

Global tales

It is well known that different processes have contributed to the creation of a global culture: the internet, sport idols, satellite transmissions, American films and their distribution through DVD rental chains, fast food chains, beverages such as Coca-Cola, brands, shopping malls, etc.

Perhaps the political narratives that made possible a world of more or less free movement of goods, capital, symbols, and partly of people are even more important than these signs, symbols, icons and expressions of a global culture. Without doubt the most important of those narratives has been the new liberalism that has preached the opening of the markets of “non-Western” countries to the products of the West and the orientation of their production to world markets. In this global narrative, wealth, surplus, deregulation and repeal of custom barriers give positive associations, and the state is regarded as an obstacle to dynamic growth and development. After the fall of the Berlin Wall this narrative, which has influenced the policies of different nations on different continents, has provided a breeding ground for what Barber has christened Western culture, *MacWorld*, a global, homogenized consumer culture, in which the same music is listened to, the same television, is watched, and the same clothes are worn.

In Asia, Latin America and Africa, the fascination of products from Western modernity has had a long history, not only clothes, furniture, and cars, but also culture products. After 1980 the world has witnessed a cultural Americanization through the massive consumption of American material and symbolic products such as the fast food chain McDonald's, Nike and Blockbuster. *Shopping Malls* have proliferated in Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia, American through and through in their origins, but now notable symbols of the global culture. The film industry, especially Hollywood, and cable TV have created a common world of the imagination with figures, characters and narratives that make it possible for the audience

of the world to project experiences, dreams and aspirations into them and through them.

The same concept is realized in different countries through programs such as *Strictly Come Dancing* and *The X Factor*. Programs such as these contain tales like *Believe in yourself* and *It is good to be famous*, and in this way there are also global tales at a micro level.

The new liberal narrative is a political narrative at a macro level, which leads to some minor narratives. One of them is the new understanding of the role of universities as helpers of private enterprises. It is a reversal of the situation in the 1960s, where the prevalent idea among some teachers and many students was that the university should serve the working classes. Today, and because of the dominance of neoliberal and management discourses the prevalent idea is that the universities should aid the European nations and other nations around the world in the global economic struggle. Not only business studies, but also the humanities and social sciences in universities have had to justify their use to private enterprises, and forms of research and teaching have been developed where the purpose is the resolution of potential problems in the markets, characterized by something other than the national culture.

Other global narratives with political and economic dimensions are those that refer to climate questions and tourism.

But global narratives are not only political and newly minted. Global tales do not necessarily pertain to modern societies, but they may also be stories of any time common to all mankind. There is a treasure trove of legends and myths from different parts of the world with universal themes, dilemmas and morals. These can be found again in for instance folktales and cartoons, where the story is appreciated in a common understanding.

Today, identity is not only shaped by an a priori tradition or culture, and the individual can to a certain extent create its own self-perception. The framework for this is postmodernism, which can be regarded as a global tale as well. In this tale, cultures, subjects, and identities are seen as temporary and provisional, and in principle negotiable.

Earlier on, the local world– the family, the village, the nation etc. – had the most decisive influence on ideas and relations, but today the access to the rest of the world is easier, both in a concrete physical sense and in a technological sense, and ideas and relations have their

point of departure in a more global perspective. It is generally known that changes in one place may create global changes. For instance it is not enough to think nationally, as not everything can be contained within borders, e.g. questions of climate and of economics. This heightened interaction causes displacement of cultures.

The individual can participate in the creation of social influences through its creation of its own identity, and these social influences are of a global nature in their consequences. We are surrounded by narratives and possible choices, but the choice we make in every single situation has consequences for not only our own personal narrative, but also for the narratives of others. And vice versa. This tendency is strengthened as we get more closely connected in networks of information technologies, media etc. We are in a dialectics between the local and the global.

The total global frame of reference is enormous, and new, more uniform tales of a more global character may arise. It may even be ventured to say that globalization is also an epoch of global narratives.

The contributions to this issue of *Academic Quarter* present different global narratives either from a political, artistic, religious perspective or from the dialectic between the global and the local.

Sune Auken's contribution to this volume, *World Class or Will-o'-the-Wisp*, discusses a new global narrative about the universities. A narrative that has become more and more worldwide and makes itself prevalent, and whose purpose is to apply the logics of business institutions to the universities in order to measure them better and to make them more useful. Auken questions the value of competition criteria derived from business organizations (competition between organizations) for the universities that have a different and complicated structure and other goals with their work. Moreover, he uncovers the incongruence and weaknesses behind the international university rankings. The article shows that despite the fact that universities today are permeated in management ideology they can still articulate a critique of the problematic aspects behind the process.

In *Civil Society and Human Rights as Part of the Neoliberal Narrative: An Export to the Russian Federation* by Eunice Castro Seixas we find a quite different global narrative. Its starting point is that civil society and human rights are global narratives, presumed uni-

versal narratives that are exported to the South and more recently to Eastern European borders, as part of the “global governance” ideology. Seixas suggests that human rights and civil society liberal narrative are being transformed and re-appropriated in today’s Russian society, by the State, the Church and civil society organizations. Although there is not a full refusal of these liberal concepts by Russian human rights organizations, neither is there a clear alternative discourse.

Mikkel Eskjær presents us with three different narratives about the climate issue in *The climate problematic as a global narrative: Medicalization of a late modern risk*: a) different sociological scenarios that give us an understanding of the causes and consequences of climate change, b) the media’s narratives, their character, and content, and c) popular culture representations in the form of disaster narratives about the climate. Those narratives are helping to create the meanings that climate issues get at a global level.

The global narrative of microloan and its ethical issues by Thessa Jensen highlights microcredit’s chronological development from its origins in Bangladesh to its potentials today in the era of an Internet-based economy. In this narrative there is a conflict between the poor borrowers (the original recipients) and the development of microcredit institutions that will only work with market economy logics: profitability and growth. Jensen analyzes the ethical challenges that this conflict provides and tries to find an answer to them involving the ideas of Løgstrup and Levinas.

In *Books about the lot – told by a lot. Lene Andersen’s global existentialism*, Kim Toft Hansen presents and analyzes *Baade og*, a comprehensive and distinctive work in five volumes by Lene Andersen. You can place this intellectual performance as a kind of map in which different genres and sciences are mixed. An especially interesting theme in this issue of *Academic Quarter* is Lene Andersen’s ideas of a global existentialism containing a critique of religion, science and business: scientific arrogance, religious stupidity and commercial cynicism. Simultaneously there is an appeal to those cultural and economic systems to work as centripetal forces and to contribute to the common good acting positively e.g. promoting prosperity, education, formation, community and awareness about responsibilities.

In *The globalization in Ernst Jünger. From World War to World State*, Jan Schlosser follows the German writer’s understanding of global

phenomena and the development of global narratives in his writings. In the early works of Jünger he reflected on the modern technology that was developed in connection with World War I. In this period he had the controversial view that there are people who master these technologies. After Germany's defeat Jünger was a spokesman for a world state and already questioned the national state, which he considered the source of mass extinction. Schlosser shows that Jünger continued to be a supporter of the vision of a world state, but that in his later days he developed a critical narrative of globalization for different reasons. One reason was the ecological imbalance created by human greed for energy. Another reason was globalization's cultural homogenization with the following loss of cultural diversity.

Birgitta Frello's article *The Roma Squatters on Amager Common* deals with two narratives used to understand the situation of Roma people. On the one hand they cannot live up to the deep ingrained understanding that tells us that it is natural for all people to live and die in the country they were born in, the national narrative. On the other they cannot fit into liberalism's (and we could add postmodernism's) story about the positive possibilities inherent in the freedom to move through national borders, enjoying cultural hybridity, multiple identities, etc. Those are reserved for transnationalism from the top, but the Roma are placed among those who practice transnationalism from below: poor immigrants, refugees and others. Birgitta Frello uses the expulsion of some Roma people from Denmark in 2010 as a case study to shed light on the two narratives, their limitations and consequences.

Gunhild Agger's *Global Tales in Scandinavian Crime Fiction - Myths, History, Christianity and Moral Philosophy* presents us with some of the reasons behind the Scandinavian crime fiction success at home and globally. One of the best known reasons is that crime fictions contain a critique of liberalism and capitalism that show the downside of this ideology and this system. However, Agger claims that there are other important reasons that can help explain the worldwide success of Scandinavian crime fiction: the skillful use of common global narratives such as myths, history, Christianity and moral philosophy. For example the mythical dimension allows a deeper plot dimension, the historical dimension uses a common understanding of the periods in European history, which is a partially

known at a global level, and a Christian perspective helps with a common cultural code, namely the Bible and its narratives.

In *The Meek Inherit the Earth: Celebrating the End of American Power in Mars Attacks!*, James Stone suggests that *Mars Attacks!*, besides celebrating the aesthetics of alien invasion films, differs from other alien invasion films in the sense that while most Hollywood movies belonging to this group demonstrate U.S. strength and ingenuity, *Mars Attacks!* goes against the grain by refusing the general pro-American tone and foregrounding America's weaknesses; the film mischievously hints that the fall of the U.S. would be no tragedy, but an occasion for celebration.

Valentina Marinescu's *Hybridism in the understanding of media "stories" - An analysis of the Romanian popularity of K-drama / treats a very recent phenomenon in Romania: the nation-wide exposure to "Hallyru" popular culture products. The article aims at explaining the reasons of the popularity of this type of products with the Romanian viewers, and to give an answer to how Korean historical drama series viewing influence Romanians' perceptions in general and especially their perceptions of Asia.*

Biopics as Postmodern Mythmaking by Valentina Cucca takes as its starting point the fact that the biographical genre has experienced a renewed prominence. The main goal of her article is to identify links and connections between many contemporary socio-cultural issues and the ways in which biopics are able to thematize and rework them. She also aims at explaining which have been and are the more or less intrinsic changes and trends of this genre, which have led to rank current productions under a label (*biopic*). Finally, Cucca aims at revealing to which extent biopics' symbolical universes are able to thematize, reflect and rework social, political and cultural identity uncertainties that have invested postmodern subjectivities.

"Which of you shall we say doth love us most" – King Lear and the necessity of salt by Imke Pannen is initiated by the idea that the motifs of parents' love for their children and children's love for their parents are common themes in various narratives of all mankind. According to Pannen, the idea of a parent demanding a declaration of his or her child's love is a less recurrent topic in literature, but it does figure in myths and fairy tales. In the article, the focus is on this theme in Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear* and *The Salt Prince*.

In *Horrors from Ribe and its environs: the horror tale as a global tale*, Mathias Clasen takes as a starting point the fact that the human beings from all documented cultures spend a lot of time in fictive worlds, considering that their biological goal is to pass along their genes. According to Clasen, this suggests that art has deep roots in the human biological design. Through a reading of Teddy Vorks' horror novel *The Dike*, Clasen supports Joseph Carroll's hypothesis; that literature makes us better at surviving and reproducing, because fictive tales can make us better at understanding and navigating in both our inner as our outer landscapes.

Testing the Limits: Forbidden Love in Two Anglophone Caribbean Texts by Camille Alexander Buxton is initiated by the discussion whether forbidden love, a form of romantic love that is a recurrent theme in literature, is constructed or natural. In the article the theme is addressed as a characteristic of natural, human emotions rather than a social construct with a specific code of conduct, indicative of Western culture. Forbidden love is a theme in some Caribbean texts, and in the article, Buxton examines texts from two Trinidadian authors, Shani Mootoo's (2005) *He Drown She in the Sea* and Elizabeth Nunez's (2006) *Prospero's Daughter*.

Natural history from the 18th century – a global tale? by Simone Ochsner discusses the apparent paradox that a series of scientific works from the 18th century, which mainly seem to focus on the local, can be considered global tales. Ochsner wonders if it is possible to see natural histories as global tales when they at that time, as regards content, change the focus from the encyclopedic to the regional and local. Ochsner has an etymological starting point, as she asks what *global*, a concept which has been used for some decades, might have meant in the 18th century.

In *Baheb el Cima – The fight of representation in an Egyptian context*, Lise Paulsen Galal analyses the global and the local tales which are activated within and around the movie *Baheb el Cima* in relation to its release in Egypt. Galal illustrates how the global and the local tales apparently converge in the movie, but do not converge outside the movie. The focus in the article is on the tale of freedom, and how this tale is encountered by tales of the nation, the minority and religion.

Tales of Tourism - Global Changes and tourism discourse by Karina Smed presents us with what has been the dominant discourse of

tourism, i.e. a discourse which has had its roots in the West's economic and cultural hegemony and the problem of the formation of identity from the dichotomy "self" and the "others". The author discusses to which extent tourism discourse is global as the reception of it has been different depending on the context. Moreover, she reflects on the impact upon this global narrative that the new economic world order will have. The new and emergent economies lead to a flow of tourists in the opposite direction: from China, India and Russia to western countries and worldwide and this will probably change the concept of tourism and our idea of identities.

Nicolai Jørgensgaard Graakjær's contribution, *McJingles - On the use of music in the McDonald's-campaign 'i'm lovin' it'*, is a stylistic and linguistic analysis of a slogan in an advertising campaign from McDonald's. McDonald's is one of the most prominent symbols of global culture and as such has been the focus of discussions about the homogenization of culture at a global level. Based on its analysis of the slogan's musical minimization and variation Graakjær argues that McDonald's does not only adapt itself to a time when the audience are saturated with advertising, but the burger chain, even though it strives for global standards, can still make cultural considerations and be adapted to local conditions. Here we see a different perspective linking well with the considerations that Karina M. Smed makes about the relationship between the global and the local based on tourism discourses.

In *The global awards – cross-mediality, mainstream movie cult and celebrity matrix*, Helle Kannik Haastrup argues that awards have to be considered media events with several functions at the same time. The article mainly treats *The Academy Awards*, and secondly *MTV Movie Awards* (2010). According to Haastrup, both awards stage-manage the "red carpet" and the "speech of thanks", and work as a platform for image management of the stars and mediated fashion.

In *Starbucks: Value-driven Consumerism as a Global Tale*, through an analysis of a Starbucks campaign, Jørgen Riber Christensen uncovers new trends in marketing, i.e. a new type of market campaign characterized by ethical considerations from both the producer's and the consumers' side, at the same time the appeal to purchase goods with an ethical dimension has as agents the consumers through their use of new global fora such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and various blogs. "156 Countries Sing Together

for the Starbucks Love Project” is an elegant expression of a global story where the global and national are united.

The starting point of *Myths in advertising: current interpretations of ancient tales* by María del Mar Rubio-Hernández is that despite the influence of science and technology in today’s world, there are still myths that play a critical role in our social imaginary and many of which have different modern manifestations. According to Rubio-Hernández, mass media today could be highlighted as the most efficient vehicle that transmits myths in our culture, since mass media do not only extend those narratives, but also amplify them. Her article specifically focuses on the presence of myths seen in advertisements, and she argues that advertising utilizes elements which are in the collective imaginary, and consequently are already settled in the audience’s mind, guaranteeing its recognition and identification.

Finally, this issue contains an interview, *Poet-Intellectual and Public Sociologist*, with Zygmunt Bauman by the Danish sociologist Michael Hviid and the British Keith Tester. Bauman has enriched our understanding of modernity, postmodernity and globalization. In this interview, asked about his audience, the Polish-born sociologist takes us through the different conceptions, especially those the Marxist tradition has developed about the place and role of intellectuals, their mission and importance to society. Bauman focuses specially on Adorno and uses him to emphasize that although we have definitely left behind the idea that intellectuals are historical agents of social transformation, we must not disregard the idea that intellectuals have something to say and that they can be important because we are confronted with suffering, threats and fear. The intellectual can have the privilege of being a detached observer.