

EXPLORING THE HYPHENATED IDENTITY: WOMAN CHARACTERS IN THE WORKS JHUMPA LAHIRI

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Abstract

Jhumpa Lahiri's narratives, Interpreter of Maladies (1999), The Namesake (2003), Unaccustomed Earth (2008) and The Lowland (2013) are informed by her own experiences as a second- generation Indian American and her love for classical literature. Her books have elicited admiration and awe for her focus on cultural contexts and ethnic identities concerned with the disturbed lives of 'transplanted' Indians and Indian Americans whose hyphenated identity has let them to be caught between the two traditions.

This paper tries to examine the relevance of ethical and cultural values and its significance at both personal and social level in Lahiri's works. It discusses the way Lahiri's woman characters deal with their dilemma and difficulties, and narrate their failures and success in adapting a new home, a new culture, a new space and a new identity. Further, this paper underscores the fact that marriage especially in Indian tradition not only acts as a mark of identity but also establishes personal, racial, sexual and social identities in the life of the immigrant women.

Keywords: diaspora, immigrant experience, culture, identity, women

"I saw my mother in a different light. We all need to do that. You have to be displaced from what's comfortable and routine, and then you get to see things, with fresh eyes, with new eyes." -Amy Tan

Pulitzer Award winning author, Jhumpa Lahiri, in her narratives, always tries to accentuate the maladies that occur in the life of the populace staying "in-between", situations they face- both temporary and life changing, relationships both unstable and unshakeable,

unexpected blessings and sudden calamities, and the powers of survival. Traveling from India to New England and back again, Lahiri maps the emotional journey of characters looking for love beyond the boundaries, cultures, religions, and generations. More prominent are her vivid women characters who belong both to Indian and American cultures, always trying to carve their own place and trying to make themselves understand “that this is what can happen and it’s neither a good thing nor a bad thing to be a little mixed up.”

It’s beyond speculation that a detailed study of Lahiri’s female characters can be accomplished in a limited number of lines. This chapter therefore needs to be selective and focus on those parts of her narratives which are directly concerned with the construction of women characters; plots that deal with their problem of adjustment and assimilation as immigrants transplanted from their familial grounds to the land of ‘new’ hope, culture and identity. The study thus revolves around Jhumpa Lahiri’s works *Interpreters of Maladies* (1999), *The Namesake* (2003), *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) and *The Lowland* (2013), highlighting the process which her female subjects adopt to reconstruct their subjectivity, reassert their agency or negotiate their identities either through silence or resistance; acculturation or assimilation.

Once in conversation with Sandeep Roy Chowdhury, Jhumpa Lahiri shares her experiences as an immigrant. She illustrates that being child of Indian immigrants she too crossed borders when she migrated from England — where she was born — to become an American citizen. Such a situation has contributed a lot towards making her an immigrant writer. All her work thus center on “the immigrant experience, the clash of cultures, the tangled ties between generations”, the inconsistency of the concepts of identity and gender roles in the space of diaspora.

Focusing on Lahiri’s female characters, we must agree that they are not at all the victims of patriarchal society. Rather they make their own choices, form their own identity and choose a life of their own. They are independent enough, still they struggle. They struggle to find their place/ locate themselves in their ‘new land’ but can’t stop longing for their homeland. As Salman Rushdie points out:

“Exiles, emigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urges to reclaim to look back at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt.”

(Rushdie, *Imaginary* 10)

Such is the condition of Ashima in *The Namesake*, who chooses to move abroad with her husband Ashoke and settles there. According to Dubey, “The immigrant experience is complicated as a sensitive immigrant finds himself or herself perpetually at a transit station fraught with memories of the original home which are struggling with the realities of the new world” (22). The novel, *The Namesake* is essentially a story about the adaptation of an Indian Bengali family from Calcutta, the Gangulis, into America, over thirty years (spanning from 1968 to 2000); experiencing the cultural dilemma and their children becoming American in

different ways. It is the story about the spatial, cultural and emotional dislocation suffered by them in their effort to make “home” in the new land. Like many “professional Indians” who “in the waves of the early sixty’s”, “went to the United States, as part of the brain drain” (Spivak:61:1990).

Ashima is satisfied with the identity of a housewife in Massachusetts though she could have adopted any professional identity given the opportunities in America. But, being an NRI is quite different for her as she feels lonely and alien in western culture. Similarly few women characters in Lahiri’s short story collection titled *Interpreter of Maladies* find it difficult to mould themselves according to the western life style. Mrs. Sen in *Mrs. Sen’s* has recently migrated to America from Calcutta and is not fitting in very well. She misses everything about her home and refuses to learn how to drive - the only activity her husband believes will broaden and strengthen her life in America. Though quite young, she seems old as she fails to adapt herself to the fast-paced life of US. She is a completely displaced person who yearns only for India and makes no attempt to assimilate. She feels alienated and remains marginalized as assimilation in western culture seems impossible to her. The only solace she can find is in the market where the fresh fishes (as in Kolkata) hold her to the alien land.

Lahiri’s first generation immigrants thus try to refrain themselves from the western world where they are presently settled. Such is the case in Lahiri’s another collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth*. In the title story “Unaccustomed Earth”, Ruma’s parents come to the U.S. in search of better educational opportunities: after her father receives a PhD degree in biochemistry, he finds a rewarding job in a pharmaceutical company which allows the family to live in comfort. But her mother remains at home, and she is only a passive participant in the pursuit of the Dream: her goal is to cultivate, replenish and continue the homeland traditions in a foreign country. In yet another story in this collection, “Only Goodness”, Rahul and Sudha’s parents, are again Bengali immigrants, who first immigrate to London in search of successful life. Nevertheless, they experience the strangeness of the new land. The town in which they settle down is “the shock. Suddenly they were stuck, her parents aware that they faced a life sentence of being foreign” (“Only Goodness” 138). The mother cannot drive a car; she does not get a job. Neither she nor her husband is familiar with American habits, and they both have problem with language. As a result, in many everyday situations they have to rely on their children.

So when we discuss about the women characters in Lahiri’s narratives, they make us realize that, as one of the ethnic groups in the world, first generation Asian American women encounter paradoxical nature, the situation in which they adapt to the new environment but insist on maintaining their old habits. Languages, beliefs, traditions, costumes, and food are the apparatuses the women use to negotiate between the worlds- old and new. This is what Lahiri experiences in her family; “My parents were always very resistant in many ways to

living in America and missed India so much and had a lot of misgivings about their lives here.” And the situation becomes more troublesome for the second generation immigrants who always try to call the new land as their home. They are always left shuffling between two worlds, two cultures and two very different situations. As Lahiri says “I have never felt a strong affiliation with any nation or ethnic group. I always felt between the cracks of two cultures. So much of it was about where I was and who was viewing me. When I went to Calcutta my relatives would think of me so much as an American. A foreigner. In America it’s always, you are Indian, when did you come here?”

Thus, Lahiri’s first generation immigrant female characters though accept the idea to migrate to the West with their spouses, upon reaching find it quite difficult to adjust there as they face cultural differences and loss of roots. Their delayed adaptation forces them to categorize themselves as marginalized. They clinch their ethnic identity in foreign-land, and hence face difficulties in cultural encounters. Their inability to absorb the culture and societal practices of the land they live in makes their times troubling. An absorbing nostalgia sweeps through the eyes of her characters like a satin cloth wiped across the face smoothly and softly giving in an instance the warm feeling of “belongingness” to a place they could truly identify with- the city of their endless joy and fond reminiscences, Calcutta. Their condition is well narrated by Lahiri in *The Namesake*:

“For being a foreigner...is a lifelong pregnancy, a continuous feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been ordinary life, only to discover that the previous life has vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding.” (49-50)

Lahiri’s second generation immigrants are children. They grow up in western society and feel uncomfortable with their ethnic Indian identity. They tend to believe as Lahiri says “When you are a foreigner and still getting used to the culture, you are walking a fine line.” So, naturally, Indian culture suffocates them. They easily connect with American/Western lifestyle and emphasize on individualism. But, all these females who uphold a self-made life suffer resistance to their freewill at their home, that too by their mothers! They break the ethnic walls but don’t receive any support from females at home.

“Old homes become blueprint for the new ones. But the lack of a guiding arrow or an orienting device for memory can render one homeless- both literally and emotionally.” (Geetanjali Singh Chanda)

In the novel *The Namesake*, Moushumi swears in her adolescence to not to marry any Indian but her vow is never supported by her mother. Moushumi grows promiscuous, and though she is married to Gogol, she nurtures extramarital affair with Dimitri. In the story “Hell- Heaven”, Usha secretly courts boys disapproving her mother’s admonishments. In “Only Goodness”, Sudha drinks, enjoys with boys and to the anguish of her parents marries a divorcee who is fourteen-year older to her. In the story “Nobody’s Business”, Sangeeta

prefers to be addressed as Sang in order to portray herself as an American. Her assertion about identity lies in her actions. In “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine”, despite the acknowledgement of the history of the Partition when Hindus and Muslims claimed authority over the same land and burned down each other’s houses, it surprises Lilia that her parents and Mr. Pirzada, who was a Muslim “spoke the same language, laughed at the same jokes and looked more or less the same” (25) and bonded more effectively on a land which was foreign to them both. It was when Mr. Pirzada got reunited with his family in Dacca that Lilia could feel his joy and contentment over the borders although she missed him and muses, “it was only then raising my water glass in his name, that I knew what it means to miss someone who was so many miles and hours away, just as he had missed his wife and daughters for so many months.” (42) The second generation women realize that they have to stand forthrightly to create their identity and set goals for their life. They assert their individual identity and personal choices. Though they are born to migrants, enjoy better settlement and place in that country but “their sense of identity borne from living in a diaspora community is influenced by the past migrant history of their parents or grandparents.” (McLeod: 2000: 207)

But the first generation immigrant females do not like to cross the ethical boundaries. They strive to continue with their ethnic values and identity, and are ready to pay for it. Boori Maa migrates to India but her life grows pathetic as she swings between her once rich past and her doomed present. Her role as “A Real Durwan” hardly churns the hearts of the residents in the apartment and as an extension of the eternal disparity between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’, she is thrown out of the premises with her bags and baskets. Her litanies tell about her affection towards her past which makes her an object of ridicule. The overpowering ethereal presence of the mother towers all mundane emotions in Ruma and her father in the story, “Unaccustomed Earth”. The mother was no more physically but her role in her husband’s and daughter’s life becomes too overwhelming for them. Ashima’s expectations from children, self imposed marginalization and divided loyalties make her suffer throughout her life in *The Namesake*. Ashima symbolically goes homeless as in the end of the novel the reader is informed that she would stay both in Calcutta and in America for six months each- “a solitary, somewhat premature version of future she and her husband had planned when he was alive” (*The Namesake*, 275).

So far we have discussed about the female immigrants of Lahiri’s narratives, who are ready to sacrifice their future for the sake of others, who believe in family, togetherness, and being there for one another through good and bad, but we are introduced to a refreshingly new woman character Gauri, in Lahiri’s new novel *The Lowland*.

The novel is set in the Tollygunge area of Calcutta in the 1950s, revolving around a middle-class family with two bright and sensitive brothers, Subhash and Udayan. They share a close-knit bond. But the bond fractures in the late 1960s as Udayan gets actively involved

in Naxalite uprising and Subhash being passive towards the movement, chooses his own way and leaves for his doctoral studies at a university in Rhode Island.

Udayan's execution makes Subhash return to Calcutta. Here, he meets Udayan's pregnant widow, Gauri, whom he then marries and takes back to Rhode Island with him. Gauri, on the other hand, escapes Udayan's fate, and moves to the United States, where she begins life anew with his brother and her daughter. Now, Lahiri places Gauri in her familiar territory of immigrant experience. But she is unlike her other first generation immigrant characters. Her move to the foreign land neither makes her curious about the new nor nostalgic for the old. She is unpredictably headstrong in breaking out from the notion of being an Indian Wife, a Mother and a Daughter-In-Law.

Gauri never establishes her relationship with Subhash and is unable to connect even with her daughter, Bela. Abandoning both her daughter and husband, she boldly, frees herself from the bondage of tradition and custom and without fear, she starts to live on her own terms—a truly American notion. However, after decades of separation and angst for all the kin, a secret from the past concerning Udayan and Gauri's role in the Naxalite movement is revealed. It is this pervasive indifference, a fundamental inability to connect, which becomes Gauri's punishment for her part in the Naxalite movement.

In sharp contrast to Udayan and Gauri, Bela is the second-generation immigrant and ill fated child of a marriage of convenience. While Gauri's motives remain unclear in abandoning her daughter, Bela's suffering is carefully depicted. "I am who I am," (The Lowland, 259) Bela imagines saying to her mother. As she grows older, Bela strives to be a caring and dedicated mother. "I live as I do because of you." (The Lowland, 259) She rejects Gauri's intellectual lifestyle, her passion for academics, and instead seeks a meaningful connection with living beings; she raises her daughter, Meghna, falls in love with Drew, embraces the counterculture lifestyle of an agricultural apprentice, and learns to grow her own food.

The web of perspectives that Lahiri carefully and dexterously weaves, leaves an indelible impression on her audience thus allowing them to empathize with her characters on a psychological and personal level and not just literally. "Good" and "evil" are hardly the words with which we can classify her characters because they struggle their way to make a place for themselves "in between" despite several setbacks. The characters are supple and transparent. The story "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" set entirely in Calcutta is interpretative of human maladies of the mind. It is about "the town's involvement ... over her marriage and in the idea of finding a husband." Lahiri has carved out a character so delicate that the final outcome doesn't jolt the reader out of the reverie. She demands, "Who takes me to the cinema, to the zoo- garden, buys me lime soda and cashews? Admit it, are these concerns of mine? I will never be cured, never married." (84) Rather it fills us with a more effective understanding of the workings of the human psyche. "Deprivation of fulfillment of certain

desires makes misfits of some people.” And eventually the birth of a baby boy cures Bibi Haldar of a mysterious malady in spite of being deprived of marriage.

Though we have discussed the theme of immigration and alienation in Lahiri’s works, we cannot elaborate on the discussion of the women subjects by ignoring the theme of love meeting, parting and lost forever in the sub plots of her narratives. As in the story, “Hema and Kaushik”, Hema and Kaushik meet as adults well into their middle age, craving for each other, bodily, soulfully, and trying to fill a void that they had felt right after they were conscious of anything that resembled close to “love”. Their first rendezvous as teenagers wasn’t a pleasant one in America but by the time they run across each other in Rome over time they are inseparable. But they love and dissolve into each other unconditionally, without any promise of anything more from life. Yet it was Kaushik who leaves an imprint on Hema’s body with his passionate and rugged kisses, the marks which made her assured, she was his but which too was washed away with turbulent turn of time as the body and memories associated with Kaushik when he disappeared into the waters of Thailand in a sudden surge of massive waves which lashed most parts of the world obliterating and rendering many people homeless and dead leaving for Hema, “nothing behind.” The relationships at one point look as superficial and refusing to ingrain into the hearts just as Akash’s Lego and dinosaurs stuffed into the soil in Ruma’s backyard which was unaccustomed to reap fruits and flowers of “Legos” and “dinosaurs.”

Love eludes both women and men characters in her stories. There is always a romantic notion set in the minds of these Bengali women who submit themselves to a man arranged to be married by the parents whom they have hardly met or even shared that notion with. The bond therefore grows only to a limited altitude, where it is not love but duty that binds them together- a responsibility linked to the Bengali culture of remaining devoted to husbands for children, for everybody else’s happiness but theirs and so, Usha’s mother in “Hell-Heaven”, finds herself hopelessly falling in love with Pranab, a young MIT scholar and a family friend, out of her wedlock enticed by his interests in all that she loved and had to relinquish after her marriage to a person absolutely poles apart from her. She even decides her suicide stunt after acknowledging Pranab’s engagement with an American girl, Deborah only to be foiled by a neighbor. Years later she confesses this to her daughter having witnessed her daughter’s failure in love too.

In “A Choice of Accommodations,” Amit out of his notion of love marries Megan, a New York based doctor leaving aside his fruitless attempt to assimilate into the life of Pam, his crush from his under grad days at Langford. After several years of a so-called happy married life and two angelic daughters, Maya and Monica, he felt an unexplained obligation to attend Pam’s wedding coaxing his wife to accompany him. Throughout their stay at the Langford grounds from the moment they arrive at Chadwick Inn till the post-wedding morning there is a restrained understanding between Amit and Pam, the reasons behind their

presence at an unsolicited event. The compartmentalized feelings boil vigorously and burst out when Megan is left unattended by Amit into the late night at the Langford grounds where the celebrations end and Amit being no longer able to contain his feeling of loss of Pam wanders into Chadwick Inn on the pretext of calling his daughters and falls asleep in the room only to find Megan reading a newspaper in the hotel room's balcony the next morning clearly exasperated and demanding answers. It is when they wander into girls' dormitory inside the Langford Academy that morning in their search for the "brunch party" when Megan directs her pent up feelings at Amit jolting him, "Was it in a room like this that you had sex for the first time ... Did you ever have sex with her ... Pam?"(125) What then follows is a terrible feeling of guilt that swells up inside Amit and he in an act of compensation makes love to Megan inside the dormitory.

It is not only the conjugal love that touches and clinches teasingly at the hearts of the characters but the perfect family tree in each of the stories appears to us with broken branches, scraped barks and torn leaves. Sudha continually tries to build a defense arena around her brother whose waywardness causes her to be questioned instead by everyone including her parents in the story "Only Goodness". Out of her instinctive duty to provide her brother, Rahul with a memorable childhood, she commits a blunder for which she is blamed by him, her husband and herself in a way. She introduces "beer fascination" as is with most American teenagers during their stay at Wayland which aggravates into a habit in Rahul. With frequent rounds at the rehabs, jails and uninterested long stays at home, he stumbles into the life of an American woman with a child whom the family never approves of and he is forced to leave home exclaiming to his father, "You're a snob. You're nothing but a pathetic old snob."(155) Lahiri brings out the sensitive details of a family's turmoil in letting their son slip away from them; a mother's blind belief in her son, blaming a racist politics in play against him for his drinking habits, a father's helplessness and anxiety giving way to non-reaction on his son's perpetual absence from the house and a sister's profound love concealed from the world apparent in her constant thoughts and words weighed carefully when she faces him at different intervals of their maturity. And eventually the myth of a perfect family is shattered to pieces when Rahul turns up after a long time at his sister's doorsteps in London to meet his nephew. Despite the awkwardness the siblings get along surprisingly well unlike during their growing years, gaining a moment of trust from Sudha's husband, Roger to look after their child while they steal away a few hours at the movie theatre, only to be found by them lying motionless, drunk and the baby in a precarious situation- inside the bathtub with the water running and gaining up to his neck. Roger packs Rahul's bag without batting an eyelid and warns his wife to wipe away his physical presence by next morning. Sudha literally drives her brother out, accusing him of resorting to utter carelessness with his drunkard misdemeanor and the possibility of horrific incident had she not returned home on time. Her confession to Roger about her role being instrumental in ruining her brother's life

shocks her husband and as Rahul leaves the driveway in the rented cab towards the airport, "...She clipped the ribbon (of the balloon bought by Rahul for his nephew) with scissors and stuffed the whole thing into the garbage, surprised at how easily it fit, thinking of the husband who no longer trusted her, of the son whose cry now interrupted her, of the fledgling family that had cracked open that morning, as typical and as terrifying as any other." (173)

Paul metamorphoses unconsciously into one of his literary characters continually pining and longing for the companionship of Sang in the story "Nobody's Business". Ironically his failure to unite with the woman he loves results in his gaining an honors degree in English Literature at the Boston University. His most coveted dream comes true but he is lost just like Sangeeta in the unforgiving world of deceptions and unrequited love. Even the endless Bengali suitors who constantly ring in a hope to set a match with Sang are eluded by the imaginative picture of a perfect Bengali woman who would set their lives right after marriage, being one of the rarest species of their community thriving in the posh suburbs of America. But everything in Sang's life goes wrong when her boyfriend, Farouk's infinite affairs are unveiled by Paul by a single phone call from a strange woman. Her world falls apart as she flashes back at the dependency her boyfriend had shown to her, letting her take care of him, forever making her live a fake life of which she was quietly aware of but refused to completely accept. Even when the truth comes out, she doesn't give away Farouk's name to the police and instead takes it upon her for the many blows Farouk inflicts upon her in a fit of rage after being caught. She appears to be strong in the beginning, knowing her way towards the direction her life was coursing through but her vision is blocked and she leaves the country for good escaping away to London never to return back.

Miranda never fully comprehends the meaning of "sexy" whispered to her by Dev in the Mapparium in the story "Sexy". She only felt the words seep into her skin through the dress giving her goose bumps and making her feel hot. However, playing the role of the mistress to a married man takes its toll on Miranda when her colleague, Laxmi's cousin comes to Boston with her seven-year old son, Rohin en route to India to recuperate from a broken trust and marriage with her husband of nine years who fell in love with a woman travelling with him to London. Miranda was fully aware that beyond physical fulfillment Dev couldn't give her anything. When Rohin exclaims "You're sexy," on seeing her wearing the silver evening gown she originally bought for a Sunday siesta with Dev, she gasps at the words and then the meaning he assigns to the word 'sexy'- 'loving someone you don't know' (Interpreter of Maladies, 59). She then feels precisely what she was doing with Dev and a parallel between her desperate situation and the pathetic condition of a deserted wife. Lahiri is remarkable in her modern approach in handling an emotional problem as in the story "A Temporary Matter" where Shukumar and Shobha have a tough time grappling with their fate having witnessed the delivery of a still born baby that threatens to rip apart the marital peace between the husband and wife. Sheltered under one roof, the marriage begins to look

like a temporary matter when an unbroken silence and aloofness characteristic of the reasons behind falling off of an Indian family, sets them apart.

At one time, the reader anticipates pervading happiness between the two when the temporary power cuts makes them share untold experiences but is shocked to hilt when Shobha declares shifting to a new apartment, alone. In all this, Shobha tries to punish herself though unconsciously for she is frustrated, angry and disappointed at the loss of her baby for whom she plans elaborately, months before her delivery. The ice breaks down finally when Shukumar confesses of his knowledge of the baby's sex from the doctor. Shobha is stunned and in moments of melting realizes that the death of the baby has affected her husband as much as her. Lahiri makes a standpoint here as is with practically all her characters when she conveys the message that everyone has to undergo his or her share of pain and here, for Shukumar the pain was bearable after the doctor suggested: "holding the baby might help you with the process of grieving", and he held his baby for a long time before he was cremated. But Shobha never gets this chance and hence, the prolongation of her malady.

Mrs. Das comes across as a woman with terrible maladies more psychological than physical. She begins life in the U.S. enveloped by the childhood love of her husband, Mr. Das, being inseparable, dreamy and romantically inclined than the literary characters but undergoes a metamorphosis after she delivers her first child, Ronnie, gaining weight and constantly feeling fatigued and overused. Slowly diverting away from social attention, her world pins on to the centre with changing nappies, checking the warmth of feeding bottles and looking after a family. A resident of America by birth, her upbringing and future scenario runs its course very much along the lines of Indian culture where her husband was pre-chosen by her parents; Mr. Das's parents being intimate friends of hers.

A sordid action on a lazy afternoon in a foreign land when her second son, Bobby was conceived with a friend of her husband's, has a tumultuous effect on her behavior and relationship with her family. For eight long years, the love she nestled so affectionately for her spouse and children ebbed and flowed with uncertain speed so much so that nothing affected her- her husband's unfaltering love, oblivious of the crime his wife had committed, her children's needs and perhaps her own as well. It is only when on a vacation to Orissa, the city of temples on the Eastern side of India, she confesses her dangerous secret to the driver guide Mr. Kapasi, who in turn is startled and bewildered at her audacious confession, that she feels relieved. Here, Lahiri as a fine story teller gives us a fantastic scene when waiting for a response from Mr. Kapasi to suggest a medication for her malady of long borne pain, disappointment with life and suicidal nature that the driver asks of her, "Is it really pain you feel, Mrs Das, or is it guilt?" that unable to form words and shocked at his question, she storms out of the car into the life she had long been evading.

The striking fact that appeals to the mind is Lahiri primarily writes from a woman's perspective. Her books are mostly autobiographical and she excels in providing a pellucid

and panoramic view of the situations through the eyes of the characters so much so that it's like witnessing a motion picture. Lahiri's interpretation of the women's maladies itself acts as a potent medicine in the way she psychologically delves into the inner worlds of her characters thus, revealing us a fascinating clash of countries and culture booming into a lowland of emotional isolation from where her female protagonists realize their own identity at a cathartic moment thus freeing themselves from the burden of an unaccustomed earth.

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