



# **EAST – WEST CULTURAL PASSAGE**

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## FOREWORD

The present volume centers on the intersections of culture and space along a temporal continuum. The articles explore a variety of Eastern and Western cultural spaces from textual and theoretical angles as reflected in the works of a number of contemporary writers and poets that have created imaginary spaces in past and present history, such as Fugard, Clark-Bekederemo, Naipaul, Rushdie, and McEwan. The examination of culture along the spatial dimension, at different moments in history and time, has allowed the authors in the current issue to craft articles that examine the connections between individual, collective, public, and private cultural spaces, offering a nuanced interpretation of such issues as identity, constructions of self, home, family, society, history and memory as reflected in poetic, narrative, and sacred spaces.

In their informative essays, Busuyi Mekusi, Ogaga Okuyade, and Dumbi Osani interrogate and critically analyze the way in which African authors have engaged with issues of colonialism and post-colonialism. Okuyade offers a broad perspective on the themes of social and individual struggle that have pervaded the creative work of African poets from different generations (from the 1950s-1960s as well as contemporary ones), while examining the similarities and differences among generations and among individual poets. He also points to the ways in which the socio-political, economic, and historical contexts and public spaces have shaped the creative responses of the poets. Mekusi concentrates on Fugard's play, *Valley Song*, and offers an informed and minute analysis of the pervading themes in the spaces of this contemporary playwright's imagination. While engaging with similar themes pertaining to an African society in transformative turmoil, Osani focuses on Clark-Bekederemo's trilogy, *The Bikoroa Plays*. Osani proposes not only to demonstrate how the public space and social context depicted in the plays have impacted the private spaces of an

African family across several generations, but he also illustrates the artistic values of Clark-Bekederemo's trilogy in terms of motifs and dramatic construction.

Gönül Bakay, too, analyzes issues pertaining to colonialism and post-colonialism as she engages in her article with two of Naipaul's novels, *The Middle Passage* and *A House for Mr. Biswas*, in order to discuss the theme of colonial trauma. Particularly in her examination of Naipaul's travel narrative, *The Middle Passage*, Bakay focuses on the extent to which the geographical and physical spaces reflect and contain the effects of colonialism even during the post-colonial period. In this respect, her article is thematically similar to Monica Cojocaru's article, in which the author analyzes the connections between history and the physical space of a city, Berlin, in McEwan's *The Innocent*. As Cojocaru points out, McEwan invites "his readers to re-examine the importance of personal and collective memory and re-evaluate the past in light of the present through the imaginative rewriting of history" at a time of great political ferment in Western history, the Cold War.

Also from a historical perspective, but with a focus on the innovative narrative technique, Anca Tomuş analyzes Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence*, a novel set in a more distant space and historical time period, that is, the Far East in the Middle Ages. Tomuş's article explores the space that emphasizes the connections between identity and story-telling, bringing together Eastern and Western cultural spaces in order to disclose the intertwined narrative layers of history and imagination.

Rather than feed the current apprehension that the world is turning into a uniform, deterritorialised global village, these papers foreground the subtle ways in which spaces preserve and assert their identity. The itinerary proposed by this volume traces the coordinates along which cultures are constructed.

The Editors