

PMLA

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Abstract. As new literatures in English emerge all over the world, literature in English is increasingly multicultural, but the criticism of these literatures has not fully come to terms with this multiculturalism. Specifically, a work read across cultures is likely to be at least partially unintelligible to some of its readers, and critics have seen this as a factor necessarily limiting the readership of these works. But intelligibility and meaningfulness are not synonymous. This essay analyzes moments of difficulty in four such multicultural texts, by Narayan, Kingston, Anaya, and Ihimaera, showing on Gricean lines that meaning can be created precisely by the struggle to make sense of the unintelligible. The work done in that process can lead to a deeper understanding of the text, and the reader who must do that work is therefore not excluded from a full understanding. (RWD)

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