction.

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Disordered Reality, Diseased Cities and Desperate Detectives in Thomas Pynchon's
The Crying of Lot 49 and *Inherent Vice*

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Abstract

Unlike in classical detective stories, reconstruction of the hidden plot or crime and subsequent reordering of reality is not possible in postmodern novels such as Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Inherent Vice* owing to the textual indeterminacy caused by a surfeit of information and excess of meaningful cues, which instead of connecting, over-saturate the possibilities of coherence and order. Like Oedipa Maas's clues connecting weirdly from an underground postal system to a Jacobean tragedy to Maxwell's Demon, Larry Doc Sportello's trail leads to an elusive entity named the Golden Fang, which might be a nefarious sailing ship, or a fraudulent celebrity rehabilitation center, or a secretive consortium of dentists or even a dangerous Indochinese heroin cartel. Fraught with doubt, paranoia, and conspiracy, their trails soon link up to every sub/counter-cultural activity that is inherently Californian and prototypically American. California representing the final frontier of the American Dream, Pynchon's psychedelic detectives reveal the "stuff" that such dreams are made of. Unlike Oedipa who hopelessly awaits another array of cues at the end of *The Crying of Lot 49*, Doc drives through the fog that covers and paralyzes the freeways of Los Angeles in *Inherent Vice*: both entropic movements without any progress typify a universal desolation and cultural mayhem.

Keywords: Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Inherent Vice*, California, Postmodernism, American Dream, Popular Culture, Detective Mode, Ordering of Reality, Disorder, Entropy

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Ideology and Microcosm in Steinbeck's *Cannery Row*

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Abstract

The paper contains a brief overview of the ideological landmarks underlying John Steinbeck's novel *Cannery Row* as well as the synthetic treatment of one of his most important narrative techniques, microcosm representation. After identifying Lao Tze's *Tao Teh Ching* as one of the informing sources and discussing its minimalist philosophy of success in failure, an obvious Empsonian pastoral streak is singled out followed by the recognition of the novel's arbitrary form with intermingling time levels. An argument about the evolution of the position of narrator ends the ideological component of the paper. In the latter part instances of a microcosmic setting for the manifestation of processes and phenomena are identified and examined, as one of the multiple techniques that ground the narrative. The microcosm is considered in the infinite diversity of *Cannery Row* as a quarter, in its dignity as standing for the whole world, in its quality as miraculous universe and a realm of wonders.

Keywords: ideology, Taoism, pastoral, narrative technique, microcosm, diversity, miraculous universe

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The Limits of Empathetic Imagination

in Ian McEwan's *Saturday*

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Abstract⁵

Ian McEwan's novel *Saturday* foregrounds an essentially humanist, empathy-centred morality, illustrating how stories can influence our ethos by involving our imaginative understanding of other people. Although this empathetic involvement is one of the novel's main concerns, it is not presented as a given, but as an act that gives way to guilt, uneasiness, ambiguity, and moral dilemmas. The lack of empathetic imagination leads to misunderstandings and traumatic events, and, conversely, the ability to imagine oneself as another eventually proves a precious tool, charged with redemptive value, empowering a new vision of life. By drawing attention to the power and function of storytelling, McEwan points to the different ways of interpreting the world, and shows that we are confronted with a welter of contradictory yet not mutually exclusive truths, with a plurality of competing narratives, all reflecting coherent worldviews, none of which acquiring a superior position.

Keywords: Ian McEwan, *Saturday*, imagination, empathetic engagement, ethical value, violence, trauma, science

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Saira Shah's *The Storyteller's Daughter*
A Rhetorical Approach to Memory and Identity Crisis

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"I've given you stories to replace a community. They are your community."
"But surely stories can't replace experience." (*The Storyteller's Daughter*)

Abstract

Saira Shah's *The Storyteller's Daughter* (2003) delves into the issue of narrative as a means of self-expression and construction of meaning and a discursive condition for remembering and retelling stories of self and society. In the light of David Herman's view of stories as emanations from "cultural understandings of emotion", this study intends to explore ways of Self-/sense-making in a world in profound crisis. Shah's novel provides models of the world through stories, exploring the relation between personal and collective experience. Accounts of wartime Afghanistan and of different selves in different cultural milieux give the story a strong rhetorical force which challenges the reader cognitively, emotionally and ethically.

Keywords: narrative, rhetoric, identity, narrating self, storytelling, experience, crisis, memory

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East Eats West:
The Multi-Centered Reality

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Abstract

“As someone who straddles both sides of the Pacific, my ambition is to describe the marriage of East and West, their growing interdependence and, in the footsteps of V.S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie and Edward Said, convey a world of human flux and shifting borders and, ultimately, redraw the map of America, one based on a trans-Pacific sensibility”. This is how Vietnamese-American writer and journalist Andrew Lam introduced himself and his intentions in the 2004 PBS documentary *My Journey Home*.

His 2010 volume *East Eats West: Writing in Two Hemispheres* sets itself to fulfill the author’s declared goals. It is a complex, intriguing, informative and touching collection of essays, which retraces Lam’s experience as a constant traveler between worlds and languages. The mechanisms of cultural definition and negotiation are sharply and wittily captured, as the writer illustrates his and his family’s gradual integration into the ‘global tribe’. Where hemispheres overlap, there are uncharted territories to explore. Lam’s personal and professional discoveries reveal the potential of contact zones and offer insightful perspectives upon (im)migration and cultural identity.

Keywords: Asian-Americans, California, cosmopolitanism, diversity, hybridity, (popular) culture, Vietnam

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“The Opposite of Disappearing”: Jewishness and Globality in Nicole Krauss’s Novels

The History of Love and *Great House*

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Abstract

The paper addresses issues of cultural, ethnic and national identity as they emerge from Nicole Krauss’s two latest novels. They deal, among other things, with a hybrid and unstable Jewish identity in its evolution from the Holocaust and its aftermath into the contemporary global(ised) context. Central to almost all characters’ attempts to define themselves in ethnic, national and cultural terms are writing and literature. Thus, *The History of Love* is the title of both Krauss’s and one of her central characters’ books and in *Great House*, all of the four intermeshed narrative voices belong to either a writer or a passionate reader. Literature is seen as “an opportunity for compassion” (in Krauss’s own words) and thus as a ‘road’ to (moral) cosmopolitanism. Both novels emphasize, to different degrees, the globality of the post-Holocaust Jewish experience. The differences between *The History of Love* (which is the earlier novel of the two) and *Great House* are significant and unveil a disturbing progression: as the setting gets global, the tone becomes grave and the questions explicit: “What is a Jew without Jerusalem? How can you be a Jew without a nation?” (*Great House* 278). By operating with Bakhtin’s terminology (heteroglossia, dialogism, hybrid constructions), I intend to interrogate both the texts’ hybridity and the hybridity of identity that the texts thematise.

Keywords: Jewishness, cosmopolitanism, identity, hybridity, heteroglossia, dialogism, Bakhtin.

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Cultural Submission in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*

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Abstract¹⁰

The last two decades have witnessed an ever-growing interest amongst scholars all over the world in the literature of the American ethnic groups, the most outstanding of all being the example of African-American literature. Many books have been written, and prestigious conferences devote special workshops to the literature of the African diaspora. Such an interest springs from a world-wide preoccupation with *multiculturalism*, a dynamic concept that can energize the individual into searching for an authentic depiction of self and group life. Most often a multicultural approach uses several disciplines to highlight neglected aspects of social history, particularly the history of minorities. Concepts of identity, religion, race, class, culture, gender, and ethnicity are the driving themes of a multicultural approach, which also promotes respect for the dignity of the lives and voices of the forgotten. These driving themes will form the structure of this study of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*.

Keywords: Ralph Ellison, identity, race, multiculturalism, ethnicity, class, politics

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The Dynamics of Interculturalism in Children's Literature Translation

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Abstract

Current developments of Children's Literature Translation Studies prove that the globalization of the children's book market and of children's culture have had a major influence on translation proper as well as on the scholars' interest in the field. The intercultural turn in translation studies in general becomes evident in translating literature for children too. The aim of this paper is to show that there are a number of clear-cut changes in translation practices according to the impact of translation on the target culture. Although there is still a discrepancy between translation into English and translation from English into other languages, target readers are more than willing to accept a mutual exchange.

Keywords: potential change, interculturalism, translational alterity

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Literacy in the Network of Shifting Borders

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Abstract

Experiencing globalization as we do, with 'networking' the label for across-the-border communication since the end of the twentieth century ('border' taken in more senses than the most plausible one), we witness major shifts in long-established cultural patterns and consequently in the social and political *status quos* of most nations. There are such major contrasts between the astonishing technological breakthroughs achieved in IT, and the very nature of communication thence resulting, that the very substance of communication degenerates into a global, ceaseless, ever-mounting super-babble. It is against this general background that national and international governing bodies with ambitious social goals on their agendas have to cope with an abundance of illiteracy (as well as with other forms of social inadequacy) on the part of their citizens – who in turn claim more and more liberties (a fact that is apt to make generous humanist ideals hard to attain in the present historic context). Evidently, with such changes at hand, re-discussing definitions of fundamental cultural and social concepts is an unavoidable liability.

Keywords: communication; heroes for society; (functional) illiteracy; (functional) literacy; networking; re-defining cultural concepts.

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Interdisciplinarity in
Medicine in Translation – Journeys with My Patients

IRINA PĂNESCU¹³

Abstract

Danielle Ofri, both writer and physician, touches on, through fiction, some issues that emerge from living in a global world. Thus, the reader can acknowledge primarily the cultural conflicts that exist as a result of coming in contact with *the other*. Nevertheless, Ofri's journeys shed light on how language barriers, religious and racial differences can also offer fruitful, positive examples of identities, cultures and civilizations. Ofri pictures many challenges that are a consequence of our multicultural society, writing on the intertwining of medicine with the reality of globalization at Bellevue Hospital as well as worldwide. Her creative way of bridging cultural gaps is fundamentally based on rich insights into the human condition.

Keywords: global world, language barriers, cultural conflicts, racial differences, insight

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Antinomic Interpretations of Self
as Defined by Moral Rights and Copyrights in
British Tradition, Spirit and Feelings,
and The United States Constitution

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and
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Abstract

Why is the use of copyrighted materials in the United Kingdom referred to as a process of ‘fair dealing’, while in the United States it is referred to as a process of ‘fair use’? Because of the universality of communications and the ever expanding use of the Internet to facilitate the free flow of published expression between readers in the United Kingdom and the United States, works have comingled their respective copyright notices that are attached to them. At first glance ‘fair dealing’ and ‘fair use’ might appear to be synonymous terms having the same meaning in law, but they are not. But then, neither is there a simple explanation as to what either term means. To find an answer it is necessary to reference a supreme written law to understand both their parameters and penumbras defining national law on copyrights, as modified by international treaties.

Keywords: Copyright law; moral rights of authors; “fair use”; “fair dealing”; US Constitution; UK law, freeborn rights.

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U.S. Universities Lose Lead in Intellectual Social Responsibility

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Abstract

In the 1960's, many U.S. college students became disillusioned with the country's social policy and began to demonstrate for equality and justice for the oppressed in America. These young visionaries became role models throughout the world while fighting for "freedom for all." Fifty years later, and the major problems facing society such as sustainable development, human rights, and peace initiatives, have become global concerns. But rather than being in the forefront and actively confronting these issues, most American students and universities today are simply maintaining the status quo. (That is, perhaps with the exception of touting a "green campus" that uses recycled paper for napkins in the cafeteria or provides bicycles for student use.) While the United States is lagging behind in intellectual social responsibility, other universities throughout the world are actively engaged in improving the social, political, economic, and cultural lives of their nation and the world, and see it as their duty to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Keywords: intellectual social responsibility, corporate social responsibility, globalization

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