Living in the Middle of Nowhere:

Ontological Ambivalence in Jhumpa Lahiri's Works

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School of Letters

Keio University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Literature

---

by

Shunsuke Shiga

October 2019

Contents

Acknowledgments

The evolution of this dissertation was made possible by teachers, colleagues, friends, and family around the world. It is impossible to fully show my gratitude here because I believe that all the encounters in my life explicitly and implicitly affected this dissertation. However, I would like to express my appreciation to some of those who made it possible to write.

At Keio University, I learned not only the discipline of Literary Studies but also a passion and sincere commitment to it. First of all, I am truly grateful to my supervisor, Professor Takayuki Tatsumi, who first encouraged me to study American literature at graduate school. The whole dissertation was guided by his insightful suggestions and sharp intellect. When I was finishing the master's course, I had decided to be an English teacher at a junior and senior high school in Japan. Without his suggestion that I should go on to work towards a Ph.D., I would not have written this dissertation. Although it sometimes felt hard to study while working in a full-time job as an English teacher, I was able to remain dedicated to my research because I wanted to repay his faith in me.

Professor Yoshiko Uzawa's class at graduate school inspired me a lot and constituted the transpacific and transatlantic framework of my study. Also, my sincere gratitude goes to Professor Hisayo Ogushi, who gave me invaluable advice on my papers and presentations. In particular, the

second chapter of this dissertation owes much to her graduate class. She also introduced me to Brown University when I was looking for a university in the United States with which to affiliate as a Fulbright researcher.

Along with these outstanding professors, I was fortunate to have enthusiastic fellow Ph.D. candidates in American literature: Shogo Tanokuchi, Yumiko Koizumi, and Kaori Hosono. Conversations with them were always inspiring. I would like to thank another Ph.D. candidate, Thae Ho Jo. Although his field is medieval English literature, while mine is contemporary American literature, we have encouraged each other since we entered graduate school in 2010.

I am sincerely thankful for the funding from the Fulbright Scholarship Program, which enabled me to study at Brown University as a visiting research fellow from September 2018 to August 2019. Without the scholarship, this dissertation would not have been as it is. The scholarship offered me not only funding but also precious opportunities to become friends with Fulbrighters from all over the world. I learned from them the importance of respecting and sharing our ideas and cultural values, regardless of different nationalities. Also, the Japanese Association for American Studies and the Modern Language Association provided me with travel funds to attend their annual meetings in the United States while I was affiliated with Brown.

At Brown University, Professor Susan Smulyan guided me as a supervisor. She helped me enormously to become accustomed to life at Brown. Professor Robert G. Lee generously allowed

me to attend his inspiring “Transpacific America” class. I was fortunate to be able to study the latest developments in transpacific studies. What I learned from his class and from other students are reflected in this dissertation. In addition, it was a joy for me to see Professor Emeritus Barton Levi St. Armand. His studies in nineteenth-century American poetry, H. P. Lovecraft, and Japanese *haiku* fascinated me. After seeing him in Providence, he kindly sent me a review about Jhumpa Lahiri, which I quote in the epilogue of this dissertation.

While studying at Brown, I also had opportunities to see remarkable literary intellectuals outside the university. The highlight was my visit to Ohio State University to see Professor Brian McHale. Deeply impressed by his studies in postmodernism, I was delighted to see him. He and his wife, Professor Esther Gottlieb, welcomed me and my wife, Risa, at their home in Columbus for five days. Although busy, they showed us around the campus of the OSU and the city of Columbus. We will never forget their kindness. Our stay was more than inspiring: Professor McHale showed me not only academic books but also works of art, such as postmodern architecture, the beautiful music of Antonín Dvořák, and American comic books. Knowing that I had published an academic journal article about the Beatles, he let me listen to the original vinyl records of the band, which was really fun. He also introduced me to Professor James Phelan, who wrote a chapter about Lahiri in his *Somebody Telling Somebody Else*, and a specialist in postcolonial studies, Professor Pranav Jani. In addition to these distinguished scholars, it was a

great honor to meet a remarkable science fiction author in Providence, Mr. Paul Di Filippo. As a local author, he told me interesting stories about literary figures in Providence, such as Edgar Allan Poe and his fiancée, Sarah Helen Whitman.

I should not forget to mention professors at Roger Williams University who formed the basis of my literary study. As the supervisor of my senior thesis, a former professor, Dr. Dianne Comiskey, exposed me to the work of a number of contemporary female writers, including Lahiri. Even after graduation, I owed much to her, as she kindly wrote a recommendation letter for the Fulbright scholarship. I also learned the joy of studying American literature from Professor James Tackach. I truly admire his passion both for literature and baseball.

Before writing this dissertation, I published in scholarly journals and delivered academic presentations. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the American Literature Society of Japan and the English Literary Society of Japan in particular. I was fortunate to receive comments from acclaimed Japanese scholars at conferences. Dialogue with specialists of Asian American literature established the basis of my study in Lahiri: Professor Hideyuki Yamamoto of Kobe University, Professor Takashi Aso of Waseda University, and Professor Rie Makino of Nihon University—to name a few. I had only limited awareness of previous studies in Lahiri; their outstanding studies guided me like torchlight in darkness.

In addition to these scholars, I would like to mention others to whom I feel grateful. First are the library staff of Rogers Free Library in Downtown Bristol, which was located literally beside the backyard of my apartment while I was affiliated with Brown. I really enjoyed studying in the warm atmosphere that they created. They reminded me of the most fundamental and most important thing about literature: love for books. Second are my former students of Seiko Gakuin Junior and Senior High School. I have many memories of them from the four and a half years I spent with them. Although I was only a teacher, they often overwhelmed me with their intelligence, because they were some of the smartest students in Japan. It was one of the hardest decisions in my life to quit the job in order to concentrate on the dissertation, because I profoundly enjoyed being with them. I will never forget their warm wishes and tears on my last day in the job. I do not think that they will read this dissertation, but I would like to tell them, “I love you!” Also, my gratitude goes to Mr. Jeremy Lowe, who thoroughly proofread this dissertation.

Last but not least, I wish to thank my family, both in Japan and in the United States. Their support and understanding enabled me to literally practice transpacific study between the two countries. In particular, I want to heartily express my gratitude to Risa, who has encouraged me throughout all of my Ph.D. days.

He’s a real nowhere man

Sitting in his nowhere land

Making all his nowhere plans for nobody

Doesn’t have a point of view

Knows not where he’s going to

Isn’t he a bit like you and me?

——The Beatles, “Nowhere Man”

Prologue

The iconic American musician and 2016 Nobel Prize in Literature winner Bob Dylan recollected that the United States witnessed a drastic change in the 1960s. Concerning this turbulent era, marked by such historic events as the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Vietnam War, he remarked as follows: “If you were here around that time, you would know that the early Sixties, up to maybe ’64, ’65, was really the Fifties, still the same culture, in America anyway. And it was still going strong but fading away. Then, by the time of Woodstock [in 1969], there was no more Fifties” (44). As if responding to the unprecedented turmoil that surrounded Americans, Dylan performed his first electric concert at the Newport Folk Festival on July 25, 1965. Some in the audience complained about the change in his musical style; they even booed and called out, angry at this change. However, what he stated implies that he was so keenly aware that the times were changing that he had to renew his music in order to express the upheaval of the era.

Now that Dylan is now known as a notable contemporary poet as well as a musician, his commentary on the mid-1960s is noteworthy in that the period also saw critical changes in the literary history of the United States. Keenly aware that conventional literary theories and methods were also challenged at this time, a distinguished scholar of American literature, Emory Elliott,

edited along with his colleagues the *Columbia Literary History of the United States* in 1988. Its "General Introduction" observes that a series of theoretical challenges that had begun in Germany and France in the mid-1960s quickly overwhelmed the United States, causing scholars to question a number of categories of thought used in discussions of ethics, aesthetics, and epistemology. In particular, in the introduction they point out that reconsidering the conventional frameworks invited scholars to reexamine the "past" as something that can be interpreted from old documents, such as diaries, letters, or newspapers, as these are filtered through the arbitrariness of the historians who use them (xvi-xvii). This reconstruction of the past made it possible to rediscover literary works by writers who had previously been regarded as minority figures. Thus, Elliott and his colleagues state:

> Perhaps the critics who have gained the most from this revolution of critical consciousness have been those interested in writers overlooked in the past and not previously accepted into the standard canon. Such scholars have discovered that the new questioning of established "truth" opened up new areas for research. Advocates of writers who had long been dismissed as "minor," especially female, minority, popular and regional authors, have convinced colleagues and publishers to reexamine and republish many such figures. This process has led to the reevaluation of many authors and the creation of a new body of criticism on these writers, especially from social and

> political perspectives. Universities and colleges have also seen the establishment of many courses on women writers, on the literatures of ethnic and minority groups, and on popular writing. These courses are broadening the definition of literature for a new generation of readers. At the same time, standard interpretations of well-established writers are being challenged and revised. (xviii-xix)

The *Columbia Literary History of the United States* demonstrates the attempt to reinterpret the established literary history of American literature, which has traditionally been thought to begin with Puritan literature in the colonial era, by now setting Native American literature at the beginning. In addition, it questions the existing literary canon by highlighting the significance of female writers, ethnic writers, and avant-garde writers. In this respect, Dylan's acceptance of the Nobel Prize in Literature could well be considered as the culmination of the reevaluation of popular art that has been consistently promoted since the 1980s.

It is true that over the past four decades scholars have reconsidered the canon of American literature. By 1980, European white male writers still dominated the map of American literature; however, the reconsideration of the canon shed light on its diversity. For example, 2017 saw the ninth edition of *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, one of the most popular introductory textbooks for undergraduate students in English, which now included numerous diverse writers who had long been regarded as "minority" figures. The anthology contains writers

who inherited the bloodlines of Native American tribes, such as Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdrich, and Sherman Alexie; Chinese-Americans Maxine Hong Kingston and Li-Young Lee; and Chicanas Gloria Anzaldúa and Sandra Cisneros, to name a few.[1] This reevaluation of the literary canon thus revealed the true diversity of American literature.

One of the most notable aspects of social change has been the influx of immigrants, who have contributed to the racial diversity of American literature. Since the foundation of the American colony in the seventeenth century, immigrants have continued to arrive by sea and land. When it comes to the racial diversity of immigrants, we cannot ignore the importance of the history of the immigration laws. Crossing the Atlantic, British colonists founded the Jamestown colony in Virginia in 1607. About 170 years later, in 1776, the thirteen colonies claimed independence as the United States of America. The history of early immigration is likely to be seen through the eye of the descendants of European immigrants. However, as the number of non-Caucasian immigrants increased, the U.S. government began to restrict immigration by law. The Page Act of 1875 marked the first restrictive immigration law and aimed to ban the immigration of Chinese women; Congress later passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which barred the immigration of male Chinese laborers (Fleegler 4). In 1917, reacting to the national atmosphere

[1] Of course, the category of "Native American" ignores the diversity of tribes. Also, it should not be overlooked that these "Native Americans" show mixed bloodlines, as Silko is of Laguna Pueblo along with Mexican and Anglo-American heritage. Erdrich was born to a German-American father and a Chippewa mother. Harjo's father was Muscogee Creek, and her mother had mixed-race ancestry of Cherokee, French, and Irish.

of negativity towards Japanese immigrants, the Immigration Bureau imposed strict literacy exams on immigrants so that they could limit the number of radicals. The 1924 Immigration Act is remarkable in that it instituted a quota system that limited the number of immigrants based on their national origin.[2] The quota system based on national origin was applied to immigrants up until the 1965 Immigrant Act, which replaced it with a new system of quotas that was applied to all countries and was evenly distributed among the countries of the Eastern hemisphere (20,000 per country), setting the annual ceiling at 290,000 (170,000 for the Eastern hemisphere and 120,000 for the Western hemisphere) (Ngai 258).[3] This indicates the end of the policy of admitting immigrants according to a hierarchy of racial desirability (227). That is, the year 1965 marked a historical milestone in the history of U.S. immigration by drastically changing the racial contours of the country.

---

[2] Prior to 1924, in 1921 Congress enacted a measure that limited total immigration for the first time in the history of the United States; the bill created quotas for each country of origin equal to three percent of its share of the U.S. population in the 1910 census, which aimed to reduce immigration from southern and eastern Europe (Fleegler 12). While Mae M. Ngai admits that the 1924 Immigration Act was not the first law that restricted immigrants, she emphasizes its significance by claiming that it was the first "comprehensive" restriction law that the United States used to establish "numerical" limitations on immigration and to create a global racial and national hierarchy that favored some immigrants over others. She asserts that the law offered Americans a new sense of territoriality, which led them to be aware of the state surveillance of the nation's contiguous land borders (3). She also points out that the United States invented the concept of "national origin" at this time because immigrants had not been classified according to nationality until 1899, when the Immigration Service began to designate immigrants by race (26).

[3] The new quota was not applied to immediate family members. However, while immigrants from the Eastern hemisphere were limited numerically and hierarchically by family members (80 percent) and occupants (20 percent), those from the Western hemisphere had no such restrictions (Ngai 258). The 1976 amendment imposed the country quota of 20,000 on the Western hemisphere as well (261).

In consequence, American literature has had notable post-1965 immigrant writers. For example, born in China in 1956 and moving to the United States for his graduate study, the writer and poet Ha Jin won the National Book Award for his novel *Waiting* (1999); Chang-rae Lee, who was born in South Korea in 1965 and moved to the United States when he was three, received the Pen/Hemingway Award for his first novel *Native Speaker* (1995); a Dominican-born American writer, Junot Díaz (1968–), moved to the United States when he was six years old, receiving the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for his novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007). The list goes on; it is now impossible to talk about contemporary American literature without mentioning the immigrant writers who moved to the United States after 1965.

Among the post-1965 immigrants, those from India, who have flourished dramatically in the past five decades, have a unique historical background.[4] They had an advantage over other racial minority groups such as Asians or Latino/as, because they had gained an impeccable English education. The history of British rule in India dates back to 1600, when it established the British East India Company. As Michael Edwardes elucidates in *Plassey* (1969), the Battle of Plassey, when the British East India Company's private army, led by Robert Clive, defeated *nawab*, a Shia Muslim ruler in Bengal, and his French allies in 1757, demonstrated British

[4] The number of Indian immigrants was 12,300 in 1960; 51,000 in 1970; 206,100 in 1980; 450,400 in 1990; 1,022,600 in 2000; 1,780,300 in 2010; and 2,390,000 in 2015 (Whatley and Batalova, Zong and Batalova).

supremacy in India. After this, the company ruled India until 1858, when it transferred all of its territories and powers in India to the British government (Dutt 89). Under British rule from 1858 to 1947, the period known as the British Raj, the Indian youth were educated in English in accordance with the British educational system. This system, promoted by the government, signified a "liberal" policy that would liberate the Indian youth from the traditional caste system; meanwhile, as Gauri Viswanathan observes, the British aimed to establish a linguistic stratification that distinguished those who were educated in English from those who were not (116).[5] As Lisa Lowe elucidates, this liberal policy justified the colonial expansion of British rule; for instance, John Stuart Mill used the word "liberty" to mean "the overarching principle that both defined political sovereignty in liberal society, and which authorized the differentiated power of government over 'backward' peoples," rather than individual rights or free will (*The Intimacies of Four Continents* 112). Viswanathan also detects that education hid the deceit of British rule. She discloses that the British rulers attempted to conceal their economic exploitation: "The English literary text, functioning as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state, becomes a mask for economic exploitation. . ." (20). They tried to make colonized India a

[5] Viswanathan recounts that this linguistic stratification was also intended to preserve the linguistic purity of British literature which seemed to exist in the homeland: "For the differentiated education that the Indian social structure encouraged—vernaculars for the lower castes and the classical languages of Arabic, Sanskrit, and Persian for the upper classes of Hindus and Muslims—minimized the possibilities of one language ever achieving the status of a common language for all the population. Linguistic stratification of classes permitted English high culture to be maintained in all its purity without the erosion that was occurring to polite literature in England" (116).

time capsule of the old England in order to preserve their own culture (116), choosing English texts written by authors such as William Shakespeare, Adam Smith, or John Locke as the representatives of the "highest" order to represent their "most perfect" state.[6]

However, ironically enough, the English education system confronted Indians with the fatal contradiction of British imperialism: although they had been promised upward mobility by gaining an English education, they actually only had limited opportunities to obtain higher-paid jobs (164). It was British rulers who derived the most economic benefits. This contradiction and economic exploitation induced the natives to rebel against British rule. Sumanta Banerjee recounts the history of Indians' revolts against British rule in *India's Simmering Revolution* (1984), revealing that, long before the Indian Rebellion of 1857, which is often regarded as the first step towards Indian independence, victims of the 1770 Bengali famine had risen in revolt against the British East India Company. After the British Raj began, unrest among the exploited led to further revolts against its rule; for instance, the Mundas of the Ranchi area fought Hindu landlords in 1895. The twentieth century then saw another two major peasant uprisings: the Tebhaga movement in Bengal in 1946, and the insurrection at Telangana from 1946 to 1951. Led by the

[6] Obviously, the British government aimed to enlighten the natives in India about Christianity through English texts. Therefore, Christian missionaries chose texts that they believed contained the "diffusive benevolence of Christianity"; for example, they found "sound Protestant Bible principles" and a "strain of serious piety" in Joseph Addison's *The Spectator* papers, "scriptural morality" in Francis Bacon and John Locke, and "noble Christian sentiments" in Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) (Viswanathan 85-86). However, some missionaries objected to teaching Shakespeare's plays because they contained pagan words such as fate, fortune, muse, and nature (88).

Communist Party of India, both were politically inspired and had a firm organizational basis and practical training (S. Banerjee 14-18). The tradition of revolt against the colonial power would be inherited by the Naxalite movement in 1960s, which I will deal with in Chapter 3.

While the English education revealed its contradictions, it nonetheless continued to allow the Indian youth to import the Western knowledge that had inspired them to resist British rule. Mahatma Gandhi, prominent leader of India's independence movement, represents a remarkable example of how Western philosophy could cross national boundaries in English. Wai Chee Dimock introduces us to an interesting fact about Gandhi's commitment to non-violence, revealing that it owed much to the principles set down in the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Sanskrit scripture, which he read not in the original language but in its English translation: "Gandhi, a native speaker of Gujarati, his knowledge of Sanskrit 'limited,' did not read the *Bhagavad Gita* till the age of twenty. He first read it in English—Sir Edwin Arnold's translation—when he was a second-year law student in London" (*Through Other Continents* 21).[7] What is interesting here is that Gandhi read the Sanskrit scripture in English while living in South Africa, practicing law and editing a weekly newspaper, *Indian Opinion* (20-21). Furthermore, what is worth noting is that he reveals

[7] In *Gandhi, An Autobiography* (1949), Gandhi recollects when he read the *Bhagavad Gita*: "I was constrained to tell [two friends of Gandhi who were Theosophists] that I had not read the Gita, but that I would gladly read it with them, and, that though my knowledge of Samskrit [*sic*] was meagre, still I hoped to be able to understand the original to the extent of telling where the translation failed to bring out the meaning. I began reading the Gita with them" (57).

that Henry David Thoreau stimulated his interest in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Thoreau mentions the Sanskrit scripture several times in his writings; for instance, he compares Western philosophy with the *Bhagavad Gita* in *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854): "In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the Bhagvat Geeta [*sic*], since whose composition with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial. . ." (559).[8] Gandhi reveals that he read *Walden* for the first time in South Africa in 1906, and the name of his movement came from Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" (1849) (Miller 238-39).[9] Therefore, his non-violent resistance to British imperialism represented the fruit of the reimporting of Hindu

[8] As the example of Thoreau demonstrates, Hindu philosophy influenced Western literature. While the British government established the Western educational system in English to preserve the "pure" English literature, it should not be overlooked that British modernist literature was influenced by Hindu philosophy. For example, T. S. Eliot adopts Sanskrit in "The Waste Land" (1922):

> London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
> *Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina*
> *Quando fiam uti chelidon*—O swallow swallow
> *Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie*
> These fragments I have shored against my ruins
> Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
> *Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.*
> *Shantih shantih shantih* (lines 427-34)

The Sanskrit words *Datta*, *Dayadhvam*, and *Damyata* mean "give," "sympathize," and "control" in English respectively. *Shantih*, meaning "peace of mind," is a word used at the end of the *Upanishads*, a part of the most ancient Hindu scriptures the *Vedas*. The quotation is from the fifth section of "The Waste Land," "What the Thunder Said," which indicates Eliot's interest in the fable about thunder in the *Upanishads*. In another example of the influence of Hindu philosophy on British modernism, E. M. Forster illustrates in *A Passage to India* (1924) the intense relation between colonized Indians and British colonists based on the independence movement in the 1920s.

[9] Gandhi revealed that he was influenced by Thoreau as follows: "Why, of course I read Thoreau. I read *Walden* first in Johannesburg in South Africa in 1906 and his ideas influenced me greatly. I adopted some of them and recommended the study of Thoreau to all my friends who were helping me in the cause of Indian independence. Why, I actually took the name of my movement from Thoreau's essay, 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience'" (Gandhi, qtd. in Miller 238-39).

philosophy via this American transcendentalist. But it was also an English education provided by the British government that made possible this cross-continental transmission of knowledge. The British government established linguistic stratification; however, an English education ended up providing the Indians with the means to overturn its rule.

When it comes to the trans-continental transmission of knowledge, the 1965 Immigrant Act marked a critical turning point in the history of Indian immigrants, who had been discriminated against as low-wage workers up until then. According to Joan M. Jensen, an Indian from Madras who visited Massachusetts in 1790 may have been the first to travel to the United States; however, few Indians had immigrated to the United States by 1906 (12).[10] By then, most Indian immigrants in North America lived in Vancouver. After a railway connecting Vancouver and other cities in Canada was constructed in 1885, Vancouver functioned as an important terminal. Indian immigrants worked as low-waged laborers there. After the construction of the Western Pacific

[10] Nonetheless, Jensen also spells out that a small number of Indians, such as merchants and religious leaders, who arrived in the United States had a strong cultural impact on Americans. For example, in the early nineteenth century, people in Boston were so enthralled by the romance of India that the Boston Theatre performed *The Rajah's Daughter* and *Cataract of the Ganges* while people sang "The Hindu Girl" (14). Moreover, she points to the cultural impact of India on nineteenth-century American literature, revealing that a literary tradition of interest in India had taken root in the northeast of the United States by 1870. In addition to Thoreau, who was inspired by the construction of the Suez Canal and the transcontinental railroad, which let him link California and India in his writing, Walt Whitman wrote "Passage to India" in 1868. Asian religious reform movements such as *Brahmo Somaj*, and European ones such as theosophy, permitted American scholars to study Hinduism and invite Indian teachers in the 1880s, which led to the term "Boston Brahmin" (15).

Railway began in 1904, the number of Indians increased.[11] In particular, Indians overwhelmed the border from Canada to the United States from 1906 to 1909 after a racist movement in British Columbia drove them out of work, leading the British government to agree to a policy preventing Indians from migrating to Canada (Ngai 40). Although Indians' status as British subjects made it possible to protect them from racial attacks (41), white workers in the United States, afraid of the "Hindoo invasion," insisted that they were racially unassimilable and sent their money home (Lee and Yung 149).[12]

After this, the immigration of Indians into the United States was severely restricted until 1965, when the Immigrant Act changed the situation. The law enabled immigrants from Europe, Asia, and Africa to arrive en masse because of the abolition of the discriminatory quota system. Unlike the other post-1965 Asian immigrants, who belonged to a low-income bracket, most Indian immigrants were professionals in science and engineering from well-off families (Ahmad 84).[13]

---

[11] According to Jensen, while only twenty Indians entered the United States in 1903, the number jumped up to 258, mostly from Vancouver, in 1904 (15-16).

[12] At that time, those from South Asia were called "Hindoos" or "Hindus," even though some of them believed in a religion other than Hinduism (Lee and Yung 149). The first revolt against Indian workers occurred in Bellingham, Washington in 1907; around five hundred white sawmill workers drove Indian workers out of the town (Ngai 41). Stemming from the riot, the trend of excluding South Asian immigrants reached a peak around 1910; according to Lee and Yung, 181 out of 184 immigrant applications by South Asians were rejected in October 1910 (149-52).

[13] Ahmad implies that the destinations of Indian immigrants depended on their families' finances as follows: "Indian immigration into the United States was overwhelmingly petty-bourgeois and techno-managerial, while members of Indian working classes went to sell their labor-power mostly in the Gulf region, secondarily in England" (84).

Concerning the post-1965 Asian immigrants, Lowe detects that U.S. colonialism, war, and neocolonialism had disrupted and distorted the societies of Asian countries such as South Korea, the Philippines, South Vietnam, and Cambodia; therefore, she considers the immigration of people from these countries as a "return" to the imperial center (*Immigrant Acts* 16). Unlike these Asians, Indian immigrants were not exploited by U.S. colonialism before 1965, although they were confronted with British imperialism. Obviously, their English education as the legacy of British rule made it easier for them to move to the United States than for other Asians. In addition to having a linguistic advantage, their historical background made the host country welcome them.

However, the U.S. policy of actively accepting Indians had an imperialistic intention that aimed at establishing a hegemony over the world. During the Cold War era, the United States fiercely competed with the Soviet Union in scientific fields, as the Soviets had had outstanding success in the space race. The launch of *Sputnik I*, the first satellite to be placed in orbit, by the Soviet Union in 1957 shocked the United States; therefore, they decided to accept specialists in science from other countries so as not to fall behind the Communist nation. The abolition of the quota system allowed them to accept Indian scientists as trump cards.

Nonetheless, although it appears that the U. S. government welcomed Indian immigrants, this does not mean that they were easily assimilated into their new country. As members of the upper-middle class, they have long been regarded as a "model minority" group, having nothing

to do with problems such as drug abuse or violence. Ellen Wu defines a model minority group as "a racial group distinct from the white majority, but lauded as well assimilated, upwardly mobile, politically nonthreatening, and definitively not-black" (2). Certainly, Indian immigrants have the highest median income household income among Asian immigrant groups.[14] However, as Monisha Das Gupta points out, this high reputation does not depict the reality of Indian immigrants; rather, "the model minority myth" has assigned them a stereotype that forces them to disguise themselves as people of good behavior (58). That is, they always have to behave as model minorities; otherwise, they cannot be accepted by American society. Also, as I will argue in Chapter 2, their assimilation has never been easy, as they have oscillated within a bicolor racial framework of black and white. While Indian-Americans have acquired the freedom to cross national boundaries with the advantage of a higher English education, they lost a homeland to set down their roots; while India no longer serves as their homeland, the United States also does not offer a soil in which they can be rooted. In other words, Indian-Americans are suspended between India and the United States as a diaspora.

[14] As of 2015, the median income household income of Indian immigrants is $100,000, compared to $73,000 for Asian immigrants, which is still higher than the $53,600 of the general U.S. population (Ruiz).

I. The Legacy of the English Education: The Rise of Indian-American Literature

The history of colonial India and Indian immigrants in the United States has produced notable literature. English education in the era of the British Raj led Indians to write novels and poems in English. Bankim Chandra published *Rajmohan's Wife* in 1864 as the first English novel by an Indian writer.[15] Other major Indian English novels followed: Raj Lakshmi Devi's *The Hindu Wife* (1876), Toru Dutt's *Bianca* (1876), K. K. Lahiri's *Roshinara* (1881), and Khetrapal Chakravarti's *Sarata and Hingana* (1895). Indian English novels in this period mainly deal with romantic historical stories. However, Tabish Khair points out that these works demonstrate Eurocentrism or European orientalism and aesthetic slavishness (47). The first Indian English writer who wrote with sophisticated expression and language is the first Asian Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore. He translated his most famous work, *Gitanjali* (1912), from the original Bengali text into English. As I will mention in Chapter 4, his poems influenced a distinguished Irish poet, W. B. Yeats. The anti-colonial atmosphere of the early twentieth century created prominent Indian English literature, such as Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), Mulk Raj Anand's *The Village* (1939), and R. K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955). Written before or a little after India's independence, these works illustrate the nationalistic resistance against British rule. The post-

[15] Although Chandra published this book in English, he never wrote fiction in English again. He wrote his subsequent fiction in his native language, Bengali. According to Khair, the literary influence of Chandra was so strong that his contemporary Indian writers believed that their natural medium should be their native language; this current alienated Indian English writers (46).

independent phase consists of writers who grew up or were born in independent India. Vikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh are among the most important Indian writers. Seth has published not only poetry, such as *Mappings* (1980), but also fiction, such as *The Golden Gate* (1986), which is set in San Francisco. As well as publishing fiction, such as *The Circle of Reason* (1986), Ghosh has written non-fiction. *Countdown* (1999) shows that even after independence, the influence of British colonialism remained in India.[16] It is remarkable that these Indian English writers crossed national borders, as Seth has settled in England, and Ghosh lives with his American wife in the United States. In addition, V. S. Naipaul was born in British Trinidad and Tobago. He later moved to England in order to attend Oxford University. Winner of the Booker Prize with his *In a Free State* (1971), he won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001. Born in Bombay, Salman Rushdie has made a literary career in England. His second novel, *Midnight's Children* (1981), won the Booker Prize, and he has achieved fame as one of the most prominent British writers.

As well as England, the United States welcomed Indian writers after the 1965 Immigration Act. As mentioned above, the United States accepted Indians in order to compete with the Soviet

[16] In *Countdown*, Ghosh writes about the several nuclear tests carried out by the Indian government on May 11, 1998. Having visited the small town of Pokharan, close to the nuclear sites, he discloses that the local political leaders were so used to experiencing oppression by the British government that they did not resist the nuclear tests, even though they recognized that they should. He writes as follows: "The political leadership has refused to break out of its colonial mould. . . . The colonial mind stayed on and it allowed the structures of colonial rule to remain. . . . This is the administrative structure the British left behind—a structure that was designed to oppress, exploit and suppress people. Everyone in India knows what the challenges are. But nobody is prepared to stand up and say that these are the challenges and we must face up to them" (45).

Union in scientific fields. The historical background of the Cold War era influenced the field of humanities as well. One of the projects was the institutionalization of creative writing by universities. This trend began as a reflection of World War II. A group of intellectuals asserted that literature and other arts, and the critical excellence of creative minds in a liberal democracy, could protect Americans against fearsome ideologies, heal the spiritual wounds of the catastrophic war, and prevent a third world war (Bennet 2). Following this claim, one novelist, Wallace Stegner, and a poet, Paul Engle, initiated creative writing workshops at Stanford University and the University of Iowa respectively. Inviting not only American students but also foreign ones, they attempted to save the world from totalitarianism and destruction. However, the workshops embraced a further political aim as well: they attempted to show the foreign students that the United States, as a free country, was superior to the Soviet Union. In particular, believing that an ideal writer was a spokesperson for all, Engle raised a fund for the Iowa Writer's Workshop by insisting that it was to fight Communism (10-11). Long before the founding of the separate International Writing Program, he invited foreign students to the workshop.

One of the foreign students who attended the Iowa workshop cultivated the path of Indian-American literature, Bharati Mukherjee (1940–2017). After studying at Calcutta University and Baroda University in India, she moved to the United States in 1961 in order to attend the

workshop.[17] She majored in comparative literature at the graduate school of the University of Iowa, earning a Ph.D. in 1969. After living in Toronto and Montreal for about ten years, she went back to the United States in order to teach at universities, and obtained a citizenship in 1988. She became a professor emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley. After making her debut in 1971 with *The Tiger's Daughter*, she received the National Book Critics Circle Award with a short story collection, *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988). As I will discuss in Chapter 3, she was so keenly conscious of the tradition of American literature that she attempted to include herself in its mainstream. Given that the Iowa Writer's Workshop aimed to show American supremacy over communist countries, it is noteworthy that Mukherjee, an Indian immigrant, tried to shoulder the mainstream of American literature.

II. Born to Be an Exile: Jhumpa Lahiri and Her Literary Works

Among other prominent Indian immigrant writers, such as Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri (1967–) is outstanding when it comes to her impact on American literature. Born to Bengali parents in London, she moved to Rhode Island in 1970. As is usual with post-1965 Indian immigrants, she grew up in a middle-class family, although her parents were not professionals of

[17] Mukherjee recounts her experience of moving to the United States in her essay "A Tale of Two Fathers." She describes how Engle introduced her to writers such as Ken Kesey in person (91). She appreciated Engle's support to become a writer, remarking that he "open[ed] up closed worlds" (92).

science: her father was a librarian at the University of Rhode Island and her mother was a teacher. She often visited Calcutta, the hometown of her parents, because they maintained connections to friends and relatives (Dhingra and Cheung vii). She earned a bachelor's degree in English literature from Barnard College, master's degrees in English, creative writing, and comparative studies in literature and the arts, and a Ph.D. in Renaissance Studies from Boston University (Minzesheimer). Her career appears to have been that of a typical elite in American society. However, despite Lahiri's high-profile status in the United States, assimilation has never been easy for her. Rather, the difficulties Lahiri has encountered as an immigrant have inspired her as a writer. Looking back on her childhood in Rhode Island, Lahiri writes: "When I was growing up in Rhode Island in the 1970s I felt neither Indian nor American. Like many immigrant offspring I felt intense pressure to be two things, loyal to the old world and fluent in the new, approved of on either side of the hyphen" ("My Two Lives"). Driven by distress over her hyphenated identity, she started a literary career. Her debut was sensational: her first short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the Pen/Hemingway Award. She has since developed a brilliant career as a writer. Her first novel, *The Namesake* (2003), was so acclaimed that an Indian-American filmmaker, Mira Nair, adapted it into a film in 2006 (Lahiri made a cameo performance in it). She received the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award in 2008, and the Asian American Literary Award in 2009 for her second short story

collection *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008). Moreover, her second novel, *The Lowland* (2013), won the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature in 2014. The literary prizes mentioned here are only some of those that she has received. And it is not only prizes but scholarly attention that has shown the value of her literature. For example, her short story "Sexy" (1999), first included in the seventh edition of *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, indicates that she is considered as one of the most important contemporary writers.[18] The publication of *Naming Jhumpa Lahiri* (2012), the first book-length collection of literary analysis on Lahiri's literature, demonstrates that scholars recognize her works not as mere popular novels but as subjects worth academic analysis.

Not only has Lahiri had an impact on literary fields but she has also gained national fame. President Barack Obama gave her the National Humanities Medal in 2014, which indicates that Lahiri is considered one of the most prominent figures in mainstream American culture. Obama made a comment on Lahiri's works along with Junot Díaz's, remarking that they "speak to a very particular contemporary immigration experience. But also this combination of—that I think is universal—longing for this better place, but also feeling displaced and looking backwards at the same time. I think in that sense, their novels are directly connected to a lot of American literature" (*The New York Times*, "President Obama's Reading List"). As he discloses in *Dreams from My Father* (1995) and *The Audacity of Hope* (2006), Obama himself has a diverse racial and religious

[18] Lahiri appears as the latest author in the seventh edition for the first time. In the ninth edition, published in 2017, Junot Díaz and a poet, Tracy K. Smith (1972–), follow her.

background: his family bloodline consists of Caucasian and non-Caucasian, drawing from religious cultures such as Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. Referring to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's argument, Takayuki Tatsumi claims that Obama is the first president in the history of the United States who represents the "planetary" mixed subject (*Lincoln's Bullet* 295-96). In short, he embodies the diversity indigenous to the immigrant nation. Lahiri's literary theme is consistent: uprooted Indian-Americans' perpetual search for a homeland where they can be settled. Therefore, most of her stories are not set in one specific place; on the contrary, her characters are persistently in transit, such as between the United States and India. In this regard, Obama's remark is noteworthy, as it implies that the immigrant experience of searching for a better place but/and feeling displaced is connected to American literature. To put it in another way, American literature cannot be separated from the immigrant experience, given that American history began with the immigration of European colonists and the founding of the Jamestown colony in 1607. Thus, Lahiri's illustration of Indian-Americans' anguish over their deracinated status represents the essential character of America.

Nonetheless, Lahiri's literary challenge does not permit us to easily categorize her within the tradition of American literature. Specifically, after finishing writing *The Lowland*, she moved to Rome. She not only left the United States but also gave up writing in English, the fundamental tool that qualified her as one of the most influential contemporary writers in English-speaking

countries. Instead of English, now she started to write in Italian, which is not her native language. As mentioned above, she studied the Renaissance when she was a graduate student. Still, her Italian is far from perfect. Her writings in Italian were published in Italy as *In altre parole* in 2015; in the following year, the English translation by Ann Goldstein came out as *In Other Words*. I will examine this ambitious literary attempt in Chapter 4, but it cannot help but make us wonder if this work can actually be categorized as American literature. Although she left the United States, she is still an American citizen. Yet her language is not the primary language of American literature, English. Furthermore, though acknowledging its linguistic diversity, the *Columbia Literary History of United States* defines the literature of the United States as "all written and oral literary works produced in that part of the world that has become the United States" (Elliot et al., General Introduction xix). This definition makes it impossible to categorize Lahiri's literary work as American literature. Should it be categorized as Italian literature? This is also difficult because she is not an Italian nor a native speaker of Italian. Even before Lahiri moved to Italy, her diasporic literary style made scholars wonder how they should categorize her works. Dhingra and Cheung spell out the difficulty of defining her literature:

> Is Jhumpa Lahiri a Bengali writer? An Indian writer? An Asian American writer? A postcolonial writer? An American writer? A global writer? Is she . . . simply a writer who "happens" to have been born in London to Bengali parents, grew up in Rhode Island,

> traveled frequently to Calcutta, lived in Boston, and now resides in New York? Why does this naming matter? To what extent do academic categories and labels limit or expand our understanding of the so-called aesthetic and what is ideological since all aesthetics are also already imbued with politics? How does this naming determine whether, and how, and by whom Lahiri's texts are taught and read, and to which literary canons they belong? (ix)

Dhingra and Cheung's argument does not take Lahiri's move to Italy into consideration because it was made before it. Now that Lahiri has dismissed English, defining her literature imposes on us a more difficult task than before.

However, in the era of mass immigration, the emergence of Lahiri is not accidental. She does not "happen" to be a diasporic writer. Rather, by rejecting conventional categorizations, her literature induces us to reconsider what America or American literature is. Given that America has been a nation of immigrants from the beginning, her works focusing on the experiences of immigrants do not merely demonstrate the contemporary circumstances of the United States. On the contrary, they disclose the essence of America that Americans as immigrants have experienced, such as anxiety over the new soil, a longing for a lost homeland, or a sense of transience. The eyes of immigrants turn toward the American soil; at the same time, they still see their old lands. If Lahiri felt rooted in America, she would try to incorporate herself into the canon of American

literature, as Mukherjee did, by focusing on immigrant experiences in the United States, rather than by portraying a sense of deracination. However, being an uprooted immigrant who has no home, Lahiri illustrates the ambivalent status of immigrants who remain caught between a new soil and an old one.

III. Roots or Routes: Theoretical Frameworks and the Aim of the Dissertation

In order to analyze Lahiri's work, insightful previous studies have given us essential theoretical frameworks. Indian scholars in the United States have dealt with the deracination of Indian-Americans as a theme. Their insightful thoughts on the Indian diaspora give us significant suggestions when we think about identity that is not circumscribed by national boundaries or nationalities. Aside from Viswanathan, Homi K. Bhabha is one of the most prominent scholars in postcolonial theory. For example, he sets out an essential argument on the Indian diaspora, suspended between India and their new country. He claims that they exist in an "in-between" space: "These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining of the idea of society itself" (*The Location of Culture* 2-3). Bhabha does not consider the uprooted Indian diaspora to be the result of the negative effect of British colonialism; on the contrary, he maintains that an "in-between" space could give them a

new platform for their identity. That is, he posits the space as a means to resist an imperialistic power that seizes Indians for its benefit. In addition to this "in-between" space, the significance of his argument on the "third space" cannot be exaggerated enough. He insists that two hybrid spaces generate a new space:

> [T]he importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the "third space" which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. ("The Third Space" 211)

Bhabha implies here that the Indian diaspora could take advantage of hybridity rather than being uprooted both from India and from their new soil. They do not have to find a soil for their roots in either land, but could acquire a new identity in the "third space" that is a result of the merging of two original spaces and cultures. The third space offers the Indian diaspora a third standpoint that permits them to displace authority, such as British rule. He implies that there is a possibility that cultural hybridity leads to a new culture. Edward W. Said observes that knowledge and power form the "principal elements in the relation between East and West" in the colonial imagination (*Orientalism* 40). However, Bhabha's arguments on an "in-between" space and the "third space" demonstrate his attempt to overcome a binary framework, such as between old and new, or East

and West. Through the elision of binary oppositions, he offers a conceptual framework to overturn the relation between the colonizers and the colonized.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is another highly significant scholar in postcolonialism. As Bhabha does, she gives us notable ideas about deracinated Indians. She refuses to think of the diaspora from a viewpoint of national boundaries; instead, she sees space as a global whole rather than as a divided one, suggesting planetarity: "I propose the planet to overwrite the globe. . . . To talk planet-talk by way of an unexamined environmentalism, referring to an undivided 'natural' space rather than a differentiated political space, can work in the interest of this globalization in the mode of the abstract as such" (Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* 72). Spivak's argument allows us to relinquish belief in presumed boundaries, such as country or nationality, in order to delve into the identity of the diaspora. She spells out a standpoint that enables us to examine deracinated Indians from within a transatlantic and transpacific framework.

For such transatlantic and transpacific perspectives, in addition to these postcolonial studies by Indian scholars, many other scholars give us key frameworks allowing us to analyze immigrants and their literature. As Elizabeth Jackson puts it, Lahiri's stories "present a more complicated picture of the ongoing effects of globalization and thus expose the limits of contemporary postcolonial theory" (113-14). Accordingly, this dissertation takes the theories of cultural studies into account as frameworks. Paul Gilroy, a specialist in African culture, captures

the African diaspora from a transatlantic viewpoint. In *The Black Atlantic* (1993), he insists that routes rather than roots can be the basis of identity for the uprooted diaspora, writing as follows: "Marked by its European origins, modern black political culture has always been more interested in the relationship of identity to roots and rootedness than in seeing identity as a process of movement and mediation that is more appropriately approached via the homonym routes" (19). His main focus is on the African diaspora; yet what he discusses is helpful in order to probe the diaspora of other racial groups, with an eye to paying attention to their movements, rather than where they find their roots. In this sense, James Clifford's question about home is worth noting. In his *Routes* (1997), much influenced by Gilroy's argument, he points out that the definition of "home" does not indicate a particular fixed place in local/global situations, where displacement appears to be the norm (84). Unlike Gilroy, who deals with the culture of the African diaspora, Clifford poses a methodical problem of fieldwork in anthropology, which tends to regard home as a site of origin (85). His assertion can be applied to the analysis of deracinated immigrants in the United States in that he indicates that displacement is a premise in the contemporary world, where boundaries are obscure. Taking this situation into account, Paul Giles points out that the national identity of the United States should be refined: "It is important to emphasize how these forces of deterritorialization have also operated insidiously to disturb and dislocate the national identity of the United States itself, in particular the relationship between its domestic space and

the wider world" (14). In an age when geographical boundaries no longer serve as the foundations of national identity, what he maintains is significant, as immigrants from other countries have been transforming the contours of a nation. Gretchen Murphy claims that the name "America," which used to indicate the cultural identity of the United States, is at stake because the implicit deletion of Latin America and Canada is now apparent (1). She implies that America does not equate with the United States because of blurred national boundaries. However, the boundary controversy is not limited to Latin America and Canada, which are contiguous with the United States. Rather, immigrants from the Eastern hemisphere who cross the Atlantic and the Pacific cause us to reconsider what America means from the transatlantic/transpacific perspectives. In this sense, the movements of immigrants offer us suggestive clues that cause us to reexamine America as the cultural identity of the United States.

With these theoretical frameworks in mind, this dissertation delves into the literary works of Lahiri in order to consider the transforming identity of the United States in the post-1965 era. In other words, it reads her works as the representation of an America that transcends boundaries. What is outstanding about Lahiri's literary works is her references to other works that serve as vehicles that transnationally convey cultural images. For example, she is indebted to Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Custom-House," the introduction to *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), as the epigraph of *Unaccustomed Earth*. Her reference to this canonical work indicates not only her consciousness

of classic literature but also the essential motif of her literature: a transnational eye extending beyond boundaries. Hence the significance of his reference to India in "The Custom-House." In addition to classic literature, her references to popular culture cannot be overlooked if we are to read the transnational cultural context of her works, although no previous studies have probed it enough. Particularly, she often mentions the rock music of the 1960s, such as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and Jimi Hendrix, as I will analyze in the following chapters. Readers might overlook them while reading Lahiri's works because they seem trivial. Quite the contrary; in fact, they allude to the contextual backgrounds essential to them. Therefore, this dissertation pays keen attention to her allusions to other works, ignoring any distinction between the classic and the popular.

Lahiri's literature crosses borders both geographically and literary-historically; thus, as Dhingra and Cheung indicate, it is difficult to assign it to one specific category because her double eye as a diaspora underlies her literature. What she remarks on Rhode Island, where she grew up, is worth quoting:

> Typical to many island communities, there is a combination of those who come only in the warm months, for the swimming and the clamcakes, and those full-time residents who seem never to go anywhere else. . . . Given its diminutive proportions there is a third category: those who pass through without stopping. Forty-eight miles long and

> thirty-seven wide, it is a brief, unavoidable part of the journey by train between Boston and New York and also, if one chooses to take I-95, by car. (Lahiri, "Rhode Island" 392)

This quotation comes from the essay that she wrote for *State by State* (2009), which consists of essays and comics by fifty writers and cartoonists who represent each state of the United States. Lahiri was chosen as the representative of one of the original thirteen states, Rhode Island; nonetheless, what is remarkable here is that she indicates the third group of people who are related to the state: that is, those who are in transit. In her literary works, she never shows us a final destination, even though her characters have their physical houses in specific places; rather, her characters demonstrate a permanent aspiration for another place. They never stop permanently but are in continual transit from one place to another. Lahiri not only describes their movements, but also explains that they generate a new space between the two places. This space implies the ontological ambivalence of presence and absence, which I choose to call a nowhere space that goes beyond a binary framework of home or alien in order to embrace the identity of uprooted Indian immigrants. Lahiri shows that Indians are not settled in this ambivalent space but suspended between the two. Spivak once said, "I have roots in air" (Chakravorty et al. 19). Likewise, Lahiri's works show that the roots of the Indian diaspora are suspended rather than set down in a particular soil. Suspension between the two spaces offers the basis of identity for immigrants. Analyzing Lahiri's works, this dissertation demonstrates that the permanent

aspiration of immigrants with suspended roots to reach a new destination essentially indicates a fundamental American spirit that keeps searching for a new soil.

IV. Really Final?: A Permanent Longing for a New Soil in "The Third and Final Continent"

Lahiri delineates the never-ending journey of Indian immigrants in *Interpreter of Maladies*. Among the short stories of the collection, "The Third and Final Continent" is the most notable, as it depicts the American spirit that yearns for a new land. The narrator of this story is an unnamed thirty-six-year-old Indian immigrant who has just arrived in the United States. In 1964, he left Calcutta for England on an Italian cargo named the *SS Roma*. While in Calcutta, his father died, and his mother went senile after his death. After studying at the London School of Economics and working at the university library, in 1969 he has just moved to the United States to take up a job at the Dewey Library at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Right before moving to the United States, he marries an Indian woman, Mala, in Calcutta. The couple spend five days together for their wedding; however, they behave as if they are strangers because they have been married by arrangement. The wife at first turns away from her husband and weeps because she misses her parents. In the United States, the narrator rents the room of a house for six weeks until his wife obtains her passport and green card. Much of the story revolves around the narrator and Mrs. Croft, the 103-year-old owner of the house until Mala arrives in the United States.

Lahiri creates a post-1965 Indian immigrant as a narrator and protagonist so that she can compare immigration with an event in American history: the Apollo 11 moon landing in 1969. When the narrator's plane begins its descent into Boston, the pilot announces the weather and time and tells the passengers that two American men have landed on the moon (Lahiri, "The Third and Final Continent" 174). That the narrator's immigration to the United States and the moon landing happen almost simultaneously implies the social background of the Cold War era. As already mentioned, the United States competed fiercely with the Soviet Union in the field of scientific technology at this time. Therefore, the Apollo 11 moon landing marked a significant effort to display the superiority of the United States. And, given that the 1965 Immigration Act purported to accept Indian professionals into scientific fields, the mention of the 1969 space project in the story also alludes to the contribution of Indian immigrants, although the narrator is not a scientist. Lahiri does not merely show the historical context of the story, but also uses it to foreground the ambition of imperial American policy.

Therefore, the narrator experiences an initiation to be settled into American soil. After the pilot tells the passengers about the moon landing, he sees one of them holler, "God bless America!" and one woman pray (174). Mrs. Croft serves as the most salient patriotic character in the story. Seeing the narrator for the first time, she commands him to lock the door of the house; she also requires him to say "Splendid!" in response to the fact that there is an American flag on the moon

(178-80). As for this conversation, James Phelan insists that it connotes a "small-scale exercise of American imperial power" (221).[19] These scenes indicate the narrator's puzzlement about how to be assimilated into American society. In order to illustrate his assimilation, Lahiri dexterously deals with foods as the representation of American culture. The narrator buys a small carton of milk and a box of cornflakes for his first meal in the United States, because he has no other choice (Lahiri, "The Third and Final Continent" 175). However, he soon gets used to the American foods: he eats cornflakes and milk with sliced bananas for variety, and he learns from another resident at the YMCA, where he stays at the very beginning of his American life, to leave a large carton of milk on the shaded part of the windowsill (175-76). Lahiri uses the foods in order to portray the process of the narrator's assimilation. Cultural differences puzzle him at first, but he gradually accepts them in order to survive in American society.

What is worth noting is that the narrator feels puzzled by the cultural differences between the United States and England, rather than the differences between the United States and his original country, India. He remarks that even buying milk is new to him, explaining: "[I]n London we'd had bottles delivered each morning to our door" (175). Comparing life in Massachusetts with that in London discloses that the Indian immigrant carries the shadow of British colonialism. Of course, he has been culturally influenced by Britain because he lived in London before coming

[19] Phelan also points out that the British name "Croft" works as a reminder of India's colonial past (221).

to the United States. However, his route from India to England induces us to speculate that Lahiri emphasizes the impact of British colonialism on Indian immigrants in the United States. She implies this by adopting an English word which has different meanings in England and the United States: “I [the narrator] bought tea bags and a flask, which the salesman in Woolworth’s referred to as a thermos (a flask, he informed me, was used to store whiskey, another thing I had never consumed)” (176). He recognizes the name Woolworth’s because he knew about it in London (175). The different meanings of “flask” allude to his English background.

Although he grows accustomed to American life, the narrator continues to feel distanced from Mala. Welcoming her at the airport, he starts to live with her. Yet he still has a sense of awkwardness:

> I waited to get used to her, to her presence at my side, at my table and in my bed, but a week later we were still strangers. I still was not used to coming home to an apartment that smelled of steamed rice, and finding that the basin in the bathroom was always wiped clean, our two toothbrushes lying side by side, a cake of Pears soap from India resting in the soap dish. I was not used to the fragrance of the coconut oil she rubbed every other night in her scalp, or the delicate sound her bracelets made as she moved about the apartment. (192)

Unlike the narrator, who came to the United States via England, Mala directly migrates to the United States from India. Thus, she retains her traditional Indian culture. His discomfort with his new life with his wife suggests that he has been severed from Indian culture. In other words, he has adjusted to American culture, as he remarks that he has become "used to cornflakes and milk" (190). In the meantime, Mala cannot acclimate to the new land. Although the narrator suggests going out, he soon regrets it because she dresses in traditional Bengali style by putting on a silk sari and extra bracelets and coiling her hair with a flattering side part on top of her head (193). Even when she goes out of the home, Mala sticks to the traditions of her homeland, which embarrasses her husband.

Surprisingly, it is Mrs. Croft who closes the distance between the narrator and Mala. When going out together, the narrator takes his wife to Mrs. Croft's house. Lahiri comically depicts the conversation between Mrs. Croft and the narrator. Mrs. Croft tells him that she broke her hip by falling off the piano bench on which she always sits (she used to be a piano teacher) and then called the police. To her question "What do you say to that, boy?" he answers with no hesitation, "Splendid!" (194), as he did before. Listening to this conversation, Mala laughs for the first time since she married the narrator. Then, he introduces her to the elderly lady. Mrs. Croft orders her to stand up, which makes the narrator feel sympathy for his wife: "Mala rose to her feet, adjusting the end of her sari over her head and holding it to her chest, and, for the first time since her arrival,

I felt sympathy. . . . Like me, Mala had traveled far from home, not knowing where she was going, or what she would find, for no reason other than to be my wife" (195). Seeing her, Mrs. Croft says, "She is a perfect lady!" which makes the narrator laugh as well (195-96). Hearing his laugh, he and Mala look at each other and smile, which marks "the moment when the distance between Mala and me began to lessen" (196). Mrs. Croft seems to be a stubborn, patriotic woman at first; however, she provides a space where both the narrator and Mala can become accustomed to the American soil.

Judith Caesar maintains that Mrs. Croft's locked house suggests an internal space in which they can rearrange distance within the external American space:

> Mrs. Croft paradoxically creates and destroys distances; she provides the interior walls that allow imagining, and she breaks down the emotional barriers the narrator has constructed to protect himself from his memories of his mother and from this stranger, Mala. When Mala and the narrator enter Mrs. Croft's house, her exterior walls shut out the world of 1969 America and her interior walls create new arrangements of distance and closeness, intimacy and privacy rearrangements of external and emotional space that make love possible. (56-57)

Caesar claims that Mrs. Croft creates a space independent from the external American space by locking the house. However, it should not be overlooked that she gives the young couple who

share immigrant experiences a clue about how to live in the United States together. After seeing her, they live as American citizens for a long time. Later, they have a son who attends Harvard University; Mala no longer drapes the end of her sari over her head, or weeps for her parents (Lahiri, “The Third and Final Continent” 197). Susan Koshy astutely observes that Lahiri delineates “naturalization not just as a formal process by which citizenship is acquired but also as a social process that extends beyond the conferral of formal citizenship and follows multiple, unpredictable pathways” (598-99). Lahiri shows that they have not only obtained American citizenship but have also adjusted themselves to life in American society. That is, Mrs. Croft functions like a diplomat at a custom house who admits their immigration. Her authentication provides them with the confidence to live in the new soil.

Therefore, at the end of the story the narrator shows confidence because he has lived on three continents. Concerning his son, who has the ambition to succeed in American society, he remembers that he himself has achieved a magnificent thing:

> In my son’s eyes I see the ambition that had hurled me across the world. In a few years he will graduate and pave his way, alone and unprotected. But I remind myself that he has a father who is still living, a mother who is happy and strong. Whenever he is discouraged, I tell him that if I can survive three continents, then there is no obstacle he cannot conquer. While the astronauts, heroes forever, spent mere hours on the moon, I

> have remained in this new world for nearly thirty years. (Lahiri, "The Third and Final Continent" 197-98)

By associating immigration to the United States with the moon landing, Lahiri illustrates that the immigrant experience can be thought of as an extraordinary journey, like the Apollo 11 achievement. The positive tone that Lahiri employs here makes a contrast with the scene in which the narrator sees Mrs. Croft for the first time. Hearing her shout "There is an American flag on the moon!" he does not feel excited, but rather calmly observes: "[The astronauts] gathered rocks in their pockets, described their surroundings (a magnificent desolation, according to one astronaut). . . . The voyage was hailed as man's most awesome achievement" (179). According to Phelan, the passive voice of the last sentence quoted above permits Lahiri to convey "her own sense of the mixed quality of the event" and distance the narrator and herself from the assessment that the moon landing indicates "man's most awesome achievement" (222). In the meantime, Lahiri uses a positive tone about an immigrant experience at the end of the story to spell out the fact that the narrator has overcome obstacles on the American soil; to put it in another way, she indicates that things such as traveling, eating a meal, or seeing a person all mark challenges and mysteries for a life of an immigrant in the United States even though they seem ordinary (Lahiri, "The Third and Final Continent" 198).

Living on his “third and final” continent, the narrator shows his pride at having survived crossing the oceans. Thus, the title, “The Third and Final Continent,” makes sense to readers because the narrator is settled in his third continent, America; nonetheless, Lahiri’s reference to his son implies that her multi-generational eye is turned towards Indian immigrants. The narrator’s immigration from Calcutta to Massachusetts via London resembles that of Lahiri’s parents, who moved from Calcutta to Rhode Island via London. Therefore, although she does not describe the narrator’s son in detail, he is significant because he represents the second generation of post-1965 Indian immigrants. Lahiri reveals how differently the Indian-American of the second generation sees the world from his parents’ viewpoint. Listening to his father’s old story at Mrs. Croft’s, the narrator’s son expresses astonishment not at the elderly woman’s age but at the rent of only eight dollars his father paid every week, which seems “as inconceivable to him as a flag on the moon was to [Mrs. Croft]” (197). Lahiri reveals the unbridgeable generational gap between the first and the second generations of Indian immigrants by mentioning a flag on the moon. This gap implicitly prevents readers from being optimistic about his future, even as the narrator shows his confidence. For the narrator, the American continent serves as “the third and final” continent; however, for his son, it suggests only the beginning. As quoted above, he has the same ambition that once impelled his father across the world. Accordingly, he will see the world beyond the United States in the future. We readers do not know where the “final” continent will be for him.

Lahiri only implies that his eye turns toward the shores of another continent. She indicates that there will be a long journey in search of a new soil that crosses boundaries.

In her following works, Lahiri further explores the theme of breaching boundaries. Analyzing them chronologically, this dissertation examines her works in order to clarify that they not only cross borders geographically but also ontologically, generating a space of ambivalence for Indian-Americans.

Chapter 1 analyzes *The Namesake*. Although the novel mainly revolves around a second-generation Indian-American, Gogol Ganguli, it comprehensively portrays the life of the family after he is born in Massachusetts in 1968. As the central character, Lahiri depicts in detail his difficulties living in American society with his peculiar name. Given that Lahiri was born in 1967 and grew up in New England, Gogol may represent the author's own life. However, I read it as a family saga. Therefore, this chapter pays close attention to Gogol's parents, Ashoke and Ashima, as well. Being an immigrant of the 1.5 generation born outside the United States, Lahiri casts an ambivalent eye on the two generations. Previous studies have shown that while Gogol feels anguish over his peculiar name, his parents attempt to preserve their original homeland, India. However, I will reveal that Ashoke and Ashima cannot feel at home even if they go back to India, because they have been uprooted since they moved to the United States. They cannot be settled either in the United States or in India; they thus continue to be in transit even though they have

physical houses in the United States. In particular, Ashima's decision, made after her husband's death, to live in Massachusetts for half a year and in Calcutta for the other half, indicates that transit itself implies the basis of her identity. In order to demonstrate the deracinated identities of the characters, I analyze the repetitious illustrations of the family members' movements by train and airplane. The scenes of transit disclose a nowhere space, blurring the distinction between presence and absence. This ontologically ambivalent space foregrounds the unrealistic aspect of Lahiri's writing, contrary to the presumption of critics that she is a realist. She explains that her characters are suspended between the American soil and the Indian one rather than searching for a specific soil where they can take root.

This chapter also probes the significance of Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat" (1842), the motif of *The Namesake*. This classic tale of nineteenth-century Russian literature serves as a backbone of the novel precisely because it saves the life of Ashoke in his youth; otherwise his son Gogol, named after the author of the work, would not have been born. However, aside from on the plot level, this short story suggests the essence of Lahiri's literature; that is, it foregrounds the forms of ambivalence that she spells out, such as between reality and unreality, or presence or absence.

In addition to Lahiri's consciousness of nineteenth-century Russian literature, I point to the importance of popular music that she mentions. The most outstanding is the Beatles, to whom

Gogol enthusiastically listens in his teens. In particular, the song that Lahiri uses in the novel, "Revolution 1" (1968), not only represents his adolescent resistance against his parents, who gave him the name that never fits into American society, but also alludes to Lahiri's awareness of the social and cultural background of 1968, the turbulent year that she sets as the opening of the story. Also, other rock musicians, such as Bob Dylan and Eric Clapton, that Lahiri mentions, further indicate the social turmoil of early 1970s India. However, most importantly, taking into consideration that Indian culture influenced late-1960s rock musicians such as the Beatles, I demonstrate that her fascination with these artists points to the cultural representation of India in the Western world. The cultural images of India conveyed by popular music implicates an orientalist viewpoint toward the East; however, distorted cultural images suspend the Gangulis between American and Indian cultures.

In Chapter 2, I examine a novella, "Hema and Kaushik," which comprises the latter half of *Unaccustomed Earth*. The title of the book reveals Lahiri's consciousness of Hawthorne, because it comes from a phrase in "The Custom-House." She quotes sentences from the introductory chapter as the epigraph of the short story collection. Scholars pay attention to the epigraph because it represents Lahiri's literary theme of searching for a new soil. That is, Hawthorne shows the same awareness of immigration as Lahiri does, which has induced scholars to speculate that Lahiri aims to put herself into the tradition of American literature. They also point to Hawthorne's

influence on Lahiri; they compare *Unaccustomed Earth* with the canonical work of American literature *The Scarlet Letter*, with special emphasis on the plot of a sensational love affair.

However, Hawthorne's impact on Lahiri should be explored further. Previous studies do not delve into the aspect of sentimentalism illustrated in *The Scarlet Letter*, which Lahiri portrays in "Hema and Kaushik." As famously known, Hawthorne harshly criticized his contemporary American female authors who wrote popular sentimental fictions; nonetheless, he was familiar with the tradition of sentimentalism, as his interest in the seduction plot of British sentimental fictions implies. Lahiri delineates the relationship between the protagonists, Hema and Kaushik, both second-generation youngsters of Indian immigrant families, from their teens to adulthood, when they eventually become lovers. Through the two characters, she creates a sentimental fiction of the twenty-first century. Particularly, the death of Kaushik's mother serves as an undercurrent that flows under their relationship; they share a sentimental emotion over her death, although they keep hiding it. Given Lahiri's consciousness of Hawthorne, their relationship may remind readers of Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale because Hema is engaged to another man.

Yet, I will demonstrate that Lahiri does not merely adapt nineteenth-century sentimentalism into contemporary literature. Noteworthy again are her references to rock music. She mentions the Rolling Stones in the early part of the novella; although this can easily be overlooked, her references to the band connote significant motifs of the novella: sympathy and natural disaster.

Lahiri constructs sympathetic ties between her characters based on fellow feelings that stem from their shared experiences. They usually conceal their sentimental emotions; however, Lahiri portrays the ways in which one character's sentimental emotions flow out like water and reach another's, binding them with sympathetic ties. Thus, she associates sentimental emotions with images of water, such as the Atlantic. Paying attention to Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones singing about a flood, I will show that a tsunami depicted in the end of the work represents such overflowing sentimental emotions.

Another important rock musician that Lahiri mentions is Jimi Hendrix. Her reference to this icon of 1960s rock music enables us to read not only personal emotions but also the collective racial ones of Indian-Americans. Taking advantage of stereotypical images of African Americans, Hendrix presented himself as a black performer in such a way that white audiences could accept him. He concealed his multi-colored racial background, which eventually inspired him to explode his racial consciousness. His oscillation between the bicolor racial framework overlaps that of Indian-Americans, who have had to live as a model minority group in order to be accepted by the white-centric society. From transatlantic and transpacific perspectives, I will explore how Lahiri implies the distorted racial contours of American society through the sentimental story.

Chapter 3 explores *The Lowland*. As shown in the previous chapter, critics have revealed the impact of Hawthorne on Lahiri. However, I will demonstrate that it is *The Lowland* that

foregrounds the influence of *The Scarlet Letter*; thus, I read the novel as the reinterpretation of this canonical work of American literature. When it comes to the consciousness of an Indian-American writer, Mukherjee serves as a prominent writer who challenges Hawthorne's literature. Thus, before examining Lahiri's work, I will give an overview of Mukherjee's *The Holder of the World* (1993) as a reinterpretation of *The Scarlet of Letter* in order to reveal the lineage of Indian-American writers influenced by Hawthorne. She complains about *The Scarlet Letter* because Hawthorne does not refer to India in the novel at all, although he implies in "The Custom-House" that the America of the Puritan era had a relationship with it through trade. By setting the story in Salem in the Puritan era, Mukherjee not only rewrote *The Scarlet Letter* but also added the viewpoint of India. In *The Office of the Scarlet Letter* (2013), Sacvan Bercovitch claims that Hester Prynne's return to Boston after crossing the Atlantic transfers her from an outcast of Puritan society to a person who suggests a bright future for America. Likewise, returning from India, where she gave birth to a daughter of a Muslim ruler, Hannah creates a harmonious space, while some Puritans avoid her and her daughter.

Taking into account Mukherjee's reinterpretation, I will foreground the ambivalence of *The Scarlet Letter*. As already mentioned, Lahiri quotes "The Custom-House," in which Hawthorne asserts the importance of continuously moving from one soil to another in order to flourish. However, contrary to the introduction, the main text of *The Scarlet Letter* demonstrates the

importance of settlement, as Hester's return implies. Lahiri embraces this ambivalence in *The Lowland*. The novel revolves around two brothers in Calcutta, Subhash and Udayan. While one moves to the United States to study, the other engages in the Naxalite movement so that he can liberate exploited farmers and laborers. Critics regard the two brothers as the protagonists of the story; however, I will read it by reconstructing a female character, Gauri, as the protagonist. Although she marries Udayan, she soon becomes a widow because her husband is killed by the police. Remarrying Subhash, she moves to Rhode Island and later to California. Although she moves geographically, she cannot replant her roots in a new soil, contrary to Hawthorne's remark; instead, she drags her roots from one place to another, which leads to an ontologically ambivalent space. In particular, Bela, a daughter of Gauri and Udayan, indicates a space where both Western temporality, proceeding from past to future, and geographical distinctions collapse. This space does not distinguish between the dead and the living, presence and absence. Therefore, as long as Gauri lives with Bela, she cannot be freed from the ghost of her deceased ex-husband until she leaves behind her daughter and Subhash by moving to California alone. I will deliberate on the meaning of her return to Rhode Island and eventually to Calcutta in order to suggest that, although she once tried to dismiss it, Gauri now searches for the ontologically ambivalent nowhere where she can be reunited with Udayan by rerouting her roots. Through Gauri's movements, I will

reconsider the previous studies that take either roots or routes to determine the identities of the diaspora.

In Chapter 4, I will analyze *In Other Words*. Lahiri moved to Rome after writing *The Lowland*; the book concerns her life there and her thoughts about Italian, a new language for her. What is most remarkable about this work is that she wrote not in English, her predominant language as an author, but in Italian, a radically foreign language for her. Originally published as *In altre parole* in Italy, its English translation does not simply stand alone; instead, the book juxtaposes the original Italian texts and the English translation. In addition, rather than translate her Italian into English by herself, she asked an outside translator to do it because she did not want her Italian to be merged with her old language.

Taking this experimental format into account, I will consider Lahiri's authority as a writer. Obviously, although Bengali is her first language, it is English, which she learned in her childhood in order to live in American society, which has long served as an authoritative language for her. She started to learn Italian when she was a college student; thus, this language has provided her with much less freedom than English. The book discloses that she doubts if she can call herself an author after having given up English. In the meantime, she recollects that English has never fulfilled whole sense of imperfection that comes from her hyphenated identity; therefore, although Italian also makes her feel imperfect, it differs from English insofar as she learned it through her

own self-will. To put it simply, she acquired the freedom to be imperfect. Moreover, as long as she does owe the English translation to an outside translator, she cannot be authoritative either in the Italian text or in the English one in the book.

Basing the analysis on this linguistically imperfect state, I will consider the significance of the experimental format by reading *In Other Words* as a postmodern fiction. The juxtaposition of the two non-authoritative languages represents the suspended status whereby she belongs to neither language. Therefore, the Italy that she depicts through imperfect languages suggests a fantasy rather than a real space. As a fictional work, *In Other Words* inherits a cultural representation of Italy that Lahiri illustrates in *The Namesake*. Thus, this chapter reads Lahiri as a fictional character in a linguistically suspended world. I will demonstrate that she cultivates a new horizon for the Indian diaspora by dismissing her authority as a writer of English.

Chapter 1

Coming out of Nowhere:

The Ambivalence of Realism and Unrealism in *The Namesake*

Jhumpa Lahiri's experience as an immigrant has brought her both inspiration and anguish. Concerning her literary theme, she says definitely that her inspiration comes from the world in which immigrants search for their roots: "I will continue to write about this world, because it inspires me to write, and there's nothing more important than that" (Kachka 67). Meanwhile, her deracinated experience has also given her a split sense of identity, divided between India and the United States. But she states that neither India nor the United States serve as a land to which she can belong: "[W]ith the exception of my first two years in London, 'Indian-American' has been a constant way to describe me. . . . When I was growing up in Rhode Island in the 1970's I felt neither Indian nor American. Like many immigrant offspring I felt intense pressure to be two things, loyal to the old world and fluent in the new, approved of on either side of the hyphen"; thus, for her, neither place can be her home; as she says, "One plus one did not equal two but zero" (Lahiri, "My Two Lives").

Lahiri's first novel *The Namesake* illustrates well her distress over her immigrant experience. The protagonist, Gogol Ganguli, is born to Bengali parents in Massachusetts in 1968.

His mother, Ashima, migrates to the United States in order to marry Ashoke, who is a Ph.D. student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As he grows up, he feels that he does not belong anywhere even though his family is affluent middle-class. Hamid Farahmandian et al. categorize this as an "autobiographical novel" that depicts the two generations of Indian immigrants and their confrontation with the cultural values of the West (953). As far as the character of Gogol is concerned, this novel does seem to have an autobiographical aspect. However, the story does not revolve only around him; rather, it tells a transatlantic narrative of the Gangulis over more than three decades. In particular, Gogol's mother Ashima represents the uprooted state of Indian immigrants.

Focusing on the generational difference portrayed in Lahiri's works, Robin E. Field asserts that the second generation not only inherits cultural material but also modifies and invents certain practices in order to acclimate to American life (171). Her argument is based on the assumption that the first generation has kept the belief that India is their homeland. In addition, according to Ann Marie Alfonso-Forero, as a postcolonial female subject of the diaspora, Ashima engages in preserving Indian culture even as she ensures a future in the United States for her children (852). However, these arguments seem to emphasize the generational divide in the novel. If *The Namesake* is autobiographical, Gogol should be born outside India and the United States, as Lahiri was born in England. As an immigrant of the 1.5 generation, Lahiri is suspended in a generational

gap as well as in the cultural divide between India and America.[1] Thus, it is difficult to categorize *The Namesake* as an autobiographical novel because Lahiri's generational liminality does not make Gogol the only representation of her immigrant experience. In fact, she pays keen attention to Gogol's parents as well, and the two generations depicted in the novel speak of her anguish over this deracination.

In order to illustrate the suspended identity of Indian immigrants, Lahiri presents a story that undermines the argument that she is a realist. Martina Caspari, for example, describes Lahiri as "a modern realist" (248), and critics tend to categorize her works as examples of realism.[2] Her admiration of Anton Chekov, Thomas Hardy, William Trevor, and Alice Munroe demonstrates her interest in realistic writing (Kachka 67).

However, as the name Gogol Ganguli suggests, her choice of Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat" as a motif of *The Namesake* makes us question whether or not Lahiri is a realistic writer because this classic Russian story has a rather unrealistic plot. The protagonist Akaky Akakievich, a government clerk in Petersburg, engages in the routine work of making copies of documents, as his repetitious name suggests. However, he quits his routine one day and decides to buy a new overcoat because his old one is worn. Now seeming like an entirely different person, Akaky works

[1] Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut define the 1.5 generation as immigrants who were born abroad and came to the United States in their childhood (246).

[2] As another example of this, Boris Kachka refers to Lahiri as "a succinct realistic writer" (67).

hard at his job to acquire his new overcoat. But, although in the end he is able to buy a new overcoat, a tragic accident befalls him: He is robbed of his overcoat by bandits. He dies soon after the robbery because of a high fever. However, the death of the protagonist does not end the story. A rumor spreads in Petersburg; Akaky's corpse appears, taking coats from passers-by at night.

In *The Namesake*, Gogol Ganguli is named after the Russian writer because his father was saved from a terrible train wreck after a rescuer found a page of "The Overcoat," which he had been reading in the train, and which had fallen from his hand. Lahiri's *hommage* to "The Overcoat" reveals a deeper significance: It overturns the supposition that she is a realistic writer. Concerning Lahiri's reference to "The Overcoat," Karen M. Cardozo astutely observes: ". . . Lahiri's intertextual gestures revise the understanding of the universal as something larger than, or separate from, the specific. Rather, intertextuality reveals how the universal inheres in the particular: It is from specific intercultural encounters that we gain a generalizable conception of human experience" (3). Thus Lahiri's intertextuality allows Gogol to represent "the ambivalence of ethnicity" that is tied to "the past yet at the same time [it is] also hopeful and future-oriented" (14). Her argument is noteworthy in that Lahiri depicts the moments of intercultural encounters so as to illustrate her world.

The liminal space in *The Namesake* reminds us of Homi K. Bhabha's insightful argument concerning an "in-between" space between two cultures. He maintains that this space gives new possible forms of identity:

> What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These "in-between" spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining of the idea of society itself. (*The Location of Culture* 1-2)

Lahiri describes a process through which Indian immigrant families struggle to find a space where they can take root between the United States and India. However, it should not be overlooked that Lahiri does not merely focus on ethnicity; rather, her intertextuality lets us reconsider the distinction between ontological boundaries, such as between reality and unreality, the living and the dead, or presence and absence. As Akaky's corpse implies a liminal space between the living and the dead, Lahiri portrays a space suspended between the United States and India, which implies Lahiri's deracinated identity. Akaky's corpse represents both existence and absence, while

the Gangulis search for this ambivalent space. Thus, they cannot find it in a real space; instead, they search for a void that represents both existence and absence.

In addition, it cannot be overlooked that, while adopting the classic tale "The Overcoat" as a motif, Lahiri also mentions rock musicians such as Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, and the Who. Although critics such as Liviu Augustin Chifane have focused on the intertextuality of *The Namesake*, no other previous studies have pointed out the importance of Lahiri's references to popular music.[3] In particular, the Beatles, to whom Gogol Ganguli earnestly listens in his teens, serve as an essential symbol of the cultural interaction between the Eastern and the Western hemispheres. Not only their music and lyrics but also their historical context foreground the suspended state of Indian immigrants in *The Namesake*. This chapter delves into Lahiri's references to Nikolai Gogol and the Beatles in *The Namesake* in order to reveal that Lahiri discloses a liminal space foreshadowed by her intertextual references to other works, which permits us to reconsider the argument that she is a traditional realist.

[3] Liviu Augustin Chifane gives an insightful argument concerning the intertextuality between *The Namesake* and "The Overcoat." However, although he mentions the crucial scene in which Ashoke gives Nikolai Gogol's *The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol* to his son, who is infatuated with the Beatles, as his fourteenth-birthday present (11), she does not explore the contextual significance of the band.

I. Lost in Transit: "The Overcoat" as the Origin of Void

First of all, in *The Namesake*, Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat" serves as a significant motif: It represents the reality that Indian immigrants encounter a sense of permanent loss even though they seem almost accustomed to American soil. The story does not merely relate to Gogol; on the contrary, it embraces the two generations of the Gangulis, in particular Ashima. As mentioned in the introductory section, "The Overcoat" revolves around a humble government clerk in Petersburg. His anonymity is noteworthy: As Nikolai Gogol relates, "in a certain department there was a certain clerk" ("The Overcoat" 563). His repetitious name, Akaky Akakievich, implies the routine nature of his work, of merely copying documents. However, he drastically changes one day; after he decides to buy a new overcoat, he passionately dedicates himself to his work in order to save money:

> His whole existence had in a sense become fuller, as though he had married, as though some other person were present with him, as though he were no longer alone but an agreeable companion had consented to walk the path of life hand in hand with him, and that companion was none other than the new overcoat with its thick padding and its strong, durable lining. He became, as it were, more alive, even more strong-willed, like a man who has set before himself a definite goal" (574-75)

Akaky has totally changed; however, his passionate devotion results in tragedy.[4] He is robbed of his new overcoat by bandits. "Akaky Akakievich felt only that [the bandits] took the overcoat off, and gave him a kick with their knees, and he fell on his face in the snow and was conscious of nothing more. A few minutes later he recovered consciousness and got up on his feet, but there was no one there" (580). He dies soon after the robbery, having suffered a high fever. It is worth noting that Akaky is conscious of "nothing more" and seeing "no one" because the usages of "nothing" and "no one" indicate the ambivalence of presence and absence; namely, Akaky's robbed overcoat implies that he is suspended in the space beyond this border.

Nikolai Gogol demonstrates this suspended world by depicting Akaky's ghost. After his death, something strange happens in Petersburg: People hear a rumor that "a corpse had begun appearing at night in the form of a clerk looking for a stolen overcoat, and stripping from the shoulders of all passers-by, regardless of grade and calling, overcoats of all descriptions. . . . One of the clerks of the department saw the corpse with his own eyes and at once recognized it as Akaky Akakievich" (588).[5] Regarding Akaky's overcoat, Sally Dalton-Brower considers it to be

[4] Olga Parton observes that Akaky's sudden change represents Nikolai Gogol's influence from Italian comedy and the traditional character of Pulcinella, who often shows a contradictory nature and a split personality (555).

[5] Leonard J. Kent, the editor of *The Collected Tales and Plays of Nikolai Gogol*, remarks that Constance Garnett translated the Russian word *mertverts* into "corpse," although it is often translated as "ghost." He praises this translation for not damaging the original tone of the story, because Gogol did not use *prividenye* (ghost) (Gogol, *The Collected Tales and Plays of Nikolai Gogol* 588).

the representation of a void that never fulfills his existence (334). It is this void that urges him to earnestly engage in his work, and this perpetual void keeps haunting him even after he dies. It makes him cross the border between life and death; thus, even after death, he keeps searching for the stolen overcoat. In this respect, the conversation between the corpse and a police officer in the last scene is noteworthy. After Akaky's corpse robs the overcoat from the Person of Consequence, who did not listen to his request to find his stolen overcoat while he was alive, people no longer see Akaky. However, the police officer does, and follows him. Asked by the corpse, "What do you want?" he simply answers, "Nothing" (591, 592). The police officer's reply echoes through the whole story along with the "nothing" that pervades it. Akaky's theft of the overcoat from the Person of Consequence does not suggest his material satisfaction; instead, it alludes to his eventual acquisition of the void that he has strived for.

The perpetual void demonstrated in "The Overcoat" also penetrates *The Namesake*. Before moving to the United States, Ashoke Ganguli is a college student in India. He travels on a train from Calcutta to Jamshedpur to visit his grandparents. In the coach, he sees a middle-aged Bengali businessman named Ghosh. Ghosh, who has been living in England for two years, gives advice to Ashoke, "Before it's too late, without thinking too much about it first, pack a pillow and a blanket and see as much of the world as you can" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 16). The significance of the fact that Ashoke is reading Gogol's "The Overcoat" on the train cannot be over-exaggerated.

Lahiri describes this scene as follows: “Just as Akaky’s ghost haunted the final pages, so did it haunt a place deep in Ashoke’s soul, shedding light on all that was irrational, all that was inevitable about the world” (14). Akaky’s void engulfs Ashoke; thus, he sees the view outside the window going black and the lights giving way to nothing (14-15). The train wreck that happens soon afterwards is a graphic illustration that the void, or nothingness, that has been hovering over Ashoke now swallows him. Although he is in the wreckage, he senses the odor of the flame, the noise of flies, the children’s cries, and the taste of dust and his blood; he feels as if they are “nowhere and somewhere” in the field.

Just as Akaky of “The Overcoat” exists in the limbo between the living and the dead, this ambivalence Ashoke feels in the middle of the transition is notable because Lahiri recreates the liminal space between the real and the unreal through this train accident. Following the advice of Ghosh, he decides to move to the United States. His limp, an after-effect of the accident, implies that he now drags the void of “The Overcoat” onto the new territory. Critical here is that Lahiri associates transition with void; if *The Namesake* represents a “wandering narrative,” as Natalie Friedman claims (113), this void reaches over the whole story. Therefore, even seven years since he left India, the images of the accident hover everywhere he goes: “They lurk around a corner as he rushes through the engineering department at MIT, checks his campus mail” (*The Namesake* 20-21). Akaky’s void still possesses Ashoke even in the United States; in other words, his overcoat

covers him up. But Ashoke's feeling is not pessimistic because he can survive because of Gogol's "The Overcoat"; therefore, when Ashima gives birth to Gogol, Ashoke feels grateful to Nikolai Gogol instead of to God (21). The comparison between Nikolai Gogol and God reveals that Lahiri illustrates Gogol as being a creator of the world; that is, she presents the world of the void that exists between the real and the unreal.

Therefore, this ambivalence overwhelms Ashima as well. Through this Indian immigrant woman, Lahiri illustrates a space in which Indian immigrants are suspended between India and the United States, alluding to a nowhere space. Ashima's words before migrating to the United States indicate this unrealistic space Lahiri delineates; on leaving India, she says to her grandmother, "Dida, I'm coming" (37), which is a common farewell phrase that Bengalis use. This expression conveys quite a different meaning from the same phrase in English. It is suggestive that she says that she is coming, although actually she is going. Lahiri's adoption of this Bengali expression obscures the geographical distance between India and the United States.

One aspect of this is Lahiri's consumption of mass-produced American food in order to invent this space. It is noteworthy that the story begins with the scene in which Ashima Ganguli cooks in the kitchen of their apartment in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1968. Being pregnant, she recently moved to the United States in order to live with her husband, Ashoke. She cooks Indian snacks with available replacement American ingredients: "Ashima Ganguli stands in the kitchen

of a Central Square apartment, combining Rice Krispies and Planters peanuts and chopped red onion in a bowl. She adds salt, lemon juice, thin slices of green chili pepper, wishing there were mustard oil to pour into the mix. . . . As usual, there's something missing" (1). The snacks differ from what she ate in India, because she cannot use the same ingredients as she did in India. Discussing Lahiri's works from the viewpoint of food, Laura Anh Williams points out that this scene reveals both home and displacement, abundance and lack (78). In addition, Anita Mannur associates the nostalgia of diaspora from their homelands with food; namely, their food enables the displaced to reassemble their lives as narratives to tell (15). In other words, the immigrants of the first generation remake the culture of their homeland with fictional reinterpretations. Ashima's quasi-Indian snacks thus represent her flawed identity. With one foot in India and one in the United States, she feels she cannot belong to either country. This opening scene indicates the motif of this novel, that deracinated Indian-Americans search for their roots between the two countries.

This restructured food suggests the conflict of immigrants in the United States. Ashima continues to make the Indian snacks even after giving birth to Gogol:

> Though no longer pregnant, [Ashima] continues, at times, to mix Rice Krispies and peanuts and onions in a bowl. For being a foreigner, Ashima is beginning to realize, is a sort of lifelong pregnancy—a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling

> out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been ordinary life, only to discover that that previous life vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding. (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 50)

Lahiri connects the life of immigrants with pregnancy; specifically, once they move to a foreign land, they can never go back to the place where they used to be. While they expect a new life, they can no longer live as simply as they used to; instead, they have to adapt to their new environment in order to live. Therefore, Ashima's Indian snacks signify the conflict that immigrants have to face and overcome so that they can survive in the United States.

The replacement ingredients of the adapted food indicate the ambivalent state of Indian immigrants: That they have become accustomed to American life but remain uprooted. When Gogol turns fourteen years old, Ashima cooks Bengali cuisine with replacement ingredients: "[Ashima] makes sure to prepare [Gogol's] favorite things: lamb curry with lots of potatoes, luchis, thick channa dal with swollen brown raisins, pineapple chutney, sandeshes molded out of saffron-tinted ricotta cheese" (72). Ashima makes these Bengali foods for Gogol and their friends from Bengal; it is noteworthy that she uses ricotta cheese to make *sandesh*, a Bengali dessert made with paneer and sugar. Ashima uses ricotta cheese to replace paneer, probably because it is much easier to buy than paneer. This alternative indicates that Ashima has adjusted to life in the United States, yet it also represents the incompleteness that leads immigrants to feel they cannot belong

anywhere. Lahiri illustrates Ashima's ambivalent state as being "a resident everywhere and nowhere" (276). These compromises reflect their attempts to reconstruct their own cuisine through a hybrid meeting of American and Indian cultures. However, what is worth noting is that Lahiri portrays a culture of nowhere through this hybrid cuisine. The food Ashima makes represents a product made by a person in perpetual transit; therefore, it foregrounds a void that "The Overcoat" launched in the middle part of Ashoke's journey.

Gogol Ganguli thus inherits this void from his parents. When Ashima gives birth to him, her grandmother in Calcutta is supposed to name him; however, the letter she sends is lost on the way to Massachusetts. The doctor tells Ashima and Ashoke that they cannot take the baby to their home without a birth certificate, which requires a name; remembering that Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat" saved his life, Ashoke names his son Gogol (27-28). At this point, the parents consider this to be a pet name, or *daknam* in Bengali, which is used at home and on other private occasions. They later intend to give Gogol a good name, or *bhalonam*, which will be used in the public space. However, although they rename him Nikhil—a good name—before the boy enters kindergarten, he refuses it, because he is "afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn't know" (57). Consequently, Gogol becomes his good name, which implies that the boy fatefully carries a void or nothingness on his shoulders. When he is eleven years old, he visits a graveyard on a school field trip. While other students find their names on tombstones, he is "old enough to know that there is no Ganguli

here" (69). By then, he has already learned that even his family name, Ganguli, is an anglicized pronunciation of Gangopadhyay, which is the legacy of British rule (67). In addition, understanding that Hinduism requires cremation, he knows that he will never be buried under the ground (69). This again implies his eternal deracination.

As he grows up, however, Gogol gradually feels more distressed about his name, although he refused another name in childhood. By his fourteenth birthday, he has come to detest his name: "He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian. He hates having to live with it, with a pet name turned good name, day after day, second after second" (76). Moreover, he feels as if this name does not belong anywhere, even in Russia:

> This writer he is named after—Gogol isn't his first name. His first name is Nikolai. Not only does Gogol Ganguli have a pet name turned good name, but a last name turned first name. And so it occurs to him that no one he knows in the world, in Russia or India or America or anywhere, shares his name. Not even the source of his namesake." (78)

He feels frustrated because his name does not suggest any particular country. The lost letter that Ashima's grandmother sent from Calcutta represents his sense of suspension in the air; it keeps hovering "somewhere between India and America" (56). Carrying the name that does not belong anywhere, Gogol is entrapped in this void.

In addition, Lahiri foregrounds Gogol's sense of dislocation by overlapping it with Nikolai's biographical information. When he is a high school student, his English teacher, Mr. Lawson, discusses the Russian writer in class. The textbook, *Short Story Classics*, sets out writers of the literary canon alphabetically: Nikolai Gogol comes after William Faulkner and before Ernest Hemingway in the book (89). This order, where Nikolai Gogol is placed between the two American literary canonical writers, is significant because it alludes to Gogol Ganguli's uneasiness over his own name. To make matters worse, the life of Nikolai that Mr. Lawson introduces makes him feel disgusted. Lahiri writes about the author's life as follows: Born in Ukraine in 1809, he moved to St. Petersburg in 1809; after completing a play, *The Government Inspector*, in 1836, he lived abroad, in cities such as Paris or Rome, eventually writing the first volume of *Dead Souls* in 1842 (90). Regarding his life, Mr. Lawson says to his students, "Not your ordinary guy, Nikolai Gogol" (91), which illustrates Gogol Ganguli's awareness of the unusualness of his name. Furthermore, as if the teacher intends to make his student feel even more uncomfortable, he talks about the author's death: "Eventually he returned to Russia. In 1852, in Moscow, disillusioned and convinced of his failure as a writer, he renounced all literary activity and burned the manuscript to the second volume of *Dead Souls*. He then pronounced a death sentence on himself, and proceeded to commit slow suicide by starvation" (91). It seems that Nikolai's burnt manuscript of *Dead Souls* presages Gogol's fate that he will be cremated after

living as a roaming soul whose roots are deracinated. By mingling Nikolai's biographical context with her own narrative, Lahiri demonstrates that Gogol's adolescence makes him feel like a misfit not only in the United States but also in the whole world.

II. Living in a Nowhere Land: The Beatles as a Cultural Vehicle

Lahiri makes another significant reference in *The Namesake*: The Beatles. This section examines how her references to popular music serve as an undercurrent of cultural representation in *The Namesake*. The scene of Gogol's fourteenth birthday in 1982 gives us a critical clue about how to read this cultural representation. Being an enthusiastic fan of the Beatles, Gogol is listening to the White Album when Ashoke knocks on the door of his room: "Born when the band was near death, Gogol is a passionate devotee of John, Paul, George, and Ringo. In recent years he has collected nearly all their albums, and the only thing tacked to the bulletin board on the back of his door is Lennon's obituary, already yellow and brittle, clipped from the *Boston Globe*" (74). Gogol's listening to the While Album is suggestive in that its plain white album cover, which does not have any pictures or illustrations other than the band's name embossed on it, represents his sense of emptiness caused by his name. In addition, Lahiri mentions a particular song on the album Gogol is listening to: "Revolution 1." Although Ashoke talks about Nikolai Gogol's life, mentioning that he spent most of his adult life outside Russia, just as he has done, his son shows

no interest but instead turns up the volume on the song sung by Lennon (77). [6] "Revolution 1" does not merely indicate Gogol's resistance to his father, who has fated him to a life of discomfort by giving him his peculiar name. Rather, Lahiri's reference to the White Album, in particular "Revolution 1," is too significant to be overlooked because it implies how a cultural image is reflected in the novel.

In order to delve into Lahiri's depiction of culture, we need to explore the historical context of the music mentioned here. It is important to note that the Beatles recorded the White Album at the peak of psychedelic rock, which was influenced by Indian culture. The White Album was recorded and released in 1968 at a time of political uprisings around the world, such as anti-war protests against the Vietnam War by American college students, anti-communist government protests in Poland, and the campus uprisings in France. Lennon was acutely conscious of this turmoil; therefore, although he had not yet commented on political issues, he decided to compose a song in order to express his feelings on them, saying, "I thought it was about time we spoke about [the political turmoil], the same as I thought it was about time we stopped not answering

[6] The film version of *The Namesake* (2006), directed by Mira Nair, shows Gogol listening to Pearl Jam's "Once" (1991), whose refrain is "once upon a time." Deepika Bahri maintains that the music works effectively because it evokes "the themes of worlds and cultures and generations in collision and contact" ("The Namesake" 13). Sounding much heavier than "Revolution 1," "Once" might delineate Gogol's anguish over his identity and resistance to his father more vividly. Still, considering the contextual background of "Revolution 1," I would like to insist that no other song is more appropriate than it for the scene of the conversation between Ashoke and Gogol in the original novel. I do not oppose Nair's choice of "Once," however, because the film needs sound effects as well. As Lahiri remarks, a film adaptation of a novel requires the transposition of "shifting to a different key" (Lahiri and Nair 8).

about the Vietnamese war" (The Beatles, *The Beatles Anthology* 298). This idea resulted in "Revolution," which he started to compose while he was staying in India (298). It is noteworthy that the band wrote more than half of the album's thirty songs in India (Platoff 242).[7]

Thus, Lahiri's choice of 1968 as the beginning date of *The Namesake* alludes to her consciousness of the historical background and cultural impact of popular music at that time. She also shows her consciousness of this turbulent year in order to depict the atmosphere of the United States; she refers to the riots during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Dr. Benjamin Spock's arrest for inspiring the youth to evade the draft for the Vietnam War, and the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Senator Robert Kennedy (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 11, 31). All of these incidents happened in 1968, when Lennon composed "Revolution." If Lahiri had written *The Namesake* as an autobiography, she would have set the beginning in 1967, when she was born. However, her choice of 1968 indicates the association of the turbulent year with Gogol's personal distress over his identity. Therefore, his listening to "Revolution 1" reminds readers that Gogol, who was born in this historically confused year, is destined to suffer personal turmoil.

[7] Among the songs written in India, "Revolution" was particularly important to Lennon; therefore, he persuaded the band to record the song first after returning to London. Although he wanted to release the song as a single, Harrison and McCartney refused his request because they thought that the tempo was too slow for a single. Consequently, the song was included in the White Album as "Revolution 1." They later recorded a faster and noisier version of the song, now known as "Revolution," released as the B-side of "Hey Jude" (Platoff 246).

In addition, given Lahiri's consciousness of the Beatles and their relation to the historical background, the section titled "1971," which follows the opening section "1968," also implies the connection between social turmoil and the Beatles at that time. As the result of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, East Pakistan achieved independence as Bangladesh in December of the same year. Before independence, Harrison, by then a former member of the Beatles, held a benefit concert with his fellow musicians at Madison Square Garden in New York City in August, 1971, in order to raise funds to rescue refugees from East Pakistan. In *The Namesake*, Ashoke reads the *Boston Globe* in 1971: "[Ashoke] reads about U.S. planes bombing Vietcong supply routes in Cambodia, Naxalites being murdered on the streets of Calcutta, India and Pakistan going to war" (49). Rather than depict these events with shock, Lahiri deals with them as occurring in distant places. She thus does not distinguish the news of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 from any of the others. However, her choice of 1971 and references to some of the musicians who joined the Bangladesh concert, such as Ringo Starr (74), Bob Dylan, and Eric Clapton (93), invite us to consider that she is implying her consciousness of the historical events affecting India and its neighboring countries through her references to popular music.

Furthermore, more significantly, Lahiri's reference to the Beatles foregrounds her depictions of India. The members of the band were enchanted with Indian culture when they recorded the White Album; however, it is also true that they had a distorted understanding of

Indian culture. Among the members, Lennon and Harrison were particularly infatuated with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, a Hindu monk and apostle of Transcendental Meditation (Bellman 125).[8] Yet Mahesh remonstrated that Transcendental Meditation was not a religion, even if he did adopt Hinduism into his philosophy and practices (Iwamura 181-82). Despite its lack of connection to Hinduism, Western people still categorized Mahesh's philosophy and practices as a religion. As Jane Naomi Iwamura points out, major print media such as *Time* and the *New York Times* fomented the image of Mahesh as an "Oriental Monk" (69). The Beatles were no exception: The *New York Times* reported in its Sunday edition of December 12, 1966 that Harrison "believed much more in religions of India than in anything he ever learned from Christianity" (qtd. in Iwamura 65). Therefore, as the Beatles' interpretation of Transcendental Meditation reveals, the adoption of Indian culture in the 1960s, represented particularly well in so-called psychedelic rock, suggests the viewpoint Western people had toward India. That is, the Beatles played a role in conveying a distorted interpretation of Indian culture to Western audiences.

However, this image conveyed by popular culture cannot be dismissed simply as cultural misinterpretation. On the contrary, Lahiri's illustration of India implies that the distorted cultural

[8] Musically speaking, the White Album does not demonstrate much influence from Indian culture, even though they were experiencing Mahesh's Transcendental Meditation while writing the songs for the album. However, their previous albums took in Indian culture musically as well. For example, Harrison played the sitar for the first time on "Norwegian Wood," a track on *Rubber Soul* (1965), although he played it like a guitar. Also, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) included Indian-influenced tracks, such as Harrison's "Within You Without You" and Lennon and McCartney's "A Day in the Life."

image of India has shaped her orientalistic viewpoint toward India. The following year after Gogol's fourteenth birthday, the Gangulis stay in Calcutta for Ashoke's sabbatical. The family, both the first and the second generations, feel as if they are tourists there; when they arrive at their relatives' house and emerge from a taxi, the neighbors cast curious looks at the Gangulis, who "stand out in their bright, expensive sneakers, American haircuts, backpacks slung over one shoulder" (82). Lahiri portrays the scene of their return to Calcutta as if the local people regard them as foreigners. Yet, although they have returned to the old hometown for the sake of the first generation, it never serves as their stable "home" anymore, as their stay at various relatives' houses during the eight months shows. In other words, they are continuously in transit even in India, which represents Lahiri's perspective on the country. She thus describes India as an entirely foreign country; when they travel by train to Agra, a city famous for the Taj Mahal, the Gangulis see an "immense, soaring, echoing station, where barefoot coolies in red cotton shirts pile the Ganguli's Samsonite luggage on their heads, where entire families sleep, covered in rows on the floor" (84). Gogol's and his younger sister Sonia's astonishment at this scenery discloses to us that they do not belong to India, although they are Indian descendants. Thus, when the two become ill after coming back from their travels, their relatives say, "they were not made to survive in a poor country" (86). Lahiri depicts India from something like a colonialist standpoint by

illustrating it as “a poor country.” The perplexity of the family in Agra vividly demonstrates their uprooted status:

> For a few days, in Agra, which is as foreign to Ashima and Ashoke as it is to Gogol and Sonia, they are tourists, staying at a hotel with a swimming pool, sipping bottled water, eating in restaurants with forks and spoons, paying by credit card. Ashima and Ashoke speak in broken Hindi, and when young boys approach to sell postcards or marble trinkets Gogol and Sonia are forced to say, “English, please.” Gogol notices in certain restaurants that they are the only Indians apart from the serving staff. (84-85)

While most people in Calcutta speak Bengali, those in Agra speak Hindi; thus, it is understandable that Ashoke and Ashima cannot speak Hindi fluently. Their behavior at the hotel and in the restaurants also indicate their separation from local Indians. However, it is critical here that Lahiri demonstrates that even the first-generation Indian immigrants feel uprooted as “tourists” in their old country. Lahiri’s use of the Taj Mahal implies that the whole family sees it as tourists; admiring its perfect symmetry, they take their photos under the minarets from which tourists used to leap to their deaths (85). Also, a tour guide tells them the legend that around twenty-two thousand builders of the mausoleum had their thumbs cut off after it was completed so that no one could build it again, which makes Sonia have a nightmare that night (85). The way Lahiri portrays the symbolic building of Indian culture implies that she takes advantage of the image of “eternal India”

which attracts Western travelers (Desai 35). In other words, she describes the contours of Indian culture through cliché, a stereotypical depiction of India that Sunanda Mongia criticizes her for creating. However, it is this cliché that allows Lahiri to delineate the space where both the first and the second generations of Indian immigrants wander with the status of "unhomeliness," in the words of Bhabha, which suggests the condition of extraterritoriality and cross-cultural initiation (9).[9] The continuous transit of the Gangulis blurs the boundary between the home and the foreign; therefore, the family's behavior as tourists does not come from the cultural and linguistic differences between Indian regions; rather, their stay in Agra demonstrates that they do not have a home anywhere in the real world, regardless of the generations. As examined in the previous section, Ashoke faces the space of the void that extinguishes the boundary between the realistic and the unrealistic in the middle of his journey by train. Likewise, the family is now confronted with the nowhere space that transcends the border between the realistic and the unrealistic, no matter how realistic Lahiri's depiction seems. It affects them strongly to hear that someone has been murdered on the same train on their way back to Calcutta. It is Ashoke who feels shocked the most: "No one is more horrified than Ashoke, who privately recalls that other train, on that other night, and that other field where he'd been stopped. This time he heard nothing"

[9] Bhabha carefully distinguishes unhomeliness from homelessness; according to him, to be unhomed does not mean easy accommodation via a familiar division of social life into private and public spheres. He emphasizes that it makes the boundary between home and world confused (9).

(Lahiri, *The Namesake* 86). Here, the void opens in front of him again. His hearing "nothing" alludes to the space as nothingness. Lahiri reconnects the space of nothing with transit. But now that Ashoke is not alone, the space engulfs the whole family.

Therefore, the condition of the Gangulis in transit continues to embrace them even after they go back to the United States. After their eight-month stay, they come back to their house in Massachusetts. However, although they no longer live in India, they still feel in transit: "Though they are home they are disconcerted by the space, by the uncompromising silence that surrounds them. They still feel somehow in transit, still disconnected from their lives, bound up in an alternate schedule, an intimacy only the four of them share" (87). Lahiri reveals that the geographical distance between India and the United States has collapsed; in this space, the Gangulis do not feel at "home," even though they have returned to their own house. Their continuous state of being in transition overwhelms them, something which has haunted Ashoke ever since he experienced the train accident as a void. Bhabha claims that this "unhomely" moment keeps lurking, stealthy as a shadow (9).[10] That is, the void that appeared between the realistic and the unrealistic in front of Ashoke has crept up again and has haunted the family since

[10] Here, Bhabha takes Sigmund Freud's argument about the *unheimlich* into consideration. Freud points out that opposite things may be reversed: "The German word '*unheimlich*' is obviously the opposite of '*heimlich*' ['homely'], '*heimisch*' ['native']—the opposite of what is familiar; and we are tempted to conclude that what is 'uncanny' is frightening precisely because it is *not* known and familiar. Naturally not everything that is new and unfamiliar is frightening, however; the relation is not capable of inversion" (219). Bhabha thus translates the German word into "unhomely" in order to emphasize the moment when something forgotten in a familiar theoretical distinction—private and public, for example—creeps up like a shadow.

their journey to India, where, although they settle there, they still feel continuously in transit. This implies that they cannot escape from the fate of perpetual movement. In addition, the silence that surrounds them reveals to us the space of nothingness that represents the ambivalence of existence and absence and swallows them up. In other words, they live in an alternate space where they have an "alternate schedule." Lahiri shows an ambivalent space which is both realistic and unrealistic by illustrating a family that crosses the border between India and the United States. They geographically come back "home"; nonetheless, they have lost this home as a place to set down roots because they remain in transit. Where does the void that has engulfed them come from? It is Gogol's "The Overcoat." The quote from Fodor Dostoyevsky that Ashoke told to Gogol on his fourteenth birthday echoes through the family now: "We all came out of Gogol's overcoat" (78).

III. The Destiny is the Origin: They Came from and Come Back to the Void

Gogol Ganguli attempts to cast off the void that he is destined to carry on his shoulders. Before entering Yale University, he decides to change his name to Nikhil, which he rejected in his childhood. What Lahiri associates with Gogol's entrance into the courthouse is remarkable: "Gogol empties his pockets and steps through a metal detector, as if he were at an airport, about to embark on journey" (98). The change of name connotes a new life journey for Gogol. Therefore,

as if having a "Second Baptism" (98), he feels exultant on finishing his interview at the courthouse: "He wonders if this is how it feels for an obese person to become thin, for a prisoner to walk free. 'I'm Nikhil,' he wants to tell the people who are walking their dogs, pushing children in their strollers, throwing bread to the ducks" (102). It seems that Gogol has acquired a new identity by throwing off his old overcoat.[11] In other words, he has finally completed his revolution by regaining "a B-side to the self" in the form of the alternate identity that he refused in his childhood (76). However, Gogol does not recognize that his new name itself also contains a fateful void. It is noteworthy that he does not choose a common American name, but instead Nikhil, because this time it does not let him belong to any place, as before. Although it is associated with Nikolai, it is still not Russian. Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that the name sounds like "nihil," which implies nothingness or void, because the sound of the "k" is lost in the Russian pronunciation of "kh." Therefore, even though he changes his name, he still exists in the nowhere space that originates in "The Overcoat." Given that the short story is associated with transit, Gogol's entrance through the security gate at the courthouse implies that he has not made any change, even though he has obtained a new name. After he replaces his name with Nikhil, American friends call him Nick; yet his sister Sonia, who calls him "Goggles," refuses to call him by the new name, saying, "You can't [change your name]. . . . Because you are Gogol" (221). Her

[11] Although Gogol changes his name to Nikhil, I call him Gogol, as Lahiri does.

words allude to her brother's destined void. He cannot find a stable soil in which to set down his roots; on the contrary, he remains in transit and keeps crossing the boundary between the realistic and the unrealistic worlds.

Meanwhile, Gogol also acknowledges his fate of being perpetually in transit. When he is a senior at the university, he goes back to his parents' house by train. There, he encounters the void generated in a liminal space. On the way to Boston, the train suddenly stops; the conductor announces that someone has committed suicide by leaping in front of the moving train (121). Once again, Lahiri connects the image of death with a train in transit. This train accident indicates that the void generated by "The Overcoat" held in Ashoke's hands lurks around Gogol. Therefore, the person who waits for him at a station near his old house must be Ashoke. The accident reminds him of his own tragedy in the past; thus, in the car, his father explains why he named his son Gogol. Lahiri conflates the image of India with that of the United States:

> And as they sit together in the car, his father revisits a field 209 kilometers from Howrah. With his fingers lightly grasping the bottom of the steering wheel, his gaze directed through the windshield at the garage door, he tells Gogol the story of the train he'd ridden twenty-years ago, in October 1961, on his way to visit his grandfather in Jamshedpur. He tells him about the night that had nearly taken his life, and the book that had saved him, and about the year afterward, when he'd been unable to move. (123)

The train accident on the way to Boston revives Ashoke's traumatic memory as a flashback. In other words, the memory hidden within himself reappears as something uncanny, or unhomely. Therefore, Lahiri shows the father and the son sharing the space of unhomeliness, which implies that they stand on the border between the dead and the alive, or the realistic and the unrealistic. Ashoke once tried to explain his son's namesake on his fourteenth birthday, but failed. However, now that the void haunts both of them, the father can explain why he chose the name. Gogol finally understands his father's reference to Dostoyevsky's words: "We all came out of Gogol's overcoat." The words do not merely mean that Gogol would not have been born if "The Overcoat" had saved his father's life. It rather suggests that crossing borders not only geographically but figuratively engulfs the whole world of the story. Lahiri illustrates that both the first and second generations of Indian immigrants live in this liminal space, unlike the previous studies that postulate that the first generation preserve the culture of their "homeland." They do not have a stable home; on the contrary, they are destined to be continuously in transit once they leave their home country. Ashoke thus tells his son his fate as an immigrant by explaining the story of his namesake.

However, Lahiri does not illustrate this as a tragedy. Although he has already renamed himself Nikhil, Gogol acquires a new sense of his old name by way of his father's story: "[T]he sound of his pet name, uttered by his father as he has been accustomed to hearing it all his life,

means something completely new, bound up with a catastrophe he has unwittingly embodied for years" (124). Gogol recognizes that his name is associated with the tragic accident that Ashoke had in India. He also notices that the accident caused his father's limp, which discloses to us that he senses the void that he has dragged with him from India. Perplexed that his name is related to this deadly accident, he asks Ashoke, "Do I remind you of that night?"; the father answers, "Not at all. . . . You remind me of everything that followed" (124). His words may sound positive, suggesting his son has brought hope to him. Yet at the same time it reveals that the nothingness of "The Overcoat" represents the ambivalence that has haunted them. Even so, the recognition of his namesake does not make him pessimistic; instead, it gradually leads him to admit that he lives in the space of the void, or nothingness.

Thus, after this critical conversation with his father, even though Gogol feels as if he finds a stable home living as Nikhil, it never lets him set down roots. Working as an architect in New York City, he starts to go out with Maxine. Her parents welcome him because she is living with them. Half living at their house, Gogol enjoys freedom; he feels no expectation or responsibility, but lives "in willing exile from his own life" (142). Lahiri here demonstrates a sharp contrast between Maxine's parents and Gogol's. When he takes her to his parents' house in Massachusetts on their way to New Hampshire, where her parents spend the summer at their lake house, his parents are not as welcoming as Maxine's; he has to ring a bell, because he knows the door is

always locked. Also, Ashima looks nervous when she opens the door, wearing one of her better saris, lipstick, and perfume, which contrasts with Gogol's and Maxine's casual clothes (146). In contrast, when he arrives at Maxine's parents' lake house, her father Gerald says to him, "Welcome to paradise" (152). The lake house further contrasts with Gogol's parents' house: "Nothing is locked, not the main house, or the cabin that [Gogol] and Maxine sleep in. Anyone could walk in. He thinks of the alarm system now installed in his parents' house, wonders why they cannot relax about their physical surroundings in the same way" (155). Gogol, known only as Nikhil to Maxine and her parents, appears to leave behind his former life as Gogol Ganguli. He has his twenty-seventh birthday in New Hampshire with them and their friends; he is "free," surrounded by a group of people who "will forget him the next day" (158). Nonetheless, he does not realize that Gogol's overcoat still embraces him. What Maxine says to Gogol on their way to New Hampshire is worth noting; she tells him that they are going to "the middle of nowhere" (145). Although Gogol feels free in the lake house, it never serves as a home because it also represents the void that has haunted him. He is not settled in a stable home because he is staying in another liminal space, caught between absence and presence.

However, Gogol's deracination no longer forces him to feel deserted. A fatal event happens while he is staying with Maxine and her family: Ashoke's sudden death by heart attack. He dies while he is living in Cleveland, Ohio, working at a temporary teaching job. Gogol then flies there

in order to collect the things left by his deceased father. Gogol faces a sense of nothingness on the flight: “On the way to Cleveland, the journey had felt endless, but this time, staring out the plane window, seeing nothing, all too quickly he feels the plane’s descent in his chest” (179). Lahiri shows that transit generates nothingness, just as travels by train connote it. Now that the space of nothingness overwhelms Gogol, he loses the sense of time and space; he feels as if the journey continues endlessly. Lahiri presents a space that is both real and unreal here.

This ambivalent space generated by Ashoke’s death covers up the bereavement of the family. During the mourning period, Ashima, Gogol, and Sonia face the nothingness: “[T]he calls, the flowers that are everywhere, the visitors, the hours they spend sitting together in the living room unable to say a word, mean nothing” (181). In this void, the family are totally isolated from the world. However, Lahiri reverses the presence and absence of Ashoke by portraying a mourner’s diet of Hinduism that forgoes meat and fish; the family feels that “the enforced absence of certain foods on their plates conjur[es] his father’s presence” (181). The death of Ashoke does not represent a loss; instead, it brings about the ambivalent space that transcends the border between presence and absence.

Noteworthy is that Gogol does not reject this ambivalent space between absence and presence but voluntarily accepts it. Maxine suggests that Gogol should revisit the lake house in New Hampshire with her for a Christmas vacation so that he can escape from the mourning;

however, he does not agree with her idea, saying, “I don’t want to get away” (182). His words indicate that he accepts the liminal space between the dead and the living. As mentioned earlier, the lake house represents a “paradise” for Gogol because it is located in “the middle of nowhere,” which connotes nothingness. Still, it is not a real place that Gogol longs for. In other words, the lake house only alludes to a quasi-paradise because the place as nowhere does not offer him a metaphysical void that breaks down the ontological distinction between the dead and the living. In the meantime, the mourning space generated by Ashoke’s death blurs this distinction, which foregrounds the motif of “The Overcoat.” In this respect, Gogol must be Gogol rather than Nikhil. Now that Gogol has fully understood the reason why his father chose the name, he needs to be his former self because, although the name Nikhil also implies the fateful nothingness of “The Overcoat,” he chose it only for the real world. Therefore, Maxine’s words, “I miss you, Nikhil,” demonstrate that Gogol has cast off his alternative self, or the “B-side” of his self, in order to stay in the void that stems from “The Overcoat.”

The void embraces Ashima as well. Worried about her isolation, her friends recommend that she go back to India. She refuses: “[F]or the first time in her life, Ashima has no desire to escape to Calcutta, not now” (183). Her refusal reveals that she does not want to leave the space of nothingness any more than Gogol does. She interprets the reason why Ashoke went to Cleveland as his desire to teach her “how to live alone” (183). She has never been alone since she

moved to the United States to marry Ashoke; therefore, his supposedly temporary leave for Cleveland and his death force her to live by herself for the first time, which may indicate her independence. However, Ashima's separation from her husband has figurative significance; like Gogol, she is destined to live in the space of nothingness. Calcutta no longer represents a home for her; she finally finds a home in the space that Ashoke's death initiated. That is, she also crosses the boundary between absence and presence; in short, Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat" covers her up as well. It is true that she is alone; however, she now accepts the nothingness as the place where she belongs. She stays with her family, including Ashoke, because the space obscures the distinction between the living and the dead. This liminal space allows her to be in transit between the two spheres, as the meaning of her name, "she who is limitless, without borders" (26), connotes.

Therefore, Ashima chooses to live both in India and in the United States. The end of the novel shows that she has decided to sell the house in Massachusetts and spend half a year in Calcutta and the other half in Massachusetts. Lahiri describes her as "a resident everywhere and nowhere" (276). This ambivalence demonstrates that the void of "The Overcoat" lurks around her. Although she spends half of her life in Calcutta, she differs from the former self who lived there as a citizen because she now holds an American passport, her Massachusetts driver's license, and her social security card (276). Dalton-Brower insists that Lahiri reveals that her in-betweenness

functions as the freedom that allows the people of the Indian diaspora to be liberated from their traditional Indian culture (333). However, Ashima's decision to live in transit has a more profound significance in that her transit allows her to be connected with the dead. It is notable that Lahiri emphasizes nothingness in order to portray Ashima's departure: "[T]here will be no trace that [the Gangulis] were ever there, no house to enter, no name in the telephone directory. Nothing to signify the years [Gogol's] family has lived here, no evidence of the effort, the achievement it had been" (281). Lahiri's usage of "nothing" indicates that the ambivalence of absence and presence surrounds Ashima. However, this space lets her live together with her deceased husband. Lahiri associates Ashoke's death with Ashima's departure: "The givers and keepers of Gogol's name are far from him now. One dead. Another, a widow, on the verge of a different sort of departure, in order to dwell, as his father does, in a separate world" (289). Just as Ashoke's death connotes a permanent transit across a nowhere space, so do Ashima's movements between India and the United States. Therefore, the space of nothingness figuratively allows them to be reunited. By connecting the two, Lahiri presents the space that connects the border between the dead and the dead, the realistic and the unrealistic, as Nikolai Gogol does in "The Overcoat."

Nonetheless, despite this familial reunion, Lahiri does not demonstrate that the space of nothingness serves as an ideal home for all the Indian diaspora. After breaking up with Maxine, Gogol marries an Indian immigrant, Moushumi. He knew her when they were children because

she and her family visited the house of the Gangulis. They seem to be a typical couple of upper middle-class Indian-Americans; she is a Ph.D. candidate in French literature at New York University. She has broken up with her Caucasian boyfriend, Graham, whom she met while she was living in Paris, even though they were engaged; the reason for their breakup is that he revealed his frustration with Indian culture, talking about the time when they visited Calcutta (217). Gogol meets her because his parents have asked him to console her. Given that Moushumi's broken engagement comes from cultural differences, her marriage to Gogol is supposed to overcome them, because they share the same background as Indian-Americans of the second generation. Following the tradition of Hinduism, they have a wedding surrounded by their families and friends of Indian immigrants. They appear to achieve harmony on the surface; yet Gogol's status of being in perpetual transit leads to discord with Moushumi. He visits Paris with her for her academic conference, but, whereas she has stayed there before, he behaves as a tourist. What is noteworthy is that he is not forced to be a tourist, but in fact he "wants simply to be a tourist," "fumbling a phrase book, looking at all the buildings on his list, getting lost" (231). Meanwhile, Moushumi tells him that she does not want to be seen as a tourist in Paris (234). The disparity between the two reflects their attitude to their status of being suspended between two cultures. On the one hand, Gogol feels extremely distressed by his uprooted identity, as his anguish over (though eventual understanding of) his namesake implies. For her part, Moushumi reinvents herself by

studying French literature and living in Paris. In other words, she successfully finds a third space other than Indian or American culture. As for Moushumi's study of French literature, which betrays her parents' expectation that she will become a chemist, Lahiri shows that the choice does not make her feel guilty: "Immersing herself in a third language, a third culture, had been her refuge—she approached French, unlike things American or Indian, without guilt, or misgiving, or expectation of any kind" (214). She does not feel guilty about leaving behind the two cultures so that she can "transform" herself into another self in the third country, France (215).

In contrast, Gogol cannot transform himself into the "B-side" of his self even though he changes his name. This inability to transform eventually leads him to live in the liminal space that blurs boundaries. Unlike Moushumi, he "still felt guilty at times for changing his name" (244). But his sense of guilt is not understandable to his wife; therefore, in front of her friends, she mentions that he changed his name from Gogol to Nikhil, which makes him think that she regards his distress over the deracination of an Indian immigrant as a mere "joke" (244). Through the discord that arises between Gogol and Moushumi, Lahiri discloses to us that not all Indian immigrants necessarily share the same anguish over their uprooted identity.

In order to emphasize Gogol's status as an eternal tourist, Lahiri again associates the image of death with transit by train. Soon after the first anniversary of their marriage, Moushumi starts to have an affair with Dimitri, her old friend. On their way to Gogol's old house in Massachusetts,

Dimitri's name slips from Moushumi's mouth, which reveals to Gogol that she is having an affair (282). It is crucial that Lahiri reminds her readers of the night when Ashoke told Gogol of his namesake in his car. As already discussed, Lahiri associates transit by train with death. Likewise, Gogol figuratively faces death, as Lahiri illustrates the scenery outside the train as follows: "[O]utside the window it had been dark, the disturbing pitch-black of early winter evening" (282). His transit as a tourist generates blackness in front of him; in this liminal space, Nikolai Gogol's overcoat engulfs him again. This image of blackness consequently revives the memory of his father's talk in the car when "he'd experienced the same bewilderment, was sickened in the same way," although he now feels "none of the tenderness that he had felt for his father" (282). The eventual divorce from Moushumi spells out the fact that the quasi-community of Indian immigrants does not serve as a stable home for him, no matter how harmonious it looked in the beginning. His memory of the conversation with his father suggests that he recognizes that he comes from Nikolai Gogol's overcoat; that is, he has to keep moving as a tourist who crosses boundaries.

What is significant is that Lahiri mentions another significant motif, the Beatles, in order to foretell Gogol's destiny. Lahiri mockingly alludes to the Beatles. When Gogol and Moushumi talk with her friends about names, one of them says, "I always liked the names of popes"; then another asks him, "You mean John and Paul?" (239). Although Lahiri does not suggest that these

two names might be associated with John Lennon and Paul McCartney, this reference invites us to remember that she has already referred to the Beatles. This hints that the Beatles continue to echo throughout Gogol's life. Once Moushumi's affair with Dimitri begins, he wakes up alone, because she has left for Palm Beach for an academic conference. The music that he listens to is the Beatles' *Abbey Road* (1969). More specifically, Lahiri chooses to point to the latter part of the album: "He puts on his *Abbey Road* CD, skipping ahead to the songs that would have been on side 2 of the album. . ." (269). The B-side of the LP consists of a medley of songs; one of the more remarkable is "Carry That Weight," by Lennon and McCartney. In this short piece, they repeatedly sing: "Boy, you gotta carry that weight / Carry that weight a long time." These lyrics connote Gogol's destiny; that is, he has to carry his namesake even though he changes his name. Or, even though it seems that he has achieved a harmonious space on the surface, by marrying an Indian immigrant, he can never fulfill the void that lurks with him; on the contrary, he has to keep living with it. The song implies that he has to carry the weight of Nikolai Gogol's overcoat.

Thus, Lahiri demonstrates that Gogol lives in the liminal space between the real and the unreal worlds. After the separation, he travels across Italy alone, although he had planned the trip with Moushumi: "He lost himself among the darkened narrow streets, crossing countless tiny bridges, discovering deserted squares. . ." (283). Lahiri describes that the darkness swallowing him up. However, crossing bridges metaphorically indicates that he is traversing boundaries, such

as between the dead and the living, or between absence and presence. The deserted squares where Gogol arrives allude to the void that comes from “The Overcoat.” Although Lahiri describes it realistically, she nevertheless presents a space that makes boundaries unclear. That is, the imagery of Italy that Lahiri portrays represents the motif of “The Overcoat.” In this space, no matter how realistic it appears, it is unrealistic at the same time; therefore, Gogol is “unable ever to retrace his steps” (283). His trip to Italy implies that he lives in the void generated by Gogol’s overcoat.

Lahiri illustrates that it is the void that serves as a home not only for Gogol but also his mother. Lahiri reminds us that “The Overcoat” has covered Gogol, even though he has not read it yet. When he goes back by train to his old house for the farewell party for Ashima, Lahiri shows us that his book is “unread,” while he uses a blanket as “his overcoat” in the compartment (280). She associates the unread book with the overcoat. Given that she has repeatedly indicated this ambivalence by portraying transits by train, this connection foreshadows the time when “The Overcoat,” connoting liminal space, will enshroud him as his destiny. Thus, when he arrives at the station, “no one,” indicating the ambivalence of presence and absence, greets him at the platform (280), which suggests that the world of the nothingness embraces him. Therefore, Sonia’s words to Gogol, “Welcome home, Goggles” (284), imply that the void is his home. He is destined to live in this void of nothingness. Continuously in transit, he obscures borders, which brings about a liminal space as his home, as Ashima does. Therefore, the last sentence of the novel,

"For now, he starts to read [*The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol*]" (291), is noteworthy in that he takes his origin into his heart. Now that he accepts his namesake, Ashoke's words resonate: "We all came out of Gogol's overcoat." "The Overcoat" saved Ashoke's life; since then, the motif of the work—the ambivalence of life and death, presence and absence, realism and unrealism—has haunted not only him but also his wife and his son. Lahiri shows us that the Gangulis live in this ambivalent space regardless of generations, contrary to the idea that each generation differs in terms of the way they face their "original" homeland, India. She shows that they come not from an actual place but from a void, represented by Gogol's overcoat.

Conclusion

Jhumpa Lahiri creates a family saga in *The Namesake*. Her eye does not focus merely on Gogol, who belongs to her generation. His anguish over his peculiar name may allude to Lahiri's own, because she also grew up in the United States, suspended between American and Indian cultures. Nonetheless, *The Namesake* does not revolve only around Gogol. Lahiri thoroughly portrays the suspended state of first-generation Indian immigrants as well. Unlike previous studies, which read *The Namesake* as her autobiography, it is possible to show that Lahiri presents the story both of him and his parents. Therefore, it is hard to say who the single protagonist of this novel is. Lahiri never deals with the deracination of Indian immigrants by generational classifications because

she herself does not belong either to the first generation or to the second generation. Her origin as one of the 1.5 generation invites us to consider that this generational ambivalence made her pay attention to both generations. Through the name that comes out of nowhere, Gogol, she demonstrates that a child of an immigrant family has to struggle over his uprooted identity even though he seems to be able to acclimate to American soil. In the meantime, she also reveals that even first-generation immigrants lose their home once they leave it and emigrate to the United States. Even if they go back to their original country, it no longer serves as their home. The travels of the Gangulis show that they live as permanent tourists who do not have a stable home in the real world.

Thus, Lahiri invents the liminal space that exists between traditional realism and unrealism; her reference to Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat" enables her to create the ambivalent space that exceeds boundaries. This classic work of Russian literature does not simply work to produce Gogol Ganguli's namesake, because it has a more profound significance in that it flows as an undercurrent of the ambivalent world of *The Namesake*. Critics presume that Lahiri is a traditional realist. Given her literary influence, this is likely. In addition, the author herself admits that she is not an experimental writer. However, *The Namesake* indicates her deviation from realism. Her intertextuality allows her to be an unrealistic writer. She foregrounds the ambivalence of Akaky Akakievich's presence and absence in order to use it as the motif of her work. By connecting "The

Overcoat" with transit, she spells out the space in which the clear distinction between absence and presence becomes blurred. This void or nowhere space generated from "The Overcoat" lurks with the Gangulis. Therefore, they do not have any physical home, even though they have their houses in the United States, because their home is the nowhere space that represents the liminality between the real and the unreal.

In addition to "The Overcoat," Lahiri's references to the Beatles function as a vehicle that conveys a stereotypical cultural image of India. They may be overlooked as mere decoration that illustrate her characters, but in fact they provide a significant key to unlocking the story if we explore the cultural context of the music. Popular music works as an apparatus that reveals the cultural transformations that took place between the East and the West in the twentieth century. The Beatles introduced a distorted cultural image of India in the 1960s, such as the practice of Transcendental Meditation as adopted into Western culture. What is noteworthy is that Lahiri, an Indian-American, takes advantage of such stereotypical images of Indian culture, which implies the potential that popular culture had to influence not only Western people but also the Indian diaspora, and to inform the latter's understanding of their "original" culture. Some critics claim that she does not understand "genuine" Indian culture even though she is of Indian descent. Such criticisms ignore the simple fact that Indian-Americans are not Indians. Lahiri's illustrations of India contradict critics' arguments because they do not distinguish Indians from Indian-Americans.

Her descriptions of the Gangulis' journey to India may demonstrate her inability to depict Indian landscapes and culture from an "original" Indian eye. However, this should not be regarded as her failure as an author. Rather, her touristic viewpoint allows her to blur the distinction between the realistic and unrealistic worlds. That is, no matter how real it may look on the surface, Lahiri's India is not rooted in its actual soil. Thus, as tourists, the Gangulis travel across this rootless soil, which denotes the impossibility that they can be rooted in any other soil than the nowhere space generated by "The Overcoat." This journey discloses their destiny as permanent tourists; therefore, even after going back to the United States, they remain in transit. It seems that Lahiri's adoption of classic Russian literature and popular music shows that they have nothing common; nonetheless, the connection between these two references foregrounds the void as a nothingness that haunts the Gangulis, regardless of generation, throughout the story. She demonstrates that popular culture has just as much potential to work as a motif as does traditional culture. In this sense, Lahiri presents the world in which the distinction between the popular and the traditional breaks down.

The Namesake demonstrates Lahiri's attempt to cross boundaries. Her unique literary world suggests that it is hard to categorize her as a traditional realist. Her characters keep on moving, crossing not only the geographical boundaries between the United States and India but also the figurative ones, and this brings about both a realistic and/but an unrealistic world. Lahiri's

characters live in this liminal space by making this continuous transit over boundaries. Like her literary heroes, she seems to stick to a realistic way of writing; however, we witness those moments throughout the novel when the void, functioning as the uncanny, surges up, which leads us to recognize that she is not a realist. At such moments, we lose the distinctions that we take for granted.

Chapter 2

Drowning in Sentimentality:

The Tradition of Sympathy in "Hema and Kaushik"

By illustrating the complex emotions of the first and second generations of post-1965 Indian immigrants in her books *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake*, Jhumpa Lahiri invites scholars and critics to recognize her as a writer of dual descent with an American and Indian background. However, the publication of her second short story collection *Unaccustomed Earth* led them to place her in the tradition of American literature. After its publication, Lahiri disclosed that her re-reading of Nathaniel Hawthorne had inspired her to write the work:

> Rereading it at nearly 40, I was both startled and unspeakably reassured. I felt that a writer who represents everything that I seemed not to be while growing up—an American, a New Englander, whose work is set in the very terrain in which I was raised and from which I felt always estranged—had articulated, almost two centuries ago, the journey and experience of my family, and had also expressed my project as a writer. The sense of recognition, of connection across space and time, was profound. (Lahiri, "Jhumpa Lahiri on *Unaccustomed Earth*")

Obviously, this title comes from Hawthorne's "The Custom-House," the introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*.[1] The epigraph of *Unaccustomed Earth* comes from it: "Human nature will not flourish, any more than potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil. My children have had other birthplaces, and so far as their fortunes may be within my control, shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth" (Hawthorne, "The Custom-House" 12).

According to Michael Wutz, this epigraph has a "most American" character in that it depicts "transplantation and the ethos of a virgin continent" (251). In addition, Rajini Srikanth considers Lahiri's quotation from Hawthorne's masterwork as "her desire to be seen as writing fully within the American literary tradition and her confidence in positioning herself within the American literary pantheon" (55). She claims that Lahiri's use of Hawthorne's words allows her Bengali characters to have credibility as being quintessentially American (55). In the meantime, Karen M. Cardozo points out that Lahiri's works illustrate the risk of including homogenous or parochial genealogies at the level of content while admitting that the epigraph indicates "an unabashed bid to claim America" (6). These studies allow us to understand that, while she was writing

[1] As Ashoke Gangluli's father worked as an officer for the customs department of a shipping company in India in *The Namesake* (9), Lahiri seems to have been paying *hommage* to Hawthorne, in particular his "The Custom-House," even before she published *Unaccustomed Earth*.

Unaccustomed Earth, Lahiri was keenly aware of early American history, the history that immigrants initiated in the new soil.

However, even though these studies have demonstrated that Lahiri's literature can be traced back to Hawthorne, allowing her to be placed in the canonical tradition of American literature, when discussing Hawthorne's impact on Lahiri it is hard to argue that they take into account the sentimental aspect of his works. It is doubtless that Hawthorne implied that the continuous movements of immigrants are essential for the prosperity of the United States. However, it cannot be overlooked that he also insisted on the significance of sympathy in "The Custom-House." In it, he laments that in the mid-nineteenth century Americans lost the quality of sympathy that the early Americans believed in so that they could form a tight-knit community:

> The sentiment is probably assignable to the deep and aged roots which my family has struck into the soil. It is now nearly two centuries and a quarter since the original Briton, the earliest emigrant of my name, made his appearance in the wild and forest-bordered settlement, which has since become a city. And here his descendants have been born and died, and have mingled their earthy substance with the soil; until no small portion of it must necessarily be akin to the mortal frame wherewith, for a little while, I walk the streets. In part, therefore, the attachment which I speak of is the mere sensuous sympathy of dust for dust. Few of my countrymen can know what it is; nor as frequent

> transplantation is perhaps better for the stock, need they consider it desirable to know. (10-11)

Hawthorne states here that his contemporary Americans do not know what sympathy is. Given that he mentions the original immigrants of America, his reference to early immigrants and sympathy reminds us of John Winthrop's 1630 speech "A Model of Christian Charity," which he delivered on the *Arbella* en route from England to America. Winthrop emphasized that to the Puritans on the ship, the importance of sympathizing with each other in order to form a tight-knit community was crucial:

> First, all true Christians are of one body in Christ. . . . All the parts of this body being thus united are made so contiguous in a special relation as they must needs partake of each other's strength and infirmity, joy and sorrow, weal and woe. . . . If one member suffers, all suffer with it; if one be in honor, all rejoice with it. . . . This sensibleness and sympathy of each other's conditions will necessarily infuse into each a native desire and endeavor to strengthen, defend, preserve and comfort the other. (6)

As governor, Winthrop demanded that Puritans must have sympathy with others; in that way he hoped that they would foster a harmonious community through Christianity.

Yet, although Hawthorne criticized the lack of sympathy in nineteenth-century America, he did not idealize the old Puritan society. Rather, in his depiction of Hester Prynne, who is banished

and made outcast, he delineates the discrepancy between the ideal and the real, and demonstrates another possibility for creating a harmonious community, as I will discuss in Chapter 3. Kristin Boudreau has suggested that to Hawthorne, sympathy seems to have been turned into both a cure and a violation: "If [sympathy] could cure society of its conflicts between individuals, the inevitable price of that cure, as Hawthorne might argue, was the rape of the individual" (9). Hawthorne spells out the cruel side of a close Christian community, in which Hester, who has sympathy with other outcasts, plays the role of an agent who suggests a haven from strict Puritan society.

Furthermore, some scholars have agreed with Roy R. Male's claims that Hawthorne was not an enthusiast of "sentimental sympathy" and "tearful benevolence" (148). It is true that in January 1855 he wrote from England to his friend and publisher William D. Ticknor complaining of the publishing market in which female writers' sentimental fiction, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), thrived: "America is now wholly given over to a d----d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash—and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed" (*Letters of Hawthorne to William D. Ticknor* 75). Nonetheless, in the nineteenth century, "the first century of human sympathy" in W. E. B. Du Bois's words (147), Hawthorne did not escape the influence of sentimental fiction. As Klaus P. Hansen points out, Hawthorne's reading of Adam Smith's *The*

Theory of Moral Sentiment demonstrates his interest in sentimentalism and sound moral good-sense philosophy (68).[2]

Given Hawthorne's keen consciousness of the presence of sympathy in literature and contemporary society, the influence of sentimental fiction that Hawthorne reveals in *The Scarlet Letter* cannot be overlooked. Erika M. Kreger asserts that the plot of *The Scarlet Letter* stems from American adaptations of the British seduction novel (310). Citing these English novels, Nina Baym also notes that Hawthorne was familiar with them in the early decades of the nineteenth century (16). This genre of novel originally comes from eighteenth-century British literature, wherein seduction either does not happen or is delayed; American authors focused on seduction in the early part of their novels and illustrated its consequences. However, Cathy N. Davidson recounts that the seduction plot all but disappears from sentimental fiction after approximately 1818, "with the graphic exception of *The Scarlet Letter*" (214). Therefore, although Hawthorne harshly criticized sentimental fiction on the surface, he actually paid much attention to its traditions, as we see in his plotline of the adultery between Hester and Arthur Dimmesdale, even though the relationship between the two does not simply suggest sensationalism to readers; rather, as Hawthorne's distress over an American society that has lost the quality of sympathy implies,

[2] The fact that Hawthorne read Smith is confirmed by the records of the Salem public library (Kesselring 61).

Hester's adulterous relationship with Dimmesdale and its consequences provoke questions of ethics and morality.

In the first chapter of *The Scarlet Letter*, alluding to a wild rose bush, the narrator says: ". . . we could hardly do otherwise than pluck one of its flowers, present it to the reader. It may serve, let us hope, to symbolize some sweet moral blossom, that may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow" (36). This opening part of the novel clearly shows Hawthorne's consciousness of morality. Given that he participated in the Young America movement in order to pursue his ideal of a more democratic society, as I will discuss in the next chapter on *The Lowland*, his allusion to the future of a more harmonious society in *The Scarlet Letter* suggests criticism not only of Puritan society but also of nineteenth-century America. In this regard, although he overtly despised his contemporary female authors and their sentimental novels, he actually shared a common aim: To awaken the moral sense of readers in a way that could lead to social unity based on sympathy.

Accordingly, Hawthorne was never in conflict with sentimental writers. Take Stowe, whose *Uncle Tom's Cabin* caused a social sensation at that time. Although she did not deal with seduction, but used the deaths of Little Eva and Uncle Tom to trigger readers' sentiments, she also explored their morality based on Christianity in an effort to abolish slavery:

> But what can any individual do? Of that, every individual can judge. There is one thing that every individual can do—they can see to it that *they feel right.* An atmosphere of sympathetic influence encircles every human being; and the man or woman who *feels* strongly, healthily and justly, on the great interests of humanity, is a constant benefactor to the human race. See, then, to your sympathies in this matter! Are they in harmony with the sympathies of Christ? or are they swayed and perverted by the sophistries of worldly policy? (556)

Obviously, when she asks readers to "feel right" and so be able to judge, she presumes their faith in Christianity. Therefore, she insists that they must have the spirit of Christian charity in order to bring about harmony—abolish slavery, to be specific. As Jane Tompkins argues, Stowe did not write *Uncle Tom's Cabin* merely for political change; in fact she aimed to change the moral conditions that produced slavery in the first place. From Stowe's viewpoint, economic and political reality cannot be transformed until the spirit of the people is converted, unlike today's readers, who are likely to regard economic and political facts as final (140-41). As Boudreau clearly states, Stowe was aware of the political and social effects of sympathy (96). In this case, sentimental or domestic fiction was not divided from the public sphere; rather, it had a political aspect that aimed at social change by appealing to Christian morality.

This tradition of sentimental fiction very naturally carries us into Lahiri's "Hema and Kaushik," a novella that comprises the second half of *Unaccustomed Earth*. Critics have typically regarded Lahiri's works as apolitical. For instance, Ambreen Hai asserts that her stories do not have "a radical or transformative political edge" (206). Given Philip Fisher's argument that family ties work as a central unit in sentimental novels (101), "Hema and Kaushik" can be categorized as a typical sentimental novel because the story revolves around the two families of the main characters, Hema and Kaushik. In particular, the sense of loss caused by the death of a parent drives the whole plot. Therefore, this story does not seem to have any connection with political reality. However, the sentimental emotions that they conceal actually reveal the racial consciousness of Indian immigrants who have to live under the model minority myth. Lahiri once expressed frustration with the treatment of Indian-Americans as an othered group within the United States ("Migration, Assimilation, and Inebriation"). And so, just as Hawthorne and Stowe emphasized the importance of creating sympathetic ties within society by arousing their readers' sentiments, "Hema and Kaushik" shows Lahiri's eye directed at discrepancies in contemporary America in which Indian-Americans are treated as others. Though Lahiri's sentimental fiction is unique in that it does not refer to politics, a careful reading of her references to cultural symbols—music and photography—uncovers the distress of Indian immigrants embedded in the text. As no previous studies have discussed the significance of the popular culture elements that Lahiri refers

to, they are often ignored as mere illustrations of trends depicting a particular time, or of certain tastes of characters. However, Lahiri's references to popular culture are actually highly suggestive in that they disclose to us how she illustrates sympathy, allowing us to link her ideas to the social context implied within the text itself. This chapter will show that by depicting the emotional lives of Indian families, "Hema and Kaushik," Lahiri's version of sentimental fiction, demonstrates the deceit of American society that prevents Indian immigrants from being assimilated.

I. Tradition of Sympathy: Sentimentality and Photography

"Hema and Kaushik" begins in 1971, when Kaushik and his family move from Bombay to Massachusetts in order to live with Hema's family. At the time, Kaushik is sixteen and Hema thirteen. Their stay with Hema's family is supposed to be temporary until they can find their own house. However, as Kaushik soon confides to Hema, it turns out that they have moved to Massachusetts so that Kaushik's mother can receive medical treatment for cancer, although they do not have any hope of her recovery. The shadow of Kaushik's mother's death instills sentimental emotions in Kaushik's and Hema's minds.

If we consider "Hema and Kaushik" to be a sentimental novella, Lahiri's reference to popular music in the early part of the story should not be overlooked, because it foreshadows how sympathy is depicted throughout. While Kaushik is living with Hema's family in Massachusetts,

he goes to a shopping mall to buy a record: "On our trip to the mall you'd [Kaushik] bought a record, something by the Rolling Stones. The jacket was white, what seemed to be a cake on it" ("Hema and Kaushik" 241). The record mentioned here appears to be *Let It Bleed* (1969). The importance of this reference cannot be exaggerated, because the music indicates sympathy based on sentimentality. The lyrics of the title track "Let It Bleed" reads: "Baby, you can rest your weary head right on me / And there will always be a space in my parking lot / When you need a little coke and sympathy . . . / Yeah we all need someone we can bleed on." Mick Jagger's usage of sympathy is unique, as its juxtaposition with "a little coke" implies; it suggests that this relationship based on sympathy is addictive, like a drug which leads to destruction. In other words, while sympathy can help individuals establish a sense of connection, it can also drown them.

Furthermore, Lahiri's reference to the Rolling Stones suggests the struggle of those who cross the Atlantic, which is portrayed in "Hema and Kaushik." John M. Hellmann Jr. points out that Jagger adapted the "blues argot" of African American blues musicians to his lyrics (367-68). In the late 1950s and the early 1960s, traditional middle-class standards made Jagger feel repressed; however, blues music liberated him from these norms. According to Hellmann, the adoption of the blues argot enabled his lyrics to acquire "a simultaneous emotional catharsis and detached analysis" on *Let It Bleed* (372). As I will discuss later, the duality of sentiment and detachment acquired by crossing the Atlantic echoes throughout the story of "Hema and Kaushik."

In order to depict sentiment and detachment, Lahiri uses photography effectively. Kaushik's infatuation with photography in particular represents these states by indicating the relationship between a witness and a subject to be witnessed. While staying at Hema's house, Kaushik often goes out alone with his camera. One day, he walks around the house as usual but does not take any photos. When asked what he has photographed, he just answers, "Nothing" ("Hema and Kaushik" 237). Discussing photography, Walter Benjamin insightfully detects that "a space informed by consciousness give way to a space informed by the unconsciousness in a photograph" (510). In other words, a photograph reflects what a photographer represses in the unconscious. Kaushik behaves as if he takes no photos because nothing special is happening; however, it is noteworthy that he knows at this time that his mother has terminal cancer. His not-feeling-anything pretense reminds us of Adam Smith's argument on sympathy:

> As [the spectators] are constantly considering what they themselves would feel, if they actually were the sufferers, so he is as constantly led to imagine in what manner he would be affected if he was only one of the spectators of his own situation. As their sympathy makes them look at it, in some measure, with his eyes, so his sympathy makes him look at it, with theirs, especially when in their presence and acting under their observation. . . . (27-28)

According to Smith, a spectator has to imagine how a sufferer feels, or how she/he would be affected when feeling sympathy for her/him. Therefore, Kaushik's taking no photos implies that he does not want to turn his eye towards the reality in front of him. In other words, he does not know how to capture what he faces as a spectator because it is so overwhelming that it does not allow him to stand aside as a spectator. On taking a photo, Susan Sontag accurately states: "[T]o photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world. . ." (4). Thus, Kaushik's pretense at feeling no sentiment suggests that he cannot, or does not want to, observe his mother as a suffering spectacle. Taking no photos implies his struggle to keep his subconscious, namely his sentiment about his mother's fatal disease, from rising to the surface and emerging as a reality.

Meanwhile, despite her critical condition, Kaushik's mother shuns sentimentality. Kaushik later confesses to Hema that his mother's fatal disease was diagnosed when the family was in Bombay, when she asked her husband to bring her to Massachusetts. His mother did not want "to be suffocated" by the attention of her family and friends in Bombay, or want them to "witness her decline" (249-50). Refusing to be a subject of sympathy, she comes to Massachusetts with her family by way of Rome; to her, crossing the Atlantic represents the rejection of sentimentality. Therefore, before she dies, she makes her family promise that they will "scatter her ashes into the Atlantic" (249). To tell Hema of his mother's disease, Kaushik takes her to a tombstone of an

American family in the forest near her house. Alluding to the family resting in the grave, he says, "They're all here together. . . . Mother, father, four children. . . . It makes me wish we weren't Hindu, so that my mother could be buried somewhere" (249). It is a tradition that Hindus throw the bones and ashes of the deceased into the Ganges river after cremation. We might remember that Hawthorne infuses the image of human roots growing on American soil with sentiment. To set roots into soil spanning the generations indicates that the sentiment of the family is also rooted there. Kaushik's wish that his mother might be buried implies that he wants to share his sentiment with his mother by settling on American soil with her. Nonetheless, despite his secret wish, his mother wants her family to scatter her ashes in the Atlantic. Her choice of the Atlantic rather than the Ganges river is suggestive in that she crossed it in order to avoid the sentimentality of her family and friends in Bombay. The Atlantic serves as a vehicle by which sentimental emotions can be abandoned; she leaves sentimentality behind on her death, and in the process of crossing the Atlantic. This is also true for Kaushik; he does not show his sentimental emotions on his mother's death after crossing the Atlantic. However, even though they seems to have been abandoned, they do not disappear; rather, they keep floating beneath the surface of the Atlantic, as Kaushik's mother's scattered ashes indicate. In short, they are kept alive in the ocean.

After his mother's death, Kaushik thus struggles to suppress his sentimental emotions. His interest in photography spells out how he establishes a distance from spectacle. "From childhood,"

Lahiri writes on Kaushik, “he was always happiest to be outside, away from the private detritus of life. That was the first thing he’d loved about taking pictures. . .” (309). Confronted with his mother’s death, he cannot take photos because his sentimental emotions nearly drown him. Ever since he learned that his mother was dying, he concealed a “sensation that had dropped anchor in me and never fully left” (254). And the memory of his mother continues to shake the ground beneath his feet. Before the Christmas vacation at college, Kaushik’s father informs him of his remarriage to Chitra, a thirty-five-year-old Indian woman whose ex-husband died of encephalitis. She and her two daughters, Rupa and Piu, have recently moved from India to Massachusetts, and Kaushik goes back to his old home to see his new family. While staying with them, inconsequential things like an old Christmas tree remind him of his mother: “In Bombay my mother had always thrown a party on Christmas Day, stringing lights throughout our flat and putting presents under a potted hibiscus” (265). While he says that he has “no sentimental attachment” to the old items, he struggles to prevent his sentimental emotions from overflowing, as indicated by the fact that he does “not want to document anything” with his camera (280). His avoidance of taking pictures demonstrates that the memory of his mother makes him so sentimental that he cannot capture the moment with Chitra, a replacement of his mother and his step-sisters. As he did not take any photos before his mother’s death, taking their photos requires him to recognize that Chitra replaces his dead mother by appropriating this as a reality. However,

by avoiding documenting his new family suggests his conflict between detachment and sentiment, which the Rolling Stones' *Let It Bleed* also indicates: While pretending not to be affected by his sentimental memory, he cannot establish distance by standing outside it, as his memory of Christmas with his mother reminds him.

With his complex feelings, he understands that Rupa and Piu share the same experiences with him. During his stay with his new family, Kaushik eventually has sympathy with Rupa and Piu: "I felt separate from them in every way but at the same time could not deny the things that bound us together. . . . Like them I'd made that journey from India to Massachusetts, too old not to experience the shock of it, too young to have a say in the matter. . . . Like them I had lost a parent and was not being asked to accept a replacement" (272). Like Kaushik, who left behind his sentimental emotions in the Atlantic, the two sisters who also crossed the ocean now conceal their turbulent emotions caused by their father's death. The girls are friendly to Kaushik, but he still feels that they keep the memory of their deceased father to themselves: "The knowledge of death seemed present in both sisters—it was something about the way they carried themselves, something that had broken too soon and had not mended, making them in spite of their lightheartedness" (272). Later, Kaushik hears Piu scream for her father while sleeping at night (283). Additionally, Rupa's statement at Dunkin Donuts, "I like the [donut] that is covered in snow" (273), unwittingly implies that she is concealing her emotions. The two sisters also keep

their sentimental emotions about the memory of their deceased parent submerged, as Kaushik does.

The sympathy with his step-sisters that comes from sharing their experiences shakes Kaushik's perspective loose until it falls away. When Rupa confesses her anxiety about going to an American school for the first time, he tells her, "Look, I know how you feel" (274). On the subject of sympathy, it is worth noting that Smith considers the emotions of a person in terms of an image of one liquid that flows into another: "The passions, upon some occasions, may seem to be transfused from one man to another. . . " (13). Kaushik's overflowing sentimental emotions puts him off-guard, so that he feels "suddenly vulnerable" when the two sisters ask him about his mother (274). The emotions that he has submerged deep in the ocean begin to rise up and out so that he has a sympathetic tie with the sisters. He thus thinks that they "understood me better, in many ways, than friends who had known me for years" (274), although he has known them for less than a day. Still, he struggles to keep his sentimental emotions buried; when Rupa asks him if he has a photo of his mother, he lies and tells her that he does not (274). In fact, he has kept her photo in his wallet since she died, but he has still never seen it (275). That is, he always feels her mother's presence; as Roland Barthes maintains in *Camera Lucida* (1980), "[e]very photograph is a certificate of presence" (87). Barthes' assertion is worth noting, in that he wrote this book right after his own mother's death in October 1977, meaning that the whole of the second half of

it was written around his mother's childhood photograph, which was taken in her old house in the Winter Garden, and so represents his mourning over her death (Dyer ix). Barthes remarks that the photograph of his mother taken in childhood gives him "a sentiment as certain as remembrance" (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 70).

Likewise, in "Hema and Kaushik," Kaushik's mother's photo makes him mourn over his mother's death. Even though he does not see it, by keeping it in his wallet, her image keeps haunting Kaushik like a ghost. Regarding the haunting quality of photographs, Eduardo Cadava accurately remarks: "Although what the photograph photographs is no longer present or living, its haven-been-there now forms a part of the referential structure of our relation to the photograph. Nevertheless, the return of what was once there takes the form of a haunting. . . . [T]he possibility of the photographic image requires that there be such things as ghosts and phantoms" (11). For Kaushik, the photo of his mother brings him both her presence and his sense of loss. Therefore, his decision not to see the photo despite keeping it in his wallet reveals his inconsistent feelings: He is afraid that his emotions may burst out, uncovered by the memory of his mother, while at the same time he does not want to forget her. However, once his submerged emotions flow out in front of the sisters, he cannot stop the rush, no matter how he tries to repress it.

As represented by the photo of Kaushik's mother in his wallet, photography demonstrates a reflection of the unconscious. While staying at his childhood home, Kaushik finds that there still

remain some pictures that he stuck on the wall in his old room, which now Rupa and Piu use: "The things I'd had on the walls, the poster of Jimi Hendrix and a copy of Paul Strand's 'Blind Woman' I'd ripped out of a magazine, had not been removed" (285). Strand's photo *Blind Woman, New York* (1916) shows a woman dangling a board written "BLIND" from her neck (see fig. 1). She looks blind, but no one knows whether she is really blind, as the board says, or is simply pretending to be blind. In this respect, the photo represents Kaushik, who is faking "blindness" to avoid the memory of his mother, although he carries her photo. It is noteworthy that, looking back on his mother's illness, Kaushik later remarks, "In pretending my mother wasn't sick and being around people who didn't know, a small part of me had been able to believe that it was true" (291). For as long as he keeps hiding his mother's photo, he is averting his gaze from her memory, though he may recognize that it still remains within himself. Strand's photo implies Kaushik's inner conflict: That he pretends to be blind in order to avoid the memory, while at the same time he does not want to abandon it.

Fig. 1. Paul Strand, *Blind Woman, New York*, 1916

II. The Distorted National Anthem: Jimi Hendrix as a Symbol of Racial Ambiguity

In addition to the photo by Paul Strand, the figurative significance of the Jimi Hendrix poster cannot be exaggerated enough; it works as a bridge that connects Kaushik's personal emotions with the racial struggle of Indian immigrants in the United States. In order to explore this connection, we need to look at Hendrix's background. Before forming the Jimi Hendrix Experience in 1966, he had been playing the guitar as a sideman of a huge number of bands across the United States. Then, in September 1966, Hendrix flew from JFK Airport to London's Heathrow Airport with Chas Chandler, the bassist of the Animals and a music manager. In London, they aimed to find members to form Hendrix's new band. As Jerry Hopkins points out, to be both a musician and British in the Beatles era was to approach sainthood (88). Therefore, Chandler believed that London, then called a "swinging city," was a perfect place for Hendrix to make his new career. Under Chandler's management, Hendrix could jam with British musicians for a couple of days. Eric Clapton remembers the night that his own band Cream played with Hendrix for the first time, saying, "I think he did a Howlin' Wolf number or something, but he did his whole routine. He did all the things with his teeth, playing the guitar with his teeth, and layin' it on the floor, and playin' it behind his head, and, you know, doin' the splits, the whole thing. It was incredible" (Hopkins 90). Hendrix eventually formed his own band, the Jimi Hendrix Experience, with the young British musicians Noel Redding and Mitch Mitchell. It is remarkable that he

formed the band with these white British musicians, though it reflected his experience of playing with musicians regardless of race both in the United States and in England. Paul Gilroy asserts that Hendrix took advantage of British white audiences' stereotype of a black musician: "A seasoned, if ill-disciplined, rhythm and blues sideman, Hendrix was reinvented as the essential image of what English audiences felt a black American performer should be: Wild, sexual, hedonistic, and dangerous" (93). That is, he performed his blackness by taking into account beforehand white audiences' horizons of expectation. He ingeniously adopted white musical styles, as demonstrated by his white musician bandmates, and by playing songs by white musicians, such as the Beatles, so that white audiences could readily accept him. In other words, although it seemed that he performed as an African American musician, his music, aimed at white audiences, represented him as a racially hybrid musician.

However, the hybridity of his musical style aroused perplexed responses in the United States. In June 1967, he moved back to his home country in order to appear at the Monterey International Pop Music Festival. As in Europe, white audiences enthusiastically acclaimed Hendrix in the United States, describing him as the "black Elvis" (Onkey 192). However, while white audiences accepted him as a new icon of rock music, black communities such as Harlem rejected him because of his music style (195, 206). Critiquing Hendrix's racially hybrid music, music critic Robert Christgau called him a "psychedelic Uncle Tom" (23). Obviously, this

nickname comes from Harriet Beecher Stowe's nineteenth-century sentimental novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This novel has been criticized by African Americans. American author James Baldwin accused Stowe of presenting blacks "as white as she can make them" (16). Similarly, the phrase "psychedelic Uncle Tom" implies that Hendrix performed as white audiences demanded. As a result, black communities dismissed him as a musician who took advantage of the stereotypes of African Americans.

In these circumstances, despite his popularity, Hendrix gradually began to feel uncomfortable with the fact that black communities would not accept him. For example, black radio stations refused to play his music (Blake). He was so frustrated by being rejected by black communities that he declared: "I don't want to be a clown anymore" (Weller 230). Once he knew that African Americans in Harlem joked about him playing the guitar with his teeth, which had overwhelmed Clapton in England, he stopped performing the action on the stage (Atlas 148). Onkey insists that black communities' response to his music revived his racial consciousness as a black man: "Hendrix attempted to reach out to a black audience in 1969, although not at the expense of the hybridity that was always the hallmark of his career. His effort to create a more racially conscious identity came at a time when he also felt a growing disenchantment with the demands of pop music success" (Onkey 207). By 1969, he was playing his music so that he could appeal to black communities. Becoming more racially conscious, he also revealed never-before-

seen political attitudes—his lyrics to “House Burning Down,” for example, refer to the violent urban landscape of the civil rights movement and the death of Martin Luther King Jr. (Moskowitz 49). Hendrix himself spoke about this song, “we made the guitar sound like it was on fire. . .” (49). It may be said that, with his violent guitar sound, he dramatically exploded racial consciousness as an African American musician.

In this regard, the 1969 Woodstock concert featuring his new band the Gypsy Suns and Rainbows witnessed this explosion of his racial consciousness. Appearing on stage with his new bandmates on August 18, he announced to the audience: “We got tired of the Experience—it was blowing our minds too much. So we decided to turn the whole thing around—we call it Gypsy Sun and Rainbows. . . (Moskowitz 57). He dedicated “Voodoo Chile (Slight Return)” to the Black Panther Party and “Machine Gun” to the soldiers fighting in Vietnam (Onkey 208). Among the songs he played at the 1969 Woodstock concert, the most outstanding is “The Star-Spangled Banner.” He played the national anthem with his Stratocaster’s distortion sound, reproducing the sounds of bombarding aircraft, exploding bombs, and people’s screams, in an attempt to comment on the violence of the Vietnam War (Seago 202). In order to reproduce the sounds of war, Hendrix employed the Uni-Vibe effect pedal to enhance his sound; in addition, he relied heavily on feedback, the whammy bar, and other pedal effects (Moskowitz 59). Asked later why he played the national anthem, he answered: “Oh, because we’re all Americans. . . . We play it the ways the

air is in America today" (Weller 217). Given his emancipated racial consciousness, his distorted national anthem illustrated not only his statement against the war but also the racial conflict of the era. And it also alluded to Hendrix's personal struggle over his racial identity, where once he had played up a stereotyped image of blackness.

However, the explosion of Hendrix's racial consciousness represents the experience not only of black and white but also of other colors, as the name of his band, "Rainbow," implies. It should not be overlooked that the band members were also not only black and white musicians, because the percussionist Jerry Velez was a Puerto Rican (Shapiro and Glebbeek 376), which added another color to the band. It is also worth noting that Hendrix himself had a complex racial background: His great-grandmother was a full-blooded Native American of the Cherokee Nation, and she married a half Native American and half Irishman (Henderson 24). Jacoba Atlas writes that when he was accused of deserting blackness, Hendrix explained that he himself was a mixture of most every race, and therefore could not desert anyone (148). In particular, his costumes, such as the one he wore at the 1969 Woodstock concert, vividly portrayed his keen awareness of his Native American blood (Blake). According to Jas Obrecht, on the subject of his colorful costumes he simply said, "I like colors" (160). Moreover, his color consciousness may be traced back not only to his blood but also to the environment in which he grew up. In Seattle, Hendrix grew up in circumstances where he met not only black and white students but also Asians in his elementary

school days (Hopkins 24). In addition, even as an adult he had connections with Asian Americans. His father, Al Hendrix, remarried a Japanese American, Ayako, in 1966. Therefore, his diverse racial background makes us speculate that Hendrix's "The Star-Spangled Banner," with its violent guitar sound, echoes through the racial disharmony of American society in which he had to disguise himself as a white musician, and the liberation of his racial consciousness that would not be bound by the binary framework of black and white.

III. Black or White: The Racial Ambiguity of Indian-Americans

Lahiri's reference to Hendrix cannot be overlooked because his racial oscillation between black and white paralleled the unstable racial identity of Indian immigrants in the United States. Until the late 1960s, the two colors of black and white had dominated the racial divide in the United States. When the government carried out a census for the first time in 1790, there were only three racial categories: White, black, and red (which means Native American, of course). In this racial classification, Asian immigrants had to be categorized either as black or white (Maeda 10). Asian Americans, mainly Chinese and Japanese Americans, rose up in order to claim their rights as Asian immigrants from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. For example, some Asian radicals formed the Red Guard Party and insisted on multi-racial solidarity with the Black Panther Party.[3]

[3] The Chinese-American critic and playwright Frank Chin believed that the Red Guard Party merely imitated the Black Panther Party, dismissing their radical actions as a "yellow minstrel

There is no room for doubt that they played an essential role in forming the new racial categorization of Asian Americans. Nonetheless, even the newly acknowledged racial category of "Asian American" did not save Indian immigrants, who were suspended between black and white. As Nazli Kibria discusses, even after the Asian civil rights movement, South Asians could not feel integrated with other Asians because of their racial difference (75).[4] In short, their racial ambiguity could not be solved even by Asian American protests.

The "official" racial categorizations used by the U.S. government has puzzled Indian immigrants and their descendants as to how they should identify themselves. Before the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, most South Asian immigrants, including Indians, belonged to the working class and were likely to be socially grouped with black people; however, after 1965, they began to "aspire to whiteness" and consider themselves as white, since most of them had professional jobs in fields like academia and technology (Prashad 95).[5] In such circumstances, the U.S. Census Bureau legally considered people from India as white in 1970

show" (Maeda 73). By illustrating the multi-racial delegation by radical leftists that toured socialist Asian countries in the Vietnam War era, Judy Tzu-Chun Wu recounts the difficulty of establishing multi-racial solidarity in *The Radicals on the Road* (2013).

[4] Sangay K. Mishra points out that the evolution of the racial category "Asian American" was initiated by Chinese and Japanese Americans, followed by Filipino, Korean, and other South East Asian communities (38).

[5] The term "South Asian" includes people whose ancestry is from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives, as well as from the South Asian diasporas who originally settled in the Caribbean, Africa, Canada, Europe, and other parts of the world (Mishra 223).

(Sen 3). Nonetheless, despite this official declaration, the U.S. government changed this categorization again; the racial struggle by Asian Americans forced them to re-categorize Indian-Americans as Asians in 1980.[6] This re-categorization was confusing for Indian-Americans, because some of them had reported themselves as white in the 1970 Census. That is, the official change of racial categorization made them more perplexed about their racial identification. Thus, in the 1990 U.S. Census, about twenty-five percent of Indian-Americans categorized themselves as white and five percent of them reported as black (Sen 3), while others chose categories such as "Hindu," "Other," or "Non-white/Hindu" (Mishra 38).

In this racially ambiguous state, they have since had to take advantage of their reputation as a "model minority" group. American society traditionally regards South Asians as a community that has nothing to do with drug abuse, alcoholism, or domestic violence; however, this image still stems from prejudice on the part of white people (Das Gupta 58). As the categories of the U.S. Census reveals, it is also problematic that the diversity within South Asian communities has been ignored.[7] Although their racial reputation is a so-called "model minority myth," they have to preserve their reputation as a model minority in order to survive in American society; in other

[6] According to Sen, some Indian immigrant groups thought this re-categorization would bring affirmative action benefits to them (3), while, as Kibria argues, others could not identify themselves with other Asian groups (75).

[7] According to Mishra, the only option that South Asian Americans could choose on the 2010 Census was "Asian Indian." Immigrants from South Asian places other than India had to choose either "Asian Indian" or another ethnicity under the "Other Asian" category (227).

words, they have to disguise themselves as white so as to be accepted in the United States' white-centric society.

This kind of strategic use of racial reputation can be associated with Hendrix, who distorted his blackness by adapting it to what white audiences required so that he could gain popularity among them. Given Lahiri's frustration with the treatment of Indian immigrants as "other," it seems that Hendrix's "The Star-Spangled Banner" and its violent, distorted guitar sound served as a critical commentary on the distortion of American society that requires racial minorities to succumb to whiteness. They have to behave as white people expect them to, or act like whites; otherwise, they cannot survive. Lahiri alludes to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 in "Hema and Kaushik," and her references to Hendrix and this Act invite us to associate the disguised racial consciousness of Hendrix with that of Indian immigrants. Both of their suppressed racial identities stem from the contradiction within American society that purports to a tight-knit community based on sympathy.

IV. Violence as Sentimentality: The Explosion of Submerged Emotions

In this regard, the violent explosion of Hendrix's sentiment within his racial consciousness makes us reconsider "Hema and Kaushik." As argued earlier, while feeling sentimental over his mother's memory, Kaushik starts to feel sympathy with his step-sisters Rupa and Piu, because they share

the same experience of losing a parent. In other words, his sentimental emotions overflow like liquid to meet theirs, to make a sympathetic union. However, his emotions soon turn into violence. Although he has kept his mother's photos sealed up in a box, Rupa and Piu happen to find them. Witnessing them seeing the photos, Kaushik harshly asks them, "What the hell do you think you're doing?" (Lahiri, "Hema and Kaushik" 286). Then he behaves violently towards the sisters: "Rupa looked at me, her dark eyes flashing, and Piu began to cry. I walked into the room and picked up the pictures, putting them down on my old dresser. Then I grabbed Rupa by the shoulders from where she sat crouched on the floor, shaking her forcefully" (286). If a photo brings to light one's unconscious, as Benjamin discusses, then the hidden photos represent Kaushik's suppressed sentimental emotions; therefore, his immediate act of putting the photos face-down demonstrates how he is trying to keep his emotions covered. However, triggered by the two sisters' discovery of the photos, he cannot prevent them from bursting out, resorting to violence against the girls. However, unlike Baldwin's argument that regards sentimentalism as a mask of violence, Kaushik's aggression shows that sentimentalism itself can explode as violence.

Photos serve here as vehicles that bridge hidden personal, sentimental emotions and disguised racial consciousness. Kaushik's violence suggests that Rupa and Piu have invaded what he has hidden deeply within himself: His sentimental emotions for his mother. Although he feels sympathy with them, he does not want them to encroach on his distance as a spectator, saying to

them: “You have no right to be looking at those [photos]. . . . They don’t belong to you, do you understand?” (286). His outpouring emotions flow into others via their same experience, leading to a sympathetic relationship; however, he still rejects their bringing up the memory of his mother, afraid as he is that his hidden emotions will explode. Consequently, when the two girls uncover his photos of his mother, he cannot refrain from violence. We should not forget that Kaushik glances at his old poster of Hendrix in the room before he sees the girls. Given that the image of Hendrix shows how the musician liberated his disguised racial identity, it foreshadows the explosion of Kaushik’s sentimental emotions. That is, Hendrix, once called a “psychedelic Uncle Tom,” reappears in front of Kaushik like something uncanny that has emerged from the unconscious, implying Kaushik’s own uncovering of his emotions.[8] Like Uncle Tom, whose image Stowe craved to present as a “daguerreotype” to her readers in order to demonstrate her desire for abolition (39), the image of Hendrix works as an imprinted image that triggers the eruption of Kaushik’s memory of his mother.

In this sense, the fact that Kaushik goes to see the shoreline of the Atlantic tells us a story of repressing sentimental emotions. After being furious and violent toward Rupa and Piu, Kaushik darts out of the Massachusetts house and drives up the coast to reach the northern border of Canada. There, looking out at the Atlantic, he senses the mercilessness of the ocean: “The sky

[8] Sigmund Freud insists that uncanny experience occurs “when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression” (249).

was different, without color, taut and unforgiving. But the water was the most unforgiving thing, nearly black at times, cold enough, I [Kaushik] knew, to kill me, violent enough to break me apart" (289). Lahiri portrays the Atlantic as something that rejects sentimentalism; as mentioned earlier, Kaushik's mother moved from India to the United States so that she could leave behind the sentimentality of her family, and Kaushik scatters the ashes of her mother into the ocean. Its blackness may suggest Kaushik's darkness deep within, where he has sunk his sentimental emotions. Nonetheless, "nearly black" implies that his emotions do not completely die out; rather, the incomplete blackness invites us to assume that they still smolder, although he manages to prevent them from exploding. In addition, given that the hidden sentimental emotions in "Hema and Kaushik" represent not only personal feelings but also racial consciousness, "nearly black" connotes the racial ambiguity of Indian immigrants who do not have a specific category that racially identifies them. The connection between the Atlantic and its blackness reminds us of Gilroy's argument on the African diaspora crossing the ocean, as discussed in *The Black Atlantic*. However, in the case of "Hema and Kaushik," Lahiri's way of illustrating the Atlantic as "nearly black" represents the incompleteness of Indian immigrants' racial identity in monochromic American society, where they are categorized as either black or white. The Atlantic thus spells out their racial sentiments: That they cannot survive unless they give in to the monochromic color line.

After seeing the Atlantic as merciless, Kaushik prevents his sentimental emotions over his mother from flowing out again. Graduating from college in 1987, he travels to El Salvador to witness the turbulence of the Salvadorian Civil War. He sees a young man shot to death:

> Kaushik's camera was around his neck as usual. . . . [H]e crept forward and lifted his camera to his face. When he thought back to that afternoon, he remembered that his hands were shaking but that otherwise he felt untouched by the situation, unmoved once he was behind the camera, shooting to the end of the roll. When he was finished, the calls for a doctor had stopped; the man was dead. (Lahiri, "Hema and Kaushik" 304-05)

The physical reaction of his shaking hands suggests that the critical moment of death triggers the emergence of Kaushik's emotions for his deceased mother; he cannot entirely stand aside from the death of the young man. While confronting the violence, he struggles with his own violent emotions. But once he starts taking photos, he no longer feels touched and moved, indicating that, by repositioning himself as a spectator, he observes the dying man as a spectacle. Although his overflowing emotions have become vulnerable after seeing Rupa and Piu, he rebuilds himself in order to stand up against what he conceals deep within, by witnessing a death scene as a photographer.

After he manages to suppress his sentimental emotions and regain a standpoint as a spectator, he goes back and forth across the Atlantic as a photojournalist. The photos he takes in

El Salvador lead him to work as a photo journalist; he engages in the job, crossing continents over the Atlantic, the symbol of repressed sentimental emotions. The job as a photo journalist thus indicates a further attempt to keep his emotions submerged. He avoids the United States, in particular his old place, Massachusetts, as much as possible, except on the occasional times that he needs to visit New York on business (305), so that he can preserve his position as an "outsider." In other words, he has to stand outside what makes his sentimental emotions burst out again because otherwise they will violently engulf him, just as he could not remain calm with Rupa and Piu, on whom he turned with violence in the end, despite, or even because of, his sympathy with them. He has to keep crossing the Atlantic so that he can keep his violent emotions submerged.

However, Kaushik's memories do not allow him to conceal his emotions. Acclaimed for his photos, he is hired by *The New York Times* when he is thirty. While staying in Rome for a job, the memory of his mother vividly flashes back: "He remembered Rome, of course, from the only other time he'd gone there, on the way back from Bombay to Massachusetts with his parents. His mother was dying, but at the time, apart from her thinness, there had been no signs. She had just turned forty, Kaushik's age on his next birthday" (307).[9] Kaushik's sentimental emotions gradually start spilling out, touched by the memory of Rome, which he visited once with his

[9] Discussing this setting in Rome, Lahiri said that she was inspired by her reading Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1860) ("Jhumpa Lahiri Talks about *Unaccustomed Earth*").

mother. Rome represents Kaushik's unrestrained emotions, since he visited there before crossing the Atlantic and, going there, sinking his emotions into the ocean.

Kaushik's physical symptoms imply that he cannot remain untouched by his past. He senses abnormality in his eyesight: ". . . Kaushik had thought a gnat was circling his head, and he kept swatting at it, putting out his fingers trying to flick it away. But . . . he realized it was within him, that it was not possible to remove it or make it stop" (308-09). An optometrist tells him that the symptom is a consequence of aging; still, he feels it as "an invasion of the part of the body" (308). The physical invasion does not permit him to see a subject from the standpoint of a spectator; the overflowing emotions for his mother obscure the border between a spectator and a spectacle. They begin to erode his foothold as a photographer—in other words, an outsider—thus, he cannot "remove it or make it stop" no matter how hard he tries. His abnormal vision indicates that he cannot re-submerge his sentimental emotions completely, which were once triggered by the memory of Rome, even though he crosses the Atlantic, the symbol of the unsentimental.

V. Engulfing Sentimental Emotions: The Formation of a Sympathetic Tie

Kaushik's sentiment does not stop spilling out; rather, it leads to a sympathetic tie with Hema, whom he meets in Rome again. He gradually reveals his hidden sentiment to Hema. When she sees some sensational photos that Kaushik took as a photojournalist, she asks him if it affects him,

seeing such violent scenes. He answers, “It doesn’t help anyone if I’m affected” (316). However, he later confesses to Hema, “It does affect me. . . . Not always, but sometimes. Sometimes in ways I don’t like” (317). His confession discloses to us that he has not been able to maintain his position as a spectator separate from a spectacle, as the scene of El Salvador demonstrates. Although he has repressed his sentimental emotions until he sees Hema in Rome, he can no longer prevent them from erupting, because she reminds him of the days when they lived together with Kaushik’s mother in Massachusetts.

Meanwhile, Hema also shows her concealed emotions, prompted by the re-encounter with Kaushik. Having earned a Ph.D., she now teaches at Wellesley College. After a long, adulterous relationship with Julian, she is now engaged to an Indian man, Navin, a professor in physics at Michigan State University. Having lied to her fiancé that she is visiting Rome for a lectureship at an institute of classical studies, Hema actually stays there alone (294). She does not tell Kaushik about the relationship with Julian because she renders it “meaningless in the official chronicle of her past” (312). In addition, her engagement has caused a conflict deep within her. While she refuses to think of her marriage to Navin as something arranged by their parents, she knows “in her heart that that [is] what it [is]” (297); that is, she understands that their parents betrothed her to Navin. Therefore, the engagement makes her feel “something dead about the marriage she was about to enter into” (301). Asked by Kaushik why she is engaged to Navin, she answers: “I

thought it might fix things" (313). She accepted the marriage because of her "inability . . . to approach middle age without a husband, without children with her parents living now on the other side of the world, and yet to own a home and shovel the driveway when it snowed and pay her mortgage bill when it came" (298). Her long life as an "other woman" suggests that she has lived outside "the official chronicle" of her life, while she admits that "her heart was taken" by Julian (300). This conflicting feeling has made Hema live as an outsider. Thus, she tries to correct her path by accepting the arranged marriage so that she can live not as the "other woman" who has deviated from the "official" path anymore. However, both her life as the "other woman" and the arranged marriage that signifies death for her imply that she has not formed a deep sympathetic tie with anyone. Even Julian cannot serve as a person with whom Hema has a sympathetic tie, because she has had to deny herself "the pleasure of openly sharing life with the person she loved" while she had a relationship with him (301). Her confession that she initially believed that the marriage would fix things briefly exposes what she has concealed. Despite all attempts to keep repressing them, she gradually lets loose her sentimental emotions.

Hema's repressed emotions are generated from a common source as Kaushik's: The past memory of Kaushik's mother. The reunion with Kaushik reminds her of the time in her teenage years when his mother praised her as a woman for the first time in her life:

> Hema remembered that it was Kaushik's mother who had first paid her that compliment, in a fitting room shopping for bras, and she told this to Kaushik. It was the first mention, between them, of his mother, and yet it did not cause them to grow awkward. If anything it bound them closer together, and Hema knew, without having to be told, that she was the first person he'd ever slept with who'd known his mother, who was able to remember her as he did. (313)

Back in their teenage years, Hema could not share the same sentimental emotions with Kaushik over his dying mother; she cried not because his mother was dying but because she felt terrified that a dying woman was living in her house. As Hema confesses, she was "too young . . . to feel sorrow or sympathy" (250), indicating that her immaturity prevented her from feeling sympathy for Kaushik. Her bursting into tears suggests that she did not know how to control her emotions. Meanwhile, he had already hidden his sentimental emotions after crossing the Atlantic; hence a gulf divided the two. However, her life as an "other woman" implies that she has now learned how to suppress her emotions; this allows her to have a sympathetic bond with Kaushik, who has also lived as an outsider. The common experience of repressing their emotions eventually binds them together, as evoked by the shared memory of Kaushik's mother. Inviting Hema to remember the time when Kaushik's mother praised her beauty as a woman, the memory leads her to gradually liberate her emotions. In the meantime, Kaushik also frees his sentimental emotions,

similarly aroused by the memory that he shares with Hema. As a result, Hema's emotions overflow to reach Kaushik's, and vice versa, so that the two form a sympathetic tie that bridges the gap between them; they immerse themselves in the sentimental emotions that they have up to now submerged.

Moreover, Hema and Kaushik's ties, bound by sympathy, shed light on the distress of Indian immigrants. Hema's adulterous relationship with Julian, which she does not mention as part of her "official chronicle," invites us to associate her situation with the status of Indian immigrants who have been forced to waver in the unstable "official" racial categories in the United States. Her life as the "other woman" resonates with the anguish of Indian immigrants, who have been excluded as an othered group no matter how hard they try to make a reputation as a model minority group. Thus, given that Kaushik's sentimental emotions represent the agony of Indians who cross the Atlantic, the sympathetic relation between him and Hema foregrounds not only their shared memory over his mother but also their racial consciousness as Indian immigrants.

VI. After the Explosion: Survival or Death

However, despite their relationship, closely bound by sympathy, Hema and Kaushik adopt a different way of dealing with the immersion in their sentimental emotions. On the one hand, while their emotions are bursting out, Hema has mixed feelings about her relationship with Kaushik:

"Only [Kaushik's] kisses, rough, aggressive kisses that were nothing like Navin's school boy behavior at [Hema's] door, made Hema feel guilty. But the rest of what they did that night felt fresh, new, because she and Navin had never done them before, and there was nothing with which to compare" (Lahiri, "Hema and Kaushik" 313). Her relationship with Kaushik allows her emotions to overflow; however, her sense of guilt suggests that she does not immerse herself completely in the relationship. In other words, it implies that she observes herself from the standpoint of an outsider. Therefore, Hema never gets drowned in her emotions. Offered a position as a photo editor of an international news magazine in Hong Kong (308), Kaushik asks Hema to cancel the engagement and come with him (321); however, she declines the proposal because she cannot "give up her life" (323), which implies that she has made a decision to live even though she has to conceal her sentimental emotions again.

Hema's choice to leave Kaushik comes from her recognition of the past. Not being able to answer Kaushik's proposal, she sees children at a pizza store, which reminds her of the time when she lived with Kaushik in Massachusetts. She feels that "the past haunt[s] her and stead[ies] her at the same time" (322). This ambiguity demonstrates Hema's relationship with Kaushik. For Kaushik, the past has haunted him, as the ghostly reappearance of the Hendrix poster connotes. Meanwhile, for Hema, the past also has haunted her, although she has repressed it in order to live as an "other woman." However, at the same time, the past enables her to partially stand aside from

the overflowing emotions. While she shares with Kaushik the memory of seeing his mother's dying condition, she did not know how to "witness" it because of her lack of experience. However, now that she feels figuratively dead by accepting the arranged marriage to Navin, she partially sees even the death of Kaushik's mother as a spectacle, while she immerses herself in the sentimental emotions. This ambiguous standpoint then also makes her see herself as a spectacle even when she has an affair with Kaushik; hence her feeling guilty while she indulges in the relationship. When Hema cannot reply to his proposal, Kaushik condemns her, saying, "You're a coward" (322). But her hesitation does not come from her cowardice. Instead, it delineates the difference between the two about how they see the past. Kaushik has never abandoned the past, as his mother's photo in his wallet shows; at the same time, though haunted by the past, Hema establishes a distance from it, because of her experience of submerging her sentimental emotions, which does not allow her to be overwhelmed by them. For Hema, it is Kaushik, who gives up repressing his emotions, who looks rather "selfish" (321).

Therefore, Hema re-crosses the Atlantic to go back to the United States so that she can silence her sentimental emotions again, a movement which reflects the Indian-Americans' conformity to American society. As for her return to the United States and marriage to Navin, she says as follows: "I [Hema] returned to my existence, the existence I had chosen instead of you [Kaushik]" (333). If we suppose that the ocean represents the concealment of sentimental

emotions, her act of crossing the Atlantic portrays the way in which she covers up her sentimental emotions again. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that she feels terrified about leaving Kaushik. As the plane takes off, she suddenly feels afraid that it might crash or be blasted apart in the sky (324). The image of death depicts her fear of having to hide her emotions again by marrying Navin. Nonetheless, despite her breakup with Kaushik, she does not abandon her emotions; instead, she leaves a trace of herself behind in Rome. Before going back to the United States, she goes eastward to see her family in Calcutta. On the plane, she notices that she has left behind at a security gate a bangle that she has worn since childhood, which makes her feel that she has "left a piece of her body behind" (324). As a symbol of her past, this bangle left in Rome reveals Hema's inner conflict: That, even though she accepts her figurative death, she keeps a part of herself alive by leaving her bangle in Rome. That is, the remnants of her sentimental emotions keep spilling over, even though she chooses to cross the Atlantic.

On the other hand, in contrast to Hema, Kaushik does not stop his sentimental emotions from overflowing. Asked by Hema if he will come back to Italy in case he does not like Hong Kong, Kaushik refuses by saying, "I've reached an end here" (321). His answer is remarkable because it alludes to his refusal to re-cross the Atlantic, a symbol of his repressed sentimental emotions. Instead of crossing the Atlantic, he moves eastward; his proposal declined, he stays alone at a beach resort near Khao Lak in Thailand during his Christmas vacation before moving

to Hong Kong. Alone there, he finds himself missing Hema, since she is the only person who has an "understanding of his past" and to whom he wants to "remain connected" (326). His sense of connectedness comes from the ocean that binds them from one shore to another. It is noteworthy that, before going back to the United States, Hema takes an eastward route after her separation from Kaushik in order to see her relatives regarding her marriage. On the beach of Khao Lak, knowing she is in India, Kaushik feels nostalgic for her: "Somewhere across the water, beyond the Andaman Sea, was the Bay of Bengal, and Calcutta, where Hema was" (325). Despite their separation, Kaushik can never abandon his ties with Hema; rather, the connection of the ocean reminds him of their bond. As Smith uses the image of liquid to explain sympathy, representing the sentimental emotions that the two have, the connected ocean still binds them together figuratively. However, once Hema re-crosses the Atlantic back to the United States, Kaushik loses the only person who can share his sentimental emotions; hence his feeling "lost" (326).

Although he now has no one to connect to, Kaushik's sentiment continues to spill out, and daily things make him sentimental: "The food reminded him a little of his childhood: Steaming rice, dense brown and yellow curries, whole red and green chilies floating in sauce. Normally he harbored no nostalgia for the particular elements of his upbringing. . . . But this food caused him to feel strangely sentimental" (325). Though different from Indian food, Thai cuisine makes him sentimental because he has regained some sensitivity after being reunited with Hema; however,

after losing her, he does not have someone with whom he can share his sentiment. As a result, his attention is directed to everyday things that he usually does not care about.

As discussed earlier, Kaushik has a problem with his vision, which represents the fact that his overflowing sentimental emotions erode him. On the ocean of Thailand, his emotions cause Kaushik to have visions of his mother. While on a boat, he sees his mother swimming in the sea: "[F]or a moment, Kaushik saw his mother also swimming, saw her body still vital, a brief blur that passed as effortlessly as iridescent fish darting from time to time beneath the boat" (330). The sentimental emotions that he has for his mother make her spectral figure appear as uncanny, suggesting "the return of the departed" (Cadava 11). The ocean represents the submergence of emotions, as the Atlantic does; however, sentimental emotions never really disappear. Although he scattered his sentimental emotions into the Atlantic along with his mother's ashes, they continue to run beneath the surface, just as Miss Ophelia in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* notices that Augustine St. Clare pretends to be fine despite his daughter Eva's death, saying, "Still water runs the deepest" (Stowe 377). The specter of Kaushik's mother illustrates the rise of his submerged sentiment, his internal anchor removed by the reunion with Hema.

Kaushik's upwelling sentimental emotions eventually swallow him in a massive wave, which sheds light on the racial disguise of Indian immigrants. Henrik, a Swedish tourist at the Thai resort, tells him that a small earthquake happened that morning (Lahiri, "Hema and Kaushik"

329). The earthquake represents the fact that he has become so sentimental that his foothold as an outside spectator is shaken. Although Kaushik did not notice the earthquake, it reminds him of the violent scene in El Salvador: "[T]he stew spilling from its bowls, the young man in impeccably clean tan trousers lying in a pool of blood on the street" (329). The image of spilling stew overlaps Kaushik's flowing emotions. In addition, the bloody image again reminds us of the Rolling Stones' *Let It Bleed*, which he bought in Massachusetts. This title foretells Kaushik's fate: He lets his sentimental emotions flood out rather than deter it. And its violent title indicates its consequences. On her wedding day, Hema sees on the TV news that a huge earthquake and tsunami have hit Asia, referring to the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami that hit on December 26. She imagines that this natural disaster killed Kaushik: "I [Hema] saw a massive surge of water moving so quickly that the tape seemed to be playing at an unnatural speed. At first it was only the damage in South India and Sri Lanka I was aware of. . . . And then I learned that Thailand had also been hit very badly" (332). It should not be overlooked that the natural disaster happened the day after Christmas Day; in his Massachusetts house, Kaushik remembers the memory that he celebrated Christmas with his mother. His Christmas vacation in Thailand reminds him of his mother vividly. Therefore, as the image of Hendrix emerged as a ghost foreshadowing the explosion of Kaushik's sentimental emotions, the spectral figure of his mother appears as a precursor to the incoming tsunami as a representation of his erupting emotions. In that sense, the tsunami works here as an

objective correlative, in the words of T. S. Eliot (*The Sacred Wood* 100).[10] Referring to the separation of Hema and Kaushik, Jennifer Bess asserts, "[Kaushik] remains as aloof from the world of emotion and empathy as he always has been" (130); in fact, he is so emotional that he is swallowed up by the tsunami as a "poetic symbol" of his sentimental emotions (Hai 201).

Kaushik's death after the eruption of his emotions invites us to associate it with the sudden death of Hendrix. The musician's death in 1970 soon after the liberation of his racial consciousness is too suggestive to ignore as a simple coincidence because his death does not simply indicate Kaushik's tragedy, drowned by his overflowing sentimental emotions. Moreover, the connection between the deaths of Hendrix and Kaushik allows us to explore further the racial oscillation of Indian immigrants in the United States. Heidi Elisabeth Bollinger doubts if it is appropriate to consider the tsunami as a metaphor of Kaushik's death. She insists that we cannot accept that the fatal tsunami which killed more than 230,000 people symbolizes one man's melancholy (499). However, the tsunami does not symbolize only one person; instead, given Lahiri's reference to Hendrix, who felt anguish over the binary racial framework of his time, it suggests the melancholy of the Indian immigrants who are forced to live as others in American society. Thus, Kaushik's death, killed by the Indian Ocean tsunami, invites us to suppose that he

[10] Eliot explains the relation between the emotions of characters and external facts in art as follows: "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked" (*The Sacred Wood* 100).

is engulfed by the disguised racial consciousness of Indian immigrants who have wavered, oscillating in the black-and-white binary racial framework in American society.

Furthermore, the reference to the Indian Ocean allows us to see Indian immigrants not only from within the Western hemisphere but also the Eastern one. This perspective, which crosses geographical borders, reminds us of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's argument that her "planet-thought" suggests "an undivided 'natural' space rather than a differentiated political space" (*Death of a Discipline* 72). The image of a surging tsunami in the Indian Ocean suggests that the natural water that represents the repressed racial consciousness of Indian immigrants reaches the Eastern hemisphere. Therefore, the reference to the Indian Ocean gives us a broader perspective from which to see Indians who cross political borders because it reminds us that the Atlantic is connected to the Indian Ocean and to the Pacific. The connections between the oceans imply the mercilessness of the Atlantic and also expand it to the Pacific very plausibly through the Panama Canal.[11] Given that Indian immigrants worked as a low-wage laborers on the Pacific coast, this planetary perspective allows us to trace the history both of pre-1965 Indian immigrants, who were regarded as blacks, and post-1965 ones, who were assigned racial categories despite their highly paid professional jobs. Thus, Kaushik's death in the Indian Ocean indicates the racial oscillation

[11] Takayuki Tatsumi astutely observes that the construction of the Panama Canal (1904-14) revolutionized the hemispheric imagination in that it redefined the Gulf of Mexico not only as transatlantic but also transpacific ("Thinking after the Hemispheric" 362).

of Indian immigrants who have had to disguise themselves as a model minority group, tossed about by the arbitrary racial categorizations of American society.

Therefore, supposing that Kaushik's repressed sentimental emotions overlap the disguised racial consciousness of Indian immigrants as a model minority group, Kaushik's death implies that they cannot survive unless they hide their racial consciousness. Those who demonstrate this adaptation to American society are Rupa and Piu. Having behaved violently towards Rupa and Piu, Kaushik talks with his father on the phone. He believes that his father knows what happened between him and the sisters; but in fact, his father does not know anything about his violence. That is, the sisters have kept his violence confidential. As regards their silence, Kaushik feels that the sisters have both protected and punished him by keeping their silence (Lahiri, "Hema and Kaushik" 293). Kaushik and the sisters had shared the same experience of losing a parent and crossing the Atlantic; namely, all three had kept their sentimental emotions over their deceased parents hidden, which led Kaushik to feel sympathy for the girls. Nonetheless, he broke this tie by allowing his emotions to explode. The silence of Rupa and Piu indicates their protection, in that his father might condemn him; yet they also punish him because he no longer concealed his sentimental emotions, which connotes the fact that Indian immigrants cannot survive in American society unless they cover up their racial identity as Indians. Although they had forged a sympathetic tie with him, then, Kaushik is no longer bound by it. For the sisters, he has broken

the bond. By remaining silent, they, as spectators, continue to observe Kaushik as a spectacle. Thus, Rupa and Piu adjust themselves to American society, unlike Kaushik. Although Rupa used to feel anxious before starting an American school when she was a child, she is now accustomed to American life, as she teaches art to elementary school students in Colorado and has married an American man; also, Piu studies medicine at Tufts University (Lahiri, "Hema and Kaushik" 306). They never reveal their sentimental emotions over their deceased parent; instead, they seem to enjoy their lives as upper-middle-class Americans, leaving behind their past. However, at the same time, their lives imply that Indian-Americans have to become accustomed to American life so that they can survive.

Obviously, Hema also represents the survival of Indian immigrants in the United States; however, her survival depicts a more complex form of anguish than Rupa and Piu's. It seems that she has conformed to life as a model minority Indian in American society; however, she confronts the question of whether or not it is correct to deeply submerge her emotions in exchange for her life. Hema and Navin plan to visit Goa for their honeymoon, but they have to cancel it because, he claims, "it didn't feel right to swim in the polluted waters that surrounded India at that time" (Lahiri, "Hema and Kaushik" 333). This quotation reminds us that in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe insists that people should have the right feeling to save oppressed slaves; however, Lahiri's right feeling differs from Stowe's. In "Concluding Remarks," Stowe asserts, "There is one thing that

every individual can do, —they can see to it that *they feel right*" (556; italics in the original). Despite the same expressions used both in "Hema and Kaushik" and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, each suggests a different meaning. On the one hand, Stowe concedes that the right feeling comes from "harmony with the sympathies of Christ" (556). Aware of the political and social effects of sympathy, Stowe attempts to urge the readers of her novel to take further steps towards abolition. To put it simply, she believed that the "right feeling" based on Christianity would lead them to have a sympathy with slaves. On the other hand, Lahiri's "right feeling" reveals a twist. Being a scholar born to an Indian immigrant, Navin serves as a model minority in American society. Lahiri illustrates a sharp contrast between him and Kaushik in terms of a relationship with Hema; she presents Navin as a "schoolboy" figure who "kisse[s] goodnight at the door of her home" (297, 313). Therefore, Kaushik's aggressive kisses make her feel "guilty," as already quoted. That is, Navin represents the conformity of an Indian immigrant to American society, while Kaushik shows deviation from it. Thus, Hema's sense of guilt implies her suspended state between the two; while she immerses herself in the sentimental emotions that she and Kaushik share, she witnesses herself from an outside standpoint. Despite this ambiguous state, she chooses Navin in the end; that is, she decides to survive even though this requires her to conceal her emotions. For Navin, who lives as a typical elite Indian immigrant, the flood water of the Indian Ocean represents the pollution of the Indian-Americans who have adjusted themselves to American

society. Therefore, his loathing of the "polluted water" suggests the elitist Indian-Americans' antipathy towards those Indians who are unwilling to abandon their racial consciousness. In other words, Navin's "right feeling" delineates the contour of the model minority myth of the Indian-American community in a rather harsh way in that they have to succumb to social expectations or perish. Here is a contrast between Stowe's and Lahiri's sentimentalism: While *Uncle Tom's Cabin* leads its readers to "feel right," and have sympathy for the oppressed, "Hema and Kaushik" lets the readers take on the model-minority people's antipathy against those who disturb their order. Thus, inasmuch as the flood water of the Indian Ocean implicates both Kaushik's personal emotions and Indian-Americans' racial consciousness, its pollution connotes the impurity of the outwardly harmonious but disguised community.

Therefore, Hema's ambivalent state demonstrates a figurative death, although she physically survives. After going back to the United States, she starts her new life with Navin. She cannot help but think of Kaushik and wonders if she has made a mistake, although she has left her sentimental emotions behind on the other side of the Atlantic. She thus cannot find Kaushik's face there no matter how hard she tries (331). Then, she is informed of the news of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean:

> On television, in a pink sitting room with stark fluorescent light, I [Hema] saw images of the Indian and Sri Lankan coastline, glimpses from vacationers' video cameras never

> intended to capture such a thing. I saw a massive surge of water moving so quickly that the tape seemed to be playing at an unnatural speed. At first it was only the damage in South India and Sri Lanka I was aware of, the fishing villages that had been obliterated, tourists stranded on Vivekananda's Rock. And then I learned that Thailand had also been hit very badly. (332)

It is too significant to be overlooked that Hema witnesses the videotaped image of the surging tsunami. Her seeing its "unnatural speed" discloses to us that she observes the natural disaster as an outsider. The tsunami also denotes her emotions because she left the remnant of them, represented by her lost bangle, in Rome, before returning to the United States. In that sense, having crossed the ocean, as a spectator she witnesses her own emotions that once exploded, triggered by Kaushik. In other words, she recognizes that she is also dead, even though she is physically alive; her lively emotions, which she once shared with Kaushik, have already left her. It is true that she looked forward to returning to the United States with Navin and resuming her teaching job at Wellesley College (297). However, the liberation of her long suppressed sentimental emotions does not let her conform to her new American life; rather, it keeps her suspended between Navin and Kaushik, who suggest conformity and deviation respectively, even though she chooses the former in the end. Thus, while she begins a new life with Navin, which

enables her to live as an elite in the United States, she is about to enter into "something dead" (301). Her remark, which concludes the story, portrays her ambiguous state:

> I [Hema] returned to my existence, the existence I had chosen instead of you [Kaushik]. . . . By then I needed no proof of your absence from the world; I felt it as plainly and implacably as the cells that were gathering and shaping themselves in my body. Those cold, dark days I spent in bed, unable to speak, burning with new life but mourning your death, went unquestioned by Navin, who had already begun to take a quiet pride in my condition. . . . It might have been your child but this was not the case. We had been careful, and you had left nothing behind. (333)

It is worth noting that while she is pregnant with Navin's child, Hema gathers the absence of Kaushik into her body; that is, she embraces both her new life and her death at the same time. This ambivalence connotes that death does not mean something lost; on the contrary, it indicates an existing absence that Hema embraces. The way that she talks about Kaushik's death is suggestive; she says, "you had left nothing behind," rather than "you didn't leave anything behind." Her choice of the affirmative over the negative informs us that she carries absence as presence. Therefore, Kaushik's death does not indicate disappearance; in fact, he keeps on haunting Hema as a ghost even though she cannot find his face. Likewise, what Kaushik left behind creates a void within her. However, this void does not simply represent her death, but also brings her into a

paradoxical state: She chooses to die in order to live. When she witnesses the tsunami, she acknowledges that the emotions that she left behind remain, erupting across the ocean. Although she stands aside from it, the image of the massive swell of water thus brings out her abandoned sentimental emotions as uncanny in front of her. At this moment, geographical distance collapses for her; she is suspended in a world somewhere between Asia and North America, which Kaushik's nothingness makes possible. Given that we can assume that racial consciousness comes through personal sentimental emotions in this novella, Hema's witnessing the surging tsunami that partly represents her own emotions vividly portrays a double vision of Indian immigrants: Although they live as a model minority group, they also recognize that they have to repress their racial identity. Kaushik's death is surely tragic; still, his one-way eastward trip, which literally brings him to a dead-end, does not make him scared of immersing himself in the sea of sentimental emotions, because he never conceals his emotions again; instead, it seems that he is willing to be overwhelmed by them, as "the sea was warm and welcoming as a bath" (331). Therefore, before the tsunami swallows him up, he leaves his camera behind in the boat (331), which indicates that he no longer takes up his position a spectator.

Yet Hema's figurative death is more tragic because she observes that her emotions still live. Even though she conforms to American society in order to survive, she cannot help fearing that her emotions, as something uncanny, may overwhelm her someday. After Kaushik's death, she

finds the picture of “two children playing, a gentle turquoise sea” on his website (332), which he took before his death. Just as the Hendrix poster reappeared in front of Kaushik and foreshadowed the explosion of his sentimental emotions, this photographed image of the two children and the sea, which represents Hema and Kaushik respectively and their shared sentimental emotions, implies that her emotions still lurk behind her, and have not been extinguished; hence there is a possible eruption of her emotions yet to come, although Lahiri does not write about the life of Hema after this.

VII. After the End: Fiction Erodes Reality

The story ends; however, the water keeps flooding. The natural disaster that Lahiri describes in “Hema and Kaushik” invites us to cross the border between the Eastern and the Western hemispheres. Takayuki Tatsumi gives us an insightful argument about the tradition of disaster novels. He points out that William Faulkner’s *The Wild Palms* (1939), which deals with the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 as a central motif, predicts modern and postmodern disaster novels; in addition, he discloses that New Orleans serves as “the geographical junction, the nexus of the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern Hemisphere as well as the Atlantic and the Pacific” (“Thinking after the Hemispheric” 360). Taking this notion into account, he asserts that Faulkner makes “a critical commentary on hardcore American continentalism” and “a planetary meditation

on the impact of panic on the traditional concepts of humanity and orthodox chrono-cartography" (362).[12] Although Lahiri does not mention the Mississippi river or New Orleans in "Hema and Kaushik," the association of personal mourning with disguised racial identity makes it possible to imagine the work as a cross-hemispheric disaster novella. In 2005, the year following the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, Hurricane Katrina hit the southern United States. In particular, the flood made the residents of New Orleans flee from their homes. The two natural disasters cannot be regarded as the same, because the mechanisms of earthquake and hurricane differ; still, the results of the two catastrophes encouraged journalists both from the United States and India to compare them.[13] Anderson Cooper, the American anchor of CNN news, recalled that the disaster in New Orleans reminded him of the 2004 earthquake and tsunami in South Asia: "I've never thought that I'd see in America—the dead left like trash" (Cooper 133). His remark came from his experience of covering the catastrophe in Sri Lanka caused by the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. He overlaps the image of the Asian tsunami with the flood water in North

[12] Tatsumi notes that, admiring Mark Twain, Faulkner must have been conscious of his memoir *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), in which he refers to the 1882 flood in Mississippi ("Thinking after the Hemispheric" 360). As for the aftermath of the flood, Twain reports: "It was nine o'clock Thursday morning when the 'Susie' left the Mississippi and entered Old River, or what is now called the mouth of the Red. Ascending on the left, a flood was pouring in through and over the levees on the Chandler plantation, the most northern point in Pointe Coupée parish" (399).

[13] Despite their different mechanisms, the Engineering School at Princeton University discovered that the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and Hurricane Katrina had much common in terms of the damage that these two natural disasters caused (Princeton University).

America. In comparing the two natural disasters, Inderpal Grewal suggested that the 2005 hurricane brought the image of the third world in front of the American people:

> Just a year before, images of the Indian Ocean tsunami led to the mobilization of humanitarian aid from many countries. While the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 produced images of suffering and destruction in Sri Lanka, India, and Indonesia—among other nations—*such images belonged to a long history of spectacularized "third world" suffering and of Asians needing US and European support*. The Katrina news coverage showed suffering victims in the United States (many of whom were non-white women and children), dead bodies floating in the water, people being rescued from house while others were left behind to die, and survivors without adequate resources. All of these images enabled comparisons to the third world. . . . *Audiences were startled to see the spectacle of suffering*, so normative and banal in global media coverage of so-called failed or developing states, or the "Third World," depict the United States. (Grewal 34-35; italics added)

The image of the disastrous flood had once belonged to the third world as a spectacle for the American people to watch before Katrina hit the United States. However, now that the hurricane caused a disastrous flood to swamp Mississippi and Louisiana, Americans could no longer see such a disaster as a spectacle; the two comparable images of a flood broke down the geographical

distance between Asia and the United States. In other words, these chaotic images captured the moment when the Global South washed over the American South. This overlapping of the two spaces reminds us that the picture Kaushik takes in Thailand implies that Hema's sentimental emotions still haunt her like a ghost, even though she left them behind before returning to the United States. Given that Hema's pregnancy signifies a nowhere space in which spatial distance loses its meaning, the similarities between the two images of the floods in South Asia and in the American South disclose to us that the two spaces, Asia and the United States, are intertwined. In addition, as Grewal points out, the disasters expose the injustice that the police show towards racial minorities ("non-whites") by arresting them as possible terrorists without positive proof (Grewal 49).[14]

In "Hema and Kaushik," the flood waters represent not only personal sentimental emotions but also racial identity, indicated by the image of Hendrix; if we accept this, the flood that overwhelmed New Orleans represents the repressed racial identities of minorities, revealing the injustice of American society, which has deviated from the ideal of a tight-knit community based on sympathy. Srikanth claims that Kaushik's death by natural disaster is not political (65). Quite the contrary; his death indicates Lahiri's political awareness that Indian immigrants have been

[14] For example, Grewal reveals that a Syrian immigrant, Abdulrahman Zeitoun, was arrested and incarcerated in a secret jail in New Orleans without any evidence simply because he was suspected as being a terrorist affiliated with al-Qaeda (49).

treated as othered, no matter how much they seem to conform to American society.[15] Therefore, where Faulkner's *The Wild Palms* can be read as a critical commentary on American continentalism and conventional cartography, Lahiri's "Hema and Kaushik" shows us the crossing of the Eastern hemisphere and the Western hemisphere, revealing the distorted racial contours in the United States. Now the Rolling Stones' "Gimme Shelter," which is included in *Let It Bleed*, echoes from South Asia to the American South: "The floods is threat'ning / My very life today / Gimme, gimme shelter / Or I'm going to fade away."

Conclusion

In "Hema and Kaushik," Jhumpa Lahiri describes the harsh fight for survival of Indian immigrants in the United States by adopting the traditional literary style of sentimental fiction. Although the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 allowed an unprecedented number of Indians to move to the United States, they still had to disguise themselves as a model minority to be treated, in Lahiri's words, as "other." For Indian immigrants, the ocean they cross represents the repression of their racial identity, something they needed to do to adjust to American society. Back in the colonial era, John Winthrop insisted that Puritans found a community based on sympathy;

[15] Rajini Srikanth asserts that Lahiri makes her characters easy to absorb, so that non-Indian readers see Indian-ness as though "it were not significantly different from what is familiar," by calling them "ornamental Indians" (59). However, I would like to emphasize the sense of difference that Indians in the United States have encountered because it is this slight difference that makes the distinction between them more stark.

however, as Hawthorne declares in “The Custom-House,” Americans have lost sympathy with each other. In “Hema and Kaushik,” the personal sentimental emotions of Indian-Americans illustrate this contradiction within American society. Specifically, their emotions regarding the memories of their deceased parents represent the repression of Indian immigrants’ racial identity. Lahiri’s reference to Jimi Hendrix, who took advantage of white musical styles, connects personal emotions with racial consciousness, and, just as Hendrix died soon after he awakened his blackness, Kaushik loses his life in a tsunami just after he gives up concealing his sentimental emotions. His death demonstrates for us how Indian immigrants struggle to survive in American society without revealing their racial identity. They experience the same things as Puritans did in the seventeenth century, crossing the Atlantic and emigrating to “the unaccustomed earth” and now forced to live as an “othered” group in society, no matter how much they may contribute to it.

It is noteworthy that Lahiri does not rely on excessive sentimentalism in her writing. As the death of Kaushik suggests, she depicts the trials and struggles of Indian-Americans in a cool-headed manner, unlike Stowe, who depends on too much sentimentalism to arouse sympathy. Lahiri captures the reality of immigrants from the viewpoint of a spectator, even while they themselves experience unfair treatment—like, for instance, when Hema witnesses the massive surge of the tsunami on television. Lahiri’s unique brand of sentimentalism is the result of her

hyphenated Indian-American identity, which allows her to view things through split viewpoints; specifically, she observes Indian immigrants from both the American and the Indian perspectives, as represented by Hema and Kaushik respectively. Still, as Hema demonstrates, even if Indian immigrants do conform to American society, they keep their racial identity buried within themselves. Lahiri's skillful usage of a nowhere space and of nothingness obscures the geographical distance between the United States and Asia. And we witness that this geographical corruption in the fiction overwhelms reality, uncovering the distorted racial contours of American society. While antebellum sentimental novels such as *The Scarlet Letter* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* embraced their WASP authors' aspiration for a tight-knit society woven out of sympathy for approximately four decades before the disappearance of the frontier, "Hema and Kaushik" has gained importance as a twenty-first-century sentimental fiction, foregrounding the post-Cold War globalist society which was made possible by a multi-nationalist America—but an America in which the people have lost sympathy with one another.

Chapter 3

Re-rooting/Re-routing Travel to the Home:

The Lowland as a Reinterpretation of *The Scarlet Letter*

As shown in the introductory chapter, after the 1965 Immigrant Act a vast number of Indians moved to the United States. Most of them were specialists in scientific fields, because the U.S. government needed their knowledge in order to surpass the Soviet Union. More remarkable is the fact that the welcoming of immigrants not only related to scientific fields but also to the humanities. One example is the instituting of creative writing department by universities. The workshops led by Wallace Stegner at Stanford University and Paul Engle at the University of Iowa contributed to creative writing thriving as an educational discipline in the United States. As Eric Bennet recounts in *Workshops of Empire* (2015), their efforts reflected the tragedies of World War II, which had ignored individual lives; they thus aimed to restore humanities as the reflection of the war. Meanwhile, they also had the political purpose of presenting the United States as a leading democratic society, superior to the Communism of the Soviet Union, guaranteeing the freedom of individuals (Bennet 5). Engle in particular attempted to accept immigrant students into his workshops so that he could tell them that life in the United States was superior to that in the Soviet Union (11).

In considering the changing racial background of the United States, scholars such as Emory Elliott have questioned the canon of American literature, which has long focused on white male writers since the 1920s; as a result, what is noteworthy is that immigrant writers after 1965 have played an important role in American narrative as part of a new national literature. Lawrence Buell, a specialist in American Romanticism, suggests that the argument about what constitutes a national literature occurs when people are anxious about cultural authenticity, which is reflected most clearly in a postcolonial situation where belief in the national identity is shaken (12). The drastic increase in the number of Asian immigrants after 1965 has led the American people to reconsider what their literature is, causing them to reexamine America as a nation.

When it comes to Indian immigrants, whose numbers have increased the most among Asian immigrant groups, the literary significance of Bharati Mukherjee cannot be exaggerated enough. After studying at Calcutta University and Baroda University in India, at the invitation of Engle she moved to the United States for the first time so as to attend his creative writing workshop at the University of Iowa in 1961 (Mukherjee, "A Tale of Two Fathers" 91). The aim of her writing was to extend the idea of what constitutes mainstream American literature as an American writer (qtd. in Buell 94). The American author to whom she paid the keenest attention was Nathaniel Hawthorne. Regarding his canonical work of American literature, *The Scarlet Letter*, Mukherjee disclosed her frustration as follows:

> I am disappointed that . . . [Hawthorne] ignores Asia's role in the making of America: witness the fortunes amassed in India and China by the colonial New Englanders Thomas and Elihu Yale. . . . In this age of mass migrations, when the U.S. is home to millions of documented and undocumented entrants, *The Scarlet Letter* acquires new urgency, for each of us is impelled to reimagine and redefine the American narrative. ("1850: *The Scarlet Letter*" 272-73)

While admitting that *The Scarlet Letter* is an essential American narrative, she points out that Hawthorne ignores the contribution of the assets accumulated in China and India through trade in the colonial era.

Mukherjee's disappointment with *The Scarlet Letter* made her rewrite Hawthorne's book from the viewpoint of an immigrant writer. Among her works, *The Holder of the World* represents Mukherjee's literary awareness most vividly. Like *The Scarlet Letter*, a narrator in her story, living at the end of the twentieth century, discovers documents referring to a woman who lived in Puritan society from the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth centuries. The originality of this novel lies in Mukherjee's imagination that extends from Puritan America, to Anglican England, to the Mughal Empire. By creating a "delocalized" narrative, in the words of Buell (94), she reimagines *The Scarlet Letter* as a transnational American narrative. This retelling indicates her attempt to

extend the American canonical novel, which has long been regarded as mainstream, and to redefine herself as an American immigrant writer originating from India.

When it comes to Indian American writers' consciousness of Hawthorne, Jhumpa Lahiri follows Mukherjee. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Lahiri shows her influence from Hawthorne: she quotes from "The Custom-House," the introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, as the epigraph of her second short story collection *The Unaccustomed Earth*. In "The Custom-House," the narrator explains that he found old documents about Hester Prynne, who also lived in a Puritan society in Boston, in a custom house where he was working. What is remarkable here is that, using the metaphor of the "guillotine" (Hawthorne, "The Custom-House" 31), the narrator speaks on behalf of Hawthorne's moral panic, which comes from being dismissed from his job at the custom house because Zachary Taylor of the Whig Party was elected as the twelfth president of the United States in 1849; Hawthorne, a Democrat, similarly lost his job as a government official (Tatsumi, *Young Americans in Literature* 85-86). The narrator states: "If the guillotine, as applied to office-holders, were a literal fact, . . . it is my sincere belief, that the active members of the victorious party [the Whig Party] were sufficiently excited to have chopped off all our heads, and have thanked Heaven for the opportunity!" (Hawthorne, "The Custom-House" 31). While living in Boston, a politically conservative place at that time, Hawthorne supported the Young American movement, which began to flourish in the late 1830s in New York City. John O'Sullivan, one of

the central figures of this movement, who claimed that America needed a "new literature" (Widmer 11), aimed to overcome the generation of the Founding Fathers and achieve a new democracy that went beyond traditional Puritanism and Anglo-Saxonism (66, 75).[1] Choosing Hawthorne as one of the forerunners of the new American literature, O'Sullivan strived to secure publishing contracts for Hawthorne's works and even published them in his literary magazine *The Democratic Review*. It was inevitable that Hawthorne would lose his job when Taylor was elected as president of the United States.

"The Custom-House" appears irrelevant to the narrative of *The Scarlet Letter*. Nonetheless, it does include certain essential themes that affect Lahiri. In the story, Hawthorne maintains that people thrive by continuously moving from one place to another, using a metaphor of potatoes ("The Custom-House" 12). The custom house serves as a gateway through which new-comers become "accustomed" to a new environment; in the meantime, under the title of "The Custom-House," Hawthorne affirms the significance of continually searching for an "unaccustomed" earth so as not to lose one's vigor. Although this introduction seems to embrace a contradiction, it cannot be overlooked because it indicates Lahiri's literary themes of migration and settlement.

[1] Edward Widmer distinguishes the Young America Movement I as an intellectual movement from the Young American Movement II, which began after the first and aimed at political expansion from New York City (15).

Lahiri's second novel, *The Lowland*, portrays her consciousness of Hawthorne more deeply than *Unaccustomed Earth* because this novel can be read as a reinterpretation of the literary themes that Hawthorne suggests in *The Scarlet Letter*.[2] Nina Martyris points out that the focus of this work is on the question of how to judge the political and personal dedication of the two brothers, Subhash and Udayan, who grow up in Calcutta in the postcolonial era, and the story thus revolves around them (39). However, the novel offers another perspective, seen through the eyes of Gauri, who marries both brothers in turn and moves from India to the United States. Although Binod Paudyal reads *The Lowland* as "neo-cosmopolitan fiction" that brings about "the imagination of a transnational and global community" (16), he does not mention that this transnationality comes from Hawthorne's awareness of India, as shown in "The Custom-House." Reading the novel through Gauri makes visible the themes of migration and settlement that Lahiri has inherited from Hawthorne. While scholars such as Michael Wutz and Rajini Srikanth (I mentioned their arguments in the previous chapter) insightfully discuss how Lahiri reveals Hawthorne's influence upon her in *Unaccustomed Earth*, no previous studies have pointed out that it is *The Lowland* that illustrates her literary consciousness of Hawthorne most vividly. Ambreen Hai asserts that Lahiri depicts individuals and families who become "tired, damaged,

[2] Regarding Lahiri's reinterpretation of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Israa Hashim Taher reads "Hema and Kaushik" as a rewriting of this classic literary work. He insists that Hester and Arthur Dimmesdale serve as the models of Hema and Kaushik respectively (138). Although his argument is interesting, I would like to focus on how Lahiri inherited Hawthorne's literary themes in *The Lowland*, rather than analyze the similarities between the characters and the plots.

and wrenched apart" in order to continually re-root them in *Unaccustomed Earth*, in contrast to Hawthorne, whose narrator of "The Custom-House" regards continuous movements from worn-out to new soil optimistically (198). However, reading *The Lowland* from the viewpoint of Gauri allows us to recognize that this novel demonstrates that Lahiri does not reject immigrants' migration to an unaccustomed earth; rather, it suggests the fruit of Lahiri's inheritance from Hawthorne's spirit. This chapter examines how Lahiri's literature can be located in the tradition of American literature by considering *The Lowland* as a work that inherits the themes of *The Scarlet Letter*, while reviewing the significance of Mukherjee's *The Holder of the World* from the perspective of Hawthorne's influence on Indian American literature.

I. Rewriting Hawthorne's Roots: Mukherjee's *The Holder of the World*

First, in order to clarify Hawthorne's awareness of India and his influence on Indian American literature, I will show that Mukherjee wrote *The Holder of the World* as a critical reinterpretation of *The Scarlet Letter*. The Indian American writer's inheritance of Hawthorne's literature is associated with the connection between early America and India through trade by English colonists. Benefiting greatly from hemp, the British government ordered the colonists to grow the plant in America in 1611 so that they could expand its market. They had been competing fiercely with Portugal, Holland, France, and the Mughal Empire for the power to control Indian hemp for

about 150 years, until the establishment of the East India Company in 1600 (Deitch 14-15). Their attempt to commercially control this global trade shows Britain's expansion of power both in America and in India during the same period. Hawthorne's reference to India in "The Custom-House" as a "new soil" for America in the colonial period (24), and his recognition that only Salem knew the route to India, disclose to us that he was keenly conscious of the connection between early America and India.

Hawthorne's life in Salem also indicates his familiarity with India. His father, Nathaniel Hawthorne Sr., often went to India as a sailor on a trade ship from Salem, a British East India Company base in America. This trade brought Indians to Salem as well; for example, according to the biography by Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Sr. had brought Indian and Chinese goods to his home (368). In addition, as Joan M. Jensen reveals, in 1851, one year after the publication of *The Scarlet Letter*, several Indians of the British East India Company joined the Fourth of July parade in Salem (12-13).

However, despite his familiarity with Indian people and culture, and the implication in "The Custom-House" that the connection between American and India can be traced back to the colonial era, Hawthorne never mentions India in the narrative of *The Scarlet Letter*, although he uses one term, "Indian," many times to refer to Native Americans. This lack of "Indians" in *The Scarlet Letter* invites us to speculate that it inspired Mukherjee and Lahiri to reimagine the story

and expand it across the Atlantic so that they could create their own stories that would comprehensively include India. In particular, Mukherjee emphasizes the difference between Asian Indians and Native Americans, both of whom may be referred to as "Indians," by depicting "Indian-Indian, not wah-wah Indian" in *The Holder of the World* (14), as if expressing her resentment toward Hawthorne's usage of "Indian."

In other words, Mukherjee rewrites *The Scarlet Letter* in *The Holder of the World* in order to include India. As mentioned above, *The Holder of the World* is based on *The Scarlet Letter* as a way of storytelling in which a contemporary narrator tells a story about a woman who lived in Puritan society. What is notable about Mukherjee's story is that the protagonist, Hannah Easton, comes back to Salem after leaving it for England, and later for India, in a similar way to how Hester of *The Scarlet Letter* returns to Boston from England. Hannah grows up as an orphan because her mother, Rebecca, elopes with a Native Indian during King Phillip's War. As a grown-up, she moves to England in order to marry a young Irish trader, and later moves to the Mughal Empire. However, after becoming a pirate, her husband abandons her in India. Although she has a relationship with a local Hindu ruler and becomes pregnant, her lover is killed under Islamic rule. She moves back to Salem in despair, where she gives birth to a girl whom she names Pearl Singh. Hannah's return to Salem overlaps the trajectory of Hester's in *The Scarlet Letter*; Hester comes back to Boston alone after crossing the Atlantic to England with her daughter Pearl. She

reveals her awareness of the world beyond the closed society of the Puritans, as she says to her lover Arthur Dimmesdale: “Is the world, then, so narrow? . . . Doth the universe lie within the compass of yonder town, which only a little time ago was but a leaf-strewn desert, as lonely as this around us? . . . Then there is the broad pathway of the sea!” (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* 119). She returns because “Her [Hester’s] sin, her ignominy, were the roots which she had struck into the soil” (53).

With regards to Hester’s return to Boston, Sacvan Bercovitch gives us an insightful argument. He suggests that Hester is pointing to the bright future of America: “[Hester’s] return provides resolution precisely by magnifying those tensions [between the need for self-fulfillment and the claims of society], projecting them, as the very spirit of prophecy, into the realm of utopia and millennium” (*The Office of the Scarlet Letter* 119-20). According to this assertion, resettling on the same place after leaving it leads to a brighter period because the agent brings another point of view to her closed society, as Hester serves as an adviser for women banished from Puritan society. Bercovitch points out the transformation of Hester’s role in society by focusing on the symbol of the “A” on her clothes, analyzing it as follows:

> Christologically, the “A” [Hester] wears expands from “Adulteress” to “Angelic.” Historically, as “the ‘A’ for America,” it leads forward from the Puritan “Utopia” to that “brighter period” when the country will fulfill its “high and glorious destiny.” More than

> any other aspect of the novel, this fusion of personal and federal eschatology makes *The Scarlet Letter* an American romance. (*The Puritan Origins of the American Self* 177)

Though her roots are fixed in the soil of a Puritan society by her sin, Hester is released from this restriction by crossing the sea that has "hardly any attempts at regulation by human law" in the Puritan era (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* 138). Therefore, she can acquire a different viewpoint from the one that she had before moving to England, and so foretell a brighter future that realizes "the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness" (155).

Hester's resettlement makes Hannah's return to Salem in *The Holder of the World* noteworthy. Soon after coming back to Salem, Hannah finds her mother, who left her with her Native American lover. She requires her mother to wear clothes sewn with an "I," which symbolizes her "Indian lover" (Mukherjee, *The Holder of the World* 184). This symbolizes not only her mother and her Native American lover but also Hannah herself, because she became a lover of an Indian. Mukherjee takes advantage of the double meaning of the word "Indian" in order to embed Asian Indians into her story when rewriting *The Scarlet Letter*. Hannah and her daughter are isolated from Puritan society. However, the people gradually come to trust her: "White Pearl [Hannah] eked out a living as a nurse, veterinarian, even, on rare occasion, doctor. Responsible citizens avoided her services, but she did enjoy a clientele of divers [*sic*] men and women who came from curiosity and stayed for the wealth of her storytelling, the pungency of

her opinions. A more refined age in a more sophisticated city might have called it a salon" (285). Hannah's harmonious space, which includes her daughter, who is evidence of her Indian lover, reminds us of the brighter future that Hawthorne illustrates; however, Mukherjee extends utopian America to a space that includes Indians, who are ignored in *The Scarlet Letter* despite Hawthorne's reference to them in "The Custom-House."

II. The Transplanting of Roots: Temporality and Spatiality in *The Lowland*

As regards the consciousness of contemporary that Indian-American writers have of Hawthorne, Lahiri inherits the themes that he suggests in *The Scarlet Letter*. As already mentioned, Lahiri shows her attentiveness to Hawthorne's themes in *Unaccustomed Earth*, as the title itself comes from a phrase in "The Custom-House." For the publication of *Unaccustomed Earth*, she reveals how she loves nineteenth-century writers such as Anton Chekov, Leo Tolstoy, and Thomas Hardy. What is noteworthy here is that her interest in these writers lies in their ways of depicting a human's "connection to the land and how rooted it is" in agricultural society (Lahiri, Interview by Isaac Chotiner). Therefore, although she does not mention Hawthorne in this interview, her quotation from "The Custom-House," used for the epigraph of *Unaccustomed Earth*, which symbolically points to human roots and their prosperity using the metaphor of potatoes, is highly suggestive in that her literary themes—roots and continual movements—can be located in the

literary tradition she traces from Hawthorne via Mukherjee. To focus on migration and settlement, particularly through the eyes of the female character Gauri, allows us to read this novel as a reinterpretation of *The Scarlet Letter.* This section discusses the idea that Gauri's migration from Calcutta to Rhode Island diminishes the distinctions between time and space.

This story is set both in Calcutta, where the two brothers Subhash and Udayan grow up while the city remains semi-colonial, even after independence from Britain, and in Rhode Island, where Subhash moves to study chemical oceanography at university. Lahiri's choice of Rhode Island as one of the settings is worth noting when we read this novel and focus on what it inherits from Hawthorne, because this place was originally for exiles who were outcast from Puritan society in the colonial era. It should not be forgotten that in *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne refers to Anne Hutchinson, who was banished to Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island, as the person to whom Hester is connected "hand in hand" (*The Scarlet Letter* 101). Considering Mukherjee's *The Holder of the World* as a rewriting of *The Scarlet Letter* thus invites us to read *The Lowland* from the standpoint of Hawthorne's influence over Indian-American literature. In particular, reading the story through the eyes of Gauri demonstrates the significance of the attention Lahiri pays to Hawthorne.

The story opens in Calcutta, where the influence of British rule remains even after independence in 1947. The two ponds that sit in a lowland near the house of the two brothers,

Subhash and Udayan, suggest that they live side by side. As Martyris points out, the story seems to develop by focusing on them. Illustrating their growth from childhood to youth in the beginning of the novel, Lahiri describes the social inequalities and generational divides that characterized India following the end of British colonialism. With detailed historical research used to depict the time period soon after India achieved its independence, she delineates the shadow that British colonialism continued to cast over Indian society, which eventually leads Udayan to dedicate himself to the Naxalite movement, which aimed to release the oppressed low-waged laborers and farmers through communist revolution. As Gauri Viswanathan has analyzed, during the British Raj, which ruled from 1858 to 1947, the British government instituted a system of social and linguistic stratifications by promoting English education. The British encouraged a minority of Indian youths to study English so that they could move upward in colonial society. However, this English-based education included a fatal contradiction of British rule, as Viswanathan explains: "The tension between the upward mobility promised by modern studies and the limited opportunities open to the colonized for advancement exposed the fundamental paradox of British imperialism" (164). That is, although some elite students could receive an English education under the guise of liberalism, they were forced to face the reality that they had no opportunities to obtain higher levels of employment in the British Indian government. Naturally, this situation caused dissatisfaction among Indian youth. Ironically, an English education, which taught Indian

elites the ideals of equality and fraternity, eventually induced these elites to question the authority of the British government. However, after the British government left India, Indian intellectuals who had opposed the existing social structure of British colonialism came forward to protect and advance their own class interests, rather than to fight for the downtrodden masses (S. Banerjee 175). Thus, the structure established in the British Raj remained, preserving the gap between some elites and the general populace.

This semi-colonial state in India is reflected in Lahiri's *The Lowland*. The Tolly Club in Calcutta represents the influence of British rule: "Until the mid-forties, from behind the wall, [Subhash and Udayan's] father used to watch horses racing around the track. . . . But after the Second World War, around the time Subhash and Udayan were born, the height of the wall was raised, so that the public could no longer see in" (Lahiri, *The Lowland* 4). The exclusion of the populace from the racetrack implies that the remnants of British rule prevailed even after independence. And to make matters worse, as the raised wall indicates, the structure of colonialism tightened its system to exclude the masses. After he becomes a student majoring in physics at Presidency College, Udayan complains: "[T]he Tolly Club was proof that India was still a semi-colonial country, behaving as if the British had never left" (25). His complaint implies that he is aware of this contradiction in Indian society.

Regarding Presidency College, which was established in 1817 to introduce English education, Lahiri reflects on the historical background of the school's students who played an active role in the Naxalite movement. The dissidents of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) were led by Presidency College student leaders, and together they formed the Naxalbari Peasants' Struggle Aid Committee, which later developed into the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI-ML). In *The Lowland*, both Udayan and his future wife, Gauri, study at Presidency College. Lahiri's choice of this school suggests that education and rebellion are deeply connected. Students of Presidency College, which traditionally promoted Western education, joined the Naxalite movement out of a sense of disillusionment with the existing educational system.[3] The students' sense of dissatisfaction was further motivated by the socio-economic conditions under which the peasants had been exploited by their landlords, and because the working-class people had been oppressed by the elites (R. Dasgupta 1921). This new form of exclusion caused the students to question the social structure. The aim of the communist revolutionaries was to put an end to affluent landlords' oppression of the peasantry, and to this end the revolutionaries fought against the structural system that had been established by British colonialism.

[3] According to Rajeshwari Dasgupta, the teacher-student ratio of schools in urban areas was often 1 to 200 in the late 1960s.

Although she does not resort to violence, unlike her husband, Gauri's character implies her desire for independence. Growing up in a suburban village of Calcutta, she hates to be confined in an enclosed place. Since she was five years old she had lived with her grandparents in Calcutta because of her mother's tuberculosis. Even after her mother recovered, Gauri did not return to the village in East Bengal where her parents lived but continued to go to school in Calcutta. Listening to her life story, Udayan compliments her on her "autonomy" (Lahiri, *The Lowland* 57). The following episode of her childhood delineates this character well: "When [Gauri] was a little girl . . . she would sometimes stumble out of bed during the night, and her grandparents would find her in the morning, fast asleep on the balcony, her face against the blackened filigree, her body on the stone floor. . . . She had loved waking up out-of-doors, without the protection of walls and a ceiling" (54). While studying Western philosophy at Presidency College, she marries her schoolmate, Udayan. He has by then become involved in the Naxalite movement, which, inspired by Marxism-Leninism, began around 1967 in West Bengal, aiming to liberate the exploited low-wage laborers and farmers. Meanwhile, although Gauri does not rebel against society in a violent way, she also shows her resistance to the social rules inherited from the older generation. Udayan's parents live with the couple in Calcutta, but they imply their complaint about their son's marriage to Gauri in their letter to Subhash, who studies in the United States: "We hope, when the time comes, you will trust us to settle your future, to choose your wife and to be present at your

wedding. We hope you will not disregard our wishes, as your brother did" (63). Given the Indian tradition that parents arrange the marriage of their children (Dhruvarajan 69), Gauri's marriage to Udayan without the agreement of their parents show her inclination to deviate from social rules.

However, Udayan's death totally changes Gauri's life. One day, when she is pregnant, the police capture and shoot Udayan to death for treason in the lowland near their house. When returning to Calcutta for his brother's funeral, Subhash sees his parents treat Gauri coldly. Worrying about the future of her expected baby, he decides to take her to the United States and marry her. She accepts his proposal; however, her remarriage to Subhash means death for her. When she goes to an airport in Calcutta by car to leave for the United States, a thick fog surrounds the car: "This [the fog] was death, Gauri thought; this vapor, unsubstantial but unyielding, drawing everything to a halt. She was certain this was what Udayan saw now, what he experienced" (Lahiri, *The Lowland* 129). In spite of Subhash's intention to save her and her expected baby, the migration to the United States brings no hope for Gauri; instead, the fog surrounding her never leaves her as the symbol of death that halts everything.

Therefore, Gauri never escapes from the death that haunts her no matter how far she moves. On a plane from India to the United States, space loses its meaning for her: "On the plane time had been irrelevant but also the only thing that mattered; it was time, not space, she'd been aware of traveling through. She'd sat among so many passengers, captive, awaiting their destinations"

(125). Gauri's travel reveals a sharp contrast to Subhash's because it liberates him, depicted as follows: "The difference was so extreme that he could not accommodate the two places together in his mind. In this enormous new country, there seemed to be nowhere for the old to reside" (34). For Subhash, Rhode Island represents newness, in contrast to Calcutta, which restrains him with the traditions of the older generation. Subhash thus enjoys his new life in Rhode Island, as he has an affair with a married woman, Holly. In the meantime, Rhode Island does not offer a new life to Gauri, around whom death lurks. Her condition as a "captive" suggests that she has lost the spirit of liberty and independence that she once had in India. Now that Gauri has to depend on Subhash in order to live in Rhode Island, she sees that the place symbolizes her relinquishing her independence. Gauri embraces a sense of death in the place where a new life is supposed to begin. She thus answers, "I didn't know what to expect" (124) when asked by Subhash whether or not the scenery is what she expected when she arrives in the United States after the long journey. Lahiri shows us that the word providence means "foresight, the future beheld before it was experienced" (125); it is ironic that the city brings not a future but a figurative death to Gauri, in spite of these meanings.

Gauri's expected baby, later named Bela, implies this ambiguous condition in which the mother is haunted by death although she has begun her new life. On the plane to the United States, the baby exists within Gauri as Udayan's ghost: "[Gauri] felt as if she contained a ghost, as

Udayan was. The child was a version of him, in that *it was both present and absent*. *Both within her and remote*" (124; emphasis added). Gauri senses the ambivalence in the fact that, while Bela indicates Udayan's presence as his child, she is also associated with his absence because of his death. In addition, Bela confuses Gauri's sense of distance, as the flight from India to the United States is not a matter of space. Bela's ambivalence "both within [Gauri] and remote [from the mother]" is highly suggestive, as the child forces her mother to experience a sense of settling both in Rhode Island and in Calcutta at the same time, despite her geographical movement between them. Given the Beatles' impact on Lahiri's literature, as shown in Chapter 1, this ambivalence may be associated with their song "Within You Without You" (1967), a song written by George Harrison, who passionately devoted himself to the Transcendental Meditation of Maharish Mahesh Yogi (Bellman 125). Harrison sings: "Try to realize it's all within yourself, no-one else can make you change / And to see you're really only very small / And life flows on within you and without you." The ambivalence portrayed in this song connotes Bela's presence within Gauri. Namely, the baby reminds her mother of both places, even though she is supposed to leave behind Calcutta, the place tightly connected with Udayan. Consequently, Bela causes Gauri to experience conflict after remarrying Subhash.

Lahiri demonstrates a unique temporality as well. In order to achieve this, she translates Hindu philosophy into an American context. Gauri lives as a housewife in Rhode Island. However,

she starts to audit a philosophy class at the university where Subhash engages in his research. What we should note here is that she studies Hindu philosophy—not in her native language, Bengali, nor in the ancient Indian language, Sanskrit, but in English. Her professor, Otto Weis, initiates her into the influence that the Indian Upanishads had on Schopenhauer, comparing Nietzsche's and Schopenhauer's concepts of circular time (Lahiri, *The Lowland* 165). In this way, Gauri studies Indian philosophy through Schopenhauer; moreover, this knowledge comes to her through English translation. Her study of the concept of time is also suggestive. When reading about the concept of time in Hindu philosophy at the university library, she learns: "In Hindu philosophy the three tenses—past, present, future—were said to exist simultaneously in God. God was timeless, but time was personified as the god of death" (151). The significance of Hindu philosophy stated here cannot be overemphasized when analyzing the temporality of *The Lowland*, which implies a mixture of Hindu and Western temporality that divides the past, the present, and the future. This Hindu temporality, when translated into an American context, brings forward the revival of the dead.

Lahiri's reference to the English translation of Indian philosophy invites us to bring in mind the transmission of knowledge across continents reflected in Mahatma Gandhi's reading of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the English version of which he read as a student. As shown in the introductory chapter, Gandhi did not read the actual Hindu scripture until he was twenty, because his

knowledge of Sanskrit was limited. Coming to know of this Indian classic while he was in South Africa and studying Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience," he went on to read Sir Edwin Arnold's English translation in England. The philosophy of this scripture eventually evolved into Gandhi's promotion of nonviolence as a means of resistance. By reimporting the Indian classic through the medium of English, Gandhi was able to apply it to the struggle for an independent India.

While translation often fails to convey the full meaning of the original, it does hint at the presence of a whole that includes them both. Comparing a translation of an original work to a fragmented vessel, Walter Benjamin gives us the following insight: "Fragments of a vessel which are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another. In the same way a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel" (*Illuminations* 78). He insists that both the original work and its translation together comprise a whole, rather than that the translation merely duplicates the original. One may assert that, rather than losing meaning, the original text thus could be revived in a new context as a whole through translation. In this space as a whole, the living and the dead can be united.

Regarding Thoreau's reading of the *Bhagavad Gita* in English, for example, Dimock's argument is suggestive:

> Translation—the movement of a corpse by a vehicle driven by something other than himself, and the movement of a text driven by a vehicle driven by something similarly alien—unites the living and the dead in a gesture steeped in mortality and inverting it, carrying on. Rather than banishing the body of the deceased from the eternity of the soul, . . . translation restores it and turns it over to as many receiving hands as the history and habitat of the species will allow. This is the civility that Thoreau extends to the *Bhagavad Gita*. It is his way of being a "reproductive reader": reproductive, in the sense of rewriting the text, updating it, giving it a new context of action. (16)

As in the metaphor of the union of the living and the dead, the act of translation brings about a restoration of energy and vigor to the static original text. Reproduction through translation does not mean that the same thing is repeated; rather, just as Gandhi applied the principles of the *Bhagavad Gita* to twentieth-century India, to reproduce indicates that a fixed fact is revived by gaining a new context.

This translated temporality that reproduction acquires, revives the dead. Bela, after her birth, represents this translated temporality. In her childhood, Bela deviates from the directional time that proceeds from the past to the present to the future:

> At four Bela was developing a memory. The word *yesterday* entered her vocabulary, though its meaning was elastic, synonymous with whatever was no longer the case. The past collapsed, in no particular order, contained by a single word.
>
> It was the English word she used. It was in English that the past was unilateral; in Bengali, the word for yesterday, *kal*, was also the word for tomorrow. . . . Time flowed for Bela in the opposite direction. *The day after yesterday*, she sometimes said. (*The Lowland* 149; italics in the original)

It is noteworthy that the Bengal word *kal* means not only yesterday but tomorrow, and that Bela's time flows backward from the future to the past, contrary to Christian temporality, which is based on the Western order.[4] As a ghost of Udayan, her "collapsed" time represents Gauri's disordered sense of time. When Gauri flies from Calcutta to Rhode Island, Bela is inside her as Udayan's ghost, implying both presence and absence. Thus, Bela's confused temporality forces Gauri to feel Udayan's presence despite his death, because the mother cannot leave him behind in the past. After Udayan's death, time in *The Lowland* does not flow unilaterally towards the future; instead,

[4] Kurt Spellmeyer maintains that Apocalyptic thinking has dominated the people in the West; they think of time as "a process of continuous revelation that will only end when the grand design behind all of time is fulfilled" (4). That is, they believe that events move from the beginning to the end in a preordained way. It was the Jewish people who imagined the concept whereby change leads them to somewhere new. Spellmeyer claims that they invented the concept of "the future" in the Western world (4-5).

the time when Udayan once lived in Calcutta erodes the one when Gauri is now living in Rhode Island.

The most impressive scene is the closing chapter of the novel, in which Udayan, shot by the police officers, sees the figure of Gauri in a sari. We witness the moment of his death, when he becomes eternal: "For a fraction of a second he heard the explosion tearing through his lungs. A sound like gushing water or a torrent of wind. A sound that belonged to the fixed forces of the world, that then took him out of the world. The silence was pure now. Nothing interfered" (339). Once the police officer shoots Udayan, the moment goes beyond the framework of time. It is obvious that Udayan is physically dead. Nonetheless, he sees the illusion of Gauri in front of him at the moment of his death: "She'd [Gauri] arrived to meet him [Subhash] in the middle of the day, still more stranger than wife, about to sit with him in the dark" (339). Lahiri blurs the border between the dead and the living here, turning "a fraction of a second" into an eternity by uniting the two. In other words, Lahiri creates the timeless space suggested in Hindu philosophy. By translating the philosophy into this novel written in English, Lahiri intentionally breaks the linear time that proceeds from the past to the present to the future. In this timeless space, no distinction between the dead and the living exists, and it is now possible, within such a space, for both Udayan and Gauri to meet each other. Before moving to the United States, Gauri bore "a map of time" (110), which suggests a horizontal temporality moving from past to future in her mind.

Nonetheless, the death of Udayan breaks down her sense of time so that the present moment acts as "a blind spot" bringing about "a hole in her vision" (111). It is noteworthy that Lahiri associates the image of time (present moment) with ones of space ("a blind spot" and "a hole in" Gauri's vision); that is, the collapsed temporality indicates a space that is not restricted by the horizontal time flow. Therefore, it is in this present time as blind spot—a void, in other words—where Udayan eternally lives.

Lahiri's depiction of Gauri's conception of time is highly suggestive: although she wishes the days and months ahead of her would end, "the rest of her life continued to *present* itself" (111; emphasis added). This quoted sentence illustrates well Gauri's lost sense of horizontal time. She understands that she continues to live; however, her life hereafter does not bring her a future because it keeps making itself "present," which alludes to the void within her. In this eternally present moment, Gauri embraces a space of nothingness that is represented by her blind spot. After Udayan is killed, Subhash returns to his old home in Calcutta, feeling it impossible that "Udayan was nowhere" (91). He weeps in front of the photo of his deceased brother. But Udayan's death does not mean that he does not exist; on the contrary, it is in this nowhere space where Udayan is revived. Valerie Miner asserts that Lahiri's strategic use of Udayan's flashback marginalizes him, so that he becomes like an avatar rather than a full-blooded character (25). Yet

the opposite is true: Udayan actually lives as a full-blooded man in this nowhere space in which time means the eternal present.

This confused temporality and spatiality thus continues to haunt Gauri even after she migrates to the United States. As mentioned above, Gauri's transatlantic journey does not indicate a spatial movement, no matter how geographically far she flies. Therefore, the mixture of the two temporalities blurs the geographical division between India and the United States. Even after settling in the United States, she feels restricted by Indian traditional rules: "She'd intended to remain anonymous, to go unnoticed. . . . She kept to herself. She was Subhash's wife instead of Udayan's. Even in Rhode Island, even on the campus where no one knew her, she was prepared for someone to question her, to condemn her for what she'd done" (Lahiri, *The Lowland* 133). She is still afraid of the condemnation for "what she'd had," that is, her remarriage to Subhash without having affection for him. As long as she lives with Bela, she never forgets Udayan; in other words, she never makes his death an event of the past. On the contrary, his death, represented by the fog in Calcutta, still possesses her, even though she is supposed to start a new life. That is, though she sets down new roots in Rhode Island, she remains rooted in Calcutta at the same time. Bela reminds her mother of the sense of sin because she is remarrying Subhash, although she keeps on being haunted by Udayan's ghost. Just as Hester does not forget what she has done, forever rooted in the soil of Puritan society through Pearl, to whom she gives birth by adultery,

Gauri is tied to two places, as the temporal and geographical indistinctness implies. In other words, *The Lowland* discloses to us that the shadow of India emerges in the United States by the erasure of the boundary between the Eastern and the Western hemispheres.

III. From Hawthorne to Lahiri: The Ambivalence of Settlement and Migration

Reading *The Lowland* through the eyes of Gauri allows us to recognize the significance of Lahiri's reference to Hawthorne's "The Custom-House." According to Bercovitch, as already argued above, Hester transforms herself into a prophetess who foretells the bright future of America by resettling herself in Boston, where she is rooted by her sin, after crossing the Atlantic. In the meantime, Gauri has a sense of sin because she lives with Subhash but cannot throw off the shadow of Udayan. This section discusses the uniqueness of Gauri's roots and the literary significance of Hawthorne.

Previous studies that I discussed in the introductory chapter give us insights from which to consider how the diaspora found their roots. For example, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak remarks that she has "roots in air" (qtd. in Chakravorty et al. 19). In addition, Homi K. Bhabha suggests the existence of a third space as a hybrid of two cultures, which "displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom" ("The Third Space" 211). Along with the

ideas of these Indian postcolonial intellectuals, in *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy points out that routes, rather than roots, may endorse the identity of the diaspora. However, even these insightful studies cannot fully grasp the nature of the roots as they function in *The Lowland*. When Gauri is pregnant with Bela, the child indicates Udayan's presence and absence. Her roots are fixed in both hemispheres, rather than in the air, as Spivak describes them. But this ambivalence that Gauri embraces prevents her from being independent, because she is haunted by the shadow of India, a symbol of the failure of independence.

However, it is Gauri's struggle that delineates the uniqueness of her roots. Her regained zest for Western philosophy increases her desire for the independence that she has lost since Udayan's death; she tries to cut off the roots which connect her to Calcutta and Rhode Island. She can never achieve her independence until she leaves behind Udayan's shadow that captures and imprisons her in the eternal present as void; in other words, she has to escape from the translated time in which the past and the future do not exist. Therefore, craving to be "a woman Udayan had never seen" (*The Lowland* 134), she has her hair cut short and wears slacks and a sweater instead of a *sari*. Her American-style clothes represent her aspiration to make the spatial movement distinct, which she was unable to do when migrating from India.

Therefore, it is understandable that she suddenly moves towards the west, California, leaving behind her family. After earning her Ph.D., she obtains a job at a university in California. While

Subhash and Bela are visiting Calcutta, she leaves Rhode Island for California, not telling them beforehand. On the plane, she embraces a feeling that she is moving forward:

> A place [Gauri] knew would contain her, where she knew she would be conveniently lost. Within her was the guilt and the adrenaline unleashed by what she'd done, the sheer exhaustion of effort. As if, in order to escape Rhode Island, she'd walked every step of the way.
>
> She entered a new dimension, a place where a fresh life was given to her. (232)

Explaining her move, Kalyan Nadiminti points out that it implies her rejection of the reproductive labor required by national structures (251-52).[5] However, Gauri's feeling here should be carefully observed, because this movement does not necessarily bring her hope. Rhode Island has enclosed her, actually functioning as a place that represents the relinquishing of independence. What roots her in this place is her daughter Bela, who reminds her of her deceased ex-husband. Thus, her endeavor to get rid of these roots requires her to leave Bela behind in Rhode Island. At the same time, her parting from her daughter also means disconnecting not only from Rhode Island but also from Calcutta, because the child represents something both "within her and remote [from her]." Therefore, her flight to California enables her to move spatially at last, taking her to "a new dimension."

[5] Nadiminti claims that her teaching job at a college satisfies her intellectual ambition and the hospitality that allows her to disavow the biopolitical sovereignty of filiality (251).

Moreover, this spatial move portrays her attempt to escape from the confines of the eternal timelessness that Hindu philosophy, translated into an American context, represents. Extricating herself from this form of temporality puts her into directional time, or Christian time, which proceeds from the past to the present to the future. However, even though she heads westward into the future, she still cannot become full of hope, because her escape from eternal time also leaves Udayan behind in the past. It is noteworthy in the quotation above that, even though she feels her adrenaline being unleashed, she has a sense of guilt about "what she'd done." As we saw in the previous section, soon after arriving at Rhode Island, Gauri was afraid that someone might condemn her for "what she'd done." This time, "what she'd done" alludes to something else: The abandonment of her daughter. It also implies more; she cannot help feeling guilty at putting Udayan in the past. Her sense of guilt thus indicates that she is still dragging his shadow along rather than ridding herself of it. Just as Hester set down her roots in Boston through her sin, so Gauri cannot throw off her roots no matter how geographically far she moves. In establishing the identities of the diaspora, then, Gilroy emphasizes their "routes" rather than their "roots." However, Gauri embraces both by dragging her roots from Calcutta to Rhode Island to California. She cannot transfer them from one place to another, even though she moves geographically; on the contrary, she brings the afterimage of the old places where she used to live with her to a new soil. As discussed already, her flight from India to the United States does not mean a spatial move

for Gauri, because her travel penetrates India and the United States at the same time. That is, her movement does not mean transference to a new place; rather, as the baby within her on the flight from Calcutta suggests, she keeps dragging the image of the old soil to the new one. Therefore, her movement shows that the afterimage of Calcutta erodes the images of the new soils, Rhode Island and California.

Given Gauri's attempt to move forward into the future, the significance of Hawthorne's "The Custom-House" stands out even more remarkably. Just as Hester of *The Scarlet Letter* or Hannah of *The Holder of the World* play essential roles as prophetesses who represent the future of America as a harmonious space, Gauri seems to represent a possible bright world by achieving her independence. After moving to California, she continues to teach at colleges in Santa Cruz and San Francisco, and also mentors students (232-33). Her independence appears to represent a more harmonious America, which includes Indian-American women. Nonetheless, the space that Gauri realizes through her independence is markedly different from what Hester or Hannah show to be an ideal space in the future. In the narrative of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne depicts the prosperity of America through Hester's resettlement after leaving Puritan society, a motif that Mukherjee inherits. This prosperity presupposes that those who go beyond America can be resettled in their original place, just as Hester and Hannah come back to New England after crossing the Atlantic. Namely, they have their roots in the American soil even though they move

over to another continent. In the meantime, it is critical that "The Custom-House" connotes the opposite state involving roots, with the emphasis on continuous movement; Hawthorne insists that people continue to search for a new soil, or an "unaccustomed earth," because otherwise they cannot flourish in worn-out soil. What he asserts in his introduction seems to contradict the narrative about roots that he sets out in the main text. Bercovitch detects the ambiguities of the images that penetrate *The Scarlet Letter* (*The Office of the Scarlet Letter* 22).[6] However, paying careful attention to both "The Custom-House" and the main text sheds light on the ambivalence of this novel that consists of settlement and migration. It is through this ambivalence that *The Lowland*, through Gauri, discloses to us the prosperity that America embraces. Gauri, who moves to California, an unaccustomed earth, while rooted in Calcutta and Rhode Island because of her sense of guilt, delineates this ambivalence. By focusing on Gauri, it might be possible to uncover the future of America, in which a female Indian immigrant as an economically independent woman contributes to its prosperity. Still, Gauri's settlement in a new place demonstrates her struggle to leave behind the shadows of her old land. In order to achieve her independence by moving to California, she has to abandon her daughter, which at the same time means that she

[6] Bercovitch argues that these ambiguities in *The Scarlet Letter* bring about the fragmentations of meaning that may lead to a unity as a whole. He states as follows: "To have choice (in Hawthorne's fiction) is to keep open the prospects for interpretation on the ground that reality never means either one thing or another, but, rather, is Meaning fragmented by plural points of view, for, although the fragmentation is a source of many a 'tale of frailty and sorrow,' such as *The Scarlet Letter*, it is also, as *The Scarlet Letter* demonstrates, the source of an enriched sense of unity, provided we attend to the principles of liberal exegesis" (*The Office of the Scarlet Letter* 22).

makes Udayan a thing of the past, which clearly distinguishes her as a living person from the dead. Despite her determination, however, she cannot dismiss her roots, as she is still haunted by her sense of guilt even while flying to California.

Gauri's struggle is associated with India's semi-colonial state. It is highly suggestive that, even after her separation from her family, time goes back to when Udayan was alive, which implies that Gauri still cannot leave Udayan in the past. As already shown, he complains that India remains under the control of Britain in spite of the 1947 independence. With regard to the Tolly Club, which was originally established for British colonialists, Udayan declares his resentment of the situation in which a handful of affluent Indians excluded ordinary citizens after independence, calling it an "affront" (25). It should not be overlooked that his complaint is repeated after Gauri achieves her independence in California. The temporality collapses here again, hence Udayan's revival. The image of India also re-emerges, illustrated as the "travesty of Independence, half of India still in chains. Only it was Indians chaining themselves now" (335). India, over which the shadow of the British control continues to hover, overlaps Gauri, who drags the roots from her old soil that confined her with conventional rules. In particular, Bela, who inherits the blood of Udayan and exists partially as his ghost, keeps Gauri half-chained; therefore, she has to be separated from her daughter. Nonetheless, Gauri's struggle suggests that she cannot achieve separation no matter how geographically far she moves from either Bela or Udayan. His

reappearance, and his resentment at India's semi-colonial state after witnessing Gauri's independence, imply that she cannot escape from temporality, symbolized by the translated Hindu philosophy, even though she strives to move forward into the future.

The space that Gauri faces is the one where the afterimage of India invades the United States. This space slightly differs from what Bhabha suggests, in that the third space that he identifies comes from the fusion of two spaces. He claims that the hybrid space brings about new cultural authority. Yet the space depicted in *The Lowland* reveals that the temporality and the spatiality of the old soil sneak into those of a new soil. This new space does not have cultural authority because it trails the afterimage of the old one, one which India, in its semi-colonial state, having only quasi-authority, represents. Gauri's movement discloses to us that Indian immigrants do not transplant their new roots into America after giving up their old soil; instead, they set down their roots in the new soil while preserving them in the old one. This ambivalence shows that America, an "unaccustomed earth," consists of the afterimages of the immigrants' original land. Since the colonial era, America has represented newness for immigrants; however, Gauri indicates that their settlement in America does not always suggests hope. Instead, her suspended status, caught between hope and despair, sheds light on the conflict that immigrants experience: that their hope for the new soil and their sorrow at leaving their native places are opposite sides of the same coin. Gauri's distress portrays the fact that the tension between the perpetual search for an ideal,

uncultivated ground, and the opposite urge to preserve roots in native lands, underlies the prosperity of the United States as an immigrant nation.

This ambivalence, connoted in *The Lowland*, can be traced back to Hawthorne. As discussed earlier, Hawthorne, a supporter of the Democratic Party, sympathized with the Young America movement. "The Custom-House" alludes to his resentment toward the Whig Party: "Strange, too, for one who has kept his calmness throughout the contest to observe the bloodthirstiness that is developed in the hour of triumph, and to be conscious that he is himself among its objects! There are few uglier traits of human nature than this tendency—which I now witnessed in men no worse than their neighbors—to grow cruel, merely because they possessed the power of inflicting harm" (30-31). As the narrative of *The Scarlet Letter* suggests, the author himself cherished the ideal of a more harmonious America by calling for the abandonment of Anglo-Saxonism and conventional Puritanism. This viewpoint is associated with his elaborate depiction in *The Scarlet Letter* of an ideal of America beyond conservative Puritan society. However, it is also true that, whereas he looked toward the future of America, he spent most of his life in Salem, "the center of the world" for him (13). According to John Franzosa, Hawthorne's sense of sin was rooted in Salem (381-82); his ancestors, such as William Hathorne, who had persecuted Quakers as a local judge, or the Salem witch trials judge, John Hathorne, haunted Hawthorne for life. The search for a more harmonious society with its roots in conservative

ground, which represents the ambivalence that *The Lowland* inherited from *The Scarlet Letter*, exemplifies Hawthorne's conflict. In the meantime, his ambivalent views on reform and tradition—in other words, the future and the past—came from the uniqueness of Salem; while his native town confined him because of his ancestry, it also allowed him to look outward on conservative society because it had served as a base for the Indian trade since the Puritan era. He wrote *The Scarlet Letter* as a new forerunner of the national literature. His gaze looking out both toward New England and India serves as an undercurrent of Lahiri's *The Lowland*, as represented by Gauri.

IV. Reunited in a Nowhere Land: The Merging of the Dead and the Living

Gauri's spatiality and temporality dominate the whole story. The lost sense of time and space overwhelm Subhash in his later years, although it seems that he enjoys life in the United States, which makes a sharp contrast with India. Unlike his younger brother, Udayan, it appears that he takes no part in rebellious activities. However, although he does not engage in political activities, his life after moving to the United States reveals that he is rebelling against the older generation. His decision to enter a doctoral program in the United States suggests that he has turned away from the conflict in India. However, it is important to consider what Udayan says to Subhash: "You're the other side of me, Subhash. It's without you that I'm nothing. Don't go" (Lahiri, *The*

Lowland 31). His pathetic tone makes us assume that if Subhash goes to the United States, the two brothers will go their separate ways. Lahiri illustrates a sharp contrast between India and the United States, depicting them as "old" and "new" respectively, in the scene in which Subhash is surprised by the differences between the two countries when he arrives in Rhode Island, as an earlier quotation shows. The ocean that divides India and the United States may be a symbol of the separation between the brothers. They are separated geographically, though, in terms of their resistance to the older generation, Subhash is not separated from Udayan. In this "new" soil, he makes silent resistance to the conventions that have restricted him in India.

As for Subhash's resistance in the United States, it is critical that India remained a semi-colonial state of the British government. Even after independence, Indians were restricted within the structural system established during the colonial era. The way Lahiri depicts Subhash's move to Rhode Island is worth noting: "A few months later Subhash also traveled to a village; this was the word the Americans used. An old-fashioned word, designating an early settlement, a humble place" (34). Subhash compares himself with the early settlers of New England. His move to Rhode Island, one of the Thirteen Colonies of Britain, recreates the revolutionary way America came to gain independence.

Therefore, although Subhash does not choose a direct path toward revolution against conventions, as Udayan does, it is possible to argue that he also engages in a rebellion that takes

place in a land that has "nowhere for the old to reside." We can see the first instance of his resistance to the older generation when he has an affair with his friend Holly, who is estranged from her husband:

> [Subhash] divulged nothing about Holly to anyone. The affair remained concealed, inaccessible. His parents' disapproval threatened to undermine what he was doing, lodged like a silent gatekeeper at the back of his mind. But without his parents there, he was able to keep pushing back their objection, farther and farther, like the promise of the horizon, anticipated from a ship, that one never reached. (77)

Crossing the ocean and studying in the United States allow Subhash to shed traditional Indian conventions, just as Udayan does by engaging in the Naxalite movement and marrying Gauri. When Subhash receives the letter from his parents, in which they insist on settling his marriage, he replies to them that he will obey their arrangement (63). However, deep within him he resists their insistence. When he has an affair with Holly, he thinks, "Udayan would have understood. Perhaps he would even respect him for it" (77). Although the two brothers are separated, Subhash feels sympathy with Udayan because both of them have a rebellious spirit, turning against the older generation.

Thus, Subhash continues to resist his parents even after the relationship with Holly ends. The most outstanding example of his revolt is his decision to marry Gauri after Udayan is killed

by the police. Subhash returns to India to take Gauri away from his parents' home in Calcutta because they are treating her coldly: "[Subhash] thought of [Gauri's] remaining with his parents, living by their rules. His mother's coldness toward Gauri was insulting, but his father's passiveness was just as cruel" (115). Seeing their parents' coldness, Subhash decides to liberate Gauri from "their rules." When two police officers come to investigate the home in Calcutta after Udayan's death, Subhash explains that he is studying chemical oceanography in the United States. One police officer tells Subhash: "You're nothing like your brother" (116). This remark sounds appropriate on the surface; however, the police officer does not understand that Subhash is planning his own rebellion, just as his brother did.

After Udayan's death, the images of him and Subhash begin to merge. After moving to Rhode Island, Gauri makes the geographical distance between Calcutta and Rhode Island obscure so that a void space is formed. Bijoli, the mother of the two brothers, lives in this space. At the edge of the lowland where Udayan was shot, she repeats her routine of washing the memorial tablet of Udayan and replacing the flowers every day. She scares neighborhood children as a ghostly figure, but she understands them: "She is tempted to tell them that they are right, and that Udayan's ghost does lurk, inside the house and around it, in and around the enclave" (180). She feels that Udayan's ghost still hovers around the lowland, which is indicative in that Udayan lives in the space, the void that Gauri has generated; in other words, Bijoli is embraced by Gauri's

space in which time eternally suggests the present. Lahiri skillfully demonstrates that the distinction between the dead and the living becomes unclear through Bijoli. After Bijoli's husband (namely Subhash's father) died, Subhash returned to his old home in Calcutta with Bela. For Bela, this was her first visit to Calcutta. Seeing the photo of a teenage boy, Bela asks Bijoli who he is, and she answers that he is "her father," hinting at something (197), while not actually disclosing that he is Udayan. Asked later by Bela about the photo, Subhash finally reveals that he had a younger brother who died; however, Bela tells him that her grandmother said that it is a photo of Subhash, although the old woman did not clearly say so. In order to conceal the fact that Udayan is her "real" father, Subhash lies to her, saying of the grandmother that "She confuses things, sometimes" (205). In fact, Bijoli is not confused at this point because she understands that the boy in the photo is Udayan. She actually cannot tell Subhash from Udayan later on, after she has a stroke, whereupon "She spoke to him in fragments, sometimes as if [Subhash] were Udayan, or as if they were boys. She told him not to muddy his shoes in the lowland, not to stay out late playing games" (220). This may be considered simply as a mental disorder that comes as a result of the stroke; however, her confusing of the two brothers indicates the presence of the nowhere space, as Subhash feels that "his mother was dwelling in an alternate time, a more bearable reality" (220). She is not seeing an illusion; on the contrary, as Subhash's words suggest, she lives in an alternate reality that does not have spatial and temporal distinctions. In this space, the border

between the living and the dead disappears; in other words, the ghost of Udayan that lurks in the lowland revives and overlaps the living Subhash. Therefore, for Bijoli, although Subhash is alive, he "only add[s] to the loss" rather than comforts her (186). In short, she regards both of her sons as nothing. However, the merged space denoted by Bijoli's confusion alludes to the reunion of the two brothers in the space of nothingness because Subhash represents "the other side" of Udayan. In that sense, what the Indian police officer says to Subhash is true: he is "nothing" like Udayan.

Given that Udayan and Subhash represent Calcutta and Rhode Island respectively, this unity of the brothers spells out the merging of the two places as well. It should be emphasized that, while illustrating the difference between the two places by describing them as old and new, Lahiri demonstrates their similarities as well in the early part of the novel: ". . . certain physical aspects of Rhode Island—a state so small within the context of America that on some maps its landmass was indicated only by an arrow pointing to its location—corresponded roughly to those of Calcutta, within India. Mountains to the north, an ocean to the east, the majority of land to the south and west" (34). After Udayan's death, we witness the moment when the two separate but physically similar spaces are conflated. In his sixties, when taking a walk in Narragansett in Rhode Island, he suddenly feels lost near a swamp:

> [Subhash] passed a swamp at the start of his walks. . . . It was the largest forested wetland in southern New England. . . .
>
> According to signs he stooped to read, it had also once been the site of a battle. . . . On a small island in the middle of the swamp the local Narragansett tribe had built a fort. In a camp of wigwams, behind a palisade of sticks they had housed themselves, believing their refuge was impregnable. But in the winter of 1675, when the marsh ground was frozen, and the trees were bare, the fort was attacked by a colonial militia. Three hundred people were burned alive. Many who'd escaped died of disease and starvation.
>
> Somewhere, he read, there was a marker and a granite shaft that commemorated the battle. But Subhash got lost the day he set out through the swamp to find it. . . . He felt only aware now that he was alone, that he was over sixty years old, and that he did not know where he stood. (243-44)

Subhash's lost sense of direction should not be overlooked as a mere accident. The images of wetland and swamp lead us to speculate that these images remind Subhash of the lowland in Calcutta. In addition, it is worth noting that Lahiri refers to the Great Swamp Massacre in 1695. This image of brutal violence in the wetland is associated with Udayan's execution in the lowland. The following quotation depicts Udayan hiding in a pond in the lowland when police officers

come to execute him: “On the bank of the first pond Gauri saw a van belonging to the Central Reserve Police. . . . Behind the water hyacinth, in the floodwater of the lowland: this was where, if the neighborhood was raided, Udayan had told her he would hide” (101, 103). However, he stops hiding once the police officers threaten him that his family will be killed if he does not show himself; as a result, he is shot in his back three times, and killed (105). Subhash does not see his brother’s execution himself; instead, he hears how Udayan was killed from Gauri. Yet the image of Udayan’s death in the lowland haunts him even after thirty years have passed. Thus, his confusion represents the spaces that Gauri generates. Also, given that Hawthorne mentions only American Indians using the term “Indian” in *The Scarlet Letter*, although he implies his awareness of Asian Indians in “The Custom-House,” this connection between the Indian massacre and the death of an Indian makes Indian space intervene in American soil.

This merged space keeps dominating Subhash even when he is neither in Rhode Island nor in Calcutta. After his divorce from Gauri, he remarries Elise Silva, a former high school teacher of Bela. They go on honeymoon to Ireland, where Subhash feels geographically confused again. While he walks in a soggy field, he senses that Udayan is beside him: “[Subhash and Udayan] are walking together in Tollygunge, across the lowland, over the hyacinth leaves” (332). Subhash’s confusion reveals that the temporality and spatiality that Gauri generates engulf all the spaces: in

there, "[t]here is no sense of its boundaries, where it begins or ends" (330), just as he feels in Ireland. That is, Gauri's nothingness overarches the whole story.

V. Return to the "Home": Gauri's Re-rooting/Re-routing

As discussed earlier, Hawthorne gives us ambivalent literary themes of continuous movement and return to home in "The Custom-House" and the body text of *The Scarlet Letter*. This section examines what the motif of the heroine's return illustrates in the most critical moment of *The Lowland*. When it comes to searching for an unaccustomed earth, it is Bela who embodies it. After graduating from a liberal arts college in the Midwest, she refuses to pursue an academic career, unlike her parents Subhash and Gauri. Instead, she engages in agricultural work by drifting from one place to another across the United States, taking in Washington State, Arizona, Kentucky, and Missouri; in the growing season and the breeding season she plants peach trees, maintains beehives, and raises chickens or goats (222). In short, she lives as a "nomad," as Subhash says (248). She lives with groups of people who share their income, and she is often paid not in money but in shelter and food. She later starts to educate low-income families in Baltimore and Detroit on how to grow vegetables in their backyards. If we take Lahiri's consciousness of Hawthorne into consideration, the significance of her job should be emphasized; moving continuously and

planting seeds in a new ground, she represents the American spirit that Hawthorne indicates in "The Custom-House."

However, when Hawthorne's ambivalence is considered, it is notable that she returns to Rhode Island. In this home, she tells Subhash that she is pregnant, although she does not show him who the father is. To Subhash, who worries that she has no stable home, she says, "I have this one" (264). What Subhash feels at this time is suggestive: "She wanted to come home again. She wanted to stay with him, to give birth in Rhode Island" (264). Bela's return to Rhode Island after moving across the country reminds us of Hester's return to New England. But the "home" here does not mean a physical house in a fixed place, given that Gauri's roots penetrate the soil from California to Rhode Island to Calcutta. This merged space overwhelms Subhash while he talks with her: "The coincidence coursed through him, numbing, bewildering. A pregnant woman, a fatherless child. Arriving in Rhode Island, needing him. It was a reenactment of Bela's origins. A version of what had brought Gauri to him, years ago" (264). Bela's pregnancy reminds him of Gauri's arrival in Rhode Island, and this remembrance makes his sense of time collapse because it is associated with "Bela's origins." As for her origins, Lahiri gives us a noteworthy depiction: after Gauri leaves her behind, she feels that "the hole remained her hollow point of origin, the cold crosshairs of her existence" (269). This sense of loss described as a hole stems from the absence of Gauri; however, she has implied both absence and existence in her even before her

birth, because she alludes to Udayan's ghost. That is, the hole inscribed in her existence has shown her fate from the beginning. It is remarkable that Lahiri associates the house in Rhode Island with an image of a void; the violent wind that is "rooted in nothingness" from the sea sometimes blows against it so strongly that Subhash feels threatened (249). That is, Bela returns to the house that is exposed to the wind by emerging from nothingness, or void. In this void, however, she can be connected with her lost mother, Gauri, who suggests both absence and existence to her. In addition, this space allows her to be with Udayan. Once she knows that Udayan is her biological father, she feels him "dead but newly alive" to her (268), which suggests that, living in the nowhere space, he appears in front of Bela.

Therefore, Gauri also heads back to the origins of the nowhere space. Although she has betrayed Bela by abandoning her, Gauri cannot forget her. She searches for Bela on the Internet in vain; she finds, "Like Udayan, Bela is nowhere" (277). Udayan and Bela are nowhere, and so she goes there. Around this time, she receives a letter from Subhash, who considers his remarriage and so indirectly asks her to agree to their divorce. Although she could communicate with him by mail, instead she visits her old home in Rhode Island without prior notice. Although she expects that she will see Subhash, the person who opens the door is Bela, because he is away. Their encounter is one of the most impressive scenes in the novel; however, paying attention to Lahiri's literary inheritance from Hawthorne makes it even more critical. It is true that Gauri visits Rhode

Island so as to talk with Subhash about the divorce. Nonetheless, her return to Rhode Island demonstrates her longing for the ambivalence of absence and existence that Bela represents. Therefore, it must be Bela who meets Gauri at the "home," the nowhere space. In short, she finally finds Bela "nowhere." We cannot overlook the fact that nothingness pervades the conversation between the two:

> I know why you left us, Bela said, directing the words at Gauri's back.
>
> I've known for years about Udayan, she went on. I know who I am.
>
> Now it was Gauri unable to move, unable to speak. Unable to reconcile hearing Udayan's name, coming from Bela.
>
> And it doesn't matter. *Nothing* excuses what you did, Bela said.
>
> Bela's words were like bullets. Putting an end to Udayan, silencing Gauri now.
>
> *Nothing* will ever excuse it. You're not my mother. You're *nothing*. Can you hear me? I want you to nod if you can hear me.
>
> There was *nothing* inside her. Was this what Udayan felt, in the lowland when he stood to face them, as the whole neighborhood watched? There was *no one* to witness what was happening now. Somehow, she nodded her head.
>
> *You're as dead to me as he is*. The only difference is that you left me by choice.
>
> She was right; there was *nothing* to clarify, *nothing* more to convey. . . .

> *Nothing* more was said. Gauri walked toward the front door, briskly this time. Bela, not looking up from what she was doing, did *nothing* to detain her. (312-13; emphasis added)

Lahiri's repetition of "nothing" illustrates that the ambivalent state of absence and presence dominates the space where Gauri sees Bela. Nothingness penetrates Gauri like a bullet, which figuratively kills her, as Bela declares, "You're dead to me as he is." Her words sound cruel; however, they indicate that Gauri has acquired her ambiguous state of absence and/but presence again. Thus, her return to Rhode Island implies her desire to confirm the state in which she is still rooted in nothingness. In other words, it represents her journey to trace back to the origin of the nowhere space. Now that she is figuratively dead, as Bela proclaims, she is qualified to see Udayan in the void. Pierced by Bela's words, she understands how Udayan felt when shot to death; this connection vividly revives Udayan here. Namely, Udayan as a ghost emerges in this house. It is too suggestive to ignore the fact that "no one" witnesses the encounter between the two, given the ambivalence of absence and/but presence that these words connote. "No one" who lives in the space of nothingness sees them—who could this "no one" be other than Udayan? This defines the moment when the three of them, Gauri, Udayan, and Bela—all of them dead and/but alive—coexist for the first time.

After seeing Bela, therefore, Gauri continues to travel, to trace back her roots/routes; she goes back to Calcutta for the first time since she left it to remarry Subhash in the United States. She orders the driver of a hired car to go to Tollygunge. In the car she feels time collapse, so that she is now in the time when she was a student at Presidency College:

> She sat in the car, in snarled traffic, the atmosphere heavy with smog. She saw a version of herself, standing on one of the crowded busses, hanging on to a strap, wearing one of the cotton saris she'd worn to college. Going to meet Udayan somewhere he'd suggested, some tuck-away restaurant where no one would recognize them, where he would be waiting for her, where they could sit across from one another for as long as they liked. (318)

The image of Udayan revives within Gauri. However, contrary to her expectation, the house in Tollygunge where she lived with Udayan and its circumstance has been altered. Even the lowland in which Udayan was killed has gone, because new houses have been built (319-20). Therefore, she cannot find anything that she can associate with the days when she lived with Udayan at Tollygunge; or, she cannot see the nothingness that leads her to the nowhere space at the place. Yet Gauri's re-rooting/re-routing does not end. She puts herself into the place where she talked with Udayan for the first time at her grandparents' home: a balcony. When she was a student, she liked to stand on a balcony. One day, Udayan visited her and talked with her while Manash,

Gauri's brother and Udayan's friend, was not at home, which was the beginning of their relationship (52-53). Now, however, Gauri does not visit the old house where she used to live because Manash, the only person whom she knows, is away. She thus steps out onto the small balcony of the guesthouse where she is staying. Her choice of balcony is worth noting in that it represents a liminal space between outside and inside. This liminality brings her to the erasure of distinctions. She feels: "This was the place. This was the reason she'd come. The purpose of her return was to take her leave" (323). It is notable that she has "[t]he sensation of nothing supporting her" (323). This sensation may indicate that she could choose to die by throwing herself off the balcony, as she feels that "[i]t would take only a few seconds. Her time would end" (323). However, this does not necessarily mean her yearning for physical death, but the sense that nothing supports her, implying that she is entering the nowhere space again, which causes her to experience this sensation. In this liminal space, she closes her eyes so that her mind becomes "blank," and sees Udayan: "Udayan standing beside her on the balcony in North Calcutta. Looking down at the street with her, getting to know her. Leaning forward, just inches between them, the future spread before them. The moment her life had begun a second time" (323). Gauri sees Udayan at last in the void pervaded by nothingness as absence and/but presence; as the balcony as liminal space connotes, she exists beyond the boundary of life and death. She

accomplishes her "return to take leave" through the reunion with Udayan in the space of nothingness.

This space of Gauri's closes the story. As mentioned earlier, the novel ends in the scene in which Udayan, shot by the police officers, sees Gauri appear in front of him: "For a fraction of a second he heard the explosion tearing through his lungs. A sound like gushing water or a torrent of wind. A sound that belonged to the fixed forces of the world, that then took him out of the world. The silence was pure now. *Nothing interfered*. He was not alone. Gauri stood in front of him wearing a peach-colored sari" (339; emphasis added). Although narrated from Udayan's point of view, this space is generated by Gauri, who makes the distinctions between spatiality and temporality obscure; Udayan's death does not put an end to the story; instead, time is fractured at the moment of his death. The closing scene thus illustrates Gauri's reunion with Udayan, which means that her travels tracing back to her roots are finally accomplished. Lahiri depicts their unity in the space in which nothingness pervades—as that "nothing interferes" suggests—through Gauri's return to Calcutta. She demonstrates the transgression of "the one ontological boundary," which is death, in the words of Brian McHale (231).[7]

[7] McHale points out that postmodernist fiction is about death in that it foregrounds ontological themes and has an ontological structure (231). I do not assert that *The Lowland* can be categorized as a postmodernist fiction; still, in order to show that this work transgresses the boundary between the living and the dead, I draw upon his insightful argument concerning death.

Gauri's return foreshadows a unity in a different way from Hester's. As Hester becomes a symbol of a harmonious space after coming back to New England, Gauri makes a return to Calcutta through Rhode Island after moving to California in order to show complete unity. However, she never finds a home in a specific place on earth, unlike Mukherjee's Hannah, who comes back to America from India. America serves as her home for Hannah, which implies Mukherjee's strong consciousness of the mainstream of American literature as an immigrant writer and the idea that she is rooted in in the United States. In contrast, although also influenced by Hawthorne, Lahiri does not have the confidence that the American soil could become her home. Therefore, Lahiri presents to us a space that makes the geographical distance between the Western and the Eastern hemispheres blurred, so that even the boundary between the living and the dead collapses. It appears in the space where the two places of Calcutta and Rhode Island are merged into one, whose contours Gauri's movements delineate. She represents the ambivalence of continuous migration and settlement to which Hawthorne alludes in "The Custom House" and *The Scarlet Letter*. In addition, the route by which she traces her roots reveals a harmony that Hawthorne suggests through Hester's return. Nonetheless, the unity that Gauri achieves does not suggest the "bright future" that Hester's journey indicates; Gauri chooses to live in the eternal present that the translated temporality of Hindu philosophy brings about. Therefore, her unity is not associated with the future. Hawthorne believed in Christian time—as Bercovitch maintains,

"the process of fulfillment may be implicit in the development from theocracy to democracy"—through Hester as a prophetess (*The American Jeremiad* 207). Meanwhile, Lahiri does not portray the progress of America but invents the temporality by which Hindu philosophy is reproduced in the American soil. Her strategy makes the afterimage of India emerge alive. In adopting the literary themes of "The Custom-House" and *The Scarlet Letter*, Lahiri challenges the presumed temporality that dominates American literature by inventing the space where Indian and American soils are merged. The unity that she conceives is realized in the space that Gauri's routes/roots generate.

Conclusion

Lahiri's *The Lowland* is Gauri's story, which reinterprets Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Her travels through the story disclose Lahiri's consciousness of Hawthorne as a canonical figure of American literature. But she does not merely rewrite the plot of the classic work; instead, she demonstrates that Hawthorne's literary themes are inscribed so as to illustrate the Indian diaspora. When it comes to the reinterpretation of *The Scarlet Letter*, Mukherjee is definitely a pioneer. Her frustration with the classic work is reasonable in that, in spite of his implied awareness of the connection between Indian and Puritan America in "The Custom-House," Hawthorne mentions Native Americans only by using the word "Indian" in *The Scarlet Letter*. His neglect of India led

Mukherjee to write *The Holder of the World* as an American narrative seen from the perspective of Indian- Americans. Adopting a female character who crosses the Atlantic and serves as a possible agent to realize a harmonious space, she expands the themes of *The Scarlet Letter*, movement and settlement, by portraying her female protagonist Hannah's transatlantic travel and adultery in India.

Lahiri's Gauri of *The Lowland* also reveals a literary inheritance from Hawthorne. However, the impact of Hawthorne does not stand out unless the novel is read by paying careful attention to the motifs of *The Scarlet Letter*. By embracing Hawthorne's ambivalence and the literary theme of returning home, Lahiri attempts to break the geographical boundaries that define American literature. Gauri moves from Calcutta to Rhode Island and eventually to California; however, despite her movement west, she remains rooted in her old lands in the east because of her sin. She tries to head toward the future by cutting ties with the eternal present that makes her captive. Her suspension between the new soil and the old suggests that America, as a new earth for immigrants, consists of the afterimages of their native land. They do not just become accustomed to the new soil by setting down roots, but trail their roots from their old ground, and do not simply sever them when they leave.

In order to illustrate the liminal status of immigrants, Lahiri portrays the void where time and space collapse. Therefore, Gauri's return to Rhode Island and eventually to Calcutta

foregrounds her travel, tracing back her roots through a metaphysical space. Lahiri's repetition of "nowhere" and "nothing" represent well that the roots of Indian immigrants are struck in this liminal sphere that penetrates the soil both of India and America. That is, they keep searching for an unaccustomed earth but remain rooted in their old soil at the same time. Lahiri's strategy, developed through Gauri's movements, is to show that geographical distance and the stream of Western time collapse, suggesting the possibility that the Indian diaspora achieves unity in this space. In doing so, she lets the image of India emerge in the American landscape more vividly than Mukherjee does in rewriting *The Scarlet Letter*. Lahiri's dexterous illustration of the conflated space reveals that the American soil as an unaccustomed earth embraces the roots set down in the old land of immigrants. However, what is noteworthy is that her keen sense of America's multilayered landscape comes from looking through Hawthorne's eyes, turned toward India. Demonstrating her literary inheritance from Hawthorne, Lahiri reveals that American literature has traditionally been multicultural.

Chapter 4

Displaced American Authority:

In Other Words as a Quasi-Autobiography

Language plays an essential role for writers wishing to explore their world. It is true that language is a tool; however, language itself can also inspire. Therefore, some choose a more suitable language than their own in which to work. For example, Joseph Conrad wrote his fiction neither in his native language, Polish, nor in his second language, French, but in English, which he did not study seriously until he settled in England in his twenties. Writing in his non-native language was never easy for him, as he revealed: "I had to work like a coat-miner in his pit, quarrying all of my English sentences out of a black night" (qtd. in Meyers 170). Living in Paris as an émigré, Samuel Beckett wrote in French rather than English after World War II. And after leaving his home country of Russia in 1919, Vladimir Nabokov started writing his first English-language novel *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941) in 1939 while living in France.

An Indian poet and the first Asian Nobel prizewinner Rabindranath Tagore was another distinguished artist who abandoned his native language. In the introduction to the English translation of *Gitanjali* (1912), which was originally written in Bengali, W. B. Yeats highly praised it as the "work of a supreme culture" (xiii), stating that Tagore had "stirred my [Yeats's]

blood as nothing has for years" (vii). However, Yeats changed his attitude to Tagore's works once the Bengali poet turned to English. Yeats expressed his harsh critique of Tagore in his letter to Sir William Rothenstein in 1937: "Damn Tagore. . . . [B]ecause he thought it more important to see and know English than to be a great poet, he brought out sentimental rubbish and wrecked his reputation. Tagore does not know English, no Indian knows English. Nobody can write with music and style in a language not learned in childhood and ever since the language of his thought" (*The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats* 834-35). Obviously, Yeats' criticism of Tagore discloses his Eurocentrism; however, Tagore himself admitted that writing in a language other than his own would be hardly possible, as he remarked: "Languages are jealous sovereigns, and passports are rarely allowed for travelers to cross their strictly guarded boundaries" (qtd. in Dutta and Robinson v). Yet, even though writers or poets understand the difficulty of writing in non-native languages, they still often attempt to cultivate worlds with them, no matter how clumsy this may look.

Jhumpa Lahiri is a writer who addresses such a difficult task by transgressing linguistic boundaries. She moved to Rome after she published *The Lowland*. She wrote about her life in Rome and her thoughts on learning Italian, though the language she used to do so was not English but Italian. Even before she moved to Italy, she showed her consciousness of Italy in her works. In her short story "The Third and Final Continent," the protagonist moves from India to England by means of an Italian cargo vessel named *SS Roma* (173). Lahiri connects Italy with the image

of crossing oceans. In “Hema and Kaushik,” the protagonists Hema and Kaushik reencounter one another in Rome for the first time since their adolescence, and later they break up. In *The Namesake*, Lahiri compares the landscapes of Italy with those of India. Nonetheless, it seems irrational for her to have given up English, a language which helped her to become one of the most acclaimed contemporary writers. Italian is neither her native language nor the second language that she had used since her childhood. For her, Bengali was the language she spoke with her family at home, and English served as the second language for public use. And, of course, it was English that she used as an author ever since she wrote the first stories in *Interpreter of Maladies*.

Lavina Dhingra Shankar points out the privilege that South Asian American writers enjoy in comparison with other Asian writers, because of their capacity to understand, use, and write in English. According to her, other Asian Americans, such as Japanese Americans or Chinese Americans, who usually grow up in working-class families, take at least two or three generations to acquire the educational background that offer them the capabilities to communicate in English and the economic freedom of choice of profession necessary for a writing career. By comparison, the post-1965 South Asian immigrants who came from the upper-middle class could publish their literary works because they have the legacy of an English education acquired during the period of British control (26). Shankar also observes that the privilege of an English education allows

South Asian immigrant writers to appeal to American audiences more easily than other Asian American writers (26). However, Lahiri chose not to write in English anymore. Her decision to write in Italian indicates that she turned away from the world market of literature.[1] In addition, she could not write in Italian as freely as in English.

Lahiri's interest in Italian began in her college days, when she majored in Renaissance Studies. Thus, Italian is far from being a language that allowed her to fully depict the stories that she wanted to tell. Her decision to write in Italian nonetheless bore fruit, as *In altre parole* in 2015, which was published in Italy and later translated into English as *In Other Words* in the following year.[2] She spells out her anguish over having to use English, as it represented a compulsory language, necessary for her to survive in the United States. She likens Italian to "a new born" child, and English to "a hairy, smelly teenager" (119). Her linguistic distress over using English encourages us to assume that she never wants to approach her former primary language again.

Nonetheless, despite Lahiri's decision to avoid English, her old language plays a significant role in *In Other Words*. What is unique about the English translation of this book is that her original Italian text and its English translation appear in parallel, on facing pages. Even so, although she was capable of translating the Italian text into English by herself, she did not dare to

[1] As of 2015, there were about 527 million native speakers of English around the world, whereas only 67 million people spoke Italian as their native tongue (Rick Noack and Lazaro Gamio).

[2] Hereafter, I call the original Italian version *In altre parole*, and the English translation *In Other Words*.

do so. Concerning her decision not to translate it, she recounts that she did not want her Italian to merge with her old language:

> One day I was explaining to [an Italian writer Francesca Marciano] why I was opposed to translating myself even though I'm technically capable of doing so, and I said, "Everything in my life, from the very beginning, was and is and shall be some kind of mixture, some kind of hybrid, some kind of hyphenated something." . . . Now that I've been able to carve out this other reality—this Italian writing, thinking, crafting—I don't want those things to mix. I don't want the Italian and the English to merge. (Lahiri, Interview by Ann Goldstein 40)

She was afraid that her Italian might be infected by her old language if she herself translated it. But one question arises: Why did she dare to present the original Italian text alongside the English translation? The Italian text does not seem necessary for an English-speaking audience, as the English translation is enough for them.[3]

The parallel-text presentation brings about an effect that makes the work multi-layered. *In Other Words* thus should not be regarded simply as a translated work of a foreign text. In his review entitled "Jhumpa Lahiri's 'In Other Words' Fails to Translate," Charles Finch maintains that Lahiri reveals a "diminution in the excellence of her prose" and an "impoverishment of

[3] I have not read all the foreign translations of *In altre parole*, but as far as the Japanese translation is concerned, it does not have the original Italian text.

imagery" because of her lack of vocabulary and the clumsiness of her Italian. As the title of his review claims, we may criticize the book as a "failure." Nonetheless, *In Other Words* confronts us with Lahiri's ambitious attempt as a writer; the juxtaposition of Italian and English suspends us and Lahiri herself between the two languages. Lahiri once remarked on her fiction, "Almost all of my characters are translators, insofar as they must make sense of the foreign in order to survive" ("To Heaven without Dying"). Suspended between India and the United States, her characters try to translate the two cultures and invent a space in which to survive. *In Other Words* demonstrates that the narrator, namely Lahiri, does not have the authority as a writer either in the original text or in the English translation, as she is suspended between the two languages. By writing in her imperfect Italian, she risked surrendering her authority. If she had translated it into English herself, she could have preserved her authority in the translated work at least. In fact, she asked an outside translator, Ann Goldstein, to do it, which deprived her of all her authority. Like her fictional characters, she linguistically placed herself between the two spaces.

This linguistic suspension questions the presumption that Lahiri writes her own experiences. She describes *In Other Words* as a "linguistic autobiography" ("How Jhumpa Lahiri Learned to Write Again"). Pointing out the affinity between autobiography and American culture, G. Thomas Couser insists that autobiography as a literary genre rests on the privileged self:

> In English the pronoun that signifies the self is triply singular: in number, in capitalization, and in being the sole single-letter pronoun. Typographically identical with the Roman numeral *I* and phonemically identical with the word *eye*, it puns on the notion of a single point of view. These fortuitous features of our linguistic system reinforce our sense of the privileged status of the self, and the language seems to encourage us to conceive of the first person as unique, integral, and independent—like the pronoun that represents it.
>
> Autobiography is the literary form, and democracy the political form, most congruent with this idea of a unique and autonomous self. . . . The dramatic inscription of the idea of individual autonomy in the texts that defined and constituted America implied the legitimacy of autobiographical discourse (13).

Lahiri narrates her thoughts as "I" in *In Other Words*. However, relinquishing linguistic authority deprives her of "the privileged status of the self." Consequently, the presumption that she writes about "herself" collapses, which permits us to read the work instead as a postmodern fiction. In addition, the displacement of autobiography, the traditional literary genre of American literature, permits her to stand aside from the mainstream. Delving into *In Other Words* as a quasi-autobiography permeated by Lahiri's literary themes, such as the continual transit between two

ambivalent spaces indicated through depictions of nothingness, this chapter argues that she explores a new horizon of American literature by displacing her linguistic authority as a writer.

I. Linguistic Exile: Search for Imperfection and/but Freedom

The Italian language represents Lahiri's never-ending journey to fill a fated void within her. However, it is worth noting that she voluntarily seeks out this sense of lack. This section argues that Italian offers Lahiri an ambivalent sense of limitation and freedom, although in doing so she relinquishes her authority as a writer.

In the beginning of *In Other Words*, Lahiri compares learning Italian with swimming across a lake to the other side. She confesses that, although she had studied Italian for about two decades, English served as a guide to study the foreign language until she crossed the Atlantic to Italy: "For twenty years I studied Italian as if I were swimming along the edge of that lake. Always next to my dominant language, English" (Lahiri, *In Other Words* 5). Therefore, her decision to move to Italy indicates that she is swimming in the lake without the help of English. However, she also implies that this move will never end because she is still always looking toward the opposite side: "After a crossing, the known shore becomes the opposite side: here becomes there" (5). Her eye on the other side alludes to her perpetual sense of imperfection. She never feels satisfied with her linguistic travel and continues to swim between the two shores.

From the beginning of her writing career until the present, Lahiri has dealt with her sense of imperfection as one of the themes of her works. Having no language she can identify with, Lahiri has developed anguish over her deracinated state. In *In Other Words*, she depicts this state of belonging nowhere linguistically as being a "linguistic exile" (19). She recounts her relationship with Bengali and English, stating that Bengali, her mother tongue, was later replaced by English, which she describes as her "stepmother" (147). Therefore, even though she speaks English as if it is her native language and writes stories in English, she has never been able to identify with her adopted language. Estranged from English, her infatuation with Italian eventually led to her becoming "a linguistic pilgrim to Rome" (35).

Yet Lahiri's abandonment of English indicates that she has given up her authority as an author. There is no doubt that she can write in English much more smoothly than in Italian, and undoubtedly English gave her the authority to become an author. Her sense of imperfection as an Indian-American inspired her to write, and English, her linguistic "stepmother," served as a vehicle to convey her conflict, as she reveals: "Writing is my only way of absorbing and organizing life" (87). She asks herself what abandoning English means: "When I give up English, I give up my authority. I'm shaky rather than secure. . . . Before I became a writer, I lacked a clear, precise identity. It was through writing that I was able to feel fulfilled. . . . What does it mean, for a writer, to write without her own authority? Can I call myself an author, if I don't feel

authoritative?" (83). This remark asks how, without an authoritative language, a writer can be seen as an author; or, to turn it around: By writing in Italian, Lahiri can no longer be an author, but is now just a writer.

However, Lahiri craves the limitations that Italian brings about. A sense of imperfection had overwhelmed her since childhood, and is related to her hyphenated identity as an Indian-American. Lahiri associates her identity as an immigrant with language: "Because of my divided identity, or perhaps by disposition, I consider myself an incomplete person, in some way deficient. Maybe there is a linguistic reason—the lack of a language to identify with" (111). Lahiri's mother tongue is Bengali, which her parents spoke at home even after they moved to the United States. However, her mother tongue made her deracinated in the United States, as she insists: "When you live in a country where your own language is considered foreign, you can feel a continuous sense of estrangement" (19). Neither the Bengali that she spoke in her childhood, nor the English that she later learned, can be the language that satisfies Lahiri's uprooted identity. It is the imperfection that Italian brings with it that differs from the imperfection she used to feel. According to her, by writing in Italian she acquired "the freedom to be imperfect" (83). Writing in Italian allows her to voluntarily choose her linguistic imperfection. She still holds a sense of imperfection even when writing in Italian; as Lahiri comments on her identity, "a sense of imperfection has marked [her] life" (111). Nonetheless, writing in Italian lets her seek imperfection at will. This does not mean

that she can be identified with Italian; her suspended identity as an Indian-American remains. Still, it makes a critical difference that she succeeds in embracing imperfection by her own choice.

Lahiri's voluntary choice of Italian makes her different from other writers who write in non-native languages. It is noteworthy that she describes her own state as a "voluntary exile" (37). While she is conscious of canonical writers who gave up their native languages, she claims that she cannot belong among them:

> I feel estranged now from the Anglophone writers I am linguistically related to, and I'm necessarily different from Italian writers. When I think of authors who decided . . . to work in a foreign language, I don't feel I'm a legitimate member of that group, either. Becket lived in France for decades before writing in French, Nabokov had learned English as a child, Conrad spent a long time at sea, absorbing English, before becoming an Anglophone rather than a Polish writer. What I'm doing—daring to write in Italian after living in Italy for barely a year—is different, out of the ordinary, so I feel an even more intense solitude, almost another dimension of solitude. (191)

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "exile" means a "prolonged absence from one's native country or a place regarded as home, endured by force of circumstances or voluntarily undergone for some purpose." This definition implies that a person in exile has a home to return to. Scholars presuppose this definition when they discuss exile. For example, Edward W. Said

speaks of exile as "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native land, between the self and its true home. . . ." (*Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* 173). In contrast, Lahiri asserts from the beginning that she has no home: "Those who don't belong to any specific place can't, in fact, return to anywhere. The concepts of exile and return imply a point of origin, a homeland. Without a homeland and without a true mother tongue, I wander the world. . . . I am exiled even from the definition of exile" (*In Other Words* 133). Not being able to blend in with a group of exiles, she keeps on wandering.

Lahiri's immiscibility represents solitude that is unique in the tradition of American literature. It should not be overlooked that she willingly chose this "intense solitude" of exile. Her mentioning solitude invites us to remember that this was an essential concept in nineteenth-century American literature, as found in the works of Henry David Thoreau and Emily Dickinson, among others. Philip Koch carefully distinguishes solitude from loneliness: Loneliness reveals "the unpleasant feeling of longing for some kind of human interaction" (31), whereas solitude "does not entail any specific desires, feelings and reflection" (33). However, as Yoshiaki Furui points out, it has been reinvented along with changing historical contexts, such as technological evolution. He observes that the invention of communication media such as the telegraph in the nineteenth century gradually brought about a shift from solitude to loneliness (23). His argument permits us to consider that Lahiri reinvented the idea of solitude in twenty-first-century American

literature from the standpoint of the Indian diaspora. What she embraces now differs from loneliness in that she feels elated as a writer by achieving solitude: “I feel more than ever that I am a writer without a definitive language, without origin, without definition” (129, 131). Her solitude is closely related to the lack of “a definitive language.” Therefore, unlike nineteenth-century American authors who searched for social solitude, Lahiri achieved linguistic solitude. It is worth remarking that because she calls herself a writer, not an author; being adrift from her former dominant language, English, brings her a sense of fulfillment as she writes. By not belonging to a particular language, she voluntarily achieves the imperfection that “inspires invention, imagination, creativity”; furthermore, it revives her, as she writes, “The more I feel imperfect, the more I feel alive” (113). Through her imperfect language, Italian, she is inspired to write more keenly.

Thus, while this sense of imperfection makes Lahiri feel uprooted, it offers her a sense of belonging. She explains this paradoxical feeling: “I write on the margins, just as I’ve always lived on the margins of countries, of cultures. A peripheral zone where it’s impossible for me to feel rooted, but where I’m comfortable. The only zone where I think that, in some way, I belong” (93). Even before moving to Italy and starting to write in Italian, her deracinated status as an Indian-American consigned her to a peripheral zone of society. However, her sense of living on the edge has inspired her to write, and her sense of imperfection to organize her life, although it is

impossible to do so completely. Her original tool was English, her linguistic stepmother, which she was forced to accept to survive in American society. Unlike English, Italian now represents her voluntary choice. Linguistically, the language offers her less freedom for writing; nonetheless, she declares, “I prefer the limitations” (43). She can see wider landscapes because of the limitations, even though this sounds paradoxical: “I realize that in spite of the limitations the horizon is boundless” (43). Yeats criticized Tagore from a position of imperial superiority, which denied the “natives” in India the possibility of mastering the language of the suzerain state. Accordingly, Lahiri’s dismissing English spells out her attempt to explore a new literary horizon of American literature by daring to step aside from her authentic position in the literary world. To put it another way, her abandonment of authority discloses that she gave up her privileged positon as a writer who belongs to the imperial nation: The United States.

Lahiri’s deviation from English distinguished her from other Indian intellectuals in North America. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak represents a notable example of an Indian scholar who took advantage of English. Translating Jacques Derrida’s ground-breaking deconstructive text, *Of Grammatology* (1967), from French into English in 1976, shortly after immigrating from India, she built up an acclaimed positon in North American academia. It is worth remarking that she translated notable Bengali female author Mahasweta Devi’s short stories “Draupadi” and “Breast-Giver” into English in her *In Other Worlds* (1987) in order to introduce the works to an English-

speaking audience. In the "Translator's Forward," she notes that Devi adopted English words about war in the original text, insisting that English serves as a "heterogeneous world language" that trespasses on domestic class differences (185). She also admits that she faced a translator's problems about the translation of the "peculiar Bengali" of local tribals; as she remarks: "[W]e educated Bengalis have the same racist attitude toward it as the late Peter Sellers had toward our English. It would have been embarrassing to have used some version of the language of D. H. Lawrence's 'common people' or Faulkner's blacks" (186). Spivak fully understands the advantage of English. Although Lahiri's *In Other Words* has a similar title to Spivak's *In Other Worlds*, their attitudes toward English sharply contrast. Lahiri's rejection of English alludes to her deviation from the tradition of Indian literary intellectuals who took advantage of English as a world language.

II. Autobiographical Fiction?: Lahiri's Ontological Ambivalence

Lahiri wrote two short stories in *In Other Words*: "The Exchange" and "Half-Light." "The Exchange" vividly illustrates her sense of imperfection. This story revolves around a female translator who travels alone in a foreign country where she cannot speak the language. This is the first story that Lahiri wrote in Italian. The story is set in an anonymous city. While taking shelter from the rain under the roof of a building, the translator sees women enter an apartment across

the street to join a party. Following them inside the apartment, she sees a fashion designer who owns it. Like the other women, the translator changes into clothes made by the designer. After the party, she finds her black sweater missing. Persuaded by the designer, who asserts that no other person at the party wore a black sweater, the translator brings home someone else's black sweater. The next day, when she wears it, she no longer wants to find the missing one, now tempted to feel that she has become another person.

This short story seems to be autobiographical fiction because it indicates Lahiri's linguistic anguish; however, her pessimistic view differs from the tradition of optimistic American autobiography. Like Lahiri, the protagonist embraces a sense of imperfection: "There was a woman, a translator, who wanted to be another person. . . . She considered herself imperfect, like the first draft of a book. She wanted to produce another version of herself, in the same way that she could transform a text from one language into another" (Lahiri, *In Other Words* 67). The protagonist's identification of herself as "the first draft of a book" reminds us of Benjamin Franklin, who associated life as a rewritable manuscript in his autobiography by using a term "Errata" three times in order to express the mistakes he made in his youth (*The Autobiography* 16, 27, 34). From his earlier days, Franklin linked life with an edition of a book in which he could correct his mistakes. His own mock epitaph is noteworthy in that it implies that he considered it possible to amend these "errata" as the author of his life:

The Body of

B. Franklin,

Printer;

Like the Cover of an old Book,

Its Contents torn out,

And stript of its Lettering and Gilding,

Lies here, Food for Worms.

But the Work shall not be wholly lost:

For it will, as he believ'd, appear once more,

In a new & more perfect Edition,

Corrected and amended

By the Author.

He was born Jan. 6. 1706

Died 17 ("Franklin's Epitaph, 1728" 226)

This epitaph discloses that he believed in an independent self who could correct and amend his life like an early edition of a book, revised by the author in order to make it "more perfect." Unlike Franklin, however, Lahiri continues to embrace her sense of imperfection because of her fated

inauthenticity, which prevents her from "correcting" her life. Instead, she has to keep moving from one imperfection to another.

In this sense, defining herself as a translator establishes Lahiri's status, continually in transit between linguistic shores, a movement which never leads her to a final destination. She cannot help but pay attention to raindrops: "She thought of the water's eternal journey, falling from the clouds, penetrating the earth, filling the rivers, arriving, finally at the sea" (71). Although she remarks that the water arrives at the sea at last, it will evaporate and become part of the clouds again, which signifies Lahiri's eternal linguistic pilgrimage.

In addition, the short story marks out the void that Lahiri carries within her. Concerning the black sweater, she regards it as an allegory of language. Her remark captures well her relationship with language. Having given up her familiar language, English, she acquires a new language, Italian, which makes her feel "no revulsion" anymore (81), although she felt it to be unsuitable at first. With the new language, she becomes "another" (81). Lahiri's own interpretation may be right. However, the black sweater represents something more critical as well. Namely, it indicates the void that keeps haunting her even though she adopts another language. From the beginning of her life, the two languages, Bengali and English, have made her "remain suspended, torn between the two" (149). She confesses that the torn-apart state causes her to have the sense of a void: "All my life I've tried to get away from the void of my origin" (169). Therefore, as a means to flee,

she writes in Italian in order to achieve a "linguistic metamorphosis" (165). Yet, another void awaits her. She likens learning Italian to the third point of a triangle, which is "a frame" that contains a mirror. She expresses her fear that the mirror reflects the void: "I think that not being able to see a specific image in the frame is the torment of my life. The absence of the image I was seeking distresses me. I'm afraid that the mirror reflects only a void, that it reflects nothing" (159). The nothingness in the mirror foregrounds Lahiri's fatal ambivalence, caught between presence and absence.

The context in which she mentions "nothing" in "The Exchange" is noteworthy. When the translator misses her black sweater, the owner asks her what clothes she decides to wear; she answers, "Nothing. I'm missing a sweater, my own" (75). This answer reveals her unwillingness to wear the designer's clothes. However, this "nothing" (*niente*) represents the fateful void that represents her ontological ambivalence. What kind of person can wear a garment embodying ambivalence? The answer is: No one. Therefore, the owner tells the translator: "No one was wearing a black sweater today. Only you" (79). This no one (*nessuna*) seems to be a different person from "you," the translator. However, Lahiri's usage of "no one," implying both presence and absence, encourages us to speculate that the no one who wears the sweater is the translator. As far as the sweater represents language, the new black sweater, connoting Italian, suggests that Lahiri has acquired a new identity. While the void makes her feel imperfect, it drives her to write,

as she spells out: “From that void, from all that uncertainty, comes the creative impulse. The impulse to fill the frame” (159). In the meantime, Italian brings about another void because it never endorses her authority. Therefore, even though the translator wears another sweater, she still carries a void within her. Thus, Lahiri admits that the void marks her life, remarking, “I come from the void, from that uncertainty. I think that the void is my origin and also my destiny” (159).[4]

The ambivalence that comes from Lahiri’s void permeates *In Other Words*. As for her creativity, Lahiri quotes the words of the Italian writer Natalia Ginzburg, “I have invented nothing” (“*Non ho inventato niente*”) (213). Meanwhile, she implies the ambivalence of her creativity: “And yet, from another point of view, I have invented everything. Writing in a different language means starting from zero. It comes from a void, and so every sentence seems to have emerged from nothingness” (213). It should not be overlooked that she juxtaposes “a void” and “nothingness” (*nulla*), because the void represents ontological liminality. Therefore, when Lahiri mentions nothing, it does not oppose everything; on the contrary, she considers absence and presence as interchangeable, as she later juxtaposes “nowhere” and “everywhere”: “. . . I hope every book in the world belongs to everyone, or to no one, nowhere” (231). She recognizes that she has “an ambivalent relationship” with *In Other Words* because while she is proud of the book,

[4] The Beatles’ influence on Lahiri may remind us of their psychedelic song “Tomorrow Never Knows.” John Lennon sings, “Lay down all thoughts, surrender to the void / It is shining, it is shining.”

she fears that “it’s a false book” due to her imperfect Italian (223). Yet this ambivalence foregrounds the essence of Lahiri’s literature, and she expresses her ambivalent state: “I feel more centered even if I’m adrift. I feel more at home, in spite of the discomfort” (229). This ambivalence comes from Lahiri’s nothingness, repeatedly represented as a void. As already shown, she remarks that the void is her origin and destiny; even though she switches languages from English to Italian, another void besets her. However, the critical difference from writing in English is that she pursues a void at will by writing in Italian.

III. Stepping into a Fictional World: An Inauthentic Writer as a Fictional Character

The short story “The Exchange” seems set apart from the other parts of the book because while the other essays are autobiographical, it is a fiction. However, while she remarks, “I hate analyzing what I write” (65), Lahiri admits that the black sweater represents language (65). Given that Lahiri does not have authority, even as the creator of the book, her commentary on the story does not represent an authoritative opinion. Rather, in a text in which the boundary between reality and unreality is unclear, Lahiri’s commentary drags her into the fictional world. Roland Barthes points out that, if an author appears in her/his text, she/he loses privilege over her/his fictional characters:

> It is not that the Author may not “come back” in the Text, in his text, but he then does so as a “guest.” If he is a novelist, he is inscribed in the novel like one of his characters,

> figured in the carpet; no longer privileged, paternal, aletheological, his inscription is ludic. He becomes, as it were, a paper-author: his life is no longer the origin of his fictions but a fiction contributing to his work; there is a reversion of the work on to the life (and no longer the contrary). . . . The word "bio-graphy" re-acquires a strong, etymological sense, at the same time as the sincerity of the enunciation—veritable "cross" borne by literary morality—becomes a false problem: the *I* which writes the text, it too, is never more than a paper-*I*. (*Image Music Text* 161)

By questioning the authority of the author, Barthes implies that, once an author appears in her/his fiction, the relation between her/him and her/his characters becomes equal. In Lahiri's case, however, she does not have authority in *In Other Words* from the beginning, as her state of linguistic exile indicates. Her suspended authority makes it questionable whether or not the book revolves around Lahiri's real experiences and thoughts no matter how autobiographical they look, making the distinction between non-fiction and fiction ambiguous. Thus, her commentary on her fiction merges the "I"—the narrator of the autobiography—with "she"—the protagonist of the story. The merging of the first person and the third person overturns the presumption that Lahiri, as the narrator, writes the book basically as a nonfiction except for the two short stories.[5] Instead,

[5] As for the other story, "Half-Light," told by the third-person narrator, it is seamlessly positioned after an "autobiographical" essay without any comments.

her meta-commentary on the fictional piece implies that she has appeared as a fictional character, "a paper-*I*," in the words of Barthes, from the beginning.

Therefore, Lahiri's linguistic imperfection even makes her commentary from the standpoint of an omniscient narrator unreliable. Mark Seltzer gives us insightful suggestions on the self-reference. He calls a self-reporting world "the official world," which represents "a self-inciting, self-legislating, and self-depictive form of life" (3). He claims that the act and its registration are continuously interchanged in the official world (33). Lahiri demonstrates self-depiction through the act of writing and its registration through the commentary on the writing. However, her relinquishment of authority as a writer makes the self-reporting impossible because she does not have an "official" language that registers her own act. That is, her linguistic illegitimacy displaces her from the omniscient position. This displacement brings about the ambiguous distinction between the first-person narrator of the autobiography and the third-person protagonist of the fiction. To be more precise, this ambiguity implies the possibility that the first-person narrator without an authentic language is a fictional character from the beginning.

Linguistic inauthenticity displaces the first-person narrator, Lahiri, from the real world. In consequence, Italian liberates her from being rooted in a specific soil:

> I continue, as a writer, to seek the truth, but I don't give the same weight to factual truth. In Italian I'm moving toward abstraction. The places are undefined, the characters so

> far nameless, without a particular cultural identity. The result, I think, is writing that is freed in certain ways from the concrete world. . . . Writing in Italian, I feel that my feet are no longer on the ground. (*In Other Words* 221)

Although it seems that she writes autobiographical essays, she shows little interest in factual truth. When she mentions "the characters," they may be the characters of the two short stories in the book; however, her liberation from the concrete world suggests that they include the narrator, Lahiri. She presents herself as a nameless character who moves from a concrete world to an abstract one. Leaving the real world, she does not feel distressed over her uprooted state, but willingly accepts it.

This suspended space collapses the temporality that flows from the past to the future. Lahiri associates this temporal sense with an ancient Italian deity: "I think of two-faced Janus. The ancient god of the threshold, of beginnings and endings. He represents a moment of transition" (39). As long as English and Italian suggest the past and the future respectively for Lahiri, she is in the middle of a linguistic transition, an ambivalence to which Janus alludes. This transitional state puts her in a liminal time that obscures the past and the future, allowing her to be liberated from the reality dominated by horizontal temporality.

Lahiri also crosses spatial borders through the ambivalence that she acquires. Lahiri indicates that her creativity comes from this ambivalent space. She reveals that her aspiration to

write in Italian comes from nowhere: “I write in a terrible, embarrassing Italian, full of mistakes. Without correcting, without a dictionary, by instinct alone. I grope my way, like a child, like a semiliterate. I am ashamed of writing like this. I don’t understand this mysterious impulse, which emerges out of nowhere” (55). Her creativity comes from nowhere (*nulla*), ending up with the ambivalence between presence and absence. As she collapses the temporal distinction between past and future, she crosses the spatial border by acquiring a language imperfectly.

Therefore, although Lahiri describes *In Other Words* as a “linguistic autobiography,” her writing shows deviation from the real world. That is, her linguistic abandonment of authority makes us readers feel suspended between the real and the unreal worlds. Thus, she illustrates that she is heading toward the nothingness that blurs the boundary between reality and unreality:

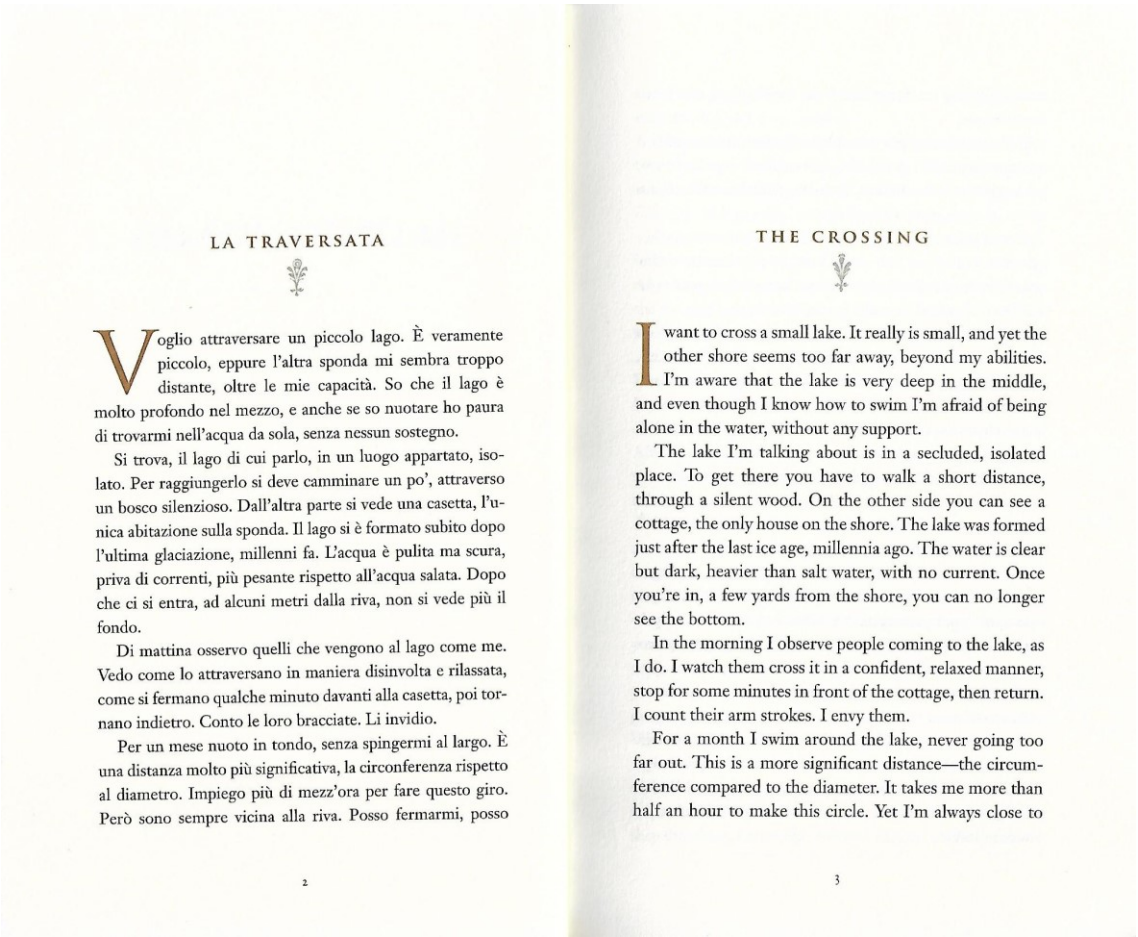
> The step that I’m taking seems like a leap into the void, an inversion of myself. Like the reflections of the buildings that tremble on the surface of the Grand Canal, my writing in Italian is something impalpable. Nebulous, like the fog. I’m afraid that the bridge between me and Italian doesn’t, ultimately, exist. That it will remain, at best, a chimera. (101)

Her words suggest that she never reaches her destination, perfect Italian, although she might achieve the linguistic conflation of English and Italian represented by a chimera, a mythical

animal formed from parts of various animals; that is, as a linguistic exile, she is permanently in transit between English and Italian.

The physical format of *In Other Words* represents Lahiri's linguistic suspension. What is extraordinary in this book is that it has her original Italian text on the left-hand pages (even-numbered pages) and the English translation on the right-hand pages (odd-numbered pages) (see fig. 1). As for the reason why she did not do the translation herself, she explains that, while she understands that a translation is a wonderful encounter between two languages, two texts, and two writers, she believes that "Translating myself, from a language in which I am still a novice, isn't the same thing. . . . It seems destructive rather than creative, almost a suicide" (121). The experimental format in which Italian and English appear in parallel reminds us of the postmodernist author Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing* (1976), which sets the French text on a left-hand page and the English translation on a right-hand page without page numbers. In the case of Federman, however, French is his native language, because he was born in France, although he emigrated to the United States in his late teens. Therefore, he himself wrote both the French and English texts in *Double or Nothing*. On the top of the two pages, he writes: "This unnumbered double column page can be read anytime either in French or in English totally or partially or simultaneously at the readers' discretion" (n.pag.). The possibility of reading the French text and the English one indicates that Federman possesses authority over both languages.

Meanwhile, although Lahiri's *In Other Words* also sets Italian and English on opposite sides, neither of them is a native language for Lahiri. And by abandoning her authority over the whole book she generates a liminal space, not only figuratively but physically. That is, the gap that we see between the Italian and the English texts physically implies Lahiri's nothingness. This unique format induces us to speculate that Lahiri tries to deviate away from a conventional realistic form of writing.



LA TRAVERSATA

Voglio attraversare un piccolo lago. È veramente piccolo, eppure l'altra sponda mi sembra troppo distante, oltre le mie capacità. So che il lago è molto profondo nel mezzo, e anche se so nuotare ho paura di trovarmi nell'acqua da sola, senza nessun sostegno.

Si trova, il lago di cui parlo, in un luogo appartato, isolato. Per raggiungerlo si deve camminare un po', attraverso un bosco silenzioso. Dall'altra parte si vede una casetta, l'unica abitazione sulla sponda. Il lago si è formato subito dopo l'ultima glaciazione, millenni fa. L'acqua è pulita ma scura, priva di correnti, più pesante rispetto all'acqua salata. Dopo che ci si entra, ad alcuni metri dalla riva, non si vede più il fondo.

Di mattina osservo quelli che vengono al lago come me. Vedo come lo attraversano in maniera disinvolta e rilassata, come si fermano qualche minuto davanti alla casetta, poi tornano indietro. Conto le loro bracciate. Li invidio.

Per un mese nuoto in tondo, senza spingermi al largo. È una distanza molto più significativa, la circonferenza rispetto al diametro. Impiego più di mezz'ora per fare questo giro. Però sono sempre vicina alla riva. Posso fermarmi, posso

2

THE CROSSING

I want to cross a small lake. It really is small, and yet the other shore seems too far away, beyond my abilities. I'm aware that the lake is very deep in the middle, and even though I know how to swim I'm afraid of being alone in the water, without any support.

The lake I'm talking about is in a secluded, isolated place. To get there you have to walk a short distance, through a silent wood. On the other side you can see a cottage, the only house on the shore. The lake was formed just after the last ice age, millennia ago. The water is clear but dark, heavier than salt water, with no current. Once you're in, a few yards from the shore, you can no longer see the bottom.

In the morning I observe people coming to the lake, as I do. I watch them cross it in a confident, relaxed manner, stop for some minutes in front of the cottage, then return. I count their arm strokes. I envy them.

For a month I swim around the lake, never going too far out. This is a more significant distance—the circumference compared to the diameter. It takes me more than half an hour to make this circle. Yet I'm always close to

3

Fig. 1. The juxtaposition of Italian (left) and English (right) of *In Other Words*

Addressing postmodernist fiction, Brian McHale gives us an insightful observation on the interaction between a book as a material object and the written word:

> The invention of printing embedded the word in *space*. . . . While a manuscript could still be regarded as the record of an oral performance, which unfolds in time, a book was a *thing*, and its material qualities and physical dimensions inevitably interacted with the word. Far from exploiting this interaction, however, fiction in the realist tradition has sought to suppress or neutralize it. (181; italics original)

Lahiri is likely to be categorized as a realist writer, as shown in the previous chapters. At first glance, *In Other Words* reads as an "autobiography," as Lahiri herself called it. Nonetheless, what Lahiri demonstrates here is far from realistic; on the contrary, as a writer without authority, she invents a space in which she is not identified with either language. As argued in Chapter 2, Lahiri used a natural disaster in "Hema and Kaushik" as an objective correlative. Now that she presents linguistic suspension by using the double column, spacing functions as the objective correlative of a destabilized fictional ontology. Given her relinquishing of authority, *In Other Words* reveals that Lahiri is less a realist than a postmodernist.

The world without an authoritative language connotes fantasy rather than reality. Her immersion in Italian suggests "a leap into the void" and "an inversion of [her]self" (Lahiri, *In*

Other Words 101), which indicates the subversion of her sense of reality. Lahiri acknowledges the significance of the third language:

> The arrival of Italian, the third point on my linguistic journey, creates a triangle. It creates a shape rather than a straight line. A triangle is a complex structure, a dynamic figure. The third point changes the dynamic of that quarrelsome old couple [Bengali and English]. I am the child of those unhappy points, but the third does not come from them. It comes from my desire, my labor. It comes from me. (153)

Lahiri's reference to the third point may remind us of Homi K. Bhabha's argument about "the third space." It is notable that he refers to authority when he discusses the hybridity of two cultures, remarking that the third space "displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom" ("The Third Space" 211). He asserts that the third space is generated as a result of the merging of two cultures. However, as Lahiri remarks, Italian is completely set apart from either Bengali or English for her. Therefore, her third space, represented by her inauthentic Italian, does not imply the hybridity of the two languages. In addition, Bhabha's argument about authority based on hybridity is worth considering, as Lahiri rejects authority as a writer. The world depicted by the Italian language as the third space differs from Bhabha's third space in that it does not have authority, as it does not come from the cultural hybridity of India and the United States. Rather,

the Italy portrayed without authority foregrounds the fragile reality into which the apparitional sphere of unreality transgresses.

Thus, Lahiri re-creates herself as a fictional character in an illusionary world throughout *In Other Words*. Her remark at the end of the book is highly indicative: "In this book I am the protagonist for the first time. There is not even a hint of another. I appear on the page in the first person, and speak frankly myself" (Lahiri, *In Other Words* 217). It is certain that the "I" is the protagonist. Yet, as long as Lahiri's inauthentic language makes it impossible to "speak frankly herself," she cannot prove that the "I," the narrator, refers to Lahiri, the writer. Given that the Italy portrayed in the book appears as an illusion, the protagonist also represents a fictional character in it. Even though Lahiri writes about herself, the pronoun "I" flees from her as a result of linguistic suspension. Therefore, she is also immersed in Italy as a fantasy.

Even before moving to Rome, Lahiri had already been conscious of Italy in her works. Particularly, *The Namesake* is outstanding in that it foregrounds the cultural inauthenticity that implies uprooted Indian-Americans. What is noteworthy is that Lahiri illustrates Italy as a never-reachable destination—namely, a fantasy—for them. She depicts Italy as an imaginary space without authenticity. Lahiri's reference to the resemblance between India and Italy suggests that the latter is a space reimagined by deracinated Indian-Americans. As for Gogol's looks, Maxine's mother Lydia says, "You could be Italian" (*The Namesake* 134). Although her comment sounds

superficial, it cannot be ignored from the standpoint of Lahiri's interest in Italian culture; this remark indicates Lahiri's affinity for Italians. Yet this superficial resemblance does not indicate an actual connection between the two countries. When Gogol describes Calcutta as having "a lot of lovely Victorian architecture left over from the British. But most of it's decaying" (134), Maxine's father Gerald says, "That sounds like Venice" (135). Again, Lahiri mentions the superficial resemblance between Italy and India, but Gogol objects, saying, "Only during monsoons. That's when the streets flood. I guess that's the closest it comes to resembling Venice" (135). In addition, Venice is only an imagined place for Gogol because he has never visited it. He draws similarities between the two cities based on his memory of going to Calcutta in his teens. As discussed in Chapter 1, Gogol and his family behave like tourists in India. Taking into consideration this fact, we can see that Gogol notes the similarities between Venice and Calcutta through the imagination of a deracinated immigrant.

Therefore, in *The Namesake*, Italy serves as a fantasy for members of an uprooted diaspora. After breaking up with Maxine, Gogol marries his childhood friend Moushumi, who is from Bengal. His marriage to an Indian-American woman seems to represent harmony at first, as both of them share experiences as Indian immigrants. However, their relationship gradually fails because his wife has an affair with another man. Ignorant of the affair, Gogol comes up with the idea of going on a trip to Italy with Moushumi: "A trip together, to a place neither of them has

been—maybe that's what he and Moushumi need. . . . He thinks of Italy, Venice, the trip he will begin to plan. Maybe it's a sign that they are meant to go there. Wasn't the Piazza San Marco famous for its pigeons?" (273). Gogol's knowledge of Venice is limited to the guidebook. Italy functions as an illusionary space in which he expects to rekindle his relationship with Moushumi. However, in the end they do not go there together because he finds out about her affair. Consequently, after the divorce, Gogol goes to Venice alone. His visit to the city marks out the sense of being lost: "He lost himself among the darkened narrow streets, crossing countless tiny bridges, discovering deserted squares, . . . sketching the facades of pink and green palaces and churches, unable ever to retrace his steps" (283). The impossibility of retracing his steps discloses that, being a rootless Indian-American, Gogol has immersed himself in an illusionary space. Rather than depict it realistically, Lahiri portrays Italy as a fantasy for the deracinated Indian-American.

Although *In Other Words* seems to be an autobiography, then, it presents Italy as an illusionary place, as *The Namesake* does. Lahiri's remark about learning Italian implies that the whole book is fiction. Lahiri likens learning a foreign language to creating fiction: "The effort of making the language mine, of possessing it, has a strong resemblance to a creative process—mysterious, illogical. But the possession is not authentic: it, too, is a sort of fiction" (213). Here she reveals that the whole book presents a fictional world because it is thoroughly about Lahiri's

attempt to grasp Italian. Therefore, insofar as the space depicted through Lahiri's inauthentic language serves as a fictional world, the book demonstrates a multilayered composition in which a fiction is written about creating fiction. As for the two stories, "The Exchange" and "Half-Light," they seem set apart from the other essays because they are written from the perspective of a third-person narrator; in fact, these fictions are the parts of the fictional whole, which totally undermines the presumption that *In Other Words* is an autobiography. The juxtaposition of English and Italian reveals Lahiri as a fictional, or inauthentic, character who is suspended between the two languages. She states that her Italian is inauthentic; however, the two columns physically show that she does not belong to either language. The physical structure of the book itself foregrounds the fictional world.

Furthermore, the displacement of the literary form of autobiography through linguistic inauthenticity shakes American autonomy. Couser points to the significant relation between American autobiography and democracy in the era of U.S. independence: "[B]oth terms [autobiography and democracy] gained currency in English in the period following the political disturbances of the late eighteenth century, and it is more than coincidence that America achieved its independence" (13). That is, autobiography represents not only a literary genre but also the political autonomy of the United States. Writing *In Other Words* as a quasi-autobiography without authority permits Lahiri to displace American selfhood. Although considered to be one of the

most influential contemporary American writers, she stepped off from “the privileged status of the self” by her own will. She questions the geographical and linguistic frameworks of the United States and of American literature by displacing the authentic “self,” represented by “I,” seen through the eye of a linguistic exile.

Conclusion

Lahiri called *In Other Words* a linguistic autobiography. Given the tradition of autobiography in American literature, the book implies her ambitious attempt to displace the authority that has traditionally endorsed the American self since independence. Yet, even though it appears to be an autobiography, Lahiri’s *In Other Words* lacks authority because it does not have an authentic language. Rather, it illustrates a fictional world. In *The Namesake*, Lahiri presents Italy as a fantasy for Indian-Americans who are suspended between India and the United States, as the landscapes of Italy are compared with India as depicted from a touristic viewpoint. To put it another way, she describes Italy as the representation of cultural inauthenticity. It offers a third choice for uprooted Indian-Americans; however, it never offers them a soil in which to lay down their roots.

Therefore, Lahiri moved to Italy not merely because of a longing for the country. She not only left behind the United States, she also relinquished her authoritative language as an author,

English, by switching to Italian. It might seem reckless of her to have given up English and written in Italian, which might have led to the abandonment of her professional career as an author. Italian does not offer her authority, with the result that she became a writer but could no longer be an author. Nonetheless, she took the chance to escape from her old language. Italian also gave her a sense of imperfection because linguistically it limited her freedom as a writer. Yet she chose to be imperfect. As an immigrant deracinated from the soils of India and the United States, she could not have a homeland where she could be rooted, as the lack of a language with which she can be identified implies. However, this linguistic solitude enabled her to achieve voluntary inauthenticity. In his insightful argument about the Indian diaspora, Bhabha suggests inventing a "third space" between India and their new soil as a strategy so that the diaspora can acquire cultural authority as a result of merging the two. However, in Lahiri's case, she rejected the merging of the old culture and the new one, represented by English and Italian respectively. She does not aspire to authority; instead, she chooses to write in a language that is inauthentic for her.

Consequently, inauthentic language makes it impossible for Lahiri to represent the authentic world. She writes about her thoughts and experiences of learning Italian and living in Italy. However, no matter how real the writing seems, as long as her possession of the language is "a fiction," as she admits, then the world portrayed by that language must be a fiction as well. The Italy that she portrays in *The Namesake* is also fictional because of the displacement of

cultural images; still, the language that depicts the fictional space, English, does at least indicate authority, even though she was forced to learn it. To put it simply, the inauthenticity represented in *The Namesake* is perpetually imperfect. This linguistic inauthenticity reveals that, unlike Franklin, who believed that he could make himself "more perfect" as the author of his life, Lahiri always tries to make the imperfection of herself more imperfect.

In Other Words exposes Lahiri's inauthentic world more vividly than the original, *In altre parole*. Although she did not have to reveal her original Italian text to English readers, she dared to do so by putting the two texts in parallel. The physical structure of juxtaposing the Italian original and the English translation spelled out her inauthenticity in both Italian and English. Abandoning English and deciding not to translate her Italian text into English herself demonstrate her aspiration to make her inauthenticity even more inauthentic. As a result, the book does not have an author. *In altre parole* indicates Lahiri's linguistic inauthenticity; *In Other Words* emphasizes this more vividly, because it physically reveals a void that suggests her linguistic suspension of authority. In this inauthentic world, the narrator of the book, namely Lahiri, loses the credit of being a "real" writer. The readers of the book presume that the narrative revolves around Lahiri's true stories; however, given that the languages that describe them are inauthentic, readers do not have any certainty about its contents. It is remarkable that the narrator makes a meta-commentary on a "fictional" short story in the book, as this demonstrates that the first-

person narrator exists in a fantasy, which converts the whole book into a fiction. That is, Lahiri presents herself as a fictional character, as she remarks that she is the protagonist of the book. In this postmodern way, she succeeds in creating a more completely inauthentic world.

Though some critics call *In Other Words* a failure, it actually demonstrates a consistent theme of Lahiri's literature—the search for a soil for the Indian diaspora, and one in which the protagonist, a.k.a. Jhumpa Lahiri, can be settled. Throughout her literary career, she has dealt with the distress of Indian immigrants over their deracinated status. *In Other Words* is no exception. Yeats harshly criticized Tagore by claiming that it is impossible to master a non-native language. However, Lahiri takes advantage of the impossibility of mastering a language to liberate herself from the imperialistic standpoint of an American writer. As a consequence, *In Other Words* spells out her ambitious attempt to invent a space for the Indian diaspora. But, rather than seek out an authentic space for the diaspora, she re-presents imperfection and inauthenticity as the hallmark of the uprooted. She shows that the diaspora can even give up their authority by portraying an inauthentic world represented as a void, which, she admits, is her own origin and destination. *In Other Words* is about the protagonist's process of learning Italian, which connotes her never-ending linguistic pilgrimage. Being on an eternal journey, she will never achieve authority. Nonetheless, the book shows that perpetual imperfection can be the state that the diaspora willingly accept. It is easy to criticize her attempt as a failure. However, it is undeniable that Lahiri

cultivated a new ground for the Indian diaspora by risking her literary career. Her abandonment of authority in the postmodernist quasi-autobiography displaces not only the linguistic and geographic boundaries of American literature, but also the American autonomous self that has marked American culture.

Epilogue

Although regarded as one of the most influential American writers, Jhumpa Lahiri has challenged the geographic and linguistic boundaries of American literature in her writing. In 2001, the first year of the twenty-first century, Wai Chee Dimock insightfully observed that territorial boundaries no longer define national literatures: "We need to stop assuming a one-to-one correspondence between the geographic origins of a text and its evolving radius of literary action. We need to stop thinking of national literatures as the linguistic equivalents of territorial maps" ("Literature for the Planet" 175). Lahiri presents works that break down geographical boundaries. Furthermore, her linguistic attempts to do so, demonstrated in *In Other Words*, betray "the linguistic equivalents of territorial maps," in the words of Dimock. In doing so, she provokes us to question presumptions about American literature, such as English being its primary language or the United States its geographical framework.

After living in Rome for about three years with her family, Lahiri came back to the United States in 2015 in order to teach creative writing and translation at Princeton University. Leaving Italy felt like "a part of me dying, that our life was dying, that what we had built was dying" for her (Lahiri, "How Jhumpa Lahiri Learned to Write Again"); however, her passionate relationship with Italian has never ended. While teaching at the university, she devoted herself to translations

of the works of an Italian author, Domenico Starnone, *Lacci* (2014) and *Scherzetto* (2016), into English (translated as *Ties* (2017) and *Trick* (2018) respectively). Yet, although it seems as though she has turned her back on creative work, this is not so; in fact, translation has stimulated her creativity. On her translations of Starnone's novels, she explained:

> [E]ven though I'm not writing as much in this phase, I know that the translation is feeding my creative work. Right now, I feel like my creative project is translation. It's just constant reading and rereading, on such a deep level. If you're reading anything at that depth, it brings this deep nourishment, linguistically and technically. ("The Tragedy of Going Back")

Even while engaging in translation, then, Lahiri always keeps in mind her literary theme of searching for a homeland, remarking that the two books by Starnone suggest the idea of "going home" for her ("The Tragedy of Going Back"). In the meantime, she has remarked that she is unlikely to write a fiction about Indian immigrants in the United States. After the publication of *In Other Words*, she clearly stated, "I'm supposed to be writing another novel in English about Indian Americans. I haven't done that. I may never do that again" ("How Jhumpa Lahiri Learned to Write Again"). Yet, although she is no longer tempted to deal with the subject of Indian immigrants, her remark on Starnone's works implies that she continues to pay attention to a space in which the displaced feel they belong.

Thus, Lahiri's short story "The Boundary," published in the January 29, 2018 issue of the *New Yorker*, addresses this theme as well as covers her previous works. As is the case with her previous book, *In Other Words*, she originally wrote the piece in Italian. However, what distinguishes the short story from *In Other Words* is that she herself translated it into English rather than asked an outside translator. At the end of the story there is a note: "Translated, from the Italian, by the author" (Lahiri, "The Boundary" 57). As argued in Chapter 4, at the time when she was writing *In Other Words*, Lahiri doubted whether she could be called an author once she gave up writing in her authoritative language, English. She refused to translate her Italian into English by herself because she hated to merge the two languages. Yet, despite making this decision in the past, she now dared to be both the creator and the translator of her work, explaining as follows:

> I translated a very short story about a year and a half ago from Italian to English. And the process was less traumatic than when I first tried to translate myself almost five years ago, when the experiment of writing in Italian had barely gotten under way. As my written Italian takes root and solidifies, it becomes easier to assess objectively and, as a result, to step in and out of it. Translating myself no longer feels like a step backward, like undoing the great labor of the original or erasing it away. ("Jhumpa Lahiri on Writing in Italian")

What enabled her to translate her own work? It is quite possible that her Italian has much improved since she published *In Other Words*. Indeed, she confessed that she felt confident in her Italian at a certain point while living in Italy:

> In Rome, at some point, during a dinner. Before saying anything I used to build the entire phrase in my head, from beginning to end, and then speak. Suddenly, that night, I stopped doing it. And that is the critical, fundamental step: it means that you are finally immersed in the new language. You think in Italian, without noticing. From that moment on, there was a significant step. ("What Am I Trying to Leave Behind?").

Thinking in Italian without noticing it definitely suggests taking "a significant step" towards mastering a foreign language; still, it is hard to say that her Italian became superior to her English in fluency, given that English had initially signified her as an author. Therefore, her own translation from Italian into English may suggest that she had taken her authority back. In this regard, the *New Yorker*'s editorial note, "Translated, from the Italian, by the *author*" (italics mine), makes sense.

Nonetheless, as long as her current primary language, Italian, does not give her authority, the translated language also cannot be authoritative, even though the creator herself translated it. In short, by translating "The Boundary" by herself, she acquired the ambivalent position of author and/but non-author. While reading the story, we understand that the author exists behind it. In the

meantime, supposing the lost authority of the original language, we cannot help but ask, “Where is the author?”

In Other Words also conceals the author by not presenting an authoritative language. However, the presence of an outside translator implies that Lahiri dared not translate her Italian texts precisely because she recognized that she had authority over the English. Meanwhile, “The Boundary” discloses the linguistic ambivalence that, while English continues to provide her with authority, at the same time it does *not* offer it to her as long as the story’s core language, Italian, is not authoritative. Accordingly, like the case of *In Other Words*, in which she thoroughly erased her authority by giving up any authoritative language, the short story reveals Lahiri’s ontological ambivalence as the author. She aptly observed on living in Rome, “Here, I have felt free and invisible” (“Why Pulitzer Prize Winner Jhumpa Lahiri Quit the US for Italy”). She appeared to enjoy hiding herself from the world that she had created as its author, stating, “I waited a very long time to really go away from the world I knew”; living an invisible existence, she felt “a sense of belonging” (“Why Pulitzer Prize Winner Jhumpa Lahiri Quit the US for Italy”). In other words, she acquired anonymity by translating her own Italian into English. The anonymity and invisibility represent Lahiri’s ambivalent state in “The Boundary”: While she exists as an author, she does not.

As if representing her invisibility, anonymities fill “The Boundary.” Lahiri does not give names to all the characters and places in the story. Readers might assume that the story is set in Italy if they knew that she lived there. In fact, it reflects her own experience in Italy of renting a summer house in Capalbio in the Tuscany region in 2014 (“Jhumpa Lahiri on Writing in Italian”). However, she leaves everything in the story nameless, as she explains: “I am working to free me from geographic coordinates, and to arrive at a more abstract sense of place” (“Jhumpa Lahiri on Writing in Italian”). The narrator, a thirteen-year-old girl, describes a family of four from the city who stay at a summer cottage for one week. Living in a small house near the cottage, the girl takes care of it because the elderly man who owns the cottage and her house stays at his property only briefly. When the mother of the visiting family mentions a piazza in the city, the narrator tells a story about what happened there before she was born: Her father, now a caretaker of the property, worked as a florist at the piazza. He and his wife had just come to the country as immigrants. One evening, a drunken man forced him to make a bouquet for his girlfriend, although the shop was already closed. The narrator’s father agreed to make it anyway; however, dissatisfied with the bouquet, the man struck him so badly that his front teeth shattered. After the incident, he felt ashamed to smile because of his missing teeth. Meeting him for the first time, strangers might believe that he does not speak the language because he is a foreigner, or because he is mute. The narrator then sharply contrasts the city-bred visitors who enjoy a vacation at the

summer cottage with her family, who moved from the city to the countryside with this painful memory.

As Lahiri had declared before, she did not write a story about the immigrant experience of Indian-Americans. Nonetheless, “The Boundary” also connotes a space of nowhere for the deracinated, as her previous literary works demonstrate. First, she positions the child of the immigrant parents as a protagonist. Yet she never feels assimilated into her environment: “In the mornings, from September to June, my father drives me to school, where I feel out of place. I don’t mix easily with others; I don’t look like anyone else” (Lahiri, “The Boundary” 55). Although Lahiri does not portray her appearance in detail, the self-stated peculiarity of her outlook among other students reminds us of Gogol Ganguli of *The Namesake*, whose unique name makes him feel isolated from others. Unlike Gogol, however, the narrator of “The Boundary” does not have a name; it is her anonymity that brings about a sphere which differentiates her from others. Therefore, the surroundings around her in the countryside allude to a space that never lets others from the outside acclimatize to it. In short, the summer cottage clearly divides the residents of the countryside from the temporary visitors.

Lahiri dramatizes a contrast between the narrator and the visitors. The vacationers enjoy the beautiful nature around the cottage:

> After dinner, the girls wander around the lawn, following fireflies. They play with their flashlights. The parents sit on the patio contemplating the starry sky, the intense darkness. The mother sips some hot water with lemon, the father a little grappa. They say that being here is all they need, that even the air is different, that it cleanses. How lovely, they say, being together like this, away from everyone. (56)

Lahiri depicts the countryside as an ideal place for the family from the city by emphasizing the natural beauty of the summer. Leaving behind the city packed with people, noise, and polluted air, they enjoy the isolation and the anonymity. In short, Lahiri takes advantage of a stereotypical touristic viewpoint about the rural area. Meanwhile, the narrator reveals the harshness of the countryside by delineating its winter:

> At the same time I wonder what they know about the loneliness here. What do they know about the days, always the same, in our dilapidated cottage? The nights when the wind blows so hard the earth seems to shake, or when the sound of rain keeps me awake? The months we live alone among the hills, the horses, the insects, the birds that pass over the fields? Would they like the harsh quiet that reigns here all winter? (56)

The contrast illustrated here represents a boundary between the temporary visitors and the permanent residents. In other words, the boundary puts a distinction between the nameless sphere and the outer world.

However, Lahiri dexterously obscures this distinction between the two spheres. After the tragic incident at the piazza in the city, the narrator's parents move to the countryside. Spending the summer in a nearby town in order to help out the elderly gentleman on vacation, the narrator's mother complains about life in the rural area: "My mother can't stand this place. Like my father, she comes from much farther away than anyone who vacations here. She hates living in the country, in the middle of nowhere" (56). What "the country" indicates is not clear. It may mean the countryside; however, it may suggest the country at large, the place to which the narrator's parents immigrated. By clearly distinguishing the countryside from the city through the vacationers and the narrator's family, Lahiri discloses the boundary that divides them. In the meantime, she blurs this division by taking advantage of a double meaning of "country." In short, the country, in which the story is set, alludes to both a part, meaning the rural, and a whole, which includes the city. Therefore, Lahiri's illustration of the country as "the middle of nowhere" is remarkable, insomuch as her previous works present a nowhere that indicates ontological ambivalence. In this space, while the city and the rural area preserve a boundary, they also erode each other. Also, it blurs the presence of those who enter it, as represented by the anonymity that envelops the whole story. Thus, now that the anonymous narrator, a resident of the nowhere space, tells the story, the visitors who step into the nameless sphere become anonymous as well. In this

space, the distinction between the natives and the foreigners becomes obscure, as all of them are anonymous, or “invisible,” using Lahiri’s term.

Lahiri locates the nowhere as the place that the immigrant family should return to. Striking the narrator’s father terribly, the drunken man and his fellows yell at him, “Go back to wherever you came from” (57). But the narrator’s parents do not go back to their original country; instead, they leave the city for the countryside, or the middle of nowhere. Their withdrawal from the city to the countryside suggests that the immigrants choose to live in the middle of nowhere, where they become anonymous and invisible. The space of nowhere offers them a soil to live in; however, their roots never take in the land. In the same way that the parents keep the stems of flowers submerged in a row of buckets (57), they do not have a soil for their roots. Once they left their home country, they uprooted themselves. Thus, although the drunken man shouted to them that they should go back to their place of origin, they have lost that place. Thoroughly employing anonymity, Lahiri does not reveal the name of the place that they came from, which invites us to assume that they originally came out of nowhere. Accordingly, their move to the middle of nowhere alludes to their return to their original anonymous place. Here, the countryside and the indicated foreign country are linked by the nowhere space. The immigrant family survives in this space; however, their roots remain suspended in the ambivalent space where, while they do exist there, they are anonymous and invisible.

The ontological ambivalence portrayed through "the middle of nowhere" foregrounds Lahiri's standpoint as the author. The translated English represents her presence as the author; at the same time, the original Italian hidden behind the English nullifies the authority of her former primary language. The self-translation enables her to obtain both visibility and invisibility as the creator of the story. In other words, she herself exemplifies the space of nowhere. By this linguistic strategy, she transgresses the ontological boundary between presence and absence. While she presents herself in front of the readers through English, at the same time she conceals herself behind it.

Lahiri envisions a world that goes beyond even the boundary of the nowhere space. The narrator's father tells her as follows: "When he talks to me, as he drives me to school, he always says the same thing: that he couldn't make anything of his life. All he wants me to do is study and finish school, go to college, and then go far away from them" (57). Lahiri casts a multigenerational eye over the immigrant family, which she shows in "The Third and Final Continent" and *The Namesake*. She implicitly delineates the possible upward mobility of the second-generation immigrant, based on education. However, unlike the protagonist of "The Third and Final Continent," the narrator's father never shows pride in his immigration. Also, unlike Ashima of *The Namesake*, who lives in a nowhere space generated through her state of continuous transit,

he does not consider the nowhere space as a final destination. His remark thus suggests a dimension that exists beyond the boundary of the nowhere space.

A sphere implied here indicates Lahiri's further literary challenge. She has broken through boundaries in her works, geographically, culturally, linguistically, and ontologically. In addition to the fiction, she edited and partly translated *The Penguin Book of Italian Short Stories* (2019). Featuring forty tales written from 1880 to 2009, the collection demonstrates her literary aim to "gather together as many of the authors who have inspired and nourished [her] love for Italian literature, and for the Italian short story in particular," "to include a wealth of styles, and a range of voices," and "to feature women authors, lesser-known and neglected authors, and authors who practiced the short form with particular vehemence and virtuosity" (Gasperin 23). What is noteworthy here is that even as an editor, her eye is turned toward minorities regardless of the time period. As a writer, translator, and editor, she deals with how those who are treated as "others" in society find a place in which to survive.

In this regard, while Lahiri's works reveal her continuous attempt to cross boundaries, they suggest consistent literary themes: Continuous transit and a desire to fill a void. Among her recent works, the most remarkable is the first novel that she wrote in Italian. For the January 2018 interview, she stated that she had finished writing a novel, published as *Dove mi trovo*, which means "where I am," later that same year ("Jhumpa Lahiri on Writing in Italian"). Given that she

translated “The Boundary” by herself, we might naturally assume that she will translate the novel as well. However, as of January 2018, when she had just finished writing the novel, she had not yet decided whether she would translate it into English herself or ask an outside translator to do it (“Author Jhumpa Lahiri Learns to Juggle English, Italian and Trump”). She might or might not. Or, she might partly translate it, cooperating with another translator. These possibilities are pure presumptions. However, it is certain that she will never be settled in a fixed place, as continuous transit marks her literature. In short, she always searches for a change. Translation offers her a chance of transformation. Being an admirer of Ovid’s *The Metamorphoses*, she explained: “To translate . . . is a kind of metamorphosis. . . . I teach a class in translation at Princeton, and the subject is always the same: metamorphosis, transformation” (“What Am I Trying to Leave Behind?”). Her continuous transformations stem from her aspiration to fill the void that she embraces as an artist. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, she admits, “the void is my origin and also my destiny” (*In Other Words* 159). She had written about Indian-Americans in her earlier literary career; however, her liberation from the presupposed linguistic and geographical frameworks of American literature indicate that she does not focused on only one particular racial group in the United States. The ontological ambivalence that she presents in her literary works connotes a space for the displaced in its broad sense.

This dissertation has explored the impact of 1960s popular music on Lahiri. The best song to conclude it could well be the Beatles' "Across the Universe," as the song implies the essence of Lahiri's literature: the impact of Indian culture on the West inscribed in popular culture, the literature that breaks boundaries and spreads across the world, and the ontological ambivalence of nothingness. John Lennon sings:

> Words are flowing out
>
> Like endless rain into a paper cup
>
> They slither wildly as they slip away across the universe
>
> Pools of sorrow waves of joy
>
> Are drifting through my opened mind
>
> Possessing and caressing me
>
> Jai Guru Deva, om[1]
>
> Nothing's gonna change my world

Regardless of language, Lahiri's words will pour out of the void inside her. And the nothingness within her will keep transforming her literature.

[1] In Sanskrit, "Jai Guru Deva" means "I give thanks to Guru Dev," indicating Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. "Om" is a sound.

Bibliography

<Primary Sources>

Lahiri, Jhumpa. “The Boundary.” *The New Yorker*, 29 Jan. 2018, pp. 54-57.

---. “Hema and Kaushik.” *Unaccustomed Earth*, pp. 221-333.

---. *In Other Words*. 2015. Translated by Ann Goldstein, Knopf, 2016.

---. *Interpreter of Maladies*. Mariner, 1999.

---. *The Lowland*. Bloomsbury, 2013.

---. *The Namesake*. 2003. Mariner, 2004.

---. “The Third and Final Continent.” *Interpreter of Maladies*, pp. 173-98.

---. *Unaccustomed Earth*. 2008. Vintage, 2009.

<Secondary Sources>

Ahmad, Aijaz. *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. Verso, 1992.

Alfonso-Forero, Ann Marie. “Immigrant Motherhood and Transnationality in Jhumpa Lahiri’s Fiction.” *Literature Compass*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2007, pp. 851-61. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1111/j.1741-4113.2007.00431.x.

Apap, Christopher. “Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘Sexy’ and the Ethical Mapping of Subjectivity.” *MELUS*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2016, pp. 55-75. *Project Muse*, doi:10.1093/melus/mlw001.

Atlas, Jacoba. “Jimi Hendrix, Black Power, and Money.” *Teenset,* Jan. 1969, reprinted in *Hendrix on Hendrix*, edited by Steven Roby, pp. 147-50.

Bahri, Deepika. “Aliens, Aliases, Surrogates and Familiars: The Family in Jhumpa Lahiri’s Short Stories.” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2013, pp.37-49. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1080/00856401.2012.732515.

---. “*The Namesake*: Deepika Bahri Is Touched by Mira Nair’s Vivid, Sonorous Account of Immigrant Life in an Adopted Home City.” *Film Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2007, pp. 10-15. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/fq.2007.61.1.10.

Baldwin, James. *Notes of a Native Son*. 1955. Beacon, 1984.

Banerjee, Badisha. “Diaspora’s ‘Dark Room’: Photography and the Vision of Loss in Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘Hema and Kaushik.’” *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 45, 2010, pp. 443-56. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1177/0021989410377393.

Banerjee, Sumanta. *India’s Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising*. Zed, 1984.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard, Hill and Wang, 1980.

---. *Image Music Text*. Translated by Stephen Heath, Hill and Wang, 1977.

Baym, Nina. *The Shape of Hawthorne's Career*. Cornell UP, 1984.

---, general editor. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. 7th ed. W. W. Norton, 2007.

Beatles, the. "Across the Universe." *Let It Be*, Apple, 1970.

---. *The Beatles Anthology*. Chronicle Books, 2000.

---. "Carry That Weight." *Abbey Road*, Apple, 1969.

---. "Nowhere Man." *Rubber Soul*, Parlophone, 1965.

---. "Revolution 1." *The Beatles* (The White Album), Apple, 1968.

---. "Tomorrow Never Knows." *Revolver*, Parlophone, 1966.

---. "Within You Without You." *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, Parlophone, 1967.

Bellman, Jonathan. "Indian Resonances in the British Invasion, 1965-1968." *The Journal of Musicology*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1997, pp. 116-36. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/763906.

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, Schocken, 1968.

---. "Little History of Photography." Translated by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, *Selected Writings*, edited by Michael W. Jennings et al., vol. 2, Belknap, 1999, pp. 507-30.

Bennett, Eric. *Workshops of Empire: Stegner, Engle, and American Creative Writing during the Cold War*. U of Iowa P, 2015. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt20p59bn.

Bercovitch, Sacvan. *The American Jeremiad*. U of Wisconsin P, 2012.

---. *The Office of the Scarlet Letter*. Taylor and Francis, 2013. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, ebookcentral-proquest-com.kras1.lib.keio.ac.jp/lib/keio/detail.action?docID=4905680.

---. *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*. Yale UP, 2011.

Bess, Jennifer. "Jhumpa Lahiri's 'Hema and Kaushik': An Anatomy of Loneliness, a Transformation of Tragedy." *South Asian Review*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2012, pp. 117-38. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1080/02759527.2012.11932881.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.

---. "The Third Space." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, Lawrence, 1990, pp. 207-21.

Bhalla, Tamara. "Being (and Feeling) Gogol: Reading and Recognition in Jhumpa Lahiri's 'The Namesake.'" *MELUS*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2012, pp. 105-29. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41440715.

Bilbro, Jeffrey. "Lahiri's Hawthornian Roots: Art and Tradition in 'Hema and Kaushik.'" *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 54, no. 4, 2013, pp. 380-94. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1080/00111619.2011.594461.

Blake, John. "How Jimi Hendrix's Race Became His 'Invisible Legacy.'" *CNN*, 18 Oct. 2014. www.cnn.com/2014/10/18/showbiz/jimi-hendrix-invisible-legacy/index.html.

Bollinger, Heidi Elisabeth. “The Danger of Rereading: Disastrous Endings in Paul Auster’s *The Brooklyn Follies* and Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘Unaccustomed Earth.’” *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2004, pp. 486-506. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43151008.

Boudreau, Kristin. *Sympathy in American Literature: American Sentiments from Jefferson to the Jameses*. UP of Florida, 2002.

Brada-Williams, Noelle. “Reading Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ as a Short Story Cycle.” *MELUS*, vol. 29, no. 3 / 4, 2004, pp. 451-64. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4141867.

Buell, Lawrence. *The Dream of the American Novel*. Belknap, 2014. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, ebookcentral-proquest-com.kras1.lib.keio.ac.jp/lib/keio/detail.action?docID=3301419.

Cadava, Eduardo. *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History*. Princeton UP, 1997.

Caesar, Judith. “American Spaces in the Fiction of Jhumpa Lahiri.” *English Studies in Canada*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2005, pp. 50-68. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1353/esc.2007.0002.

Cardozo, Karen M. “Mediating the Particular and the General: Ethnicity and Intertextuality in Jhumpa Lahiri’s Oeuvre.” *Naming Jhumpa Lahiri*, edited by Lavina Dhingra and Floyd Cheung, pp. 3-25.

Caspari, Martina. “Changing the Dominant Discourse and Culture, One Eater at a Time Subversive Discourse and Productive Intervention in ‘Mrs. Sen’s’ in Jhumpa Lahiri’s

Interpreter of Maladies." *Pacific Coast Philology*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2014, pp. 245-61. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/pacicoasphil.49.2.0245.

Chakraborty, Madhurima. "Adaptation and the Shifting Allegiances of the Indian Diaspora: Jhumpa Lahiri's and Mira Nair's *The Namesake(s)*." *Literature / Film Quarterly*, vol. 42, no. 4, 2014, pp. 609-21. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43798999.

Chakraborty, Mridula Nath. "Leaving No Remains: Death among the Bengalis in Jhumpa Lahiri's Fiction." *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 110, no. 4, 2011, pp. 813-29. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1215/00382876-1382267.

Chakravorty, Swapan, et al. *Conversations with Gayatri Chakravorty Spiva*k. Seagull, 2006.

Cheung, Floyd, and Lavina Dhingra. "The Inheritance of Postcolonial Loss, Asian American Melancholia, and Strategies of Compensation in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*." *Naming Jhumpa Lahiri*, edited by Lavina Dhingra and Floyd Cheung, pp. 27-50.

Chifane, Liviu Augustin. "The Intertextual Dimension of Otherness in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*." *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2015, pp. 8-21. *JSTOR*, doi:10.7596/taksad.v4i3.462.

Christgau, Robert. *Any Ol' Way You Choose It: Rock and Other Pop Music, 1967-1973*. Penguin, 1975.

Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Harvard UP, 1997.

Cooper, Anderson. *Dispatches from the Edge*. HarperCollins, 2006.

Couser, G. Thomas. *Altered Egos: Authority in American Autobiography*. Oxford UP, 1989.

Cox, Michael W. "Interpreters of Cultural Difference: The Use of Children in Jhumpa Lahiri's Short Fiction." *South Asian Review*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2003, pp. 120-32. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1080/02759527.2003.11932304.

Dalton-Brower, Sally. "The Freedom of the Inbetween: Gogol's Ghost and Jhumpa Lahiri's Immigrants." *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2011, pp. 332-44. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1093/fmls/cqr005.

Das Gupta, Monisha. *Unruly Immigrants: Rights, Activism, and Transnational South Asian Politics in the United States*. Duke UP, 2006.

Dasgupta, Rajeshwari. "Towards the 'New Man': Revolutionary Youth and Rural Agency in the Naxalite Movement." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 41, no. 19, 2006, pp. 1920-27. *JSTOR*, /www.jstor.org/stable/4418215.

Davidson, Cathy N. *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*. Expanded edition, Oxford UP, 2004.

Deitch, Robert. *Hemp—American History Revisited: The Plant with a Divided History*. Algora, 2003.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. 1967. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Johns Hopkins UP, 1976.

Desai, Anita. *Clear Light of Day*. Penguin, 1980.

Dhingra, Lavina. "Feminizing Men?: Moving beyond Asian American Literary Gender Wars in Jhumpa Lahiri's Fiction." *Naming Jhumpa Lahiri*, edited by Lavina Dhingra and Floyd Cheung, pp. 135-55.

---, and Floyd Cheung. Introduction. *Naming Jhumpa Lahiri: Canons and Controversies*, edited by Lavina Dhingra and Floyd Cheung, Lexington, 2012, pp. vii-xxii.

Dhruvarajan, Vanaja. *Hindu Women and the Power of Ideology*. Bergin and Garvey, 1989.

Dimock, Wai Chee. *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time*. Princeton UP, 2006.

---. "Literature for the Planet," *PMLA*, vol. 116, no. 1, 2001, pp. 173-88. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/463649.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Oxford UP, 2008.

Dutta, Krishna, and Andrew Robinson. *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*, St. Martins, 1996.

Dutt-Ballerstadt, Reshmi. “Gendered (Be)longing: First- and Second- Generation Migrants in the Works of Jhumpa Lahiri.” *Naming Jhumpa Lahiri*, edited by Lavina Dhingra and Floyd Cheung, pp. 157-80.

Dyer, Geoff. Forward. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, by Roland Barthes, Hill and Wang, 1980, pp. ix-xix.

Dylan, Bob. Interview by Mikal Gilmore. *The Rolling Stone*. 27 Sep. 2012, pp. 42-51, 80-81.

Edwardes, Michael. *Plassey: The Founding of an Empire*. Hamilton, 1969.

Eliot, T. S. *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*, Barnes and Noble, 1960.

---. “The Waste Land.” 1922. *The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909–1950*. Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1958, pp. 37-55.

Elliott, Emory, et al. General Introduction. *Columbia Literary History of the United States*, edited by Emory Elliott, et al., Columbia UP, 1988, pp. xv-xxiii.

---, general editor. *Columbia Literary History of the United States*. Columbia UP, 1988.

“Exile.” *Oxford English Dictionary*. 26 Aug. 2017, www.oed.com.kras1.lib.keio.ac.jp/view/Entry/66231?rskey=O4ehOK&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid.

Farahmandian, Hamid, et al. “Diasporic Language and Identity in *The Namesake*.” *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, no. 5, vol. 5, 2015, pp. 952-56. *JSTOR*, doi:10.17507/tpls.0505.09.

Field, Robin E. “Writing the Second Generation: Negotiating Cultural Borderlands in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake*.” *South Asian Review*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2004, pp. 165-77. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1080/02759527.2004.11932352.

Finch, Charles. “Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘In Other Words’ Fails to Translate.” *USA Today*, 14 Feb. 2016, www.usatoday.com/story/life/books/2016/02/14/in-other-words-jhumpa-lahiri-book-review/80085180.

Fine, Laura. “Space and Hybridity in Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘Unaccustomed Earth’ and ‘Only Goodness.’” *South Asian Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2011, pp. 209-22. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1080/02759527.2011.11932836.

Fisher, Philip. *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel*. Oxford UP, 1987.

Fleegler, Robert F. *Ellis Island Nation: Immigration Policy and American Identity in the Twentieth Century*. U of Pennsylvania P, 2013. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, ebookcentral-proquest-com.kras1.lib.keio.ac.jp/lib/keio/detail.action?docID=3442095.

Franklin, Benjamin. *The Autobiography*. *Benjamin Franklin’s Autobiography*, edited by J. A. Leo Lemay and P. M. Zall, W. W. Norton, 1986, pp. 1-146.

---. “Franklin’s Epitaph, 1728.” *Benjamin Franklin’s Autobiography*, p. 226.

Franzosa, John. “‘The Custom-House,’ *The Scarlet Letter*, and Hawthorne’s Separation from Salem,” *ESQ*, vol. 24, 1978, reprinted in *The Scarlet Letter*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne, pp. 381-82.

Freud, Sigmund. “Uncanny.” 1919. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund*, vol. 17, edited and translated by James Strachey, et al., London: Hogarth, 1973, pp. 217-56.

Friedman, Natalie. “From Hybrids to Tourists: Children of Immigrants in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*.” *Critique*, no. 50, vol. 1, 2008, pp. 111-25. *JSTOR*, doi:0.3200/crit.50.1.111-128.

Furui, Yoshiaki. *Modernizing Solitude: The Networked Individual in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. U of Alabama P, 2019.

Gandhi, Mahatma. *Gandhi, an Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Translated by Mahadev Desai, Phoenix, 1949.

Gasperin, Vilma De. “Things Strong and Pure: The ‘True Inclination’ of Italian Literature.” *The Times Literary Supplement*, 7 June 2019, p. 23.

Ghoreishi, Seyedeh Zahra, and Zahra Bordbari. "Postcolonial Hybrids in *The Lowland*." *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2016, pp. 41-47. *JSTOR*, doi:10.7575/aiac.alls.v.7n.2p.41.

Ghosh, Amitav. *Countdown*. Ravi, 1999.

Giles, Paul. *The Global Remapping of American Literature.* Princeton UP, 2011.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Harvard UP, 1993.

Gogol, Nikolai. "The Overcoat." 1842. *The Collected Tales and Plays of Nikolai Gogol*, translated by Constance Garnett, Random House, 1964, pp. 562-92.

Grewal, Inderpal. *Saving the Security State: Exceptional Citizens in Twenty-First-Century America*, Duke UP, 2017.

Hai, Ambreen. "Re-Rooting Families: The Alter/Natal as the Central Dynamic of Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*." *Naming Jhumpa Lahiri*, edited by Lavina Dhingra and Floyd Cheung, pp. 181-209.

Hansen, Klaus P. *Sin and Sympathy: Nathaniel Hawthorne's Sentimental Religion*. Peter Lang, 1991.

Hawthorne, Julian. *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife: A Biography*, James R. Osgood, 1885.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "The Custom-House." 1850. *The Scarlet Letter*, W. W. Norton, 2017, pp. 7-33.

---. *Letters of Hawthorne to William D. Ticknor: 1851—1864*. NCR Microcard Editions, 1972.

---. *The Scarlet Letter*. 1850. Edited by Leland S. Person, 2nd ed., W. W. Norton, 2017.

Heinze, Ruediger. "A Diasporic Overcoat?" *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2007, pp. 191-202. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1080/17449850701430598.

Hellmann Jr., John M. "'I'm a Monkey': The Influence of the Black American Blues Argot on the Rolling Stones." *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 86, no. 342, 1973, pp. 367-73.

Henderson, David. *'Scuse Me While I Kiss the Sky: Jimi Hendrix: Voodoo Child*. Atria, 2008.

Hendrick, George. "The Influence of Thoreau's 'Civil Disobedience' on Gandhi's Satyagraha." *The New England Quarterly,* vol. 29, no. 4, 1956, pp. 462-71. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/362139.

Hendrix, Jimi. "The Star-Spangled Banner." *Live at Woodstock*, Experience Hendrix, 1999.

Hopkins, Jerry. *The Jimi Hendrix Experience*. Arcade, 1983.

Iwamura, Jane Naomi. *Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture*. Oxford UP, 2011.

Jackson, Elizabeth. "Transcending the Politics of 'Where You're from': Postcolonial Nationality and Cosmopolitanism in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2012, pp. 109-26.

Jensen, Joan M. *Passage from India: Asian Indian Immigrants in North America*. Yale UP, 1988.

Kachka, Boris. “The Confidence Artist.” *New York*, vol. 41, no. 12, 2008, pp. 67-68. *ProQuest*, search.proquest.com/docview/205104420?accountid=11815.

Kellman, Steven G. “Jhumpa Lahiri Goes Italian.” *New England Review*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2017, pp. 121-26. *Project Muse*, doi:10.1353/ner.2017.0046.

Kesselring, Marion L. *Hawthorne’s Reading 1828—1850: A Transcription and Identification of Titles Recorded in the Chargebooks of the Salem Athenaeum,* Haskell House, 1975.

Khair, Tabish. *Babu Fictions: Alienation in Contemporary Indian English Novels*. Oxford UP, 2001.

Kibria, Nazli. “The Racial Gap: South Asian American Racial Identity and the Asian American Movement.” *A Part, Yet Apart*, edited by Lavina Dhingra Shankar and Rajini Srikanth, Temple UP, 1998, pp. 69-78.

Koch, Philip. *Solitude: A Philosophical Encounter*. Open Court, 1994.

Koshy, Susan. “Minority Cosmopolitanism.” *PMLA*, vol. 126, no. 3, 2011, pp. 592-609. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41414132.

Kreger, Erika M. “Depravity Dressed up in a Fascinating Garb: Sentimental Motifs and the Seduced Hero(ine) in *The Scarlet Letter*.” *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 54, no. 3, 1999, pp. 308-35. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2903143.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. “Author Jhumpa Lahiri Learns to Juggle English, Italian and Trump.” Interview by Cary Darling, *Houston Chronicle*, 24 Jan. 2018, www.houstonchronicle.com/life/article/Author-Jhumpa-Lahiri-learns-to-juggle-English-12521754.php.

---. *The Clothing of Books*. Translated by Alberto Vourvoulias-Bush, Vintage, 2016.

---. “How Jhumpa Lahiri Learned to Write Again.” Interview by John Burnham Schwartz, *WSJ Magazine*, 20. Jan. 2016, www.wsj.com/articles/how-jhumpa-lahiri-learned-to-write-again-1453305609.

---. Interview by Ann Goldstein. *Poets and Writers*, Mar. / Apr., 2016, pp. 37-41.

---. Interview by Isaac Chotiner, *The Atlantic*, Feb. 2008, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/03/jhumpa-lahiri/6725.

---. “Jhumpa Lahiri on *Unaccustomed Earth*.” *The Guardian*, 31 Aug. 2013, www.theguardian.com/books/2013/aug/31/unaccustomed-earth-lahiri-book-club.

---. “Jhumpa Lahiri on Writing in Italian.” Interview by Cressida Leyshon, *The New Yorker*, 22 Jan. 2018, www.newyorker.com/books/this-week-in-fiction/fiction-this-week-jhumpa-lahiri-2018-01-29.

---. “Jhumpa Lahiri Talks about *Unaccustomed Earth*.” *Random House*, 2008, www.randomhouse.com/kvpa/jhumpalahiri/audio_interview.php.

---. “Migration, Assimilation, and Inebriation.” Interview by *Bookforum*, *Bookforum*, Apr. / May 2008, www.bookforum.com/inprint/015_01/2250.

---. “My Two Lives.” *Newsweek*, 6 Mar. 2006, www.newsweek.com/my-two-lives-106355.

---. “Rhode Island.” *State by State: A Panoramic Portrait of America*, edited by Matt Weiland and Sean Wilsey, Ecco, 2009, pp. 392-401.

---. “To Heaven without Dying.” *Feed*, 2000, web.archive.org/web/20000815073529/https://feedmag.com/book2/essay_lahiri.html.

---. “The Tragedy of Going Back.” Interview by Dan Piepenbring, *The Paris Review*, 18 Apr. 2018, www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/04/18/the-tragedy-of-going-back-jhumpa-lahiri-on-her-work-as-a-translator.

---. “What Am I Trying to Leave Behind?” Interview by Francesca Pellas, *Literary Hub*, 31 Aug. 2017, lithub.com/what-am-i-trying-to-leave-behind-an-interview-with-jhumpa-lahiri.

---. “Why Pulitzer Prize Winner Jhumpa Lahiri Quit the US for Italy.” Interview by Sheila Pierce, *Financial Times*, 22 May 2015, www.ft.com/content/3b188aec-f8bf-11e4-be00-00144feab7de.

---, editor. *The Penguin Book of Italian Short Stories*, Penguin, 2019.

---, and Mira Nair. *The Namesake: A Portrait of the Film by Mira Nair Based on the Novel by Jhumpa Lahiri*. HarperCollins, 2006.

Lee, Erika, and Judy Yung. *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America*. Oxford UP, 2014. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, ebookcentral-proquest-com.kras1.lib.keio.ac.jp/lib/keio/detail.action?docID=578792.

Levine, Robert S, general editor. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. 9th ed., W. W. Norton, 2017.

Lim, Shirley Geok-lin, et al., editors. *Transnational Asian American Literature: Sites and Transits*. Temple UP, 2006.

Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts*. Duke UP, 1996.

---. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Duke UP, 2015.

Lynn, David H. "Virtues of Ambition." *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2004, pp. 160-66. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4338635.

Maeda, Daryl J. *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America*, U of Minnesota P, 2009. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, ebookcentral-proquest-com.revproxy.brown.edu/lib/brown/detail.action?docID=496587.

Male, Roy R. "Hawthorne and the Concept of Sympathy." *PMLA*, vol. 68, 1953, pp. 138-54. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/459912.

Mani, Bakirathi. "Novel / Cinema / Photo: Intertextual Readings of *The Namesake*." *Naming Jhumpa Lahiri*, edited by Lavina Dhingra and Floyd Cheung, pp. 75-95.

Mannur, Anita. “Culinary Nostalgia: Authenticity, Nationalism, and Diaspora.” *MELUS,* vol. 32, no. 4, 2007, pp. 11-31. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/30029829.

Martyris, Nina. “The Naxalite Novel.” *Dissent*, vol. 61, 2014, pp. 38-44.

McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. Methuen, 1987.

McLennan, Rachael. *American Autobiography*. Edinburgh UP, 2012. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=534526&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Meyers, Jeffrey. *Joseph Conrad: Biography*. Cooper Square, 1991.

Miller, Webb. *I Found No Peace*. Garden City, 1938.

Miner, Valerie. “The Militant, His Wife, and His Brother.” *The Women’s Review of Books*, vol. 31, no. 2, Mar. /Apr. 2014, pp. 24-26. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/24430539.

Minzesheimer, Bob. “For Pulitzer Winner Lahiri, a Novel Approach.” *USA Today*, 19 Aug. 2003, usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/books/news/2003-08-19-lahiri-books_x.htm.

Mishra, Sangay K. *Desis Divided: The Political Lives of South Asian Americans*. U of Minnesota P, 2016.

Mohimood, Shaik, and K. G. B. Gowri. “A Study of Jhumpa Lahiri’s Feminism.” *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Approach and Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2017, pp. 15-19.

Mongia, Sunanda. "*Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri." *Indian Literature*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2001, pp. 206-11. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23344119.

Moskowitz, David. *The Words and Music of Jimi Hendrix*. Praeger, 2010.

Moynihan, Susan Muchshima. "Affect, History, and the Ironies of Community and Solidarity in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*." *Naming Jhumpa Lahiri*, edited by Lavina Dhingra and Floyd Cheung, pp. 97-116.

Mukherjee, Bharati. *The Holder of the World*. Fawcett, 1993.

---. "A Tale of Two Fathers." *A Community of Writers: Paul Engle and the Iowa Writers' Workshop*, edited by Robert Dana, U of Iowa P, 1999, pp. 89-92. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, ebookcentral-proquest-com.revproxy.brown.edu/lib/brown/detail.action?docID=859274.

---. "1850: *The Scarlet Letter*." *A New Literary History of America*, edited by Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors. Belknap, 2008, pp. 268-73.

Murphy, Gretchen. *Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire*. Duke UP, 2005.

Nadiminti, Kalyan. "A Betrayal of Everything: The Law of the Family in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*." *Journal of Asian American Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, June 2018, pp. 239-62. *Project Muse*, doi:10.1353/jaas.2018.0014.

Nair, Mira, director. *The Namesake*. Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2006.

Neutill, Rani. “Intimate Awakening: Jhumpa Lahiri, Diasporic Loss, and the Responsibility of the Interpreter.” *Naming Jhumpa Lahiri*, edited by Lavina Dhingra and Floyd Cheung, pp. 117-32.

New York Times, the. “President Obama’s Reading List.” 18 Jan. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/01/18/books/president-obamas-reading-list.html.

Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America.* Princeton UP, 2004.

Noack, Rick, and Lazaro Gamio. “The World’s Languages, in 7 Maps and Charts.” *The Washington Post*, 23 Apr. 2015, www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/04/23/the-worlds-languages-in-7-maps-and-charts/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.d99ee0873e0d.

Obama, Barack. *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*. Three Rivers, 2006.

---. *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*. 1995. Three Rivers, 2004.

Obrecht, Jas. *Stone Free: Jimi Hendrix in London, September 1966–June 1967*. U of North Carolina P, 2018.

Onkey, Lauren. “Voodoo Child: Jimi Hendrix and the Politics of Race in the Sixties.” *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and ’70s*, edited by Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, Routledge, 2002, pp. 189-214.

Partan, Olga. “Shinel’, Polichinelle, Pulcinella: The Italian Ancestry of Akaky Bashmachkin.” *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2005, pp. 549-69. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20058345.

Paudyal, Binod. “Breaking the Boundary: Reading Lahiri’s *The Lowland* as a Neo-cosmopolitan Fiction.” *South Asian Review*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2015, pp. 15-31. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1080/02759527.2015.11933031.

Pearl Jam. “Once.” *Ten*, Epic, 1991.

Phelan, James. *Somebody Telling Somebody Else: A Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative*. Ohio State UP, 2017.

Platoff, John. “John Lennon, ‘Revolution,” and the Politics of Musical Reception.” *The Journal of Musicology*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2005, pp. 241-67. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jm.2005.22.

Portes, Alejandro, and Rubén G. Rumbaut. *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. U of California P, 2006.

Prashad, Vijay. *Uncle Swami: South Asians in America Today*. New Press, 2012.

Princeton University, Engineering School. “Hurricane Katrina And 2004 Tsunami Caused Surprisingly Similar Destruction.” *Science Daily*, 12 Apr. 2007, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/04/070411110017.htm.

Reddy, Vanita. “Jhumpa Lahiri’s Feminist Cosmopolitics and the Transnational Beauty Assemblage.” *Meridians*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2011, pp. 29-59. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/meridians.11.2.29.

Roby, Steven, editor. *Hendrix on Hendrix: Interviews and Encounters with Jimi Hendrix*. Chicago Review Press, 2012.

Rogobete, Daniela. “In Search of the Invisible Roots: Immigrant Experiences in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Unaccustomed Earth*.” *Romanian Journal of English Studies*, vol. 13, 2016, pp. 45-52. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1515/rjes -2016-0007.

Rolling Stones, the. “Gimme Shelter.” *Let It Bleed*. Decca, 1969.

---. “Let It Bleed.” *Let It Bleed*.

Ruiz, Neil G. “Indian Migration to the U.S.” *Pew Research Center*, 30 Jan. 2018, www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/indian-migration-to-the-us.pdf.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Vintage, 1979.

---. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Harvard UP, 2000.

Samuels, Shirley, editor. *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in 19th-Century America*. Oxford UP, 1992.

Seago, Alex. "*Remembering Woodstock* by Andy Bennet." *American Studies*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2005, pp. 202-03. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/i40027749.

Seltzer, Mark. *The Official World*, Duke UP, 2016.

Sen, Sharmila. *Not Quite Not White: Losing and Finding Race in America*. Penguin, 2018.

"Sentiment." *Oxford English Dictionary*. 8 Oct. 2019, www-oed-com.revproxy.brown.edu/view/Entry/176056?redirectedFrom=sentiment#eid.

Shankar, Lavina Dhingra. "Not Too Spicy." *Other Tongues: Rethinking the Language Debates in India*, edited by Bonnie Zare and Nalini Iyer, Brill / Rodopi, 2009, pp. 23-52. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=263263&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Shapiro, Harry, and Caesar Glebbeek. *Jimi Hendrix: Electric Gypsy*. St. Martin's Griffin, 1995.

Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. 1759. Edited by Knud Haakonssen. Cambridge UP, 2002.

Song, Min Hyoung. "The Children of 1965: Allegory, Postmodernism, and Jhumpa Lahiri's 'The Namesake.'" *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2007, pp. 345-70. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20479817.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. Penguin, 1977.

Spellmeyer, Kurt. *Buddha at the Apocalypse: Awakening from a Culture of Destruction*. Wisdom, 2010.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Death of a Discipline*. Columbia UP, 2003.

---. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. Routledge, 1987.

Srikanth, Rajini. "What Lies Beneath: Lahiri's Brand of Desirable Difference in *Unaccustomed Earth*." *Naming Jhumpa Lahiri*, edited by Lavina Dhingra and Floyd Cheung, pp. 51-71.

Starnone, Domenico. *Ties*. Translated by Jhumpa Lahiri, Europa Editions, 2017.

---. *Trick*. Translated by Jhumpa Lahiri, Europa Editions, 2018.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly*. 1852. Edited by David S. Reynolds, Oxford UP, 2011.

Strand, Paul. *Blind Woman, New York*. 1916. Aperture Foundation, Inc., Paul Strand Archive.

Sukenick, Ronald. *In Form: Digressions on the Act of Fiction*. Southern Illinois UP, 1985.

"Sympathy." *Oxford English Dictionary*. 8 Oct. 2019, www-oed-com.revproxy.brown.edu/view/Entry/196271?rskey=4ZqbUC&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid.

Taher, Israa Hashim. “Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Unaccustomed Earth* and the Reading of Nathaniel Hawthorne.” *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, vol. 7, no. 5, 2016, pp. 137-41. *JSTOR*, doi:10.7575/aiac.alls.v.7n.5p.137.

Tatsumi, Takayuki. *Rinkan no Seiki: Amerika Daitouryoutachi no Bungakushisoushi* [*Lincoln’s Bullet: A Literary and Cultural Biography*]. 2nd ed., Seidosha, 2013.

---. “Thinking after the Hemispheric: The Planetary Expanse of Transnational American Writing.” *The Routledge Companion to Transnational American Studies*, edited by Nina Morgan, et al., Routledge, 2019, pp. 357-69.

---. *Young Americans in Literature: The Post-Romantic Turn in the Age of Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville*. Sairyusha, 2018.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*. 1854. *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers / Walden, or, Life in the Woods / The Maine Woods / Cape Cod*. The Library of America, 1985, pp. 321-587.

Tompkins, Jane P. *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860*, Oxford UP, 1986. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, ebookcentral-proquest-com.revproxy.brown.edu/lib/brown/detail.action?docID=272678.

Twain, Mark. *Life on the Mississippi*. 1883. Oxford UP, 1990.

Valkeakari, Tuire. "'Railway Spine,' Trains, Migration, and Mobility in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*." *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, vol. 28, no. 3-4, 2015, pp. 202-07. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1080/0895769x.2015.1114873.

Vanaja, Dhruvarajan. *Hindu Women and the Power of Ideology*. Bergin and Garvey, 1989.

Viswanathan, Gauri. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. Columbia UP, 1989.

Weller, Sheila. "Jimi Hendrix: I Don't Want to Be a Clown Any More. . . ." *The Rolling Stone*, 15 Nov. 1969, reprinted in *Hendrix on Hendrix*, edited by Steven Roby, pp. 227-31.

Whatley, Monica, and Jeanne Batalova. "Indian Immigrants in the United States." *Migration Policy Institute*, 13 Aug. 2013, www.migrationpolicy.org/article/indian-immigrants-united-states-0.

Wilhite, Keith. "Blank Spaces: Outdated Maps and Unsettled Subjects in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*." *MELUS*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2016, pp. 76-96. *Project Muse*, doi: 10.1093/melus/mlw004.

Widmer, Edward L. *Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City*. Oxford UP, 1999.

Williams, Laura Anh. "Foodways and Subjectivity in Jhumpa Lahiri's 'Interpreter of Maladies.'" *MELUS,* vol. 32, no. 4, 2007, pp. 69-79. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/30029832.

Winthrop, John. "A Model of Christian Charity." 1630. *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630—1649*, edited by Richard S. Dunn and Laetitia Yeandle, Belknap, 1996.

Wu, Ellen. *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority*. Princeton UP, 2013.

Wu, Judy Tzu-Chun. *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era*. Cornell UP, 2013. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=671639&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Wutz, Michael. "The Archaeology of the Colonial: Un-earthing Jhumpa Lahiri's Unaccustomed Earth." *Studies in American Fiction*, vol. 42, issue 2, 2015, pp. 243-268. *Project Muse*, doi:10.1353/saf.2015.0008.

Yeats, W. B. Introduction. *Gitanjali*, by Rabindranath Tagore, Macmillan, 1914, pp. vii-xxii.

---. *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*. Edited by John Kelly, et al., InteLex, 2002.

Zong, Jie, and Jeanne Batalova. "Asian Immigrants in the United States." *Migration Policy Institute*, 6 Jan. 2016, www.migrationpolicy.org/article/asian-immigrants-united-states.