

## 9 Conclusion

---

Based on the analysis of the three selected North American novels – Dionne Brand’s *Toronto*, *What We All Long For* (2005), Chang-rae Lee’s *New York*, *Native Speaker* (1995), and Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Los Angeles*, *Tropic of Orange* (1997) – this work examined global cities as a literary phenomenon (‘diverCity’). As shown, the poetics of narrative, place, and code-switching function as the common aesthetics of global, urban, and ethnic literature. Thus, this structured analysis of a poetics of ‘diverCity’ provided the connecting link for examining the triad of globalization and its effects, global cities as cultural nodal points, and cultural diversity in a globalizing age as a literary phenomenon.

In this work, the analysis by a poetics of diverCity provides the opportunity to illustrate how the common aesthetics are of significance to each of the three selected novels. The poetics of narrative, place, and code-switching are important in *Tropic of Orange* (1997) when portraying the cultural multiplicity, urban-geographic complexity, and socio-political ruptures of the global city. Although, both the poetics of place and narrative are essential in *Native Speaker* (1995), the poetics of code-switching is the novel’s dominating strategy in visualizing, exploring, and translating urban immigrant life and the integration of different ethnic groups into urban society. Similarly, with the poetics of narrative and code-switching, *What We All Long For* (2005) illustrates the different coexisting and overlapping worlds within the city while focusing its exemplifications on concepts of urban place and space. The three poetics thus play an important, albeit different, role in each literary analysis.

In this study, the poetics of narrative mainly concentrates on the novel’s genre, intertextuality, and narrative voice. In *Native Speaker* (1995), for example, different genre conventions, such as the immigrant novel, the spy thriller, and the detective story, are combined to maneuver outside literary and cultural categories. In *Tropic of Orange* (1997), the story of Christopher Columbus’ conquest

of America is interspersed with elements of magic realism to parody literary conventions and, similar to the network-like composition of the seven culturally diverse characters and their stories, different and coexisting forms of genre are mixed to show multiplicity on different levels. Examples of paratextual devices include the chapter overview called ‘HyperContexts’ in *Tropic of Orange* (1997), the use of italics to mark translations in *Native Speaker* (1995), and the different justification in Quy’s chapters in *What We All Long For* (2005). In the chapters titled ‘Quy’, a different narrative voice is used to highlight the parallel, diary-like narration of the lost son’s story of life, stressing his struggle with linguistic fluency. Moreover, *Tropic of Orange* (1997) is written in a polyglot fashion, altering the narrative voice every chapter to suit the respective character in focus. Thus, at least seven different voices are found in the novel, mostly achieved by mirroring and sometimes parodying ‘ethno-linguistic’ stereotypes. This polyglossia creates closeness to the characters, featuring and thus envisioning seven perspectives and different worlds that coexist and later collaborate in the global city of Los Angeles.

The poetics of place focuses on the different forms of literary place and space. Description, figurative language, cognitive mapping, or mental maps create a specific literary setting, forming the basis for examining urban space and its concentration of cultural diversity. Different types of narrating the city can be identified, types conveyed with the help of figurative language or ones including themes of fragmentation and collage, as in the time-space compression and the redefinition of borders in *Tropic of Orange* (1997), or ones including symbolism, as when the city of New York functions as *the* immigrant heaven and thus represents the American dream as a whole in *Native Speaker* (1995). The presented environment of the narrated city is also of importance. Whereas the introduction to the global city in a winter setting in Dionne Brand’s Toronto is an example of the natural environment, highlighting the interdependence of nature and culture, the description of the Los Angeles highway system and its comparison to ‘veins’ is a reference to the ‘built’ cityscape of ‘real’ cities. Moreover, a major distinction is made between public and private space, as the different types of escapes, such as ethnic, gendered, and generational, describe forms of integration and suppression in urban space in *What We All Long For* (2005). Whereas Lee’s New York and Brand’s Toronto are portrayed as rather static cityscapes due to John Kwang’s failure and the continuation of anti-immigrant racial politics in Giuliani’s time and the failure of integrating first-generation immigrants in a modern Canada, Yamashita’s Los Angeles is presented as a city in flux. The dynamics of Los Angeles include the distortion of geography when the physical

border of the Tropic of Capricorn is dragged towards the city or the homeless start living in upper middle-class cars.

The poetics of code-switching emphasizes the importance of the various forms and strategies of language use and translations. Functioning as important markers for global and ethnic literatures, the use of different languages or translations always involves a cultural process of negotiation. In *Tropic of Orange* (1997), apart from English and Japanese, Spanish is incorporated to highlight the diversity of the novel's characters. The character Bobby, for example, speaks Spanish like a Mexican, although he is Chinese, demonstrating his linguistic flexibility and hybrid identity. Similarly, African-Caribbean Canadian Dionne Brand decided to embed Vietnamese to emphasize a character's cultural particularity. Moreover, language constitutes the governing structure in Lee's *New York* because, as the novel's title indicates, the immigrant experience is repeatedly depicted in linguistic terms. The novel violently portrays how linguistic fluency does not automatically equal the recognition as a well-integrated American citizen, showing that language and conventions have the power to marginalize.

The combined poetics of 'diverCity' – narrative, code-switching, and place – formed the basis for the comparative literary and cultural analysis: In Dionne Brand's *Toronto*, the different worlds of the city and their coexistence and overlap become visible in 'the world in a city,' in Chang-rae Lee's *New York*, urban immigrant life and the integration of the different ethnic groups into society are visualized, explored, and translated in 'a city of wor(l)ds;' and in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Los Angeles*, different worlds come together, collide, and cooperate in 'the world city.'

With a literary analysis involving a poetics of 'diverCity,' it was the goal of this work to identify synchronic and specific aspects of global cities as a literary phenomenon. One of the challenges when comparing global cities as a literary phenomenon is that urban centers and their individual composition of cultural diversity are influenced not only by global synchronization processes but also by national, regional, and local particularities, such as the geography or the city's political or economic present and past. By considering the three key terms of this work – globalization and its effects, global cities as cultural nodal points, and cultural diversity in a globalizing age – combined with a structured analysis by a poetics of 'diverCity,' the specific characteristics ('specifiCity') and the synchronic impact ('synchroniCity') of global, urban, and ethnic literature were successfully identified.

The concept of 'specifiCity' describes the specific particularities of global cities as a literary phenomenon, partly shaped by a global city's present and past in economic, geo-political, and socio-cultural terms. Although *Toronto*, *New*

York, and Los Angeles are three of the largest, most culturally diverse and globally connected metropolis in North America, some of their characteristics differ immensely. Whereas Toronto functions as the Canadian role model of ‘multiculturalism’ but still struggles to integrate particular immigrant groups, New York long functioned as *the* American immigrant city. Los Angeles, however, slowly became the new representative of American cultural politics following the change of immigration politics in the 1960s. Thus, the three different cities show how different national or regional discourses impact global cities and their policies on cultural diversity in a globalizing age.

Each analyzed global city is characterized by its unique composition of diversity, which developed due to migration politics, geographical proximity, and economic possibilities. Whereas Mexican Americans are a major ethnic group in Los Angeles, for example, New York does not feature one dominant group. Asians, however, play a major role in each of the global cities; a role that started increasing with laxer immigration policies in the 1960s and that has been influenced by the proximity to the Pacific Rim or by military involvements, such as the Korean War. Furthermore, the type and the degree of integration differs in the cities, as is revealed in the novels by the type of interaction, such as through the same ethnicity or other immigrants, the formation of interethnic groups, the description of where immigrants live and how they move and interact in urban space, or how different cultures do or cannot interact on eye-level. Therefore while the scale of immigration is extremely high in each city and has multiplied manifold since the mid-1960s, the origin of recent immigrants and their insertion into the existing political, ethnic, and class structures varies immensely.

The concept of ‘synchroniCity’ describes parallel phenomena in a global context, such as globalization and its effects, similar qualities of global cities as important cultural nodes in a world-encompassing network of flows as a form of homogenization, or the multiplicity of cultural diversity in global cities as a form of hybridization in a globalizing age. Common developments include increased connectivity, improved technologies, and perceived convergence. These forces lead to a growing global interdependence, multi-directional migrations, and the slow erosion of geo-political borders. Thus, global economic, cultural, and media exchange is triggered, creating a state of synchronicity. In the three novels, these effects are described as a time-space compression, Westernization, or multi-directional migration. Globalization and its effects also manifest themselves in the similar structural, economic, and cultural qualities of global cities. Powered and accelerated by the various globalization forces that are effective particularly in urban space due to the intensity of cultural flows, a synchronization process is expressed in a common urban multiplicity of cultures and their exchange. Global

city inhabitants thus usually share a similar experience of urban cultural complexity. Therefore, constructions such as ‘national identity’ or ‘nativity’ are progressively questioned because cultural identity and exchange are increasingly understood and practiced in a flexible, dynamic, and multidirectional way.

Toronto, New York, and Los Angeles feature an overwhelming diversity of immigrants of different background. The three global cities function as sites of intense cultural contact: peaceful and creative as well as violent and eruptive. This tension is translated into literature, together forming an interethnic literature in Canada and the U.S. that captures the positive and negative effects of increasing encounters between an array of ethnicities in a globalizing age. Although each novel features different ideas of socio-cultural integration and self-definition, methods of an interethnic imagination represent a recurring theme. More than one ethnicity is featured in the novels with the goal to rewrite the formerly anglicized cities of Los Angeles or Toronto, to show inequalities, such as in the case of African and Asian Americans in New York or Toronto, or to illustrate collaboration or consolidation in a time of severe interethnic struggles in New York’s ‘Giuliani Time’ or following the L.A. riots. The particular strategies and techniques, however, vary from portraying interethnic friendship combined with an intergenerational conflict to evoking a feeling of a shared history of suffering and a shared minority vernacular and political representation to illustrating a network-like collaboration against a threatening apocalypse.

This work’s analysis of three contemporary North American novels has shown how a poetics of ‘diverCity’ provides the opportunity to examine ethnic urban literature in a globalizing age in a structured way. With the consideration of the common aesthetics of global literature, urban fiction, and ethnic writing – ‘the poetics of narrative,’ ‘the poetics of place,’ and ‘the poetics of code-switching’ – the focus of the analysis was on the impact of globalization and its effects, global cities as cultural nodal points, and cultural diversity in a globalizing age. Thus, globalization served as the temporal frame, global cities as the spatial frame, and cultural diversity as the topical frame.

By presenting different versions of an interethnic imagination identified in this work, the three novels contribute to a new poetics of ethnic global city literature (‘diverCity’), which focuses not only on one but on multiple cultures that simultaneously compete and collaborate with each other. Thus, a global perspective of simultaneity and diversity is created, united by a common yet specific literary urban space. With the interdisciplinary paradigm shift, which began in the 1990s and intensified in the first decade of the new millennium, literary and cultural studies as well as their analysis have changed substantially. The perceived increased connectivity and convergence, the erosion of borders as well as the ac-

celerated migration of the world-encompassing globalization process have been researched across the academic disciplines. Resultingly, North American literary and cultural studies were increasingly denationalizing and interethnic writing emerged, in particular in Canadian multicultural and Asian American literature. At the same time, established schools of urbanism were examining global cities and their qualities as structural, financial, and cultural nodal points in a worldwide network of flows of people, money, and goods. Considering the sum of these recent developments across the different fields, this analysis shows how contemporary North American global city literature in a globalizing age reflects the multiplicity of cultural diversity across ethnic boundaries.

The structured analysis involving a poetics of diverCity elaborates on how the novels illustrate and translate the multiplicity, complexity, and heterogeneity of global cities as cultural contact zones. Although each city and each novel features this phenomenon of an interethnic imagination only in a limited space and period of time, Toronto, New York, and Los Angeles enable such coexistence and tolerant interethnic interaction of their inhabitants. Therefore not only a global turn but also an interethnic turn in cultural and literary studies of the global city can be identified. This paradigmatic shift has the potential to be acknowledged and applied across disciplines. It shows how literary analysis contributes to a global, multi-perspectival understanding of literature, culture, and society. It can provide an interdisciplinary approach to understanding ethnic complexity beyond artificial categorizations, ethnic silos, and monocultural constraints.

Through the comparative analysis of the three novels, this work has identified the trend of globalization and its repercussions as moving in the direction of cultural hybridization and multiplicity. Globalization and its effects will continue to affect more and more people, literally encompassing the entire globe. This trend will be a significant force in the future, enriching the modes of interethnic representation and cross-cultural discourse in a world in which the physical borders and conceptual distinctions that have previously shaped one's identity are increasingly beginning to blur. Furthermore, due to the all-encompassing effects of such an unprecedented phenomenon, the global appeal of ethnic literatures coupled with global cities as a literary phenomenon and the related revelations will inspire and further the development of a juggernaut of future literary and cultural studies.