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Global visions and East/West intercultural communications: From Whitman to Kipling to Friedman

Visiones globales y comunicación intercultural este/oeste:

De Whitman a Kipling a Friedman

GUIYOU HUANG¹

Este ensayo analiza expresiones poéticas y periodísticas de visiones globales y comunicaciones interculturales expresadas por tres escritores: el poeta y periodista estadounidense Whitman; el poeta, novelista y periodista británico Kipling; y el escritor y periodista estadounidense Friedman, todos los cuales comunican los mensajes a través de culturas y razas para proyectar visiones de una unidad global posible.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Globalización, Comunicación, Whitman, Kipling, Friedman.

This essay analyzes poetic and journalistic articulations of global visions and intercultural communications as expressed by three writers: American poet and journalist Whitman; British poet, novelist, and journalist Kipling; and American writer and journalist Friedman, all of whom communicate messages across cultures and races to project visions of possible global unity.

KEY WORDS: Globalization, Communication, Whitman, Kipling, Friedman.

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INTRODUCTION

East/West encounters have long been described by travelers, humanists, poets, colonialists, journalists, novelists, and scientists, ever since the times of Marco Polo and Columbus, though large-scale interactions with greater frequency and consequence had not occurred until the nineteenth century, when European colonialism reached its heyday. A considerable quantity of literary works depicting global visions and East/West encounters has been produced over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but little scholarly analysis has been undertaken of such literary expressions. This essay analyzes poetic and journalistic articulations of global visions and intercultural communications as expressed by three Western writers: mid-nineteenth-century American poet and journalist Walt Whitman; late nineteenth-century British poet, novelist, and journalist Rudyard Kipling; and late twentieth-century American writer and journalist Thomas Friedman, all of whom were fascinated with the East/West dynamics, and all of whom wrote literary and journalistic works, in my opinion, for the purpose of communicating messages across cultures and races to project visions of possible global unity and to promote understanding and universal brotherhood, despite the abundance of natural and cultural barriers.

Culture is an all-encompassing, slippery concept. According to some sociologists, culture is learned rather than inherited. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952), for example, argue that the core of culture are social values and norms as “culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other hand, as conditioning elements of further action” (p. 357). Simply put, culture is a systematic collection of meanings. For the East and the West, not only do their cultural beliefs differ in many aspects, the diversity of their racial behaviors and practices is also remarkable, some examples of which will be seen especially in the works of Kipling and will be examined in this essay.

Throughout the twentieth century, approaches to theorizing intercultural and interracial communications of the East and the West underwent transformation from modernization theory to cultural studies perspectives and then to the theory of information society. These theoretical approaches reflect the concerns of the times in which they were witnessed. The three authors named above represent issues of their eras and are chosen for discussion for several significant reasons: they are all journalists at some points in their lives and all write with journalistic perspicacity; they all share a fascination with and write about India, the focal point of my critique here; they all evince a great deal of interest in East/West relations; and just as importantly, their writing careers, from 1855 (initial publication year of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*) to 2005 (first edition of Friedman's *The World Is Flat*), span a century and a half, a time duration long enough to demonstrate the vitality of sustained global visions about the East and the West in both concept and practice. India as an embodiment of the East captured these writers' imagination due to its historical position as a British colony as well as a converging point for East/West meetings. In this essay the East is specifically represented by India and to a lesser degree, by Afghanistan, and the West, by the United States and Great Britain.

WHITMAN: TECHNOLOGY AND GLOBALIZATION

On May 10, 1869, at Promontory Summit in Utah, the final golden spike joining eastern and western United States was driven in by Major General Grenville M. Dodge, completing the continent's first transcontinental railroad, the Union Pacific Railroad. In 1871 Whitman notes this epoch-making feat in *Passage to India* as he celebrates the utility of innovative transportation and communication devices: "The New [world] by its mighty railroad spann'd,/The seas inlaid with eloquent gentle wires" (p. 275). These modern marvels would benefit not just the United States but also the rest of the world:

The earth to be spann'd, connected by network,
The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage,

The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,
The lands to be welded together (p. 276).

Yearning for the spiritual unity of the world and proclaiming the necessity of the soul's passage to the eastern hemisphere as part of God's purpose, Whitman goes on to note the means by which such unity can be achieved: the facts and wonders of modern science that in his day and age include new technological inventions that lend expediency to transportation and communication. Imagining himself riding a train on the Pacific railroad that surmounts every barrier, the poet credits engineers, architects, and machinists for "Bridging the three or four thousand miles of land travel,/Tying the Eastern to the Western Sea,/The road between Europe and Asia" (p. 277). So with the advents of transportation facilities such as the railroad and communication devices such as the telegraph, Whitman proclaims victory for the realization of Columbus's dream, "(Ah Genoese thy dream!/Centuries after thou art laid in thy grave,/The shore thou foundest verifies thy dream)" (p. 277).

In the optimistic spirit of the poet as a unifier and communicator, Whitman declares all separations and gaps bridged not only by the inventors and voyagers but also by "the true son of God, the poet," who "absolutely" fuses Nature and Man. With robust enthusiasm the American Bard continues:

I see O year in you the vast terraqueous globe given and giving all,
Europe to Asia, Africa join'd, and they to the New World,
The lands, geographies, dancing before you, holding a festival garland,
As brides and bridegrooms hand in hand (p. 279).

The joining of continents by the railroad and through telegraph wires is analogized to unions in marriage. In Mason's view, "Whitman envisioned a world ready for its final accomplishment: the creation of spiritual unity" (1998, p. 507). While Mason offers a more metaphorical interpretation of Whitman's global vision, the literal significance of the poem should not be lost, that, the poet embarks on a quest for global harmony expected from unions amongst countries and continents made possible by modern technology.

The British novelist E. M. Forster was so inspired by Whitman's vision for intercultural communications and global unity that he appropriated his American colleague's idea as a title for his own novel *A Passage to India*, the power of which, according to Bradbury, lies "in the Whitmanesque ambition to include multitudes, to find eternity in some order in the given world" (1987, p. 43), though as another scholar Bharucha observes, Forster also refutes Whitman's vision of the marriage of East and West and "its assumption of global order and universal brotherhood" (1987, pp. 104-105). In another novel of his, *Howards End*, Forster reaffirms the idea of connection and communication vis-à-vis isolation, "Live in fragments no longer. Only connect..." (1954, p. 187). The meaning of connect, "the salvation that was ... in the soul of every man" (p. 186), becomes even more accentuated in a statement made by the book's protagonist Margaret Schlegel: "connect – connect without bitterness until all men are brothers" (p. 269).

Connecting is thus projected as a means by which to achieve universal brotherhood, with its attainment being facilitated by technology and science. Technological advances in transportation and communication were to spawn more access to intercultural and intercontinental interactions among individuals. The West of the nineteenth century was fascinated with the power of modernization where communication beyond national borders could be used to spread the message of modernity and transfer the economic and political models of the West to the East which would in turn carry the hope of helping transform traditional societies. The end results of the West's technological advances could be catalytic to the East in bidding farewell to its tradition, or "backwardness." Lerner (1958), who ushered in the period of modernization theory with his study of the Middle East in the 1950s, argues that "from the West came the stimuli which undermined traditional society that will operate efficiently in the world today, the West is still a useful model" (p. 47).

KIPLING: BIFURCATED VIEWS ON GLOBAL UNITY

Kipling on the other hand refuses to regard the Western path to modernization as the most effective way to shake off the traditional "backwardness" of the East; instead in "The Ballad of East and

West” he presents a bifurcated, even schizophrenic, understanding of intercultural and interracial communications or lack thereof between the East and the West. Kipling’s works explore how the dominant culture plays a critical role in the West’s economic and cultural expansion in the nineteenth century, a topic that Said also probes in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) which, looking into the connection between imperialism and literature of Western countries, contends that literature reflects and supports the culture that creates it. Kipling is a case in point. In intercultural communications the notion of culture is conceptualized as a key player in disseminating and propagating the values and norms of the dominant culture. Therefore, cultural communications between the East and the West are no more than a sort of one-way flow, where Western culture and ideology occupy a paramount position that Kipling critically examines in his poetry and fiction.

Kipling shows an acute awareness of nineteenth-century national identities, racial bias, and continental divide between the hemispheres. Said even goes so far as to assert, “The division between white and non-white, in India and elsewhere, was absolute, ... and no amount of friendship or camaraderie can change the rudiments of racial difference. Kipling would no more have questioned that difference, and the right of the white European to rule, than he would have argued with the Himalayas” (1994, pp. 134-135). Said might have overstated Kipling’s racial views that may be more true of *Kim*, but are hardly applicable to “We and They” and “The Ballad of East and West,” both of which contain evidence that precisely questions that difference.

“We and They,” according to Dobrée, is an example of Kipling’s verse “which has a meaning, makes an impact which prose cannot give”, and which is “a sermon against snobbery and racial discrimination” (1967, p. 214). The poem looks at a dichotomy between the self and the other and questions race relations from a first-person viewpoint:

Father, Mother, and Me,
Sister and Auntie say
All the people like us are We,
And every one else is They (p. 277).

The racial divide/othering is blown wide open through the metaphor of a family related and bound by blood as opposed to non-family folks –members within this inner circle are properly called We, and those without are simply labeled They– outsiders who are genealogically and geographically removed from We:

And They live over the sea,
While We live over the way,
But –would you believe it?– They look upon We
As only a sort of They! (p. 277)

This poem centers on a dyad of opposites represented by two plural pronouns, We and They, separated by a geographical gap embodied by the sea. In the above-quoted lines, however, the speaker also introduces a lower-case third party, you – who could be potentially a listener/reader/observer. The use of the second-person pronoun suggests that Kipling is not merely interested in addressing folks who hold conventional views on a perceived opposition between We and They. He is only too familiar with them and their views as he has actually lived both “here” and “there,” respectively corresponding with We and They. The power of these lines resides in Kipling’s ability in switching positions, for he is at once willing and able to see the racial divide from a mediated viewpoint. What are fixed, immovable opposites suddenly become dynamic and fluid and take on new perspectives due to the occurrence of understanding of “They” over the sea who are just as biased as “We” here at home. The introduction of you is therefore noteworthy because you –the reader/listener/observer– are willy-nilly being pulled into a debate about difference and identity, distance and proximity: “Like” designates identity, and “else” indicates difference. “You” thus become a key witness to difference and identity while assuming the role of a mediator/harbinger across cultures and races.

In this situation, the conceptual framework about relations provided by Levinas is pertinent to understanding intercultural communications between the East and the West, and between the self and the other.

Our relation with the other (*autrui*) certainly consists in wanting to comprehend him, but this relation overflows comprehension. Not only because knowledge of the other (*autrui*) requires, outside of all curiosity, also sympathy or love, ways of being distinct from impassible contemplation, but because in our relation with the other (*autrui*), he does not affect us in terms of a concept. He is a being (*étant*) and counts as such (Levinas, 1996, p. 6).

The other in Kipling's poem is seen as distinct in racial, cultural, and even culinary terms as the poet further delineates what and how each group eats:

We eat pork and beef
 With cow-horn-handled knives.
 They who gobble Their rice off a leaf,
 Are horrified out of Their lives;
 And They who live up a tree,
 And feast on grubs and clay,
 (Isn't it scandalous?) look upon We
 As a simply disgusting They! (p. 277)

The speaker demonstrates a humorous awareness of cultural stereotypes associated with each group, in this case, their eating habits and respective perception of the other group's customs. A notable difference between them is in the items of consumption: that We eat pork and beef while They take in rice hints at the degree of plenty/paucity that suggests economic, if not racial, superiority/inferiority. A second difference lies in the presence/absence of dining instruments: We use silver wares while They rely on hands. The mediation by the tools – or simply the possession of them – suggests the superiority of a civilized We, while the immediacy of the hands implies a lower level of advancedness, if any, on the part of They. The disturbing metaphor, though, is not about the silver ware or the food on the dinner table; rather, it is about the habitat of They and their “despicable” nutrition source: living in trees and eating insects implies their savagery and proximity to nature, while We reside in urbanized environments where trees are city decorations and shade makers and insects are mere nuisances, not culinary delights.

While eating beef and pork seems to represent a higher level of civilized life for We, no sensitivity is shown toward the cruelty involved in slaughtering the animals; in fact, such implicit cruelty continues to rear its head in the following stanza: “We shoot birds with a gun. They stick lions with spears”. Killing/butchering is obviously perpetuated by both groups, except that We do so with a gun and They with sticks, once again reinforcing differences in the level of civilization and technological superiority. The irony of incongruence is seen in Our use of guns to kill small things like birds (for fun or for food is not known) while They fight giant beasts such as lions with primitive spears. In addition to exposing the technological inequity, the poem casts a glance at some differences in the dress code: “Their full-dress is un/ We dress up to Our ears”, essentially saying that They are naked while We are decent. This stanza, though, spells out an exceptional identity between the two groups: both We and They value friendships though the two groups practice the concept differently – They merely offer tea to their friends to drink, suggesting a superficial kind of bonding, while We invite Our friends to stay overnight, implying not only a much deeper connection but also trustworthiness that characterizes their relationship.

“We and They” is a short poem that contains no narrative and presents a summation of prevalent mundane observations. The fact that both We and They appreciate friendships appears to be a valid universalization, though there is no way to ascertain whether friends staying over signifies a difference in the superiority or inferiority associated with any cultural group. The cultural differences are communicated not only through the metaphor of foodways and friendships just discussed but are also seen in how each group addresses its medical needs. Hence in the fourth stanza:

They drink milk or blood,
Under an open thatch.
We have Doctors to fee.
They have Wizards to pay (p. 278).

The safe and clean environment of We contrasts starkly with the dangerous and filthy living quarters of They, as is evident in the use

of “latch” and “open thatch”, respectively. Drinking milk (presumably unpasteurized) and blood (presumably raw) is perceived to be gross and is cause for diseases. “Doctors” and “Wizards”, of course, perform different social functions, the former being associated more with science and professional training and the latter almost certainly with superstition and witchcraft.

In the first four stanzas of the poem Kipling successfully lays out some general areas of difference between We and They by naming practices each group is accustomed to. It is important to point out that Kipling’s own birth and early childhood occurred in India and he had therefore seen and lived different lifestyles in both his birth country of India and his ancestral country of Britain. Of his first twenty-four years of life Kipling spent a total of thirteen in India (1865-1871 as a child and then 1882-1889 as a journalist). During the first six years he “spoke Hindustani and lived a life very much like Kim’s, a Sahib in native clothes”; and even though Kipling permanently left India in 1889, “for the rest of his life his art fed on the memories of his early Indian years” (Said, 1979, p. 133). In other words, he could easily be one of those whom his poem casts as They. The poem therefore was not necessarily written to endorse a racist view but rather to question its validity by casting popular perceptions about race into doubt:

All nice people, like Us, are We
And every one else is They:
But if you cross over the sea,
Instead of over the way,
You may end by (think of it!) looking on We
As only a sort of They! (p. 278)

Evident is the use of satire and sarcasm in this last stanza: Who is to say We are the good and They are not? Sarcasm works well here as it subverts biased perceptions by providing an alternative way of seeing and understanding the self through switching positions, and by questioning the racial hierarchy of groups. Kipling’s recommendation to cross over the sea would enable you to gain a different perspective

where We become a sort of They – an Other – in whose eyes We may not necessarily be the superior.

Kipling acquired his personal perspective of cultural positioning by actually residing in India and observing how Indians – a They – lived. Concerning such Oriental residence, Said remarks, “to reside in the Orient is to live the privileged life, not of an ordinary citizen, but of a representative European whose empire (French or British) *contains* the Orient in its military, economic, and above all, cultural arms” (1979, p. 156). While Said fails to make a distinction between Indian-born Europeans (e.g. Kipling) and European-born colonialists or soldiers who sojourn in foreign lands, he is convinced that “Residence in the Orient involves personal experience and personal testimony to a certain extent” (1979, p. 157). Kipling’s is a considerably different case from other Orientalists that Said enumerates for the former had the birth sensibility of India that most other British sojourners and travelers did not possess. Being born and spending many years in India made it Kipling’s first home country, so he not only enjoyed the privilege of Oriental residence but he also lived and breathed its culture about as natively as the Indians; in fact he was better able to appreciate and articulate some cultural and racial differences between Indians and British because of that residential experience. This bifurcated understanding receives special emphasis in his famed “The Ballad of East and West,” to which I turn now.

MEETING POINTS OF THE EAST AND THE WEST

Shahane points out that “Poetry for him [Kipling] was not merely a means for self-expression but a means of communication in which the reader has a definite role assigned to him” (1973, p. 109), of which we have seen a fine example in “We and They” where Kipling invokes “you” as a reader, listener, and mediator, an entity that might be neither a westerner nor an easterner, or could be either except that entity holds a position between both. Communication, in this case intercultural and interracial, is taking place through the mediation of the poet and the addressee. Shahane further writes, “complete rapport between the poet and the reader thus becomes an important element in

Kipling's poetry, particularly in regard to his choice of poetic forms. A poet who aims at direct communication is likely to find only certain verse forms – such as the ballad – suitable for his poetic needs" (1973, p. 110). The term ballad (derived from the Italian *ballare* meaning "to dance") is generally a traditional story told lyrically, with a variety of tonal implications: moral, spiritual, and political. "The Ballad of East and West," considered Kipling's thematically most important piece, fits properly in this category, although it "has often been misinterpreted as a poem articulating Kipling's basic attitude to contemporary racial and political problems" (Shahane, 1973, p. 111), which at least partially explains its popularity with Western audience.

The ballad indeed looks at racial dynamics by zooming in on how an interracial conflict can turn into a conciliation, and a confrontation into a compromise. The opening section of the ballad in italics introduces a perceived problem: The East and the West shall never meet, until two strong men respectively from the East and the West confront each other, bringing the need for direct contact and communication to the surface and testing the validity of the popular perception that the twain shall never meet. The potential for misunderstanding and bias as a result of xenophobia amongst nineteenth-century countries and cultures is enormous and undergirds the need for intercultural communications to enhance what Levinas terms "the comprehension of the other" (1996, p. 6) as well as the potential for peace-making. "To comprehend a person," writes Levinas, "is already to speak with him" (1996, p. 6). Speaking leads to the resolution of the problem through personal face-to-face communications between two men, each representing a different culture and race.

"The Ballad of East and West" presents a simple narrative about the theft of a British Colonel's mare by a local Afghan. Actions and dialogues are deployed around two main characters: the Afghan thief Kamal and the unnamed British Colonel's Son. Other characters mentioned include the Colonel who makes no appearance; Kamal's son who briefly shows up toward the end of the ballad; and a local informant, appropriately called Mohammed Khan, who provides the Colonel's Son with information on Kamal's escape route after the latter steals the mare. To reclaim his father's stolen property, the Colonel's

Son chases Kamal to the Tongue of Jagai where the two men meet, speak, reconcile, and negotiate the peaceful return of the mare to her rightful owner. In the end Kamal even gives his son to be a member of the Guides serving the British Queen under the leadership of the Colonel's Son. Kamal's unselfish decision implies a newly found trust in the Other and thus holds redemptive significance that eases the peace-making process. A potentially violent revenge story now morphs into a peaceful resolution through two-way communications and mutual respect, whereby blood-shedding is avoided as is further loss of properties. This somewhat unexpected denouement effectively proves the belief unfounded that the East and the West cannot meet, and the notion reasonable that there is really "neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth."

In addition to depicting the interactions of human characters, Kipling utilizes a number of natural elements probably to symbolize barriers: animals such as the mare, the dun, the jackal, the bird, the kite, the doe, and so on, and borders such as Fort Bukloh, the Khyber Pass, and the Tongue of Jagai, where, "the length and the breadth of that grisly plain is sown with Kamal's men./There is rock to the left, and rock to the right, and low lean thorn between,/And ye may hear a breech-bolt snick where never a man is seen" (1961, p. 118). Perilous as the borders are, the Colonel's Son literally crosses them, thus metaphorically breaking them down as barriers, so that a meeting is achieved despite the difference in breed and birth, and the mindset of division between the East and the West.

Henley considers "The Ballad of East and West" Kipling's masterpiece "alike in inspiration and in execution" (1971, p. 56). A noteworthy anecdote about this poem is that it first appeared as written by "Yussuf" in November and December 1889 (Green, 1971). This pseudonym, Arabic or Turk sounding, deserves notice. Why would a WASP adopt such an alien name while writing and publishing in English? Was it because he wanted his ballad to be read by non-British who could better identify with a familiar vocative like "Yussuf"? The use of this pseudonym was undoubtedly intentional. If some of the intended audience were Arabic-speaking AND English-reading, utilizing a local, mid-eastern name might be an effective strategy to garner a

larger audience; and if the readers were indeed Afghan and Indian also, Kipling might have wanted to reach these peoples to communicate his understanding and interpretation of popular perceptions of the East/West divide and of the possibility of the two's convergence, a way to build common grounds between the speaker and the listener to eliminate possibilities of misunderstanding in favor of promoting communication.

Johnson calls the ballad a "thing to stir the blood like a trumpet" (1971, p. 103), and Shahane similarly observes that "Kipling obviously praises vitality, strength, physical and moral courage, and unflinching loyalty between two committed individuals" (1973, p. 111). These praiseworthy human qualities are dramatized through a meeting between two heroes in Kipling's eyes. Indeed heroism features large in the ballad and constitutes the basis for mutual admiration between the two concerned individuals. For example, when the Colonel's son fires twice to announce his arrival with an evidently hostile intent, he is greeted with a generous compliment from Kamal, "Ye shoot like a soldier" – the turning point of the story in my opinion – followed by a challenge to a horse race in which Kamal seems to gain the upper hand.

The hero of Kipling's poem is, in reality, Sir Warburton's son, Warburton, Jr., who was obviously half Afghan, half English. Quite ironically East and West had already met in the person of Warburton, Jr. and as such one of the two principal characters in the ballad nullifies the argument of the incompatibility of East and West (Shahane, 1973, p. 112).

Thus another kind of communication – an interracial union – had already occurred between the East and the West. In expressing his views of East/West encounters, according to Shahane, Kipling follows "the principal image of the literature of imperialism in depicting closely contrasted relationships: white and black, superior and inferior, advanced and backward" (1973, p. 112). To validate the contrast, Kipling establishes Kamal as purely Afghan, not half and half. While the racial difference between the two men is clear (a Briton and an Afghan), authorial concern about racial inequity is not as discernible as in "We and They."

Serious communications in the form of negotiations occur in the ballad when the Colonel's son asks for the return of his father's mare:

Kamal has gripped him by the hand and set him upon his feet.
'No talk shall be of dogs,' said he, 'when wolf and grey wolf meet.
'May I eat dirt if thou hast hurt of me in deed or breath;
'What dam of lances brought thee forth to jest at the dawn with Death?'
(p. 120).

The Colonel's son's response, "Take up the mare for my father's gift," along with the mare's recognition of him (she "nuzzled against his breast"), helps win over Kamal who not only returns the mare but also lavishes gifts to accompany the return, either as a symbolic expression of apology over his theft of the beast, or as a gesture of friendship and peace-making, or both. In return, the Colonel's son gives Kamal a pistol, holding it "muzzle-end," "a gift for a gift," which suggests his willingness to cease fire and make peace. However, while these exchanges are trust-building initiatives, they are not equitable deals, for Kamal makes the Colonel's son his own son's master, thus thrusting him into a position of service if not servitude.

The poet however thrusts the spotlight on the moment of peace being made between two representatives of the East and the West:

They have looked each other between the eyes, and there they found no fault.
They have taken the Oath of the Brother-in-Blood on leavened bread and salt:
They have taken the Oath of the Brother-in-Blood on fire and fresh-cut sod,
On the hilt and the haft of the Khyber knife, and the Wondrous Names of God
(p. 121).

These lines reinforce the negation of the notion proposed in the italicized introduction that a meeting of the East and the West is never possible. To have so powerfully described an East/West encounter, writes Henley, is "to have given hostages to expectation, and placed oneself in the position of them of whom much is asked, and whose failures were a national misfortune, even as their triumph is a triumph

for the race” (1971, p. 57). A meeting becomes a reality due to two men’s determined will despite their cultural, racial, and nationality differences. The outcome of the meeting is neither based on nor because of differences but rather on human identity and shared values: both men are heroic; both recognize honor and valor in the other; and both want peace. Stokes says it well: The achievement of Kipling’s greatest work was:

To bring the separate worlds and dimensions into confrontation and to set up a creative tension between them. The contrasted worlds may be those of East and West, or more generally, the world of commonsense rationality as opposed to the underworld of spirituality and magic, or simply the tragic-comic contrast between everyday illusion and pitiless reality (1972, p. 93).

In the end a relationship is established, and as Levinas argues, only in a relation can we speak to a being; “To be in relation with the other (*autrui*) face to face is to be unable to kill” (1996, p. 9). The ability to kill by either party was nullified and as a result, no killing happened; instead, a new relationship was established.

Major General Lionel Charles Dunsterville, Kipling’s lifelong friend and the first president of the Kipling Society founded in 1927, also has a few things to say about intercultural relations and about his favorite poet, in particular reference to the latter’s views of the dichotomy of the East and the West:

The fundamental differences of East and West are never to be altered, and none can say that our Western culture is superior to that of the East – no comparison is possible between two opposites. In forcing our ideas on them we do both them and ourselves great harm. Because a certain system has been found to suit us, that is no reason why we should run about the world pressing our great gift on people who think that they are already in possession of something much better (Dunsterville, 1971, p. 373).

While Dunsterville views East/West relations as oppositional and uncompromisable, he does concede a rationalistic position about the impossibility of judgment on the superiority/inferiority of cultures.

Dunsterville is a sincere apologist for British colonialism, as he further notes the difference between India's alien rulers, the Aryan and the Moguls, with mixed airs of haughtiness and resignation:

The only difference ... lies in the sense of responsibility which we feel and acknowledge towards the peoples we govern. This sense of responsibility is very hampering in the measures we pass for what we honestly believe to be the betterment of life conditions of the people we rule over. They don't thank us for it, but it is part of our make-up and we can rule in no other way (1971, pp. 373-374).

Despite the jingoistic, self-righteous argument that admits no wrongdoing, Dunsterville seems to be convinced that his sense of racial and cultural superiority will be vindicated in the future, "When we are dead and gone, and history is written with a true perspective, generations not yet born – both Indians and British, but especially the former – will acclaim the nobility of our share in the evolution of this land of tangled races, religions and languages" (1971, p. 374).

"The Ballad of East and West" is concerned with events that occurred on the Afghan and Indian borders involving an Afghan and a Briton; in fact much of Kipling's writing has India as a setting and Indians as principal characters. As Said adeptly observes, "Kipling not only wrote about India, but he was *of* it" (1996, p. 133). Indians form a major component of Kipling's corpus and remain, all his life, a huge figment of his imagination and literary output. The chief points of Kipling's picture of the Indian, according to Eric Stalky, are "a loyal and devoted servant (Gunga Din); a brave soldier in some races, unreasoning and easily aroused by propaganda. Truth and impartiality are foreign to his nature. Sanitation and a regard for the underdog are repugnant to him" (as cited in Dunsterville, 1971, p. 375). These unflattering portrayals are profoundly biased stereotypes of an alien nation, a "They" as was described in "We and They." However, argues Stalky, "The real India has not changed since the days when Kipling wrote" (as cited in Dunsterville, 1971, p. 373). "India now stood in danger; if we let go of her, she would go to the same depths of chaos" (as cited in Dunsterville, 1971, p. 377). This very sort of stereotyping of

India as “a timeless, unchanging, and ‘essential’ locale” Said criticizes as a “radical misreading of his works” (1994, p. 134).

India was important to Indians as their homeland, as was Britain to Britons. Dunsterville and his likes talk about India as if it were a costly but ultimately dispensable toy, a mindset expressed earlier by Carlyle back in 1840. In his lecture “The Hero as Poet. Dante: Shakespeare” included in *On Heroes and Hero Worship and the Heroic in History*, Carlyle identifies Shakespeare as a national hero and, calling him “the chief of all Poets hitherto” (2007, p. 104), offers an assessment of the English Bard’s value against the entire India: “Indian Empire, or no Indian Empire; we cannot do without Shakespeare! Indian Empire will go, at any rate, some day; but this Shakespeare does not go, he lasts forever with us; we cannot give up our Shakespeare” (p. 104)! Shakespeare is important because Carlyle believes that “it is a great thing for a Nation that it get an articulate voice”; “Italy produced its Dante; Italy can speak” (p. 105)! The Carlylean notion of articulation/representation is significant as he saw Dante and Shakespeare as their respective nation’s spokesperson, someone he had not found in India. So like Russia that had only Czars with weapons, India had “no voice of genius” and therefore could not communicate with the rest of the world. But Carlyle was also right – India did go, just about a hundred years later, though it did not “go to the same depths of chaos” as Stalky unwittingly predicted.

In 1947 India was partitioned into India and Pakistan, and in 1971 Bangladesh seceded from Pakistan. In all three current nation-states, remnants of British colonial rule are still visible in their political, cultural, and social fabric. On the other hand, Kipling’s “importance in the definition, the imagination, the formulation of what India was to the British empire in its mature phase, just before the whole edifice began to split and crack, is undeniable” (Said, 1994, p. 133). The mid-century partition of India is one of the most traumatic events in the history of that country, roughly half a century after Kipling wrote “The Ballad of East and West”. India’s independence was controversial with the British – some supported letting India go, and conversely, some believed giving up India was bad for both Britain and India (Said, 1996, p. 135). But British colonization of India undoubtedly changed

both countries. A great deal of societal, cultural, and economic shifts took place in both India and Pakistan, and since India's independence from Great Britain and partition from Pakistan, even more changes have been seen in its economy, education, and technology over the last half century, which Thomas Friedman notes extensively in his popular book, *The World Is Flat*.

FRIEDMAN: TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY PERSPECTIVES

Even just a handful of years into the twenty-first century, Friedman was already eager to write a brief history of the world with particular emphasis on China and India, the world's two most populous countries and two of Goldman Sachs's BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). Friedman went to visit Bangalore, India's Silicon Valley, on his "own Columbus-like journey of exploration" (2007, p. 4), where his faith was "profoundly" shaken in the notion that the world was round, as was discovered by Columbus some five hundred years ago. Having witnessed how multinationals located in Bangalore conduct business through teleconferencing on a big flat-screen TV, and been told by Infosys's CEO that "the playing field is being leveled," a convinced Friedman confided to his wife, "Honey, I think the world is flat" (pp. 5-7).

The flattening of the world was made possible through a globalization of economy and education, and just as importantly, by technological advances which have directly contributed to the enhancement of communications between countries and continents. The spread of electronic communications binds the world into a small community, something that Whitman was starting to see in the 1860s. The most significant technological progress made in recent decades however seems to be the velocity of global electronic communication that cuts across individuals, nations, races, cultures, and continents. Such velocity is possible because of communication technologies such as satellite TV, GPS, the internet, cellular phone, email, text-messaging, Skype, and Facetime, among other devices. To illustrate the speed and simultaneity of electronic communications, the CEO of Infosys tells Friedman:

Infosys can hold a virtual meeting of the key players from its entire global supply chain for any project at any time on that supersize screen. So their American designers could be on the screen speaking with their Indian software writers and their Asian manufacturers all at once. ‘We could be sitting here, somebody from New York, London, Boston, San Francisco, all live. And maybe the implementation is in Singapore, so the Singapore person could also be live here ... That’s globalization. (p. 6).

That’s East meeting West, in virtual reality and real time. Such virtual meetings in Whitman’s and Kipling’s times were technologically impossible, of course.

But Whitman’s robust interest in the Orient, particularly India, inspired him to envision a passage to India, as his eponymous poem, among other pieces, celebrates human achievements in transportation and communication:

Singing the great achievements of the present,
Singing the strong light works of engineers,
Our modern wonders, (the antique ponderous Seven outvied)
In the Old World the east the Suez canal,
The New by its mighty railroad spann’d,
The seas inlaid with eloquent gentle wires (p. 275).

The railroad and the telegraph (“gentle wires”) were monumental, landmark innovations worthy of the poet’s lyre, but more importantly, they greatly improved the quality and speed of human transportation and communication. Whitman’s *Passage to India* predates Kipling’s *The Ballad of East and West* by nearly two decades. In the former’s poetic articulation, passage to India was realistic because of the invention of the locomotive, and communication with foreign lands was quicker due to the availability of the Atlantic cable.

Whitman’s society of America was industrially much more advanced than Kipling’s Indian/Afghan borders of the late nineteenth century when horses and mares were probably the fastest transportation means. Paradoxically, though, face-to-face communications like that of Kamal and the Colonel’s Son have always been and still are of essential

necessity. Today, in-person meetings like those between Friedman and the Infosys's CEO in Bangalore are easily accomplished by crossing over to the other side of the globe following a plane ride of less than twenty-four hours. And, as the CEO takes pleasure and pride in pointing out, "It is now possible for more people than ever to collaborate and compete in real time with more other people on more different kinds of work from more different corners of the planet and on a more equal footing than at any previous time in the history of the world – using computers, e-mail, fiber-optic networks, teleconferencing, and dynamic new software" (Friedman, 2007, p. 8). Such collaboration between the East and the West would have amazed writers and travelers like Kipling or his friend Dunsterville, if not quite Whitman.

In *Years of the Modern* (1865) Whitman again celebrates technological triumphs which he views as a propellant of human progress and proponent of "the solidarity of races", as he describes the capabilities of the "average man":

Lo, how he urges and urges, leaving the masses no rest!
His daring foot is on land and sea everywhere, he colonizes the Pacific, the
archipelagoes,
With the steamship, the electric telegraph, the newspaper, the wholesale
engines of war,
With these and the world-spreading factories he interlinks all geography, all
lands;
What whispers are these O lands, running ahead of you, passing under the
sea?
Are all nations communing? Is there going to be but one heart to the globe?
(p. 246).

This far-seeing vision of globalization was way ahead of most of the poet's American or European colleagues. It is a utopian vision of human solidarity across races and continents, facilitated by technologies of transportation and communication through media such as electric telegraphs and the newspaper. It is almost redundant to say that over the last 140 years, since the construction of the Union and Central Pacific transcontinental railroad in 1869, transportation technology has

so amazingly transformed the world by shrinking the time of travel wherever trains were available. Though trains and ships were then incredibly fast vehicles of transportation, they are in no position to compare, let alone compete, with the speed of today's jetliners, not to mention space shuttles. Whitman traveled on foot and by train; Kipling by boat and train; and Kamal in the ballad relied on horses. Since the latter half of the twentieth century, airplanes have become a dominant mode of travel. Friedman, like many other journalists, crisscrosses the world by jet-planes. The difference in travel mode between now and then is, quite literally, heaven and earth.

Since the invention of the telegraph, verbal communications absent human presence across continents became a reality. The shortcoming of non-face-to-face communications through telegraph and later, telephone, is overcome by more speedy and audiovisual mechanisms such as the flat TV screen that Friedman profusely lauds in his book. Effective communication is often predicated on fast transportation that expedites face-to-face human interactions. Transportation and communication enhance each other in this fast-consumption age. Intercontinental travels and global commerce further necessitate, indeed warrant, intercultural and interracial communications which in turn promote economic, educational, cultural, and political collaborations and cooperation among peoples and nations in the new era of globalization.

Friedman identifies three eras of globalization in modern history: 1. From 1492-1800; 2. 1800-2000; 3. 2000 – present, though one could debate the start point of the present era. Each of these eras has its own dynamic force. “While the dynamic force in Globalization 1.0 was countries globalizing and the dynamic force in Globalization 2.0 was companies globalizing, the dynamic force in Globalization 3.0 ... is the new found power for *individuals* to collaborate and compete globally” (2007, p. 10). The power a twenty-first century individual has relative to one's own globalization is based on the ability to communicate directly with anyone in basically any part of the world, due to the facilitation of technology other than a medium like a poem or a ballad, products made with pen and paper. Friedman illustrates this point of technological advances that enable speedy information sharing, “Think of what one

person can do with pen and paper. Think of what one person can do with a typewriter. And then think of what one person can now do with a PC” (p. 56).

So technology is the game changer in the globalization of information. Remarkable innovations in information and communication technologies have led to the emergence of an information society. Media technology influences much more than the content that the media conveys, and people in different countries are often enabled to receive the same major news unfolded by the mass media, such as those satellite broadcasting television news networks and so on and thus participate in them together. The power of Google – an example of the ninth of Friedman’s ten world-flattening forces, In-Forming – revolutionized the way people obtain information. “Never before in the history of the planet have so many people – *on their own* – had the ability to find so much information about so many things and about so many other people” (Friedman, 2007, p. 177). According to the information society theory, the technological-determinists constantly emphasize the great potential of media technology to promote democracy, disseminate Western culture and help or even force traditional societies to shake off its “backward” and “outdated” culture, however one wishes to define these qualifiers.

CONCLUSION

In twentieth-century international communications, intercultural communication in particular, research approaches under different context transformed from modernization theory to cultural studies and then to the theory of information society. Interestingly, these theoretical approaches mirror literary writings of the nineteenth century concerning cultural communications between the East and the West. Marco Polo or Ghenkis Khan, Mateo Ricci or Rumi, Columbus or Cheng Ho (Zheng He), all attempted various forms of communication between the East and the West. Rumi, for example, living and writing in thirteenth-century Afghanistan, then part of the Persian Empire, called for unity of religions and cultures, thus gaining the name as a “bridge between religions and cultures” and a “dissolver of boundaries” (Barks, 1995,

p. xvii), something that Whitman was doing in mid-nineteenth-century America, Kipling in late nineteenth-century India and Britain, Forster in early twentieth-century Britain, and Friedman in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century United States.

In the opening years of the twentieth-first century Friedman declares the world flat in his eponymous book: the globule earth has become flattened by fast speed communications that happen 24/7 on the wide, flat TV screen found in countless households and offices. The function of communication has changed from verbal messaging carried from lips to lips to written words to sophisticated high-tech broadcasting that reaches intended audience literally in split seconds. But no matter what technology, the message, not the means of communication, has always been the top concern in all ages. The same message –world peace or global unity, utopian as this might sound– from Rumi to Whitman, Kipling, Forster, and Friedman, has remained consistent, despite the change from limited print media to worldwide mass media as symbolized by the flat screen of an iPad or TV that sits in almost every household corner throughout today's world.

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