

INESCAPABLE CONFORMITY OF IMMIGRANTS IN *JASMINE* AND *THE NAMESAKE*

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Abstract

*This paper examines the confusions and struggles of the immigrant characters in two novels Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989) and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003) to be able to find a possible representation through their diversities despite being reduced in so-called multicultural areas. These characters remain foreign to their actual selves due to being in the state of becoming, that is, their roots shadow them no matter how far away they travel. Thus, further analysis of the experiences of first and second-generation immigrant characters in both novels helps us better understand the reflections of how they shuttle back and forth between the two different cultures. The paper aims to provide insight into how the characters end up with inescapable conformity to the dominant culture, yet, as Homi Bhabha proposes, in a reformed, creative and iterative way called mimicry. The paper then aims at shedding light on this struggle of conformity in the light of Bhabha's formulation of the third space and even offering a new matrix for looking at conformity as an advantage since ultimately it enables the immigrants to be in either place at once. As a result of such an unsettling 'reversed' situation, in Lacanian terminology, not only do they perform the Other, but they can also undertake the role of the Self.*

Keywords: Identity, roots, the third space, conformity, reversed situation.

1. Introduction

Throughout history many nations have suffered a physical defeat, but that has never marked the end of a nation. But when a nation has become the victim of a psychological defeat, then that marks the end of a nation.

— Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*.

In today's world, globalization process has been compelling the societies all around the globe to melt in one pot and become more homogenous. As one would expect, globalization is more of a capitalist term because the aim behind 'the melting-together' model is changing the world into a global market. Since we started inhabiting in a global village, every single individual, with no exception, has been facing certain cosmopolitical problems which neglect "the inherent heterogeneity of world culture" and reacting to the rapid shift to "the universalism" (Shaw, 2018, p. 25). This overarching globalization today indicates "the

increasing pace at which people, ideas, and culture move from one nation and culture to another” (Nyman, 2009, p.18). With this in mind, globalization can be “best understood as a socio-cultural and economic phenomenon which deepens existing forms of exclusion and inequalities of access as much as it activates new patterns of connectivity” (Shaw, 2018, p. 24-5). In such a “nothing happens because too much happens” atmosphere, the integration and adaptation of immigrants into diverse spheres has led to cultural and psychological ambivalence and identity crisis since they are one way or the other marginalized and underprivileged members of the colonial center (Mishra, 2006, p. 4). Being acculturated, new life abroad renders them to be alienated from even their own selves. Thus, immigrants feel the significance of one’s background and culture maybe more than any other marginal groups.

As mentioned in the above paragraph, the dissemination of globalization is conceived as a right by the hegemonic power holders. The diffusion of dominant ideas is occurred expeditiously by means of technology. The technology of the West has evidently helped –and even legitimized- the colonizer exploit the poor countries as cheap labor force and violate the indigenous people’s lives. That is, the more the world becomes borderless, the more the colonialist states get benefits. Yet, there is an indisputable problem with this order. In such a framework, there is no welcoming atmosphere for the immigrants. It is due to the repressive and intolerant frame of the hegemony that first and second generation-immigrants can place themselves neither in their home country nor the latter one. However, the first generation-immigrants’ roles in diaspora are seemingly different from that of the second generation’s as well as both generations similarly pursue a life without complexity and doubt. Therefore, the following part of the article is designed not only to present some differences between the struggles and pursuits of first and second-generation immigrants but also to suggest how they finally come to terms with their new identities in order to forge a place at least where they can feel relatively safer and free. Examining the immigrant characters’ resistance to any possible psychological defeat as Ibn Khaldun’s above cited idea also indicates, this article will pursue Homi Bhabha’s selected concepts, primarily *the third space* which significantly helps us think of the act of mimicry in the lives of the immigrant characters of *The Namesake and Jasmine* as a reformed and creative way to keep on living in the alien culture.

2. The Third Space and Other Concepts

And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves.

— Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

Several researches have been conducted on postcolonial criticism of each of two novels so far. In my research, Bhabha’s concepts such as hybridity, mimicry, and conformity will be incorporated to dig deeper into the functionality of the third space in adaptation process of the diasporic characters in both novels. The reason why Homi Bhabha’s ideas are implemented to conduct this study is that he ardently emphasizes the power of mimicry which enables the

immigrant characters of the either of the stories to adapt and negotiate the changes. As such, this resistance challenges the dominant discourses as it is a reversal in a certain way.

Although (re)interpreting Bhabha's ideas is notoriously challenging, it would still be appropriate to suggest that his notion of the third space -which is a kind of negotiation- in fact proposes an alternative space for once-colonized people by deconstructing meta-discourses established by the West and providing a possible representation. What Bhabha does differently than his contemporaries lies in his criticism towards mainstream Western superiority which puts the Western subject/the Self at the center whereas objectifying the Other. He insists on the value of the difference between these two and rejects the hegemonic language of the West that came up with assumptions made about it(Self) and the rest. Thus, he focused more on demolishing such fixed perception of the rest being inferior and the west being the canon of power since his time coincides with the decolonization of various areas. He highlights incommensurability of differences and ambiguous area of the third space by implying the impossibility of purity of any culture. With this in mind, the reader will find the immigrant characters having to negotiate their former and latter selves, yet with "a tension peculiar to borderline existences" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 218), and eventually gaining awareness of their hybrid identity and being more vigilant as to carry "the burden of the meaning of culture" (Bhabha, 1994, p.38) thereafter.

Discrimination between the self and the other, in Lacanian term, leads to an adherence to the values for immigrants living in foreign culture. Such an outcome is what colonialists exactly intended to create so that the present cultural division becomes wider and more obvious. As a result of such relationship between 'the mother and its bastards', so to speak, immigrants are exposed to a double transformation and subjected to "a process of splitting as the condition of subjection: a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different—a mutation, a hybrid" (Bhabha, 1994, p.111). By doing so, denial of subjugated people is constantly iterated by the colonialist until the division becomes ossified enough to make immigrants feel fragmented, ambivalent and half. They, not to remain unable to speak up for themselves, needed to find an alternative way to negotiate their former and latter selves and become a whole anew. Having to unlearn the previous codes and unthink the current colonial ones, they need somewhere else "besides" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 64), which Bhabha also names as "a third space - the negotiation of incommensurable differences" (1994, p. 218). However, such negotiation brings about a great deal of ambivalence due to the construction of the self based on the other:

The intervention of the Third Space enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code. Such an intervention quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People (Bhabha, 1994, p.37).

What Bhabha intends to highlight as to hybridity is that it should be seen as a reevaluation of the colonial assumptions through the iteration of differences. It becomes a reversal in the end and this reversal unsettles so-called “authority” by challenging its prescribed definitions and the holistic concept of the entire history. Therefore, with this interpretation, hybridity represents “that ambivalent ‘turn’ of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification—a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 113).

Rapid migration across the cultural borders in the contemporary world brings us to multicultural modernity today. This cultural multiplicity is indeed what Homi Bhabha has popularized in his studies on *mimicry* and *the third space*. As is well known, the condition of mimicry creates a deep ambivalence and confusion not only in the colonized individuals but also the colonizers. In the state of mimicry, the mimic is constantly split between the two possible ways: as neither being the same nor different, they are rendered in a shift between two pillars of obscurity. This “almost the same but not quite” level of mimicry proves these minorities’ successful yet unsettling adaptation as a result of the amalgam of difference and iteration (Bhabha, 1994, p.122). By blending both, the immigrants could then find a way to present and re-present themselves. We can state that their conformity to the social environment somehow comes as a result of mimicry. When we observe Jyoti -becomes Jasmine following her marriage-, Ashima and Gogol, we witness their struggle for being able to live as an outsider and any possible way of representation with the hope for a better life in abroad. These are, thus, despite ambiguity, the stories of resilience of those who seek to find their ‘own’ voice in a distant and foreign land.

3. Struggle of Conformity: Undertaking the Self and the Other Simultaneously in *Jasmine* and *The Namesake*

The novel *Jasmine*, written by Indian female author Bharati Mukherjee in 1989, tells the story of a hyphenated identity, an Asian-American woman, who struggles with identity and cultural crisis both within and outside of her own culture. To put it another way, the plot depicts Jasmine's hopeful and triumphant quest for herself and unshattered personality as well as the changes she undergoes. We can say that it is the story of a female character's spiritual integrity which she gained by deconstructing all the social and cultural norms. Mukherjee's book is far more than a traditional bildungsroman because it covers a brief yet tense period in the heroine's life, and it depicts her battle with not only the ordinary struggles of growing up that any young individual faces, but also issues concerning her racial, sexual and cultural identification. Jasmine spends her childhood in Punjab, India. At the age of seventeen, she becomes a widow, which is accepted as the turning point in her life. After Prakash's death, his dream to be able to go to America to study turns out to be her obsession. Afterwards, we witness her relocation to the United States and rooting herself there as an Indian woman. In fact, her situation mirrors turbulent experiences of many other eastern women in the contemporary world. On the whole, the novel concentrates on being an easterner and a woman at the same time by addressing ethnic tensions and identity crisis.

Her name, Jasmine, is even determined by her husband, Prakash, which we can regard as another limiting act towards her rights. In fact, she is keen on being renamed as Jasmine but the issue is that she is given another definition which is as if an attempt to erase the traditional name and give a modern one instead. Now she is completely confused about what she really is: is she a woman still bearing the traces of her traditional past or a woman open to multifarious possibilities in a modern future? Irony lies in the fact that either ways are at some level provided by the interior patriarchy with the aim of conforming to the exterior patriarchy. Jasmine openly expresses this sense of in-betweenness as follows: “I felt suspended between worlds” (Mukherjee, 1991, p. 76). Such deep cultural clash between home country definitions and the current process of transformation is also revealed in an interview with the author of the story, Bharati Mukherjee as seen below:

the novel provided so many different points of focus: the experience of dislocation and relocation is handled by each of the immigrant characters. As in Akbari miniatures, my novel compresses the immigration histories of many minor characters (Edwards & Mukherjee, 2009, p. 78).

As observed in the above citation, Mukherjee’s characters in the novel are usually split into two different identities throughout the story in the same way as her protagonist Jasmine. Although that is the fact, Jyoti/Jasmine never gives up and also remains very eager to have a baby because she is in need of self-articulation and esteem somehow. In this case, it is only possible, as she does believe, after having a child. Her growth mindset seems to welcome any kind of challenge as she is going through the changes for the sake of self-inventions. It is obvious that she has the awareness of the necessity of dislocation in order to relocate the self. Throughout the story, she remembers her husband Prakash’s words: “... love was letting go. Independence, self-reliance” (Mukherjee, 1991, p. 76). Upon his dreams, she has come to the US to make peace with her hyphenated identity due to the exigencies of possibility: “I do believe that extraordinary events can jar the needle arm, jump tracks, rip across incarnations, and deposit a life into a groove that was not prepared to receive it” (Mukherjee, 1991, p. 127).

Jasmine’s first day experience in America is dreadfully unfortunate yet still beneficial one in terms of reclaiming her identity. She not only takes vengeance on her rapist but also ends his life instead of her own life. This incident makes her a “walking death”, as she herself claims too, but for a very short time to find her new self (Mukherjee, 1991, p. 106). Jasmine’s actions remind us of a phoenix, burning former version of herself and rising from the ashes with her renewed self so that she can now live through anything. She also defines her transition within an alien culture as a suicide and expresses that “we murder who we are so we can rebirth ourselves in the images of dreams” (Mukherjee, 1991, p. 25). After she wears a blue jean-jacket –which is to me her first symbolic rebirth– she begins to Americanize herself day by day. She undergoes such changes unconsciously since she is exposed to discrimination and overgeneralizations concerning her Indian roots. Thus, she was so ready to shift to her new life that she welcomed every step of the transformation in the quest for her identity:

If we could just get away from India, then all fates would be canceled. We'd start with new fates, new stars. We could say or be anything we wanted. We'd be on the other side of the earth, out of God's sight. (Mukherjee, 1991, p. 85)

Although she faces a great deal of troubles and turbulent experiences in the United States, she courageously manages to reposition her identity by putting the jigsaw pieces of her life together. She hints at her adaptation way which includes the amalgam of difference and iteration in the following lines: "I have had a husband for each of the women I have been. Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, Bud for Jane. Half-Face for Kali" (Mukherjee, 1991, p. 175). We can confidently suggest that being a fluid character, she has negotiated her yesterday, today and tomorrow. Being a diaspora, she is in a constant flux and movement. As can be understood, she inevitably comes to terms with the American life in the end, but it must be seen as her conformity to her own hybrid self in her own unique way owning her unique voice. Even though so-called globalization and modern environmental factors expect her to behave like an American, she makes use of her current American identity in order to forge at least a stable and permanent space where she can feel safe and free. To do so, she, in fact, does not choose between her previous and latter identities created by the cultural milieu. It is more of a choice to intervene and reconfigure the self by repositioning the new Jasmine despite "the violent shuttling" in Spivak's saying (Chrisman & Williams, 1993, p. 102). Jasmine, being well aware of her hybrid power, knows that her survival depends very much on the self-affirmation which will follow the acculturation to the new culture. Her adaptability is the only thing that comforts her in the end.

In the second novel scrutinized in this paper *The Namesake*, we observe the thirty-year story of an Indian Bengali immigrant family. Ashoke, the family guy, leaves his hometown, Calcutta, in search of a better life and possibilities in America, as well as a place where they can call 'home'. We witness the struggles and pursuits of the Ganguli family and their recently born children as they endeavor to negotiate their new identity and new life in an alien culture.

Ashima and Ashoke, since they are the first generation immigrants, seem more ambivalent and vulnerable to those cultural differences during the story. We often find them homesick, hesitant and dubious about this very alien way of life to which they are exposed in America: "... don't want to raise Gogol alone in this county. It's not right. I want to go back" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 33). When we put the story under the scope, we can notice that all the Ganguli family members are neither entirely Indian nor American, but rather somewhere in the middle. Due to the impossibility of an abandonment of all the cultural codes that have been ingrained and prescribed throughout their lives in the hometown, India, they have to take the middlemost way possible. This middle way is actually a negotiation between one's former and the latter self. We can also think of this strategy, in Freudian terms, as a defense mechanism which functions to defend against threatening and very unpleasant occurrences (1907). Such kind of survival strategy requires those marginalized and otherized people to adapt and conform to the new way of living in the USA. Yet, the issue here is that they are Indian in the USA and this past confuses Ashima and Ashoke and their children about their

Indian past and American present: “She has given birth to vagabonds. She is the keeper of all these names and numbers now, numbers she once knew by heart, numbers and addresses her children no longer remember” (Lahiri, 2006, p.167). The Ganguli’s constant transformation also makes imitation/mimicry process compulsory for them to build a new identity for themselves at the expense of their past:

Eventually he begins to practice his new signature in the margins of the paper. He tries it in various styles, his hand unaccustomed to the angles of the N, the dotting of the two i's. He wonders how many times he has written his old name, at the top of how many tests and quizzes, how many homework assignments, how many yearbook inscriptions to friends (Lahiri, 2006, p.98).

The quotation above represents Gogol’s reinscription process. As in the case of Gogol, Bhabha similarly argues (2006) that such reinscription occurs in the process of mimicry, or in other words in this compulsory borrowing process. It is an ambiguous third dimension which “challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force...” (pp. 155-157). It is exactly that the third space which can be seen, in Fanon’s term, as a “fluctuating movement” of the instability of culture having no fixity (Fanon, 1967, p. 168). Being a fluid entity, cultural identity is constructed through the interaction with people around us. However, the second space, which is imposed by colonizing structure, doesn’t allow for the articulation of the first space identity - identity that of the indigenous people. Thus, they have to carve out an alternative space: the third space. As can be anticipated, it is impossible for Gogol -Jasmine too- to function in both spaces due to the ongoing discrimination and unhomeliness. It is now time for indigenous people to develop a hybrid identity. From now on, they can express their hybrid identity by making use of the first two spaces. I thereby will argue that having a transgressive potential, the third space is a hybrid manifestation of the first two spaces. In those moments of master-slave encounter during the first two spaces, the assumed *sanctity* of the colonizers claimed to be their own is suddenly replayed or mimicked by the colonized. Here, I can firmly suggest that in the third space anything is open to appropriation, retranslation, replay, rereading and even rehistoricization which puts an end to the cultural difference rhetoric, as Susan and Henry Giroux tactfully suggest with their idea of Bhabha’s “making the political more pedagogical” or vice versa (Giroux, S. S., & Giroux, H. A., 1999, p.139):

The theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. It is the inbetween space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture, and by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38).

The first and second generations’ approaches to the traditional culture left behind in the homeland and the adopted culture are diametrically opposed to one another. The first generation takes great pains to preserve the tradition that has been passed on to them whereas

their children being born in America can feel no closeness towards Indian identity as well as American one. We can claim that the first generations are more in between as we deduce from the name of their son, Gogol itself. This in-betweenness is passed down to Gogol as well. Gogol despises the fact that his name is both ludicrous and vague one, that it does not represent who he really is. This name has nothing to do with either Indian or American representation. Thus, what frustrates him is that he has to come to terms with such an obscure nickname after all. As we may see, Gogol and Sonia become more obsessed about their lack of roots and fragmented past. They, differently from their parents, attempt to establish their historical existence in mainstream society. Having a cultural identity, Gogol always believes and seeks for his cultural history since he knows well that everything has a root. As Hall puts it in his own life context, there are two possible ways of viewing “cultural identity”, the first one is “in terms of one, shared culture”, and the second one as “a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’ which belongs to the future as much as to the past” (1993, pp. 223-225). For it is rather a matter of becoming, then being an immigrant is problematic because each immigrant finds oneself stuck at the threshold during a lifetime, burdened with memories of their former place clashing with the conditions of the contemporary world. As the title of this study declares, such way of life spent in-between makes immigrants feel quite bewildered unless they finally comply with the adopted way of living. At the end of the novel, the reader finds ‘namesake’, Gogol, reading *The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol* given to him by his father. This scene shows the fact that he has overcome several issues related to his name so far and now comes to terms with his process of becoming, and thereby begins to negotiate his hybrid identity:

Plenty of people changed their names: actors, writers, revolutionaries, transvestites. In history class, Gogol has learned that European immigrants had their names changed at Ellis Island, that slaves renamed themselves once they were emancipated. Though Gogol doesn't know it, even Nikolai Gogol renamed himself, simplifying his surname at the age of twenty-two from Gogol-Yanovsky to Gogol upon publication in the Literary Gazette (Lahiri, 2006, p. 97).

As Bhabha suggests in his masterpiece *The Location of Culture*, ambivalence about the cultural practices of India and the adaptation to the new land is quite felt in the characters' attitudes throughout the events in Lahiri's story. What leads to identity crisis is that the immigrants have an intense sense of belonging to neither side, yet at the same time try to make efforts to stick to their culture in the foreign land as much as the recollection of their memories permits. Since having migrated with the memory and nostalgia of their pasts, the characters in both stories leave not only their former lands but also their identities in both cultural and psychological senses and have to start a new life from scratch in the US. Without cultural representations that are extremely rigid and efficient for the formation of social structures, life is never easy for anyone because humans are socially constructed beings who can only exist within socio-cultural framework. Main issue here is that dominant Western frame puts cultures “within a universalist framework” (Rutherford, 1990, p.209). It has been always-already problematic for different cultures to coexist because culture by its nature is, as Bhabha sees it, “incommensurable” (Rutherford, 1990, p. 209). Any sort of restricting look at

cultures evokes cultural displacement within underprivileged newcomers. As Bhabha investigated this very problem of disoriented voices anthropologically, he reiterated the term *liminality* which basically explains immigrants' situation of standing at the threshold and belonging to neither side hence either side. With Ashima, Jhumpa Lahiri, as well, draws a parallel between the situation of liminality and a lifelong pregnancy as follows:

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 has vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding. Like pregnancy, being a foreigner, Ashima believes, is something that elicits the same curiosity from strangers, the same combination of pity and respect. (Lahiri, 2006, p.49)

In an interview with the author, Lahiri highlights this situation of liminality once again:

I wanted to please my parents and meet their expectations. I also wanted to meet the expectations for my American peers, and the expectations I put on myself to fit into American society. It's a classic case of divided identity (Agarwala, 2007, p. 40).

As Bhabha suggested once, western patriarchal discourses may seem liberating on one hand, yet always remain restricting on the other. Living in the US, she felt torn between her roots and requirements to be an American imposed upon her by both former and latter identities. She, just as the Ganguli family members, belongs to either side in a constant state of becoming and reshaping her identity until negotiating it.

As Kant provokes the modern reader to rethink with his book, *Critique of Pure Reason*, knowledge is only the construction of our vision (2003, p. 22). If it is how we perceive the world, then our knowledge is nothing less than *our* mere assumptions and suppositions. As such, colonized societies are forcefully reduced to a linear existence out of these mere assumptions, which I believe should be seen as the displacement of the angle of vision. Likewise, Homi Bhabha is completely against such assumptions since he advocates that every cultural encounter brings about extremely valuable hybrid and evolved outcomes at the end of the day. He offers people to hold a multicolored and multi-voiced view which will help them articulate and enunciate their hybridity.

4. Conclusion

All in all, these are the stories reflecting the conditions and struggles of immigrant characters dwelling within the borders of dominant cultures in different areas of the world. By blending the hybrid manifestations of the first two spaces, the immigrants could find a way to present and re-present themselves in an alien culture. It was this unique strategy developed by immigrant characters in both works that caught my attention and how their resistance to a psychological defeat made an undoing of colonization possible. What particularly struck me was how they had to deconstruct the prescribed western definitions by proving the incommensurability of differences and cultures, and how they carved out a self-defined/third

space. The analysis of both works shows us that the characters have overcome various problems related to their identity crisis and finally come to terms with their diasporic identities and find an articulation of their thoughts and beliefs.

As a result of my comparative analysis, both Jasmine and Gogol utilized their new identities to handle the situation in abroad as diasporas. They maintained a successful relationship with their own selves by seeing the problems as an opportunity for growing and getting stronger, which can also be called *coping mechanism* strategy. Bhabha's formulation of the third space enabled those minority characters from once-colonized countries to own their voice in a very foreign culture. Having such a hybrid identity, diasporic characters had a great deal to say regarding their past and present and inevitably let people hear about their stories in the quest for rescuing shattered identity.

Bhabha advises the third space against the stereotypical colonial discourses as to how to gain more consciousness on the issue and expose its productive capacities: "For a willingness to descend into that alien territory may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity" (*The Location of Culture*, 1994, p.38). He further suggests "by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (Bhabha, 1994, p.39). For Bhabha, this attempt does not still have to have an impact on the colonizer's attitude; instead it has to offer a *third space*, definitely not a de facto one, for the colonized.

Speaking from an anthropological perspective, both works have proved how remarkably adaptive and resilient human species is. This study showed that it is possible for everyone to overcome certain difficulties by realizing and admitting the fact that none are superior to one another; in fact there is not the "Self" or the "Other". With this in mind, these oppositions are mere concepts and one of the hallmarks of European worldviews. In the case of Jasmine and Gogol, it will be appropriate to say that they let go of whatever limits them in life: traditions, definitions, prejudices, etc. and fit into this way of life in abroad. However, conformity should not be confused with giving in to the pressures of the American culture; on the contrary, it is more of an acceptance of the state of a constant flux towards finding one's own identity. All in all, the protagonists of both novels succeed to detach themselves from fixed representations and stereotypes allocated by the colonial discourse, and instead recultivate an intrepid and adaptive manner. What Lahiri and Mukherjee similarly do is not only abandoning firmly established opposition of the West and the Other, but also cultivating endless possibilities of their characters' identities. Since they are open to any possible change and in "perpetual motion", this study tried to offer a new matrix for future studies to see conformity as an opportunity and tackle it in the same manner (Fanon, 1967, p. 224). It is only possible with this conformity that both Jasmine and Gogol are constantly evolving and show us they, no matter which ethnic group or gender one may belong to, can be anything they want to be apart from colonial definitions and even beyond. Last but not least, such conformity in turn renders the condescending idea of the West regarding itself to be the purest and the most advanced throughout the human history invalid.

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