This talk engages three recent books preoccupied with the multiple implications of crossing linguistic worlds: Jhumpa Lahiri’s *In Other Words*, Mark Sanders’s *Learning Zulu*, and Han King’s *The Vegetarian*. In distinctive ways, each signals the emergence of the global South as a site of contemporary cultural production. Asking what it means to read these texts together as a symptom of the times will open up key concerns in world literary debates today on ‘decentering English’ and the vexed question of the ‘ownership’ of language.