

“Never Mind How Creative You Are”:
Artistic Crisis and Global Dystopia in Kazuo Ishiguro’s
Never Let Me Go

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Abstract

The fiction of Kazuo Ishiguro repeatedly figures narratives of crisis and unreliability as a meta-diegetic means of subverting nationalistic ideologies. From *The Artist of the Floating World* to *The Remains of the Day* to *When We Were Orphans*, figures of distressed, unreliable narrators, entranced by nationalistic ideals, exemplify the authoritarian and fascistic tendencies within post-consensus politics. In *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro’s 2005 novel, this project takes on a new, cosmopolitan dimension as socially instituted clones – raised and harvested for the purpose of donating their organs – become the unexpected exponents of global technology, translating neo-liberal doctrine onto international relations. Positioned within a futuristic dystopia of genetic-technological abandonment, in which consumer choice provides a nativist basis for social exploitation, premised on ‘birthright’, this affirmation exposes neo-liberalism’s failure of democratic reasoning, wherein only those who are born ‘naturally’ to a nation (in accordance with ‘birth-right’) find access to authorised personhood. Building on Giorgio Agamben’s notion that the *homo sacer* (the unauthorised person) represents the central political figure of our time, indicative of global crisis, this essay reads the novel as an indictment of neoliberal politics, in which an emphasis on market-based humanism distorts the very concepts of the human and creativity.

Keywords: Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, Giorgio Agamben, crisis, dystopia, neo-liberalism, cosmopolitanism, *homo sacer*

Andrei Codrescu's *Wakefield* –
The Architecture of a Soul

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Abstract

In Andrei Codrescu's *Wakefield*, the Devil and his client strike a Faustian pact that forces the latter to embark on a quest for authenticity in order to live one year longer. Wakefield, the eponymous protagonist, who is the Devil's client, revisits the American society in search for "a real life." A collector and a cartographer of lost and hidden spaces, Wakefield learns that the genuine and the authentic reside at the heart of each individual, within the architecture of the self, inside the stories of each individual. The Other functions as witness of another's role in a society. The limits of each inner world condition the limits of outer worlds. Unexpectedly, the Devil ends up tragically, rejected by his own kin and alienated from a much younger, on-changing, nonconformist, and democratizing devils' society.

Keywords: authenticity, the *other*, alienation, inside/outside, architecture of soul, the daedalean labyrinth

Constructing Identity and the Self: A Psychoanalytic
Approach to Alice Walker's
*The Color Purple*¹

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Abstract

Mirrors are objects that hold a certain resonance for contemplation on simple points in life before major transformations occur. In this sense, for the protagonist of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, the mirror functions as a liminal object that opens the door of her imagination, paving the way for access to a world full of new possibilities and changing her Self into the Other and vice versa. This essay explores the way in which Celie experiences herself through the images of the Mirror Stage, the identity choices of her subjective formation, and ultimately, the resolution of the Oedipus complex. Each of these psychoanalytical concepts constitutes identity situations that are involved in the formation of the Lacanian subject. It is also the aim of this study to investigate, from a psychoanalytic perspective, the conceptual grounds upon which these notions are based.

Keywords: self, other, mirroring, desire, identity, subjectivity, Oedipus complex, Jaques Lacan.

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Teaming to Grow Up: Patterns of Development in Recent American Films

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Abstract

One of the most popular genres of Hollywood films is the coming-of-age narrative. This genre of film charts the growth process of its protagonists from ignorance to cognition. However, this journey or growth process is not wholly physical or completely psychological, and it is predicated on the attainment of cognition. This quest towards cognition may involve physical or psychological journeys which the protagonist must embark upon. This essay examines the way Hollywood films, such as *Gridiron Gang*, *Finding Forrester*, *Take the Lead* and *You Got Served*, reflect, through their unique and definitive content and visual style, the visual topography of growth. By applying the concept of the *Bildungsroman*, a German narrative form articulating human growth process or a narrative form which foregrounds the protagonist in the process of evolving, one can explore the politics of growth by looking at how young protagonists deal with the universal problems of coming of age, sexuality, and the search for identity. The essay shall equally demonstrate how these films subvert the traditional form of the *Bildungsroman* to give voice to marginalised protagonists.

Keywords: Hollywood, *Bildungsroman*, Growth, Film, Transition, Identity

Earth in the Balance: The Commodification of the
Environment in *The Eye of The Earth* and *Delta Blues &
Home Songs*

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Abstract

Contemporarily, Tanure Ojaide and Niyi Osundare are among the foremost politically committed Nigerian poets. The overriding concern of all their works is to comment on the politics of the season. In Osundare's own words, poetry is "man meaning to man". For Ojaide, a creative writer is not "an airplant", situated in no place. Both writers envision that literature should have political message. Thus, in Osundare's collection, *The Eye of the Earth* (1986) and in Tanure Ojaide's *Delta Blues & Home Songs* (1998), the major aesthetic focus is on eco-poetry, which interrogates the politics behind oil exploration in Nigeria. Both writers refract this in the terms of what Osundare daubs "semantics of terrestriality", i.e., words for the earth. Eco-poetry addresses environmental politics and ecological implications of humankind's activities on the planet. Armed with this poetic commitment, both writers unearth commodification of socio-economic relations, the environmental/ecological dissonance, leadership malaise, and the endangered Nigerian environment mediated through (global) capitalism. Both writers maintain that eco-poetry is a platform to upturn environmental justice, as well as to decry man's unbridled materialist pursuits. Thus, the preoccupation of this paper is to investigate how these poetry collections, *The Eye of the Earth* and *Delta Blues & Home Song*, unveil the despicable state of Nigeria's environment as a consequence of global capitalism.

Keywords: capitalism; commodification; eco-poetry; environment; Nigeria; Ojaide; Osundare.

Transplanted Identities in Jhumpa Lahiri's
Unaccustomed Earth

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Abstract

Unaccustomed Earth (2008) is Jhumpa Lahiri's second collection of short stories about upwardly mobile Indian immigrants, thriving in American urban spaces. The second-generation in particular shuttles between the two cultural milieus with ease (Spivak). Thus, Lahiri, whose parents migrated first to England, and then to the United States when she was a child, writes about transnational characters who develop capabilities to negotiate both worlds. By focusing on the opening short story, which also gives the title to the entire collection, I aim to show that this "model minority", as the Indian diaspora has been called (Bhatt), eventually strikes strong roots in foreign, unaccustomed earth. I will investigate the tropes Lahiri uses in order to illustrate this process of successful transplantation.

Keywords: Jhumpa Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth*, transnationalism, Indian American, diaspora, urban spaces, global migration

The J. R. Ward Forum: An Exercise in Hyperreality

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Abstract

This paper explores the on-line forum of popular fiction writer J. R. Ward from the point of view of Jean Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality. It analyzes this hyperreal contact zone between author and fans as a space where borders and identities become blurred, and recreated, a space where we may be able to talk across our differences and find common points of interest through our fantasies, to paraphrase Henry Jenkins in *Convergence Culture*, a space where the powerful and the disenfranchised struggle over meaning and validation.

Keywords: hyperreality, simulacrum, identity, popular fiction, strategy, tactics

Philosophical and Cultural Items in the Chinese Language

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Abstract

Language expresses and embodies cultural reality. People identify themselves and others through their use of language. There is no exception for Chinese language. Chinese language represents a system of signs with its own cultural value.

The present paper focuses on the interdependence between Chinese culture and language and to what extent one may constitute the other. Three aspects will be discussed: characters, words, and grammar. We may conclude that characters contribute to keeping the old traditional culture alive after the lapse of a thousand years; numerous social values are encoded in words and the grammar is intimately linked to the way that Chinese people think or look at the world.

Keywords: Chinese culture; Confucius; Chinese characters; language; logographic; rectification of names; the Doctrine of the Mean

The “Nonfiction” Story Revisited

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Abstract

Capote always referred to his work as falling into cycles in his development as a writer. In the fourth cycle, the one that began after the publication of *In Cold Blood* and turned out to be his last, Capote wrote rather little because of the mounting dependence on alcohol and drugs from 1977 on. In 1973, he published *The Dogs Bark*, a collection of essays, which had previously appeared between 1947 – 1967, followed then in 1980 by *Music for Chameleons*, which contains a variety of prose works written after 1975. Nevertheless, the work to which Capote devoted his final years, *Answered Prayers*, remained unfinished at the time of his death in 1984.

Keywords: Truman Capote, “nonfiction” novel, conversational portraits, autobiographical sketches, frame, concentric love triangles, gothic trappings, “nocturnal” pieces, vignettes, *doppelganger*

Is there a Right to Cultural Identity?¹

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Abstract

This article aims to present and discuss the constant evolution of the importance of cultural rights and the possible existence of a separate right to individual or collective cultural identity. At first, we will show why cultural rights were considered to be the “Cinderella of human rights” and then we will show that, nowadays, a main preoccupation of the international bodies is that of strengthening both cultural rights, as such, and also their mechanism of implementation and protection.

In doing so, the issues of cultural diversity and cultural identity, intimately connected with human dignity, are useful tools. The special relationship we’ve mentioned also brought into discussion the necessity, the existence and/or the desire for a separate new right, namely the one to cultural identity. The main debates on the existence of a right to cultural identity are connected with the its scope: is it useful in order to protect culturally vulnerable communities or, on the contrary, it is a dangerous step which will lead to a “legal” justification for the violation of other human rights, especially those considered to be the hard core, namely civil and political rights.

Secondly, the adoption and the opening for signature, on the 10th of December 2008, by the United Nations, of the *Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*²

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² Abbreviated, in the following lines, as *OP-ICESCR*

constitutes, in our opinion, a strong step ahead. It continues the road paved in the last decade by the UNESCO *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (2001) and UNESCO *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression* (2005). We will point out the main provisions of this Protocol and we will conclude in the sense that this instrument, the others before it and the General Comments of the Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (namely *General Comment no. 20* and *General Comment no. 21 of 2009*), are meant to sustain this desired evolution in the field of cultural rights.

Keywords: cultural rights, the right to cultural identity, cultural diversity, international law, cultural international law, collective rights, individual rights, collective cultural identity, cultural community, human dignity, Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.