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Editorial

American fiction is as vibrant and varied as ever. That is what transpires from the first three articles in this issue. All three examine important contemporary novels that reflect a different aspect of a changing America, as well as constituting by their very existence the changing face of American fiction itself.

The issue starts with “The Violence of Hybridity in Silko and Alexie” by Cyrus R. K. Patell. The author finds that the two Native American novelists, Leslie Silko and Sherman Alexie, employ a narrative strategy based on an understanding of “hybridity as a crucial fact about identity” and aimed at depicting “the ontology of hybridity as an ontology of violence.” This is contradictory to a logic “that is dominant within American culture,” writes Patell, the “logic founded upon *ontological individualism*.”

The second article is “Culture, History and Consciousness in DeLillo’s *White Noise*: The Aesthetics of Cyberspace” by William S. Haney II. The author examines how in the novel in question, “reality and self-identity for the characters hinge on the images of media representation, primarily by television but also by computers.” For Haney, “individual experience counts for less than public information,” in DeLillo’s novel, and “through television and other media the collective perception of this information enters (and in a way constitutes) social consciousness.”

The third article is Magdalena Delicka’s “American Magic Realism: Crossing the Borders in Literatures of the Margins.” Viewing magic realism as “a mode which crosses the borders between two different forms of reasoning,” Delicka examines two novels by two American ethnic authors, Louise Erdrich’s *Tracks* (1989) and Amy Tan’s *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995). Her article demonstrates how in these novels, the “boundaries between the real and the supernatural fade.”

In “Didion’s ‘On Going Home’: The Rhetoric of Fragmentation” Dilek Direnç directs attention to a 1960s piece, an essay by Joan Didion from her *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (1968). This is an article on rhetorics, analyzing minutely how Didion achieves the sense of fragmentation in post-World War II American society through stylistic devices. “Using the techniques of an alternate grammar of style and of New Journalism,” writes the author, Didion gives her readers a warning “against the disintegration of social order, apparent fragmentation and resultant rootlessness.”

Two young scholars from Çukurova University, Türkey Bulut and Cem Can, under the guidance of their professor F. Özden Ekmekçi, visited the American schools in İncirlik, the military base from which the late President Turgut Özal infamously allowed US troops to attack Iraq during the Gulf War. They wanted to know what students did while their daddies were throwing scud missiles. It turns out that they were getting a “multicultural education.” In “A Descriptive Study of Multicultural Education in İncirlik Schools,” Bulut and Can report on their findings through photographs they have taken. Whether the curriculum differs or not in any way from schools located on US soil is up to those living in the US to assess, but it is interesting to observe how these junior “innocents abroad” learn to be Americans, in the new fashion—the politically correct, multicultural way.

William DeGenaro in “Post-Nostalgia in the Films of Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez” discusses the movies made by these two directors to find that they “call into question the very extent to which society can trust in the existence of a stable past.” For DeGenaro, Tarantino and Rodriguez “subvert the notion that nostalgia establishes ‘reassurance and direction’ in the contemporary individual,” and achieve this through the stratagem of “replacing an idealized past with a pastiche of stereotype and gore.”

It is customary to write an obituary for the departed. That is exactly what I would like to do for the “American Library” in the Turkish American Association building on Cinnah Caddesi in Ankara which has closed its doors to the public to give way to an up-to-date, sophisticated high-tech center of research and information for scholars. The American Library was frequented by many Angoriotos. There were students, whether from high schools or universities, whether barely learning English or expected to write erudite term-papers in that language, whether to leaf through popular magazines or get hold of a volume to be found nowhere else in Ankara, all of them able to dream their own special “American Dream” while within the walls of the library. There were many retirees; my father, a longtime US resident, would frequently end his daily stroll there doubtless to get a whiff of American air through the daily press he read, when, past eighty, he lived in Ankara during the last years of his life. Many of my girl friends, graduates of American schools in İstanbul and İzmir, whether career women or socialites, would go there periodically to take out American novels they had been nourished with from a tender age. As a young mother of three small children unable to work outside, I would repair there whenever I found a moment, to read *Signs*, the women’s studies journal, elated to find my preoccupations translated on paper so many miles away, myself transported mentally to an oasis of “sisterhood” so many miles away. Today, I am formally an academician who by definition is one of those privileged to have access to the new center. Yet I feel nostalgic, not only for what I once was, but for what the US during the Cold War was, for all of us in the “free world,” a role it now must feel compelled to relinquish, and which no CD-roms or information superhighways can make up for.

The closing of the American Library to the public signifies the end of an era. Evidently, it has accomplished its mission, just as the many now-defunct American missionary schools having mushroomed all over Anatolia, more often than not in towns populated by minorities, at the beginning of the century before the demise of the Ottoman Empire had. The library functioned perfectly as a dream factory anchoring us in a glossy and colorful world of democracy and liberalism, while charming us away from the lure of the “evil Empire” and its rhetoric. The end of the Cold War today reminds us of the fragility of empires.