

TITLE PAGE

THE EFFECTS OF COLONIALISM ON SOUTH ASIAN IMMIGRANT
LITERATURE: GENDER IN JHUMPHA LAHIRI'S *THE INTERPRETER OF MALADIES*
AND BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S *JASMINE*

by

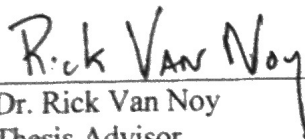
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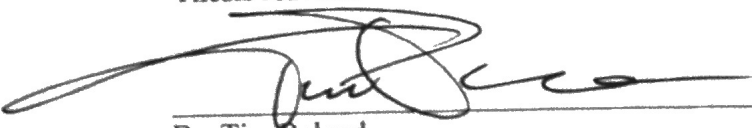
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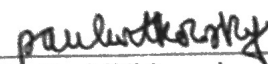
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines two South Asian immigrant narratives, Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, through Abdul R. JanMohamed's framework for colonial literature. The thesis argues that these works deviate from the traditional understanding of immigrant narratives due to colonialism's impact in South Asia. To prove this, the thesis demonstrates how the South Asian immigrants do not struggle with the criteria William Boelhower delineates in his work "The Immigrant Novel as Genre." Then I argue that these two texts are examples of symbolic colonial literature as they create hierarchal binaries between the Americans and the South Asians. To demonstrate these binaries, I examine gender roles in the first and second generation of the immigrants. First, I examine differences in masculine performances, arguing that Lahiri and Mukherjee are responding to colonial portrayals of effeminate Indian men. Then, I examine the differences in feminine performances, arguing that South Asian women are portrayed as inferior to American women. After examining gender roles and demonstrating how these two works differ from the traditional immigrant narrative, I conclude that they are examples of symbolic colonial literature.

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CHAPTER 1: A CONTINUATION OF COLONIAL LITERATURE

An examination of American immigrant literature typically occurs from the perspective established by William Boelhower in his 1981 essay “The Immigrant Novel as Genre,” where he argued that the creation of the immigrant genre as a literary field was necessary to avoid the “construction of a monocultural worldview, which cancels or melts immigrant and ethnic protagonism” (4). Boelhower created a framework for examining and assessing immigrant narratives based upon his examination of early European immigrant narratives. As a result, an examination of American immigrant literature is modeled on the experience of European immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. After examining European immigrant literature, Boelhower stated that the immigrant novel is one in which the “protagonist, representing an ethnic world view, comes to America with great expectations, and through a series of trials is led to reconsider them in terms of his final status” (5). Furthermore, the immigrant characters share the following traits: a language barrier, struggle to assimilate, fiscal crisis, ignorance of American norms, and guidance by an old worldview (7). A key reason Boelhower’s framework for immigrant literature has been successful is due to its general applicability to other immigrant groups. For instance, Latin American and Asian American immigrant literary narratives such as Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* (1975), Sandra Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street* (1984), Esmeralda Santiago’s *When I was Puerto Rican* (1994), Chang-Rae Lee’s *Native Speaker* (1995), and Junot Diaz’s *Drown* (1997) fit into Boelhower’s framework for immigrant literature.

However, the immigrant narratives of South Asians (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) deviate from Boelhower's model for several reasons. First, South Asian immigrants are from former British colonies, and thus have significant exposure to Western norms and the English language. Furthermore, a policy of the British Empire was the Anglicization of colonized lands, which hastened the acculturation of certain segments of the South Asian population (Mukherjee 411). Second, the immigrants' South Asian nations operate under the hegemonic influence of Western civilizations as evidenced by their membership in the Commonwealth of Nations and their adoption of Western structures such as parliamentary government. Third, the immigration policy reforms beginning with the Hart-Celler Act of 1965, which abolished the National Origins Formula, limited the entry of South Asian immigrants into the United States to 170,000 per year. The numerical restriction on South Asian immigrants to the United States favored immigration by the wealthiest and most educated South Asians. As a result, many of the South Asian immigrants arrived speaking English, pursuing higher education, and with positive financial prospects. Therefore, the South Asian immigrants portrayed in immigrant narratives do not struggle with the issues outlined by Boelhower and shared with other immigrant novels. Evidence of these differences can be seen by examining Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, which demonstrate that South Asian immigrants' primary concerns are not "a language barrier, struggle to assimilate, fiscal crisis, ignorance of American norms, and guidance by an old worldview" (Boelhower 7).

Mukherjee's novel and Lahiri's short story collection exemplify the South Asian immigrant narrative. By utilizing their works as models of South Asian immigrant literature, we gain a better understanding of how the South Asian immigrant narrative deviates from

Boelhower's model. Furthermore, as the Indian subcontinent gained independence from British rule within the last century (August, 1947), and these works are written in a post-colonial period, it makes sense to examine *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies* from a post-colonial perspective, which enables one to examine issues of acculturation, assimilation, hybridity, mimicry, and appropriation.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is a significant, influential, and foundational text for the post-colonial field of study, and "provides scholars with many registers with which to address and interpret" (Mishra 375). Said defines Orientalism as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and 'the Occident'" (2), and argues that a key feature of "Oriental-European relations was that Europe was always in a position of strength" (40). Said's work focuses primarily on the political and cultural relationship between Europeans and the Orient, though he does state that "Orientalism is a dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns" (15). A thorough examination of *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies* demonstrates that the texts are engaged in a "dynamic exchange" with previous European novels such as Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. Through their works, Lahiri and Mukherjee respond to "canonical" Western literature, which often depicted non-Europeans as inferior. For instance, Mukherjee purposefully models *Jasmine* after *Jane Eyre* to demonstrate that a *Bildungsroman* does not have to originate in the Western hemisphere and that a *Native* can also have a coming-of-age transformational story.

While Said's text helped establish the field of post-colonial study, it does not thoroughly examine literature. Abdul R. JanMohamed's article, "The Economy of

Manichean Allegory,” builds on Said’s argument about Orientalism and establishes a framework for examining literature. JanMohamed argues that during colonization natives are depicted to serve colonial purposes in colonial narratives. JanMohamed further asserts that there are two phases of colonization: dominant and hegemonic. The dominant phase of colonization exists until the colony gains independence. In the case of South Asian literature, the dominant colonial phase ended in August 1947. The hegemonic phase begins after independence as the natives adopt the colonizer’s values and perspectives. For South Asia the hegemonic phase is ongoing as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are members of the Commonwealth of Nations, which is primarily made up of former British colonies. Furthermore, evidence of South Asia’s acceptance of British values can be seen by their adoption of Western structures such as parliamentary government, regulated capitalism, and a general preference for Western modes of production over traditional modes of production. When examining South Asian literature, evidence of JanMohamed’s hegemonic phase can be seen through the choice made by renowned South Asians (Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Aravind Adija, et al.) to write in English, leading to the creation of the Indian English Literature (IEL) field, which is the primary contemporary field of literature in South Asia.

JanMohamed states that there are two types of colonial texts: symbolic and imaginary. The imaginary text portrays the native to be a one-dimensional product, and the word native equates to evil. An example of an imaginary text would be James Fenimore Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans*. Symbolic texts are more complicated and nuanced than imaginary texts, as symbolic texts “are aware of the inevitable necessity of using the native as a mediator of European desires” (19). These texts are willing to acknowledge and examine the differences in culture, but still view the two cultures in hierarchal terms and do not

advocate that syncretism or hybridity is a viable solution. JanMohamed states that symbolic texts can be divided into two categories. The first one “attempts to find syncretic solutions to the Manichean opposition of the colonizer and the colonized,” but ultimately does not succeed (19). An example of the first type of symbolic text is Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*. The second type of symbolic text begins with the premise that “syncretism is impossible,” and thus seeks to demonstrate that the colonial should dominate and impose himself on the native (20). JanMohamed cites *Heart of Darkness* and *A Passage to India* as examples of the second type of symbolic texts.

Thus, when examining South Asian immigrant narratives, one must begin with the basic understanding that due to the hegemonic nature of colonization, the South Asian immigrant experience drastically differs from the early twentieth-century European immigrant model. By using JanMohamed’s post-colonial framework for examining literature, we see that *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies* are examples of symbolic colonial literature, as the two works demonstrate that hybridity between the South Asian immigrants and Americans is not possible and creates a hierarchal relationship between the South Asian immigrants and the Americans. At first glance, it might appear odd that non-westerners can create colonial texts, but there is significant evidence and precedence of natives writing colonial texts. For instance, JanMohamed examines V.S. Naipaul’s *The Mimic Men* and demonstrates that Naipaul’s text is an example of symbolic colonial literature. Through a post-colonial reading of Mukherjee’s and Lahiri’s works, we see that significant differences exist between male and female immigrant behavior, that these difference exists in both first and second-generation South Asian immigrants, and that both genders and generations of South Asian immigrants are consistently inferior to their American counterparts.

In the first chapter, I examine the way Lahiri and Mukherjee portray South Asian and American males, the differences between first and second-generation South Asian males, and demonstrate that a hierarchal relationship exists between South Asian males and their American counterparts in both generations. Furthermore, I demonstrate that both authors are responding to a colonial narrative that portrayed South Asian males as effeminate. As a response, they create hyper-masculine males. This first-generation of South-Asian male immigrants are static characters who view masculinity as an unwavering set of behaviors. In comparison, the American men realize that masculinity has a variety of forms and that masculinity can be achieved in a variety of ways. The relationship between this generation of South Asian men and American men is hierarchal, with Lahiri and Mukherjee portraying the American men as superior. The second-generation of South Asian men reject their fathers' hyper-masculinity and attempt to emulate the multiple masculinities demonstrated by American men. However, this group struggles to balance multiple masculinities and behaves in an effeminate manner, which causes complications in their relationships. Similarly, Lahiri and Mukherjee juxtapose the second-generation of South Asian men with American men who easily navigate between multiple masculine performances.

In the second chapter, I examine the way Lahiri and Mukherjee portray South Asian and American females, the differences between first and second-generation South Asian females, and demonstrate that a hierarchal relationship exists between South Asian females and their American counterparts in both generations. In *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies*, the first-generation of South Asian women are depicted as traditional, dependent on their husbands, and subservient. I argue that this depiction of first-generation South Asian women is necessary for the hyper-masculine constructs to work. However, both authors juxtapose the

first-generation of South Asian women with American women who are independent, resourceful, modern, and capable of navigating multiple modes of feminine behaviors. Lahiri and Mukherjee depict the second-generation of South Asian women as overtly sexualized women, who are still not capable of being independent or resourceful. Similarly, these characters are juxtaposed with American women who, while sexualized, are able to maintain their independence and control their future.

By examining these two South Asian immigrant narratives closely from a post-colonial perspective, we see that these works continue a colonial legacy. Lahiri and Mukherjee portray the South Asian immigrant as inferior to their American counterpart, unintentionally creating symbolic colonial literature, as defined by JanMohamed. I conclude my examination of their work by offering a personal perspective on the immigration experience that varies from the binary oppositions Lahiri and Mukherjee unintentionally establish as normative.

CHAPTER 2: MANLY OR EFFEMINATE?

The immigrant novel genre began in late nineteenth century and coincided with increased immigration to America, which created social turmoil and angst. Novels such as Drude Krog Janson's *A Saloonkeeper's Daughter* (1887), Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (1912), Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), Willa Cather's *My Ántonia* (1918), and Anzia Yezierska's *Bread Givers* (1925) explored the way in which immigrants adapted to life in America and helped define the immigrant novel genre's characteristics. William Boelhower's examination of early twentieth-century immigrant novels led him to conclude that the immigrants depicted in these novels share the following characteristics: a language barrier, a struggle to assimilate, fiscal crisis, ignorance of American norms, and that the immigrants were guided by an old-world worldview. Boelhower's analysis of immigrant novels has continued to be relevant in examining late twentieth-century immigrant literature such as Esmeralda Santiago's *When I was Puerto Rican* (1994), Chang-Rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995), and Junot Diaz's *Drown* (1997), as these works can be read through Boelhower's framework of immigrant literature.

However, South-Asian immigrant literature differs from Boelhower's model, in particular Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989) and Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999). Certainly, the immigrant experience is an aspect of both Mukherjee's and Lahiri's works, but it is not the central focus of their books. For instance, the protagonists in *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies* do not struggle with the problems explicated by Boelhower, since they speak English, assimilate into American culture, and prosper financially. Instead, a central aspect of Mukherjee's and Lahiri's works is the examination of gender roles and the

differences in gender roles between first and second-generation South Asian immigrants. Furthermore, by exploring gender roles Mukherjee and Lahiri respond to the depiction of the effeminate Indian male created by British colonial authors such as E.M. Forster and Rudyard Kipling in *A Passage to India* and *Kim*.

Through their works, Lahiri and Mukherjee explore South Asian immigrant masculine constructs such as the hyper masculine male, the metrosexual male, and the effeminate male. The first-generation South Asian immigrant male characters, I argue, are depicted as hyper masculine, do not display any concern about gender roles, and are not successful in romantic relationships. Conversely, the second-generation South Asian immigrant male characters struggle to behave in hyper masculine ways and tend towards metrosexual and effeminate behaviors, similar to the South Asian males depicted by Kipling and Forster. As a result, the second-generation South Asian immigrant men are plagued with self-doubt about their masculinity and flounder in romantic relationships, which are often depicted by their partner's unfaithfulness. Neither South Asian immigrant generation demonstrates the ability to appropriate aspects of masculinity to construct a new masculine identity, one that combines hyper masculine, metrosexual, and effeminate behaviors. Both Lahiri and Mukherjee represent Caucasian American men as not bound by rigid gender constructs—their performative actions can appropriate new identities.

Pompper defines masculinity as “a slippery notion of what is expected of men that varies throughout” (683) their lives, and both Mukherjee and Lahiri utilize masculinity in ways that demonstrate the effects of colonialism on South Asian men. Both authors are Bengali and Bengal's colonial history influences their writing. Bengal, a region in the northeast of the Indian subcontinent, is divided between the modern nation-states of India

and Bangladesh and was the political and commercial of British India. The East India Trading Company established trading posts in Bengal's capital, Calcutta, in 1690. The British named Calcutta the capital of British India in 1772 (Baxter 31). Historical evidence in the form of letters, official British documents, and diaries demonstrates that the aristocratic Bengali male was depicted as effeminate in comparison with the British (Sinha 447). In *The Good Parsi*, Tanya Luhrmann argues that in literature "the British were hyper-masculinized, scientific, and progressive, a high step on the evolutionary ladder; the Indians were effeminate, childlike, primitive, and superstitious" (8). The effeminate depiction extended into the writings of British officials such as Thomas Babington Macaulay, a British administrator in the nineteenth century: "the physical organization of the Bengali is feeble even to effeminacy" (Dhingra 144). The repeated charges of effeminate behavior by South Asian men occur only in areas colonized by the British in South Asia. For example, the Pathans—who occupied parts of Punjab, modern day Pakistan and Afghanistan—were not colonized in the same way as Bengalis. As a result, historical British documents do not depict the Pathans as effeminate. Instead, the Pathans are "aggressive and hyper-sexualized" (Dhingra 143). In Forster's *A Passage to India*, Ronny Heaslop, a British magistrate, states that "the Pathan—he's a man," when discussing British concerns about rebellion in India. Heaslop's comments further demonstrate that colonization and conquest changed the way the British viewed a population's masculinity, as the British had conquered Bengal but not the Punjab (38).

The repeated depiction of South Asian males, especially Bengalis, as effeminate, permeated Western literature and helped to reinforce the notion of masculinity as a singular monolith achievable only by the Westerner. For example, in Forster's *A Passage to India*

Ronny Heaslop, the magistrate, speaks at a party about the ridiculousness of dressing up like an Indian man and states, “the educated Indians will be no good to us if there’s a row,” implying that the Indian men lack masculinity (38). Mukherjee and Lahiri rebut these Western notions of Bengali masculinity by depicting first-generation immigrant Bengali men as almost the exact opposite of these Western notions. Their first-generation male characters are instead hyper masculine. Through these representations, both authors unwittingly continue a tradition of depicting South Asian men’s masculinities as a monolithic entity. A common trope in the immigrant literary genre is the conflict between first-generation immigrants and their children, and both authors use this conflict to explore masculine identities. The first-generation South Asian immigrant men respond to the effeminate depictions of South Asian males by embracing hyper masculinity and rigid gender roles. The second-generation of South Asian men reject their fathers’ notion of masculinity, yet are self-conscious about their own.

A close reading of *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies* highlights the differences between masculinity in first and second generation South Asian immigrants. Mukherjee’s novel follows the journey of Jasmine, the protagonist, from a rural Indian town to America. Throughout the novel, Jasmine transforms herself and demonstrates a remarkable ability to reinvent herself. For instance, Jasmine begins the novel as Jyoti, then morphs into Jasmine, then Jase, and then, when in Iowa “Plain Jane” (Mukherjee 4). Jasmine’s success at blending into her surroundings stems from her ability to assimilate and practice cultural mimicry, as she’s aware that her “genuine foreignness frightens” others (Mukherjee 4). Through Jasmine’s journey we see several examples of South Asian immigrant masculine constructions, such as Professorji.

Lahiri's thematic collection of short stories offers numerous examples of the differences between first and second-generation South Asian male immigrants. In the collection, the following stories focus on first-generation South Asian immigrants: "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine," "Mrs. Sen's," and "The Third and Final Continent." In these stories, the gender roles are established, traditional, and the men adhere to a rigid masculine identity. Conversely, the following stories focus on second-generation South Asian immigrants: "A Temporary Matter," "Interpreter of Maladies," and "This Blessed House." In these stories, gender roles are fluid and the men do not adhere to the traditional masculine identity of their fathers. As a result, the second-generation men in Lahiri's collection struggle with self-esteem and their romantic relationships suffer.

The second-generation South Asian immigrant men attempt to create a hybrid identity to balance conflicting societal demands by their ethnic roots and their new American homeland. The identity struggle is most prevalent in first and second-generation South Asian immigrant men who have varying definitions of masculinity, which, as Judith Butler informs us in "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" is a performative action based upon the adoption of societal norms. The second-generation immigrant men attempt to reconcile the social norms of their parents and American popular culture, but struggle to excel at either—leading to a loss of self-esteem. Both Mukherjee and Lahiri utilize middle-class Caucasian American men as examples of how males do not need to adhere to a rigid definition of masculinity. For example, in *Jasmine*, Taylor and Bud, Jasmine's lovers, demonstrate multiple notions of masculinity by participating in household chores and cooking. In these novels, the American men's masculinity is not an issue. There is no tension regarding the validity of their performative actions, nor does the community judge their actions. The

American characters demonstrate Kimmel's argument in "Global Masculinities" that "men's realities encompass a range of interconnected identities, so that plural masculinities [are] more accurate" (683). In contrast to the Americans, the first-generation of South Asian male immigrants demonstrate a rigid adherence to traditional masculinity, which is seen through rigid gender-roles and a clear hierarchy between the genders. However, second-generation South Asian men, as portrayed by Mukherjee and Lahiri, deviate from hyper-masculinity, flounder in romantic relationships, think themselves effeminate, and are plagued with self-doubt.

Mukherjee's and Lahiri's depiction of South-Asian men embracing hyper-masculinity is a reaction to colonization and the subsequent orientalist caricatures of the effeminate Indian in colonial literature. For example, in *Kim* Hurree Babu, a Bengali intelligence operative, states, "I am unfortunately Asiatic, which is a serious detriment in some respects. And all-so I am Bengali—a fearful man" (179). Even though Babu is Kim's superior and works for the British, his ethnicity prohibits him from being brave, a stereotypical masculine trait. Mukherjee's and Lahiri's work consistently depict first-generation South Asian immigrant men as the near opposite of the colonial portrayals of South Asian men. For example, in Lahiri's "The Third and Final Continent," the unnamed narrator relates his duties regarding his wife as being "my duty to take care of Mala ... to protect her" (Lahiri 190). In this instance, the Bengali narrator's statement of protection demonstrates his masculinity and illustrates his thoughts about women's ability to protect themselves. Similar to Kipling's and Forster's portrayal of effeminate Indian men, the depiction of the first-generation immigrants by Lahiri and Mukherjee is rigid and without variation. All of the first-generation men

believe in traditional gender roles, according to which the men are the protectors, the providers, and the head of the household.

In “The Economy of Manichean Allegory” Abdul R. JanMohamed argues that colonial literature falls into two categories: symbolic and imaginary (65). Imaginary texts are ones where “the writer [...] tends to fetishize a non-dialectical, fixed opposition between the self and the native” and symbolic texts are where writers “examine the specific individual and cultural differences between Europeans and natives” (65). Novels such as James Fenimore Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans* and Joyce Cary’s *Mister Johnson* are examples of imaginary texts, as in these works there exists a fixed binary opposition between the native and the colonizer. JanMohamed further argues that symbolic texts seek to find hybrid solutions to European and Native problems, but inevitably fail and in the process “illustrate the economy and power of the Manichean allegory,” where inherently the native is inferior to the European, symbolic of evil, and needs to be tamed and controlled by the European (65).

E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* and Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* are examples of the first type of symbolic texts as they seek to find syncretic solutions between the British and the Indians, but by the end both texts demonstrate that a hierarchal difference exists between the two groups. Furthermore, JanMohamed demonstrates that natives can write colonial literature as well, citing V.S. Naipaul’s “representation of the innate barbarity of Third World” in *The Mimic Men* as an example (84). Similar to Naipaul, Lahiri and Mukherjee write symbolic colonial literature as they approach syncretism between the Americans and South Asian immigrants through their depiction of second-generation male immigrants. It is in this group that we see an attempt at hybridity as the second-generation immigrants attempt to reconcile their parent’s definition of masculinity with the contemporary American

definition of masculinity. However, the syncretic practices fail, as the second-generation immigrants consistently appear muddled, unsure, and weak in romantic relationships.

Concurring with JanMohamed, Salman Rushdie argues that, ostensibly, both writers are familiar with the traditional literary canon and have read works by Forster and Kipling where the Indian male is portrayed as an effeminate caricature (100). Rushdie's novel *The Midnight Children* is a rebuttal to Forster and Kipling's rejection of syncretism, as the protagonist, Saleem, a Muslim who is the son of a Hindu woman and an Englishman, is a living example of hybridity. Rushdie's work demonstrates a tradition within Indian English Literature and the larger literary community where writers respond to previous literary works through their literary work. Just as Rushdie rejects Forster's and Kipling's symbolic texts, Lahiri and Mukherjee reject the effeminate Indian male, as evidenced by the way they portray first-generation South Asian males' strict adherence to hyper masculine roles. Effeminate first-generation South Asians do not appear in either of their works. The lack of diversity in Lahiri's and Mukherjee's depiction of first-generation South Asians results in these characters becoming caricatures of South Asian men, similar to the way Aziz and Babu from Forster's and Kipling's works, respectively, were portrayed. Lahiri and Mukherjee are Bengali, the South Asians most often portrayed as effeminate in colonial literature, and their works seek to rebut the representation of the effeminate Bengali.

Evidence of Mukherjee's desire to respond to previous writers can be found in her interview with Robin Field, director of Women's Studies at King's College and treasurer of the South Asian Literary Association. In the interview Mukherjee stated that the short-story and novel *Jasmine* are responses to V.S. Naipaul's assertion that a person's physical location matters and thus anyone born in the "third world" is likely to be irrelevant (247). Mukherjee

(and Lahiri continues in this vein) responds to Naipaul by demonstrating that immigration makes it possible for the third world citizen to speak in meaningful ways. However, while Lahiri's and Mukherjee's works depict South Asian immigrants as educated and *financially* successful, they fail to depict immigrants in *socially* meaningful ways. For example, in Lahiri's "The Third and Final Continent" the unnamed narrator, a student at MIT, stays silent during a conversation between an American mother and her daughter about the social changes occurring across the United States in 1969 (186). The social upheaval does not affect the narrator nor does he comment on the conversation, even though in 1969 there were numerous student protests across university campuses in Boston, including protests at M.I.T, Harvard, Tufts, and Brandeis (Harvard). As M.I.T. was involved in military research, the protests across its campus regarding the Vietnam War were massive, and it led to 10-year prison terms for some protestors (Job).

The time period for the first-generation immigrants depicted in Lahiri's and Mukherjee's works correspond to a time of significant social unrest in the United States, as these immigrants arrive in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet, both authors ignore the social upheaval that the first-generation immigrants, as students on university campuses, would have been impacted by, in favor of demonstrating the static social order in the first-generation immigrants' homes and their financial success. For instance, during the same time period in *Jasmine*, Taylor—a physicist, Jasmine's lover, and a Caucasian American male—is concerned with being called a bigot (61). However, Professorji, a first-generation immigrant, does not think, participate in, or discuss the social upheaval occurring across the United States. Instead, his primary focus is maintaining his status as the "Almighty him" in the eyes

of his wife (151). Professorji's unrealistic behavior is indicative of the fact that Mukherjee is focused on representing first-generation males as hyper-masculine.

The use of immigration as a literary device by Mukherjee and Lahiri to show that a person born in the third-world can be relevant demonstrates the veracity of JanMohamed's two stages of colonialism model, the dominant and hegemonic. The dominant phase lasts until the colony declares or is granted its independence. The hegemonic phase occurs when the "natives accept a version of the colonizer's entire system of values, attitudes, morality, institutions, and, more important, mode of production" (62). By setting their works within the immigration framework and juxtaposing modes of masculinity, where American modes of masculinity are seen to be superior as this masculinity is liberating instead of regulatory, both Mukherjee and Lahiri demonstrate that they have accepted a version of the colonizers' system of values and that the natives should emulate the colonizers. For example, both authors represent South-Asian males as attempting to duplicate American modes of masculinity, but the South-Asian males consistently fail to do so.

However, as their works are also symbolic examples of colonial literature, the natives are a generation behind the colonizers. For instance, during the colonial rule of South Asia the literary depictions of South Asian men are effeminate and the colonizers are masculine. When Lahiri and Mukherjee depict South Asian men they follow the idea of the masculine identity established by colonial writers. Furthermore, Lahiri's and Mukherjee's South Asian men realize that greater financial success can be achieved by leaving South Asia and living in the West. However, the West's ideas about masculinity have changed by the time Mukherjee's and Lahiri's characters arrive, causing the male characters to appear provincial, as they are uniformly masculine when the West's conception of masculinity is changing.

Mukherjee and Lahiri's works are examples of symbolic colonial literature as they seek to explore the differences between Americans and South Asians. Their texts demonstrate that the American way of life is superior to the South Asian way of life, as the Caucasian American men are able to navigate multiple masculine identities. For instance, in the short story "Jasmine," which became the novel *Jasmine*, Mukherjee depicts Jasmine's awe at Bill's cooking for pleasure, "Jasmine hadn't seen a man cook who didn't have to or wasn't getting paid to cook. [...] But even her daddy, who'd never poured himself a cup of tea, wouldn't put Bill down as a woman" (133). If Jasmine's father or any other South Asian man were to cook out of choice he would be seen as violating acceptable gender roles and be ostracized from the community. Yet, when Bill engages in stereotypical female behavior such as cooking, the action does not emasculate him. Instead, it entices and excites Jasmine. In the novel *Jasmine*, several Caucasian male characters engage in household duties, blurring traditional gender roles. For instance, Darrell, Jasmine's neighbor, cooks Indian food to attract Jasmine's romantic interest. Darrell tells Jasmine, "I'd like to invite you in some day [...] I've been practicing with some of your recipes" (25). Yet, Darrell is also portrayed as a rugged farmer and construction worker: "We can see Darrell up on the crossbeams of his hog pen. It's already bigger than Gene's old barn, and a lot more secure" (24). In Mukherjee's work, the Caucasian American men are capable of navigating multiple masculinities, and the ability to do so makes them desirable. In contrast, Professorji, a first-generation South Asian immigrant male, does not engage in any household duties and follows "an ancient prescription of marital accord: silence, order, authority," and his wife follows a similar prescription "submission, beauty, innocence" (151). Professorji's character is static and does not have the capability to change as the world around him changes. His primary concerns are

fiscal and an appearance of masculinity, which identify him as a provincial character. For example, the American men are open, engaging, and confident with women and do not worry about their masculine image. In contrast, Professorji is “secretive [and] parsimonious with his affections” (150). By juxtaposing Professorji with American models of masculinity—Taylor, Darrell, and Bud—Mukherjee creates a hierarchal binary that exists in all colonial literature.

Similarly, in Lahiri’s short story “This Blessed House” from *Interpreter of Maladies*, we see an acceptance of a variety of masculine performances when it concerns American men. For instance, Sanjeev’s co-worker, Douglas, enjoys himself at a housewarming party without being concerned about how his behavior affects his masculinity, “His face was flushed and he was wearing Nora’s feather hat on his head” (154). The rest of the guests embrace Douglas’s behavior and join his revelry. However, Sanjeev does not join the guests in their celebration and throughout the story displays uneasiness with his own masculinity. Sanjeev, a second-generation South Asian immigrant, attempts to combine competing masculine identities, as he is the primary breadwinner and also responsible for the household duties. Sanjeev does not adhere to rigid gender roles like his parents, and he tries to embrace multiple models of masculinity like the American men. For example, after moving into their new house Sanjeev and Twinkle, his wife, find a statue of Christ. Sanjeev is worried about displaying the statue, as it could obscure their Hindu identity. Twinkle brushes aside Sanjeev’s concerns as she “planted a kiss on top of Christ’s head, then placed the statue on top of the fireplace mantel, which needed, Sanjeev observed, to be dusted” (137). In this scene, the stereotypical gender roles are reversed, as Twinkle makes decisions concerning the family and Sanjeev notices things need to be cleaned. Throughout the story, Sanjeev is uncomfortable about his masculine identity and unsure of how to behave in most social

situations. The second-generation immigrant men in Lahiri's work recognize that there are multiple forms of masculine behavior, as they see the variations in masculinity in American men and strive to behave like American men. However, the paradox is that sometimes Caucasian American men behave in ways that South Asian men consider effeminate and these South Asian men struggle to mimic effeminate behavior due to the historical representation of effeminate South Asians that Mukherjee and Lahiri rebut.

The second-generation South Asian immigrant men fail when they attempt to mimic the various forms of American masculinity for two reasons. First, historically, South Asian men are depicted negatively when behaving in effeminate ways, and these characters view effeminate male behavior with suspicion. Second, they are under the impression that Caucasian masculine behavior is the model to imitate, but contemporary Caucasian masculine behavior embraces a plurality of models and at times resembles what South Asian men consider to be effeminate behavior. As a result, when second-generation South Asian immigrant men are publicly confronted with a behavioral choice they freeze, as Sanjeev does at his housewarming party when the Caucasian men like Douglas dress in effeminate clothing and dance. Yet, second-generation South Asian men continue their attempts at masculine mimicry, as they believe that Western values are superior to South Asian ones. An instance of this paralysis occurs when Sanjeev worries about his eyelashes, believing his wife's teasing that they "look like a girl's" (140). Sanjeev desires a patriarchal gender hierarchy, but the combination of feminine features and mimicking contemporary masculinity models that blur traditional gender roles causes Sanjeev to worry about his masculinity. Furthermore, Sanjeev's marriage to Twinkle is acrimonious, as he is unhappy with the power dynamic between the two of them since Twinkle does not believe in

“submission.” Sanjeev struggles to articulate his frustration with the lack of power, which he believes should inherently be his as a male. As the primary earner in the relationship Sanjeev wants Twinkle to clean the house, since she does not work, even though she is a graduate student working on her thesis. Yet, he is unable to express his feelings to Twinkle out of fear that she would reject his requests: “He wanted to say to her then you could unpack the boxes. You could sweep the attic. You could retouch the paint on the bathroom sill” (141). The blurred gender roles, the attempt to perform varying modes of masculinity, the decision to distance himself from his parents’ traditional patriarchal hierarchy, and a historical recognition of the effeminate South Asian, all cause Sanjeev to freeze, making it impossible for him to succeed in romantic relationships. Sanjeev is unable to speak his mind to Twinkle, and instead resorts to passive-aggressive behavior such as marking spots in the house that need cleaning or painting with post-its (136). Second-generation South Asian characters such as Sanjeev demonstrate how *Interpreter of Maladies* and *Jasmine* are in fact symbolic colonial texts as defined by JanMohamed. The second-generation South Asian males’ attempts to create multiple hybrid/syncretic masculinities repeatedly fail, while the Caucasian American men navigate multiple masculinities and traditional gender roles with ease.

As Sanjeev vacillates between modes of masculinity, the distance between Twinkle and him widens. In "American Spaces in the Fiction of Jhumpa Lahiri," Judith Caesar argues that “Lahiri uses the architecture of old American houses as an emblem of the emotional spaces between the people who live in those houses” (56). In “This Blessed House,” there are numerous examples where the architecture of the house reflects the emotional spaces between Sanjeev and Twinkle, which is exacerbated by Sanjeev’s attempts at masculine mimicry. For example, Sanjeev, angry at Twinkle’s latest dismissal of his request, storms

into the bathroom to find Twinkle taking a bath. Twinkle raises her legs and sensually asks, “Where are you going to put it” (148)? Twinkle is refereeing to the Christ statue they found in their house, but her nudity and physical movements suggest a double entendre. Sanjeev does not understand, as his struggle with masculinity makes him impotent and uninterested in sex. In comparison, Twinkle is excited, engaged, and interested in sex, but with Sanjeev’s continuous rejection the distance between them grows and the house takes on symbolic meaning. For Twinkle, the house is marvelous and full of adventure. As a result, when Sanjeev comes looking for her, Twinkle is in an intimate area of the house, a place whose architecture symbolizes closeness and joy. While Twinkle bathes, reads sonnets, and drinks wine in the bathtub, Sanjeev broods in his study, drinks whiskey, watches the news, and works up the courage to confront Twinkle. The newly purchased house, with its distinctly masculine and feminine spaces, demonstrates the gulf between the couple.

Instead of creating a new mode of masculinity, a hybrid or syncretic mode, Sanjeev mimics the behavior of Caucasian American men. Homi Bhabha describes hybridity as “an international culture, based not on the exoticism or multiculturalism of the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity” (157). It is clear that Sanjeev does not create an international culture. For instance, Lahiri writes that “Sanjeev was lonely, with an excessively generous income for single man,” and only decides to marry since he “has enough money in the bank to raise three families” (148). The decision to pursue an arranged marriage comes from his South Asian heritage and the notion of masculinity that requires that Sanjeev, with this excessive income, must have a wife to look after him. This traditional masculinity is a rebuttal of the colonial effeminate masculinity ascribed to South Asians by the British, and the same one Professorji follows when he speaks of “an ancient

prescription of marital accord: silence, order, authority” (Mukherjee 151). There is no possibility of Sanjeev staying single or deviating from heteronormativity. Simultaneously, Sanjeev’s odd behavior in his relationship with Twinkle comes from his decision to mimic a form of American masculinity, which allows for multiple masculinities to exist. At first glance, Sanjeev’s behavior might look like hybridity, but the two masculinities are separate, incompatible, and in constant conflict. Sanjeev’s heritage, a traditional patriarchal masculinity, wants him to establish dominance over Twinkle and avoid being effeminate. Conversely, the contemporary models of masculinity encompass numerous ways to be masculine, and appearing effeminate is not a concern, as effeminate behavior is merely a construction of social and gender expectations. The two conflicting masculinities leave Sanjeev paralyzed, unable to act, and unable to find any happiness, as demonstrated through his antagonistic relationship with Twinkle.

Throughout Lahiri’s and Mukherjee’s work we see a consistent hierarchy of masculinity, which places the American performances at the top. In Mukherjee’s depiction of Taylor and Professorji we see two contrasting forms of masculinity. Taylor represents one of several American masculinities in these two works, and his behavior is depicted as a rallying point for the oppressed female gender. Simultaneously, the juxtaposition of Taylor and Professorji implicitly extends Western cultural superiority over South Asians. Yet, when comparing the actions of Taylor and Professorji it is clear which one of them is the more honorable person. Taylor hires Jasmine as a nanny, pursues her relentlessly, and sleeps with her while his wife is out of town. Professorji invites Jasmine to live with his family when she is homeless, offers to help her procure a green card, and when Jasmine finds out that he works at a factory instead of teaching at a university, Professorji pleads with her not to reveal

his lowered position to the community. Throughout the novel, Taylor is depicted as more masculine than Professorji regardless of his performative actions that blur gender roles. In fact, the blurring of gender roles makes Taylor more alluring to Jasmine, whereas the blurring of gender roles in South Asian males makes them unappealing to women. For example, in “Interpreter of Maladies,” the story of Raj and Mina’s vacation to India, we see Raj, a second-generation South Asian, attempt to mimic multiple masculinities. However, when he speaks his voice sounds “tentative and a little shrill [...] as though it had not yet settled into maturity” (44). Furthermore, Raj teaches middle school, a stereotypically gendered profession, and Mina is not sexually interested in him. When the tour guide comments on their son’s bravery to Mina she responds, “It’s not so surprising, he’s not his” (62). The son was conceived during Mina’s one-night stand with a Punjabi, who is also known as a Pathan. The Pathans were the group of people on the Indian subcontinent depicted as masculine by the British in their colonial writing, and Ronny from *A Passage to India* states, “the Pathan—he’s a man” (Forster 38). Again, we see the South Asian male who attempts to mimic multiple masculinities is not considered attractive, but the Punjabi (Pathan), who is not colonized and thus not subject to the Manichean allegory, stays true to his identity and is considered attractive. In the same way, when Caucasian American men navigate multiple masculinities they are attractive, since they remain authentic to their identity.

Neither Taylor, the Punjabi, Professorji, nor Raj are angelic in their behavior. Two of them are adulterers, the Professorji a liar, and Raj a coward. Yet, all four characters use masculinity as regulatory functions in their lives. In “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” Judith Butler argues that “identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes,

whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression” (308). The difference between the four characters is in their motivations. Taylor desires Jasmine and seeks to win her by using the form of masculinity that he knows. Professorji uses gender and his pretended position at a university to garner respect. The Punjabi knows he can sleep with Mina at will and does, and Raj fears confrontation, so he pretends to be a progressive masculine male when he is really a coward. The difference between the four men’s use of masculinity as a regulatory discourse comes down to the sexual versus the selfish. Both Lahiri’s and Mukherjee’s texts portray Taylor and the Punjabi as the favored model of masculinity. Professorji and Raj appear as obtuse South Asians that do not understand how to function in the Western world and appear pathetic in their attempts to fit into it. By juxtaposing the competing forms of masculinity, and implicitly stating that the American modes of masculinity are better, both Lahiri and Mukherjee create symbolic colonial texts. In reality, the American mode of masculinity is just as intertwined with hierarchy and regulative discourse as the South Asian mode of masculinity.

R.W. Connell’s *Masculinities* helped to create the Men’s Studies field and identify many different masculinities, each linked with various hierarchal positions. In Lahiri’s and Mukherjee’s works we see variations of masculinity situated within the immigrant and colonial context, though when examining immigrant literature not much has been said about masculine identity. For instance, in “The Immigrant Novel as Genre,” Boelhower delineates the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century immigrant novel’s structure: “An immigrant protagonist representing an ethnic world view, comes to America with great expectations, and through a series of trials is led to reconsider them in terms of his final status” (5). For

Boelhower, a key element is that the “protagonists are clearly first generation,” and that these protagonists will have similar struggles around the following issues: they are naïve and ignorant of American life, they have a language barrier, they are unassimilated, they are hopeful, and their actions are guided by an old-world worldview (7). Boelhower’s argument focuses on immigration from Europe, ignores the Chinese immigrant narratives that depict immigration on the West Coast of the United States, and does not discuss skin color as a unifying force among these immigrants. For all of Europe’s regional differences, the variations in its populations’ skin color are minimal when compared to other continents. Furthermore, this general unity in skin color permits a diversity of masculinity to flourish in literature, as these variations do not threaten the hegemonic hierarchy or regulative discourses, which place Caucasian men at the top. As we see from Mrinalini Sinnah’s work, *Colonial Masculinity*, skin color plays a role in the masculinities available for populations to engage in. As a result, in Lahiri and Mukherjee’s texts there are limited modes of masculinity available to the South Asian immigrants.

As evidenced by JanMohamed’s argument about colonization and colonialist literature from writers such as Forster, Conrad, and Kipling, when Anglo culture encounters the native, the native becomes an essentialized being, reduced to simplistic qualities with little room for diversity or variation. It is the “othering” of the native that leads to the emasculation of the native males and the prescription of effeminate qualities to native males during colonization. As Edward Said argues, during the colonial process, hybridization cannot exist (93) and we notice the rejection of hybrid practices in numerous colonial texts. For colonization to function there needs to be a binary and hierarchical relationship between the colonizer and the native. JanMohamed furthers Said’s argument by stating that there are two

phases of colonization, dominant and hegemonic. When colonies gain independence, they transition to the hegemonic phase of colonization, as they have internalized colonial values. We see this in Mukherjee's and Lahiri's works as their characters internalize Western values and place those values in a position of authority over their lives.

Male characters in Mukherjee's and Lahiri's works emerge from this hegemonic condition, as both writers are actively resisting various aspects of colonization. However, in their attempts to resist colonial caricatures of native people, including the effeminate constructions of masculinity offered by Forster and Kipling, both Mukherjee and Lahiri unintentionally create a caricature of South Asian immigrant men by ascribing an essential masculine quality with no variation to the first-generation of immigrant men. JanMohamed argues that critics of colonial literature do not pay attention to the political and historical events that influence the literature, and this is evident in Boelhower's analysis of immigrant narratives, as his argument is concerned only with what happens once the immigrant arrives, not what happened prior to their departure. Boelhower's article inherently accepts assimilation as the normative form of behavior for immigrants with the implicit implication that the "ethnic world view" must conform to the Anglo-American worldview, and as a result he neither allows nor suggests the possibility of hybridity. Furthermore, Boelhower does not account for the ways in which a colonized culture creates immigration narratives, where their very attempts to assimilate cause a clash of values.

For Boelhower the successful immigrant is one who methodically resolves cultural differences between their "ethnic worldview" and the Anglo-American worldview by discarding their "ethnic worldview." However, Mukherjee and Lahiri's work demonstrate the difficulty of creating syncretic practices, as evidenced by South Asian second-generation

immigrant men's struggles with masculinity. Unfortunately, neither authors' works attempts to dismantle the regulative discourse gender roles play within cultures (American or South Asian), and both inherently accept a traditional masculinity, in all its various forms, as the dominant regulative discourse. Perhaps, the next generation South Asian immigrant literature will explore regulative gender discourses by deviating from the hetronormative experience offered by Mukherjee and Lahiri.

CHAPTER 3: THE ONE DIMENSIONAL WOMAN

During the late nineteenth century, women's struggle for equality impacted numerous aspects of life in the United States, including literature. The women's suffrage movement coincided with the rise of the immigrant novel genre, and the women's suffrage movement's influence can be seen on the immigrant novel genre by examining novels such as Drude Krog Janson's *A Saloonkeeper's Daughter* (1887), Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (1912), Willa Cather's *My Antonia* (1918), and Anzia Yezierska's *Bread Givers* (1925). Each of these novels features strong female characters who, in the process of challenging traditional definitions of femininity, demonstrate themselves to be just as capable as men if not more. In the twentieth century, the trend of strong immigrant female characters is well established as novels such as Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959), Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1975), Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* (1984), Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), Esmeralda Santiago's *When I was Puerto Rican* (1994), and Gish Jen's *Mona in the Promised Land* (1996), all of which feature nuanced and diverse portrayals of women. Furthermore, these novels function within William Boelhower's framework for immigrant literature, which states that immigrants share a language barrier, a struggle to assimilate, fiscal crisis, ignorance of American norms, and an adherence to an old worldview.

However, the depiction of women in South-Asian immigrant literature differs from the established feminist trend in immigrant literature, as evidenced by examining Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989) and Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999). In both of these works, the South-Asian women are not portrayed in diverse or nuanced ways, essentially becoming caricatures. Mukherjee's and Lahiri's texts are examples of symbolic

colonial literature as defined by Abdul R. JanMohamed in “The Economy of the Manichean Allegory.” JanMohamed argues that symbolic texts seek to find syncretic solutions to Western and Native problems, but inevitably fail and in the process “illustrate the economy and power of the Manichean allegory,” where the westerner is inherently superior to the native (65). A close reading of *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies* provides numerous examples that demonstrate how when first-generation immigrant South Asian women attempt to behave like American women, they fail, therefore establishing that a hierarchal order exists between South Asian women and American women. The American women are able to navigate multiple aspects of femininity, but the South Asian women are limited to one model. Similarly, the second-generation of South Asian immigrant women are unable to navigate multiple models of femininity, while their American counterparts do so with ease. While there are differences in the behaviors of first and second-generation South Asian women, both generations fail to accomplish tasks the American women accomplish.

A significant difference between the first and second-generation South Asian women depicted by Lahiri and Mukherjee is that the first-generation South Asian women follow Boelhower’s framework for immigrant literature, whereas the second-generation of South Asian women have assimilated into American culture. However, both of these generations are depicted as dependent and subservient to South Asian men, and they are inferior to American women as well. For example, Mukherjee utilizes male companions to define Jasmine and other first-generation South Asian women, but American women such as Karin and Lillian are depicted as independent and successful. When Jasmine or Nirmala attempts to emulate Karin or Lillian they fail, reinforcing the Manichean allegory.

Mukherjee's and Lahiri's depiction of first-generation South Asian women follows from their depiction of South Asian men. Both authors depict the first-generation South Asian men as hyper-masculine, as a rebuttal to the effeminate colonial depictions of South Asian men. For the depiction of hyper-masculine males to work, a hierarchal relationship between male and female genders needs to exist, and as a result the first-generation South Asian women are depicted as subservient and dependent on the men. The characters in these novels prove Judith Butler's claim in "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" that "identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes" (308). An example of this hierarchal relationship is the immigrant experience. The first-generation of men do not struggle with the criteria explicated by Boelhower as they speak English, assimilate into American culture, and prosper fiscally. However, the first-generation women do struggle with most of Boelhower's immigrant framework, which is surprising as in the works that Boelhower examines gender does not play a regulatory role in the immigrant experience. Boelhower finds that the entire generation of immigrants struggles with the immigrant experience, but in Mukherjee and Lahiri's works only the first-generation women struggle with it. For example, Jasmine needs Lillian Gordon to teach her how to "walk American," use revolving doors, and step off escalators (133), whereas male immigrants like Professorji do not need such instruction. The interactions between Jasmine and Lillian reveal the colonial influence on the immigrant experience, as Lillian states that Jasmine was lucky "that India had been a British colony" as Indian immigrants speak English, which made their assimilation process easier than the other immigrants Lillian trained (132). However, in Mukherjee's work only the first-generation males speak English, and the first-generation women like Jasmine and Nirmala have to learn English through their journey.

Similarly, in “Mrs. Sen’s,” a story from the *Interpreter of Maladies*, Lahiri describes the difficulties Mrs. Sen has as an immigrant, whereas Mr. Sen does not struggle with the acculturation process. Mrs. Sen is guided by an adherence to an old worldview, one of the characteristics Boelhower ascribes as necessary for the immigrant genre. For instance, Elliot, the child Mrs. Sen babysits, learns that two things make Mrs. Sen happy: letters from home and fish, which remind her of Calcutta (121-123). Mr. Sen does not have an adherence to an old worldview and is immersed in his new life as a professor of mathematics. Conversely, Mrs. Sen’s life revolves around taking care of men, and focuses on the life she left behind in India. While preparing meals or taking care of Elliot, Mrs. Sen listens to audiotapes from her family in which they state the price of groceries on the day she left India (129). Like Mukherjee, Lahiri juxtaposes Mrs. Sen with an American woman, Elliot’s mother, who is capable of balancing work and a personal life. Elliot’s mother is a single parent who works fifty miles away, maintains the home by cooking and cleaning on the weekends, controls her grief, and is sexually active. In comparison, Mrs. Sen appears like a child, as she cannot learn to drive, struggles to control her grief, and wilts when faced with adversity.

Furthermore, Mukherjee and Lahiri depict first-generation South-Asian immigrant women as rigid adherents to subservient gender roles with neither the ability nor the desire to learn new skills, including simple and necessary ones such as balancing a checkbook or knowing how to contact their husbands at work. This static depiction of first-generation women in *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies* results from the way Mukherjee and Lahiri portray the first-generation South Asian immigrant men as hyper-masculine, which is in response to the British Colonial depictions of South Asian males as effeminate. For the first-generation male characters to succeed in their hyper-masculine performances, the first-

generation female characters need to be subservient, static, and secondary. When Lahiri and Mukherjee depict these first-generation South Asian women they juxtapose them with American women, who in comparison are sophisticated, diverse, capable, and generally successful. As a result, the first-generation South Asian women are unequal to their American counterparts and demonstrate that *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies* are symbolic literary texts, as defined by JanMohamed.

A first-generation South Asian immigrant woman's role as housewife, child bearer, and general subordinate to her husband can be seen in the opening sequence of Lahiri's short story, "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine," where the child narrator's mother works preparing a meal for the guests: "She was busy at the stove [...] and could not hear me because of the drone of the exhaust and the fierce scrapes of her spatula" (25). Throughout the story there is a rigid hierarchy between the wife and husband, as during the wife's cooking the husband, "leaned against the refrigerator, eating spiced cashews" (25). The trend in home labor distribution continues for when it is time for dinner the wife waits and observes the men from the kitchen, and "as soon as they were seated my mother appeared from the kitchen with a plate of mincemeat kebabs" (29). Lahiri depicts the men eating several times throughout the story with the wife cooking and serving the food each time. We never see the wife eat, or the men assist in the daily housework. There are numerous mentions of men taking delight in their food like "Mr. Pirzada popped one into his mouth," and "reaching for another," as they discuss politics, history, and world events, but the women's intellectual abilities are relegated to jokes (29). When Mr. Pirzada describes the names of their seven children, he ruefully explains that it was "their mother's idea" to have all their children's names begin with the letter "A" (23). The identity allowed for first-generation women due to their gender is

restrictive and regulatory, as they are relegated to subservient status in comparison to men. In this story, the unnamed first-generation South Asian woman does not have any depth to her character, as she merely exists to demonstrate Mr. Pirzada and her husband's hierarchal positions. For instance, Lahiri does not describe any physical characteristics of the South Asian wife in this story, but when the American woman is introduced the textual descriptions demonstrate this groups' ability to navigate multiple definitions of femininity. When Lahiri characterizes American women she combines phrases such as "the aroma of her perfume" with their ability to drive, be employed, and take care of the household, demonstrating that these characters are inherently more capable by the variety of their performative actions (39).

In *Jasmine* we also see a hierarchy of female characters with Western women at the top. Mukherjee constructs a *bildungsroman* and purposefully places her work in the English literary tradition of novels like *Great Expectations* and *Jane Eyre* (Carter-Sanborn 573), works that Jasmine attempts to read but abandons due to their difficulty. In "We Murder Who We Are" Kristin Carter-Sanborn argues that "both of these earlier novels are indeed 'thick' with the voice of an ostensibly progressive colonial authority addressing issues of gender and class formation" (573). By placing *Jasmine* in the context of two Victorian novels, Mukherjee seeks to follow a literary pattern and a social order that established British perspectives as the normative form of behavior. Throughout Mukherjee's work, we see the narrator, Jasmine, struggle to adapt to these normative Western behaviors, as she sheds various skins (Jyoti, Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase, and Jane) attempting to transform into a replica of Colonial femininity. However, Jasmine is inherently unequal to Jane, and unlike Jane she cannot accept Bud, her maimed "Rochester."

At first glance, Jasmine appears to be a dynamic first-generation female character, but her character's progress is an illusion. Jasmine continuously seeks to be subservient and static as demonstrated by her interactions with her husband, Prakash, who wanted to "break down the Jyoti I'd been" (77). Jasmine willingly molds to whatever Prakash desires her to be, and when Prakash is murdered she goes through a series of traumatic transformations. In this regard, Jasmine is similar to the widow depicted in Lahiri's "The Third and Final Continent," who "sank deeper into a world of darkness" after her husband's passing. After Prakash's death, Jasmine's journey is a spiral of darkness and despair (187). Jasmine's inability to accept being single demonstrates her reliance on men, and directly contrasts her foil and Bud's former wife, Karin. In Mukerjee's novel, it is Karin who emulates Jane Eyre, as she is the one who returns and accepts Bud's crippled form when Jasmine abandons him. Jasmine repeatedly admits that American women are superior to her, stating that "one day I want to belong to that tribe" (197). The sequence of events and behaviors in *Jasmine* again demonstrates the hierarchal relationship between Western women and South Asian women, as the American women overcome adversity, whereas first-generation South Asian women struggle to deal with adversity, at least without a man.

Both *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies* contain numerous examples of first-generation South Asian women behaving in rigid adherence to subservient gender roles. For instance, in *Jasmine* the Professorji's wife, Nirmala, has "no idea where her husband worked" and who "followed an ancient prescription for marital accord: submission, beauty, innocence" (151). When Professorji's father cuts his head and needs medical attention, Nirmala is not able to contact Professorji nor does she know what to do. Nirmala's life revolves around serving the Professorji and having children (143).

Similarly, in Lahiri's "Mrs. Sen's" we see the wife's identity constructed through her husband's existence from the advertisement placed by Mrs. Sen in the supermarket: "Professor's wife, responsible and kind, I will care for your child in my home" (111). Mrs. Sen's role in the marriage is to cook, clean, care for children, and dress dazzlingly in the home at all times: "She wore a shimmering white sari [...] more suited for an evening affair" (112). Conversely, in the same scene Elliot's mother is dressed "in cuffed, beige shorts and rope-soled shoes," asking "a long series of questions, the answers to which she recorded on a steno pad" (112-113). The juxtaposition of sensible with overt feminine regalia further demonstrates the difference between the women. One is able to navigate multiple identities and perform in multiple venues, whereas the other serves one purpose: housewife. The relationship between Mrs. Sen and Mr. Sen is depicted as inferior to superior, as Mr. Sen typifies the hyper-masculine caricature of first-generation South Asian males and barely tolerates Mrs. Sen, apologizing for her on a regular basis. Lahiri continues to depict Mrs. Sen as a static female character, as she describes Mrs. Sen's ability to dissect a fish and calculate how many meals the meat will provide in seconds, but then demonstrates Mrs. Sen's inability to perform basic math as she cannot learn to balance a checkbook (127). Implicitly, the scene states that Mrs. Sen thrives in the kitchen, the stereotypical locale of women, and flounders when dealing with fiscal matters, the stereotypical site of men. In this scene, we see an inherent contradiction in the text, as the reader is explicitly made aware that Mrs. Sen is a capable arithmetician, but her arithmetic ability does not exist outside of the kitchen, which is not feasible as arithmetic is a transferable skill. In contrast, Elliot's mother easily does "the laundry, balances the checkbook, and with Eliot's help vacuumed the inside of the car," demonstrating that the American women are able to navigate multiple identities and gender

performances through their lives, whereas South Asian women are not able to navigate multiple identities and gender performances. As a result, the text is an example of symbolic colonial literature, where a strict hierarchal binary exists between South Asian and American women.

Lahiri and Mukherjee continue the Manichean allegory with their depiction of second-generation South Asian women. The second-generation South Asian women no longer follow Boelhower's immigrant model, as they have assimilated into American culture. However, these second-generation women are portrayed as miserable, dependent on men, without the capacity to thrive independently, and overtly sexualized. For instance, in "This Blessed House" Twinkle emulates the American women Lahiri depicts by pursuing education, living independently, and dating. Unlike the American women, Twinkle struggles with these endeavors, eventually failing and marrying Sanjeev, a wealthy man expected to take care of her.

Similar to how the second-generation of South Asian men change from hyper masculine to effeminate, the second-generation women in Lahiri's and Mukherjee's work change from subservient to sexual, as the depiction of second-generation South Asian women focuses primarily on their sexuality. Lahiri's descriptions focus on the second-generation South Asian women's physical features, whereas previously Lahiri rarely provided physical details about the first-generation women. If she did provide physical descriptions of first-generation women the details were superficial. Surprisingly, Lahiri's physical descriptions for the second-generation women are extensive and often take up half a page, significant in a short story. For example, in "Interpreter of Maladies," a story that focuses on a day-long car trip the Das family takes while on vacation, Mrs. Das is described as wearing "a red-and-

white-checked skirt that stopped above her knees,” heels, a “close fitting blouse” that “was decorated at chest level” (46). Lahiri continues this description at length ending with a description of how Mrs. Das sways when she walks. Lahiri’s attention to detail when describing second-generation South Asian women is striking, as she rarely describes what first-generation South Asian immigrant women look like, or how they walk. However, in the first-generation stories Lahiri does describe American women in detail, and the transition to physical description in the second-generation stories signifies that these South Asian women have assimilated into American culture.

Lahiri depicts the first-generation of women in traditional roles, such as cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children. The second-generation of South Asian women are primarily depicted as sexualized objects. For instance, in the short story “Interpreter of Maladies,” Lahiri emphasizes Mrs. Das’s sexuality. Mrs. Das passes time by “polishing her nails,” doesn’t remove her sunglasses in the forest, sways when she walks, and is ogled by the locals (49). Lahiri depicts Mrs. Das through a heavily feminine and sexual lens, while depicting Mr. Das through an effeminate lens. The difference between the couple causes sexual frustration, as Mr. Das is unable to perform sexually. When Mr. Das and Mrs. Das were teenagers they were sexually active, as Mrs. Das states, “the things we did on those Friday and Saturday nights, while our parents sat downstairs drinking tea” (63). However, as Mr. Das grows older he rejects the first-generation South Asian male’s hyper-masculinity, which attracted Mrs. Das, to emulate multiple models of masculinity. As the work is a symbolic colonial literary piece, Mr. Das fails at navigating multiple models of masculinity, unlike his American counterparts, and becomes an effeminate male. Mrs. Das continues on

her teenage trajectory of sexuality and desires a hyper-masculine partner, who will take charge.

In “Interpreter of Maladies” Lahiri provides two instances where Mrs. Das succumbs to the hyper-masculine male. The first occurs between Mrs. Das and the tourist driver, Mr. Kapsasi, a hyper-masculine construct. Lahiri had described the scent of American women in her portrayal of first-generation immigrants, but not stated how South Asian women smelled until the second-generation. Mrs. Das’ scent is “a mixture of whiskey and rosewater” (55), demonstrating that on a day-long tour through the blistering Indian jungle Mrs. Das continues to perfume herself. When the tour driver demonstrates a commanding demeanor he notices that, “Mrs. Das had taken an interest in him,” and he begins flirting with her (58). However, as the tour driver reveals more about himself, we find that he is not a hyper-masculine construct, but an effeminate male who works as a translator in a doctor’s office, which causes Mrs. Das to lose interest in him. Once the driver’s effeminate nature is established, Mrs. Das gossips with him and admits her weakness for a man with a commanding and forceful personality. During the journey, Mrs. Das recounts her affair with Mr. Das’s friend, which began because the husband’s friend is hyper-masculine and Punjabi. Mrs. Das states “she made no protest when the friend touched the small of her back as she was about to make a pot of coffee, then pulled her against his crisp navy suit” (64). Lahiri depicts the husband’s friend, a Punjabi, with the same type of colonial masculinity seen in works such as E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*, where the Punjabis (often called Pathans) are depicted as hyper-masculine, as this region had not been colonized by the British. In comparison to the Bengalis, who were among the first group colonized by the British on the Indian subcontinent, the Punjabis are depicted as virile, aggressive, and hyper-masculine.

This colonial characterization continues throughout Lahiri's text, and when a Punjabi encounters Mrs. Das, a second-generation woman depicted as a highly sexualized being, it is inevitable that they sleep together. The juxtaposition of Mrs. Das, who cannot resist a hyper-masculine male, with American women, who have the agency to make decisions about their sexuality, plays into the colonial literary narrative where authors attempt symbolic syncretic practices that fail, and ultimately depict a hierarchal separation between the Colonizer and the Native. In colonial immigrant narratives such as *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies*, the key difference is that the colonized native has moved to the colonial homeland, where they continue to be a second-class citizen.

Mrs. Das is unlike the American women Lahiri depicts, who are able to navigate multiple feminine modes. For instance, in "Sexy" Miranda controls her sexuality and is able to choose when to begin and end a relationship, unlike Mrs. Das or the other second-generation South Asian women Lahiri depicts. Miranda, who has been having an affair with Dev, states, "she would tell him the things she had known all along: that it wasn't fair to her or to his wife ... that there was no point in dragging it on" (110). Miranda demonstrates the ability to begin relationships, end relationships, and survive independently, something the South-Asian women cannot accomplish. In "Sexy" Lahiri juxtaposes Miranda with two South Asian women: Laxmi and her unnamed cousin, whose husband has an affair with an English woman. Laxmi's cousin does not attempt to leave her husband, and continues to find reasons to stay with her husband. One of them being, "she's willing to forgive him for the boy" (91). Laxmi acts tougher by stating that "she would change the locks" if her husband cheated, but moments later her sentiment is weakened as she recounts her visit to the Taj Mahal with her husband stating, it is "the most romantic spot on earth" while "brightening

visibly” (92). It is clear that Laxmi would behave in the same manner as her cousin if her husband cheated on her, and that both of these second-generation women are dependent on their husbands and create their identity through their marital relationship, which is depicted as more sexualized than the first-generation’s marriages primarily due to the behavior of the second-generation South Asian women. In this story we see evidence of the text being symbolic, as a hierarchal binary relationship exists between the American women and the second-generation South Asian women. The South Asian women attempt to emulate their American counterparts, but like the first-generation women they are unsuccessful and fail in their attempts.

In *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies*, the second-generation of South-Asian immigrant women demonstrate a slight ability to negotiate what was considered masculine performances in the first-generation, such as speaking English, acquiring employment, and blending into contemporary American society. These second-generation women do not conform to Boelhower’s framework for immigrant behavior in literature, and are initially only recognizable as immigrants due to their South Asian names. However, in these works the second-generation South-Asian women are sexualized dependents, seeking a dominant masculine counterpart. The second-generation of South Asian immigrant men reject their father’s hyper-masculinity, struggle to navigate multiple masculinities like the American men do, and come off as effeminate and unsure of their masculinity, which creates a tension between the second-generation genders depicted by Lahiri and Mukherjee. Both generations of women in these works struggle in comparison to their American counterparts, who demonstrate an ability to navigate multiple modes of feminine behavior.

The juxtaposition of these two groups reinforces Judith Butler's argument that gender roles and performances are artificial constructs, and that it is societal norms that place limits on each gender's acceptable public performance. In these works, the social norms vary for the immigrants and Americans. At first glance, it appears that the difference exists solely due to cultural variances. However, a reading informed by post-colonial criticism demonstrates how these differences are indicative of a hierarchal binary between the American and South Asian women, which is a critical characteristic of symbolic colonial literature.

CHAPTER 4: INTENTIONAL OR UNINTENTIONAL CARICATURES?

Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* are significant literary works that changed the way we view South Asian immigrant literature. Mukherjee's novel responds to Naipaul's assertion that those born in the "third-world" are destined to be powerless and insignificant through Jasmine's journey. *Jasmine* demonstrates that an immigrant woman can have agency, even though there are systemic barriers (patriarchy and colonialism) to overcome. Lahiri's work won the Pulitzer Prize in 2000 and helped to change how South Asian Americans were depicted in popular culture. By portraying South Asians as educated and financially successful, *Interpreter of Maladies* provided a direct counter-point to popular depictions of South Asians from television shows such as *The Simpsons* and *Seinfeld*. Lahiri and Mukherjee's works challenged William Boelhower's framework for immigrant literature and helped to further the argument that immigrant literature is a diverse mode that encompasses numerous genres.

William Boelhower's call in "The Immigrant Novel as Genre" (1981) to define the immigrant literary genre stemmed from a concern that "a distinct literary thread had been left out of the weave of American literary history," and in the ensuing years Boelhower's concerns have been addressed, as the immigrant novel is accepted as a genre (3). However, the classification of immigrant literature as a genre is too narrow a classification. Calling all literature with immigrants in them a genre is much like stating that pastoral novels are a genre because they contain nature. Paul Alpers in *What is Pastoral* argues that "types of literature, which have generic-sounding names, but which are more inclusive and general than genres" are modes of literature not genre, as these modes can occur in numerous forms

and kinds of expression (46). Alpers states that genres have clear “superficial features or marks of identification” such as those delineated by Boelhower (46). However, modes include numerous genres such as “pastoral elegies, pastoral comedies, pastoral romances,” demonstrating that the pastoral element in literature is more than a genre (46). Similarly, it is time to expand the immigrant theme in literature from a genre into a mode, as that enables us to examine the full-scope of the immigrant theme ranging from personal essays, memoirs, poems, short stories, and novels. The expansion of the immigrant genre into mode also enables us to examine works that deal with immigration but are not from the immigrant’s perspective, such as Elizabeth Strout’s *The Burgess Boys*.

The initial examination of immigrant narratives focused on a particular type of immigrant, all of whom shared the following characteristics: a language barrier, a struggle to assimilate, fiscal crisis, ignorance of American norms, and were guided by an old worldview. An examination of Bharati Mukherjee’s *Jasmine* and Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies* demonstrates that not all immigrant narratives share these characteristics, and that the immigrant experience in literature varies tremendously based upon the immigrants’ colonial history. A close reading of Mukherjee’s and Lahiri’s works informs us that significant historical and contextual understanding is necessary to comprehend immigrant narratives, as many of the occurrences in these works do not make sense at first glance. By applying a post-colonial lens to *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies* we are able to expose issues such as racial hierarchy, gender roles, and responses to historical events not present in other, European immigrant literature.

Abdul JanMohamed’s “The Economy of Manichean Allegory” provides a critical framework for assessing immigrant works, where the protagonists arrive from colonized

territories. JanMohamed elucidates that colonization has two phases: the dominant and the hegemonic. The dominant phase lasts until the colony declares or is granted its independence. The hegemonic phase occurs when the “natives accept a version of the colonizer’s entire system of values, attitudes, morality, institutions, and, more important, mode of production” (62). An example of the hegemonic phase can be seen in governance of the United States after gaining independence from Great Britain. In terms of *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of the Maladies*, we must notice that the immigrants’ South Asian nations operate under the hegemonic influence of Western civilizations, as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are members of The Commonwealth of Nations, which is primarily comprised of former British colonies. Furthermore, evidence of South Asia’s acceptance of British values can be seen by their adoption of Western structures such as parliamentary government, regulated capitalism, and a general preference of Western modes of production over traditional modes of production.

Furthermore, JanMohamed argues that there are two types of colonial texts: symbolic and imaginary. The imaginary text portrays the native to be a one-dimensional product, and the word native equates to evil. Symbolic texts are more complicated and nuanced than imaginary texts, as symbolic texts “are aware of the inevitable necessity of using the native as a mediator of European desires” (19). These texts acknowledge and examine the differences in cultures, but view the two cultures in hierarchal terms and do not advocate syncretism or hybridity as a viable solution. JanMohamed states that symbolic texts can be divided into two categories. The first one “attempts to find syncretic solutions to the Manichean opposition of the colonizer and the colonized” (19), but ultimately does not succeed. An example of the first type of symbolic text is Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*. The second

type of symbolic text begins with the premise that “syncretism is impossible,” and thus seeks to demonstrate that the colonial should dominate and impose himself on the native (20). JanMohamed cites *Heart of Darkness* and *A Passage to India* as examples of the second type of symbolic texts.

By utilizing JanMohamed’s framework to examine *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies*, we begin to see that both of these works are the second type of symbolic texts, where syncretism is impossible. A thorough examination of these works reveals a pattern, which exists across genders and generations, between the Americans and South Asian immigrants. The pattern consists of a hierarchal binary relationship between Americans and South Asian immigrants, and depicts the Americans as superior and the South Asians as inferior. There are four instances of this binary relationship: first-generation South Asian and American males, second-generation South Asian and American males, first-generation South Asian and American females, second-generation South Asian and American females.

Lahiri and Mukherjee depict the first-generation of South Asian males as hyper-masculine caricatures, who are not capable of navigating multiple masculine identities. As a result, these characters are rigid, unyielding, and come across as emotionally stunted. Demonstrating that their works are in fact symbolic colonial literature, Lahiri and Mukherjee juxtapose these first-generation South Asian men with American men, who navigate multiple masculine identities with ease. For instance, the American men are capable in the economic realm and the domestic realm, an aspect that adds to their sexual allure, but the South Asian men are incapable of performing domestic duties. By portraying the first-generation immigrant South Asian men as hyper-masculine, Lahiri and Mukherjee are responding to the historical depiction of South Asian men as effeminate by the British. Unfortunately, the

response is flawed, creates static characters, and ultimately creates a Manichean allegory by demonstrating the inherent superiority of American men.

Similarly, Lahiri and Mukherjee depict the first-generation of South Asian females as domestic goddesses, dependent and subservient to their husbands. For the prior characterization of first-generation South Asian men as hyper-masculine to work, first-generation immigrant women need to be timid and obedient housekeepers. Several times, both works depict these women taking care of the household while being exquisitely overdressed, as though they are ready to depart to a formal social gathering at a moment's notice. However, first-generation South Asian women are not sexualized and practically androgynous. Furthermore, both works juxtapose the first-generation of women with American women, who like their male counterparts are able to navigate multiple feminine identities. At times, the difference between the two groups of women is unbelievable and it is not shocking that Jasmine states: "one day I want to belong to that tribe" (197). Whereas the hierarchal relationship between first-generation males and their American counterparts is covert, the hierarchal relationship between the first-generation females and their counterparts is overt and clearly demonstrates American superiority.

As these works progress into the second-generation of immigrants, there is a transformation in the South Asians, as both males and females attempt to emulate how the previous generation behaved. Second-generation male immigrants reject the hyper-masculinity modeled by their fathers, attempting to navigate multiple masculinities like American males. Yet, these characters are plagued with self-doubt and self-loathing, preventing them from navigating multiple modes of masculinity. Instead, they are paralyzed and unable to cope with adverse situations. In each of the stories, the second-generation

South Asian male finds himself unable to maintain a healthy relationship with his significant other, which leads to misery, divorce, and affairs. Conversely, American males continue to demonstrate the Manichean allegory by easily navigating multiple modes of masculinity. For the American characters in the second-generation stories there are a plurality of modes of being, but only misery and self-doubt for the second-generation South Asian males.

The second-generation South Asian women undergo a similarly radical change from their mothers, as these women are overtly sexualized. Whereas the authors rarely describe the physical characteristics of the first-generation South Asian women, they now routinely spend several paragraphs describing the second-generation women's attire, makeup, and swaying walks. In Lahiri's work the transformation is striking, as her style of writing is minimalistic and the focus on physical attributes, like "she lifted her pinkish brown sunglasses and arranged them on top of her head like a tiara," dominate the second-generation's short stories. While South Asian women are now depicted as having some agency, they are still subservient and dependent on men. For example, Mukherjee and Lahiri depict several unhappy South Asian women though none of them are able to take concrete steps to change their situations. Instead, like the second-generation males they are mired in paralysis. Conversely, American women are able to balance sexuality and power, enabling this group to make decisions regarding their future.

Throughout *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies*, we see a hierarchal relationship between immigrants and Americans. By using JanMohamed's framework, we are able to explicate historical reasons for this binary relationship. Yet, JanMohamed's framework does not provide us with the ability to answer the question whether the authors intentionally created these binary relationships? If so, what purpose could it serve? Both authors pursued

higher education in the United States, during an era when multiculturalism, pluralism, and diversity were embraced. While neither author has commented in interviews on this binary relationship, it is highly unlikely that they intentionally sought to create this juxtaposition. Furthermore, as there has not been any significant scholarship examining South Asian immigrant narratives from a post-colonial perspective, we have limited resources with which to analyze Lahiri's and Mukherjee's work.

As a result, I turn to my own personal experience as a first-generation Indian immigrant to explain how the binary relationship might have come to exist unintentionally. My parents immigrated to the United States to pursue their Ph.Ds., when I was seven, and a few years later I joined them. A few days after arriving, I remember a conversation with my father where he mentioned how smart and hardworking Americans were in comparison to Indians. He stated he felt pressured to work harder and longer in his graduate program. This conversation stuck with me for several years, and I believed my father's perception of Americans to be true. Yet, what is important to realize is that my father had created an essentialized American, much like the colonizers created an essentialized Other. My father had created a false American persona, one that he both revered and feared. At weekend parties with other Indians, I noticed this essentialized American existed outside of academia, as my anesthesiologist uncle and my banker uncle made similar comments. While my evidence is anecdotal and personal, I would argue that South Asian immigrants, due to our colonized past, revere and seek to emulate Western civilization. In JanMohamed's terms, this is evidence of the hegemonic phase of colonization.

After teaching at a community college for several years, my father told me he thought Americans were stupid and lazy. Remembering our previous conversation, where he had

venerated Americans I was surprised and reminded him of his previous comments. He responded that he did not know any better then, and that more exposure had led him to have the same view of Americans that he had of Indians, which is that the majority of them are stupid and lazy. As I was older, in college, full of idealistic notions, and argumentative, I chastised him on his statements, to which he responded by stating that he knew he was making a generalization about groups of people based upon his experiences, and argued that when we do not practice mindfulness or ruminate on our thoughts our prejudices begin to dominate our worldviews. Similarly, I too have noticed that when I do not practice mindfulness, I am prone to deferring to hierarchal binaries, such as America superior, _____ inferior. These types of thoughts are indicative of the American hegemony we live in, and I postulate that this is what caused Mukherjee and Lahiri to create unintentional binaries between South Asian immigrants and their American counterparts.

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