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(Trans)cultural Voices of the East and the West in Jhumpa Lahiri's and Anita Rau Badami's Literary Creations

The present paper aims to develop a comparative perspective on Jhumpa Lahiri's and Anita Rau Badami's visions of transcultural interactions as illustrated by their fiction of migration. Contemporary writers of Indian origins living in the USA and Canada, Lahiri and Badami place their Indian protagonists in transnational regimes of belonging, either engaged in mobility across physical borders, between India, America and Canada and/or connected by various networks of (tele)communication. Consequently, the theme of migration/border crossing, so prominent in their literary creations translates as dialogues and intersections between Eastern and Western cultural paradigms. This discussion focuses on the transnational literary space created by the two authors in order to highlight processes of cultural (ex)change experienced by the Indian characters, whether at home or abroad. Because most of the protagonists are female (trans)migrants engaged in various patterns of transition, the argument will examine the intersection between Hindu gender and caste ideologies, North American discourses of identity and theories regarding mobility, empowerment and belonging. Therefore, the present research sets out to establish whether the act of crossing physical/national borders also entails a process of cultural transgression that may possibly lead to syntheses between Eastern and Western cultural models. Moreover, the argument also aims to establish whether the protagonists' transnational experiences generate hybrid identities, and whether one can identify nuances of this cultural hybridity. Which cultural values are negotiated/reshaped in the transition from India to America and Canada? Are there instances of non-migrant characters which transgress conventional roles without crossing the physical borders of nations? Do these authors present transnational mobility as an empowering mechanism across generations?