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Reading Jhumpa Lahiri in the Light of Planetarity

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摘要

本論文試圖藉由印裔美籍作家鍾芭·拉希莉之兩部作品《同名之人》與《陌生的土地》探討移民第二代之身分認同：從傳統的根源之認同轉向關係認同。愛德華·葛利松之概念「關係認同」強調個人身分認同須建立在自己與他人之關係上。而此概念呼應史畢娃克之「星球性」理論。由字面可知，星球性為全球化現象之反思。史畢娃克批評全球化帶來的資本主義已將地球上的生命或資源商品化；因此，她提出星球性之理論，提醒人類面對全球化之洪流時，應有能力維持自己文化的獨特性。除此之外，星球性更進一步建議，若人類能意識你我皆為棲身在地球的同一物種，更應該再次思考人與人之間的關係，不該因為人類劃分的國家或種族界線而有所疏遠，相反地，應該親密且沒有藩籬。

本論文分為四個章節。第一章為論文之介紹，包括拉希莉之背景、作品內容及風格、與星球性理論之概略。第二章檢視史畢娃克之「星球性」理論，並以此概念分別討論亞美文學及離散身分認同。史畢娃克將星球性運用在文學範疇上，認為將傳統比較文學與區域研究結合是實踐星球性最好的方法。如此一來，新的比較文學研究將能跨越國族界線，並能照顧各地不同文化。利用此概念分析亞美文學，希望亞、美之內的多元性能被關注。至於離散身分認同，第二代已逐漸轉向葛利松所強調的關係認同：除了「根」之外，身分認同必須建立在人與人之關係。其中，由於「愛」擁有結合你我的特質，所以在人類互動中格外重要。利用以上所提之概念，第三章分析拉希莉的兩部作品：《同名之人》與《陌生的土地》中之短篇故事。拉希莉在故事中分別巧妙運用「姓名」與「攝影」之譬喻影射主角心境與身分認同的轉變，而家人朋友的愛以及人與人之間之關係與互動最終扮演關鍵角色。第四章為結論。除了回顧此篇論文重點，也對史畢娃克的星球性是否可行提出質疑。

Abstract

This thesis aims to analyze the Indian American writer Jhumpa Lahiri's works, *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth*, so as to explore how the second-generation immigrants' identity transforms from the root identity to the relation identity. Based on Édouard Glissant's concept, I argue that the relation identity emphasizes how one builds his/her identity on the relationship with others. Apart from that, I also incorporate Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of "planetarity," which Spivak regards as an alternative to globalization, into Glissant's identity theories. Criticizing capitalism and commodification brought by globalization, Spivak calls on "planetarity" to alert her reader to the danger of different local cultures being subsumed under globalization. In addition, viewing people as the same species inhabiting on earth, she invites us to reconsider the intimate relationship among human beings.

This thesis is composed of four chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the main ideas of the thesis, which includes Jhumpa Lahiri's background, her major works, and the basic concepts of "planetarity." Chapter two examines Spivak's "planetarity" which serves as a theoretical base for my discussions of both Asian American literature and the diasporic identity. Regarding planetarity as a literary trope, Spivak wishes to propose this humanitarian project in the hope that it may combine area studies with studies of comparative literature. In doing so, she anticipates a new vision in the future when comparative literature can transcend national boundaries and embrace difference, which inspires me to read Asian American literature planetarily. In this similar light, I argue that the second-generation immigrants have developed a special type of diaspora identity which is relational with its emphasis on multiple relationships with others. Also, in the course of relation identity formation, the emotion of love plays a critical role in binding people together. Chapter three intends

to analyze Lahiri's *The Namesake* and the "Hema and Kaushik" trilogy collected in *Unaccustomed Earth* on the basis of the theories elucidated in the second chapter. By using names and photography as metaphors, Lahiri dramatizes the transformation of the characters' mentality and their identity formations. Characters, relationship, and love hence serve as the very essential elements for identity formation. The fourth (final) chapter concludes my arguments by reviewing the main points discussed previously. It attempts not only to re-evaluate the feasibility of Spivak's utopian project but also to exhibit more possibilities of productive dialogues that "planetarity" might open up to the question of diaspora identity.

Acknowledgements

Édouard Glissant says our identity is built on the process of "giving-on-and-with" (142). So is the completion of this thesis. I kept this mindset while I was working on my thesis and genuinely appreciate all the people who helped and encouraged me.

I am deeply indebted to my advisor, Professor Susan Jung Su, whose instructions and words of encouragement spur me on to complete this thesis. I cannot thank her enough for her wholehearted support and professionalism, which guided me through the tough path to the completion of this thesis. Her judicious advice always helps me better my writing project. What I appreciate most is the time and energies she spent in correcting my writing, including the logic and grammar. Moreover, were it not for her warm encouragement, which constantly increase my confidence, I would never have completed this thesis.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Widely acclaimed in the literati for her elegant style of writing and her stories of Indian American immigrants, the second-generation immigrant Indian American writer Jhumpa Lahiri writes about how the Bengali immigrants straddle the American main stream and the Indian family tradition in her three major works, *Interpreter of Maladies* (2000), *The Namesake* (2003), and the more recent *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008). Among many other themes, the generation gap carries much critical weight in her writings. For Lahiri, the second-generation immigrants' suffering from mediating between filial obedience and individual autonomy always seems to be central to her interest. Namely, the question of identity keeps playing a leading role in Lahiri's works. More often than not, it is difficult for the fictional characters in her novels to feel attached to their root identities. In this thesis, I attempt to probe into the question of identity by bringing forth the idea of relation identity by incorporating into my reading of Lahiri in the light of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of planetarity.

"Globalization," the most influential trend over the past few decades, links the local to the global in economics, politics, technology, cultures, and many other aspects. However, different scholars hold antithetical views toward this emergent phenomenon. On the one hand, theorist like Jürgen Habermas tends to be more optimistic. He thinks that the decline of nation-state may bring forth a new possibility, and that a new form of association, such as the global city or the postnational constellation, will replace the traditional monopolizing violence and jurisdictional forms. On the other hand, Fredric Jameson tends to be more pessimistic. He worries about the "McDonaldization" of the world. Jameson thinks that "McDonaldization" suggests an age of standardization and

homogenization resulting from the flow of the global capital and the supremacy of the United States. The current turns the world into a system of capital accumulation: everything is homogenized. For instance, even U.S. citizenship has been considered as a cultural commodity. Spivak is critical of this condition of globalization. In her critical work, *Death of a Discipline*, she argues that "Globalization is the imposition of the same system of exchange everywhere" (72). To refute this hegemonic tendency of globalization, Spivak proposes a new idea, "planetarity," to challenge the discourse of globalization, hoping to innovate, conceive, and envision a better world where all human beings can form a new collectivity without reducing one another.

Spivak's Concept of Planetarity

To rectify the "McDonaldization" in globalization, a result of the flow of the global capital and the supremacy of the United States, Spivak proposes a new concept, "planetarity." Spivak uses the term as an alternative way to redefine the human relationship in the era of globalization, a period of time when everything easily gets trapped in the norm of standardization and homogenization.

In her work *Death of a Discipline*, as is suggested by the book title, Spivak claims that the existent comparative literature is outdated. She calls on a new one in which the improved discipline is given a new life without being dominated by the market or capitalism. The new goal that comparative literature pursues is to ask people to be aware of the linguistic diversity of literature, and it should be "world embracing" (Spivak, *Death* 4). Moreover, Spivak also hopes to accentuate the political consequence of reading the works of other cultures: "as presumed collectivities cross borders under the auspices of a Comparative Literature supplemented by Area Studies, they might attempt to figure themselves—imagine themselves—as planetary rather than continental, global, or worldly" (Spivak, *Death*

72).

Using literature as a trope, Spivak points out the problems of globalization and tries to map out a new face of our world. She thus maintains, "I propose the planet to overwrite the globe. Globalization is the imposition of the same system everywhere" (Spivak, *Death* 72). Spivak considers planetarity as a different type of universality to replace the capital-oriented globalization and pursues a new inclusiveness that embraces diversities and kinship. She urges us to think from an ecological perspective, arguing that the earth is "an undivided 'natural' space rather than a differentiated political space" (Spivak, *Death* 72). In this light, she reminds us that the relationship between human beings should be close and go beyond national or cultural boundaries. Moreover, we need to keep the others in mind, that is, to "other ourselves" and embrace alterities.

The idea of planetarity has been appropriated by many scholars to analyze literary works. Inspired by Spivak, I also try to read Lahiri's works and the idea of diasporic identities in the light of Spivak's insight. The articles mentioned below use planetarity as a trope to reconsider the question of the Other in the age of globalization. Again like Spivak, they discuss how we otherize ourselves to form a new identity or to develop harmonious relationships with human beings. For example, Matt Waggoner's essay, "Death of a Discipline," discusses how 'planetarity" may inject new life into religious studies. Waggoner reads Jonathan Z. Smith's *Rear Window* in Spivak's light to "write the self at othermost" (140). He hopes in doing so, he can better interpret the works of religious studies to "engage the idiom of global others" (140). Beverly M. Weber, likewise, focuses on another minor group, the immigrant women in Germany. Drawing on Spivak's discourse of planetarity and transnational feminism studies, Weber's article, "Beyond the Culture Trap: Immigrant Women in Germany, Planet-Talk, and a Politics of Listening," re-examines

immigrants and minority women's cultural and economic position in Germany. Weber employs the concept of the planet to counter globalization because she thinks globalization marginalizes minority cultures and relegates immigrant women's agency of speaking the unreasonable. She explores and examines the potentiality of planetarity and the imperative for propagating it. Anna Guttman, another scholar who notices the problem of globalization, discusses Arundhati Roy's novel in "Reexamining Indian Nonalignment: Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*." Guttman uses Roy's works as an example to demonstrate Indian anti-globalization writings. Guttman thinks Spivak's planetarity in some way responds to Roy's Indian nonalignment position, for planetarity offers an alternative to globalization. It provides the chance to think of the earth as a unit, to reconsider the existence of others, and to urge the essentiality to respect the very difference of others. Roy endeavors to remind her people that although globalization and its effect of McDonaldization are inevitable trends, the Indians can still maintain their uniqueness by asserting their own Indian cultures.

Jhumpa Lahiri and Her Works

Jhumpa Lahiri is renowned for her realistic way of delineating the stories of Indian American immigrants. Her works have lots to do with her backgrounds. Born in London in 1967 and raised in Rhode Island, Lahiri was the daughter of Bengali immigrants. Her father is a librarian at the University of Rhode Island, and her mother is a teacher who earned a master degree in Bengali literature. The Lahiri family moved from India to South Kingston, Rhode Island when Lahiri was three; therefore, she spent most of her life in North America. It was not until she was eighteen did she get her American citizenship. Although Lahiri was brought up in North America, she is not unknowledgeable of her Indian background because her parents want to

preserve their cultural heritage. As a result, Lahiri learned a lot about Bengali culture when she was very young. But the Bengali traditional culture often conflicts with the American culture in her everyday life. For example, she suffers from difficulties in developing interpersonal relationships, the stress of daily existence, and the ambivalence toward Indian and American cultures, to name just a few.

Lahiri's academic trainings are the prelude of her writing career. She majors in English literature at Barnard College and earns three master degrees at Boston University, which includes the degrees of English, creative writing, and comparative literature and art. Then, she gets a Ph. D. in Renaissance at the same university. In addition to the formal education, she takes up a fellowship at Fine Arts Work Center located in Provincetown for two years, which can be one of the most influential trainings she receives and an inspiration to her writing. During these years at school, she has already worked on some stories, nine of which appear in the later published *Interpreter of Maladies*. In the process of writing, she finds creative writing is her favorite, and she makes up her mind to devote herself to the career. When the first short story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*, was published in 1999, it was well-received. Moreover, in 2000, to her surprise, this debut work won the Pulitzer Prize, an affirmation of her superb storytelling skills as well as the book's wonderful plots and characterization. It is worthy of mentioning that only seven story collections won the award. For that reason, thereafter, as an Indian American writer who writes about diaspora, Lahiri always attracts the critics' attention.

Lahiri's works usually contain cultural conflicts, diasporic experiences, and generation gaps, most of which reflect Lahiri's personal experience. Lahiri's first short story collection, the-Pulitzer-Prize-winning *Interpreter of Maladies*, demonstrates Indian American immigrants' lives and their struggles against the state of in-betweenness. With greater depth and length, published in 2003, her second novel,

The Namesake, centers on similar subjects. Using the motif of name as an important metaphor in *The Namesake*, Lahiri not only delineates the protagonist's anguish and personal conflicts but also richly and deeply delves into the Gangulis' immigrant life. Critics generally agree that in this novel, Lahiri uncovers the experience and identity crisis of immigrants' children. The novel is adapted into a film entitled *The Namesake*. It was directed by Mira Nair and released in March 2007, which pushes the novel to its peak. Lahiri's third work, *Unaccustomed Earth*, a collection of stories published in 2008, debuts at number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Compared with the previous two works, *Unaccustomed Earth* puts more emphasis on "characters who are not immigrants themselves but rather the offspring of immigrants" (Lahiri, "Jhumpa Lahiri"). In these stories, details of the Bengali lives remain the main theme. Yet different from the previous two works, the common experiences and universal emotions among human beings are highly underscored.

My thesis attempts to center on *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth* to explore how the second-generation immigrants cope with problems of identity which are different from those of their parents and how they tend to have relation identities rather than root identities. Natalie Friedman holds the same idea and maintains that Lahiri's works suggest "assimilation—cleaving to the hope of an 'American Dream' —*is no longer at the heart of the immigrant story*," and the characters in her novels are "members of a shifting network of global travelers whose national loyalties are flexible" (Friedman 112, emphasis added). Therefore, I will not discuss Lahiri's works from a traditional perspective. Rather, a different interpretation stressing on relation will be employed.

The Namesake writes about a newly settled Bengali family, the Gangulis, and their painstaking struggle for adjustment in the United States. Ashoke Ganguli and Ashima Ganguli, the first generational Bengalis immigrants, were born in Calcutta

and emigrated to the United States for a better future. Their children, Gogol and Sonia, growing up in the United States, have their own ways of living and thinking, which largely differ from their parents. Clashes and identity crises therefore arise out of cultural conflicts and the generation gap. Among all of the conflicts, Gogol's name is one of the major causes of his identity crisis, which is one of the main points I aim to discuss in my thesis. His name serves as not only a symbol of his insistence on the root identity, but in the end an embodiment of his change of attitude and mentality. Moreover, it provides a chance for him to re-examine his relationship with others.

Lahiri's latest collection of stories, *Unaccustomed Earth*, includes two parts. The first part consists of four individual stories. Most of the protagonists are Indian Americans. But Lahiri chooses the descendants of immigrants as the leading characters in her story. She focuses on their feelings and emotions, depicting the relationship between sisters and brothers, fathers and mothers, daughters and sons, as well as friends and lovers. The second part of this book, "Hema and Kaushik," the main part I draw on in my essay, is a trilogy. The first story, "Once in a Life time," is delineated from a girl's perspective: Hema observes the life of the Choudhuri family who moved to her home. The second story, "Year's End," on the other hand, is basically about the experience and confession of Kaushik Choudhuri, who is the same age with Hema. The third story, "Going Ashore," happens after Hema and Kaushik have grown up, tells of how destiny brings them together to develop a relationship in Rome. Through the eyes of Hema and Kaushik, readers may find that the second generation diaspora people have different attitudes toward home and the sense of belonging, which will be the focus of my discussion. In addition, the story gives not so much Bengali details as Lahiri's previous novels; instead, Lahiri injects into the story more elements of love and emotion, which helps us reflect ourselves by making connections with her fictional characters.

Lahiri is often categorized as an outstanding member of “Post-Rushdie generation” who is “in many ways broken away from the magic realism that characterizes much of Mr. Rushdie’s work” (Rothstein, “India’s Post-Rushdie Generation”) and turns her back on “other experiments to write well-crafted traditional realistic fiction” (Brains 196). In terms of the theme, her works have often been regarded as those dealing with diaspora, but her writing style is very different from that of Salman Rushdie. Lahiri writes plainly and elegantly. Not sensational or melodramatic, her stories are told in a plain way without too much craft, exaggerated effects, or overly obvious endings. Liesl Schillinger notices Lahiri’s light writing skill as he comments as follows:

> Lahiri handles her characters without leaving any fingerprints. She allows them to grow as if unguided, as if she were accompanying them rather than training them through the espalier of her narration. Reading her stories is like watching time-lapse nature videos of different plants, each with its own inherent growth cycle, breaking through the soil, spreading into bloom or collapsing back to earth. (“American Children”)

As Schillinger suggests, Lahiri never shows off her techniques; thus, naturally there is a quiet and subtle beauty in Lahiri’s writing. In addition, Schillinger’s comments imply Lahiri’s another merit—she writes in detail and accurately—like a video recording the growth of plants, correctly and carefully. Despite her simple and plain languages, Lahiri never neglects the details in describing her characters and emotions, and she always has profound observations about life. Her exquisite and sharp depiction thus categorize her as a “succinct realist writer” whose work has “no genre bending, no comics-inflected supernaturalism, no world-historical ventriloquism, no 9/11 flip books” (Kachka, “The Confidence Artist”) which may distance readers from the serious and abstruse features of “literature.” It is easy for us to walk into her

fictional world and empathize with what is going on in the stories.

Another distinctive feature of Lahiri's writing consists in her ability to depict universal feelings, in particular the emotion of love. Reviewers agree that although Indian Americans dominate Lahiri's stories, the emotions she portrays are universal. Cathy Carmode Lim maintains:

> Lahiri chooses to tell her stories through the lens of the lives of Indian-Americans, providing an interesting window into their particular experience. But she knows of the human soul's capacity for love—and equal capacity for sometimes dashing it—and writes poignantly of these universal traits. ("Transplanted Hearts")

Elizabeth Taylor holds similar viewpoints: "[Lahiri's work] has a powerful emotional resonance that transcends what has been classified as immigrant fiction and instead assumes a universality as characters struggle with authenticity, assimilation and independence" (Rev. of *Unaccustomed Earth*). Moreover, because of Lahiri's simple yet delicate and accurate ways of delineating stories, it is easier for her to convey the feeling of the characters and make them jump out from the pages into reader's daily lives. Readers have no difficulty finding that Lahiri offers the mirror for them everywhere in her novels. We would agree that although the Bengali details may be foreign to readers, Lahiri's theme is universal and familiar to all of us. This viewpoint responds to Spivak's pursuit of planetarity—searching for a kind of collectiveness and sameness among all of the human beings on the planet. Lahiri's delicate ways of writing and her depiction of the universal emotion and experience, praises Lev Grossman, is like Ernest Hemingway and Anton Chekhov:

> [Lahiri's stories are] of precisely narrated time and delicate emotional tension before the story finally gathers its energies for one sharp, perfectly aimed stab of achy sadness and hope. This is the short story as Hemingway

> practiced it--or Chekhov, for that matter--in all its demanding, reactionary glory. (Grossman, “Indian Ink”)

Lahiri’s writing conveys loss, love, and missed connections in plain but accurate way, which few contemporary writers can express without making the work sensational and depressing. Therefore, many critics regard Lahiri as a miniaturist and a micro-cosmologist.[1]Through her depiction, we are able to understand the others by the details she gives us and conceive what those lives mean without resorting to the label of multiculturalism. More importantly, we are able to meet our emotional doubles and reflections in her story.

Jhumpa Lahiri and Planetarity

Spivak considers planetarity as an alternative to the recent capital-dominated globalization. It is a new kind of collectiveness among human beings which pursues diversities and kinship. Instead of thinking from any political stand and avoiding the restraints drawn by us human beings, she suggests that we think the planet as “an undivided ‘natural’ space” (Spivak, *Death* 72). Moreover, she tries to evoke the relationship between human beings by emphasizing the fact that we are the same species living on this planet. Furthermore, Spivak maintains, to keep a close relationship, we need to bear others in mind, to other ourselves, and to embrace alterities, without the restriction of national or cultural barriers. Inclusiveness, diversity, siblinghood, and othering oneself, all of which are keywords of Spivak’s “planetarity,” turn out to be key to the study of Jhumpa Lahiri and her works. I will discuss the writing style, the theme of her stories, and how the second-generation

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[1] Critics like Lev Grossman and Donna Seaman make similar comments. Seaman writes “An inspired miniaturist, Lahiri creates a lexicon of loaded images” (Rev. of *Unaccustomed Earth*). Grossman also praises: “Lahiri is a miniaturist, a microcosmologist, and she helps us understand what those lives mean without resorting to *we-are-the-world* multiculturalism” (“Jhumpa Lahiri: The Quiet Laureate”).

immigrants form a relation identity from the perspective of planetarity. By using Lahiri's works as an example, I hope to probe into the category of Asian American literature.

We may see Lahiri's works as diasporic literature, but they are, however, different from the stereotypical types. As I discussed before, Lahiri is a writer of "post-Rushdie" generation which is "in many ways broken away from the magic realism that characterizes much of Mr. Rushdie's work" (Rothstein, "India's Post-Rushdie Generation"). In addition, her works does include the misfits and ambiguous mentalities of traditional diaspora; however, what distinguishes Lahiri's works from Salman Rushdie's is the primacy of common feeling and emotion among all human beings. Through her graceful and realistic writing style, readers are introduced to a fictive world in which they find the affection in the novels so familiar to them. Greatly admiring Lahiri's unique writing style and manner, Sarah Kerr writes: "this is not so common a heritage for your typical American writer today" ("Displaced Passions"). Lahiri's works avoid sensational delineation or dramatic plots, but her delicate description of characters and emotions awakes the readers to a bond of affection for all human beings. Through the lens of Bengali Americans, we are able to see how other lives are led in the planet; moreover, Lahiri's pursuits are universal—it is about love and connection. In this way, readers are guided into a better understanding of the alterity and thus be able to find the connection between them.

For the second-generation immigrants, home is not restricted to one's origin and the place one lives; rather, home can mean where love and siblinghood exist. Therefore, I think Spivak's concept of planetarity could be incorporated into Édouard Glissant's idea of relation identity when we discuss the second-generation immigrant's identity in Lahiri's two works: *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth*. Glissant in Poetics *of Relation* regards the relation identity as an alternative to the root

identity. He denounces the root identity as something not recommendable mainly because it depends largely on bloodlines and territory instead of respecting the personal will and therefore annihilates other possible ways to establish one's identities. In order to amend this flaw, Glissant employs Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's important concept, "rhizome," to elucidate the concept of "relation identity." Glissant explains that like a rhizomic network, identity is a "giving-on-and-with" process (142) and a result of complicated and interconnected relations. It welcomes all possibilities. In Lahiri's works, she uses the symbol of name and photography respectively to delineate how the characters' identity is transformed from the root identity to the relation identity. Analyzing from this perspective, I additionally would like to maintain that in the formation of relation identities, the emotion of love plays an important role, because it serves as the sticky power which connects people to one another. Corresponding to the relation identity, the emotion of love also stresses our bond with others and how our identity is built on the the process of "giving-on-and-with" (Glissant 142). In Lahiri's works, the protagonists, Gogol and Kaushik, eventually realize that their identities are related to others, and it is love and siblinghood that really matter. Hence, from my point of view, it is more possible for the second-generation immigrants to keep others in mind, develop a different relationship with other people, and embrace all human beings.

In addition to discussing how the diasporic identity transforms from the root identity to the relation identity and thus allows us to rethink the relationship between human beings, I want to state that Lahiri's works serve as an example of Spivak's planetary vision: the combination of Area Studies and Comparative Literature. Spivak aims to keep the very difference of every culture and highlight the kinship of literature. If we closely examine the nature of diaspora literature, we will find that it mainly stresses the problem of exile, migrant identity, and politics of home. In my opinion,

while featuring transnationality, diaspora literature renders a "third space" for multiple ways of thinking. Besides, the theme of immigrants' struggle against cultural barriers also invokes a re-consideration of the existence of other cultures. We therefore have to always keep the Other in mind and "other ourselves." As in the case of the second-generation immigrants, Gogol Ganguli, the protagonist in *The Namesake*, struggles between two cultures but finally finds that he cannot deny any of them, especially the part that is always foreign to him. Near the end of the story, Gogol perceives that only when he opens up his mind and accepts his unhomely parts can he embrace the world.

Moreover, following Spivak, we must also keep in mind that the difference of every culture should not and cannot be categorized within a single group, which is apt for our analysis of Lahiri's diaspora fiction here. Due to the cultural heterogeneity in diaspora works, we are able to study the very nature of each culture without reducing them to such over-simplified category as "minority" about which people tend to ignore the multiplicity under the labeled stereotype. However, whether taking the name too broadly or too narrowly, its definition needs to be reconsidered. Take Lahiri's novels for example, most of the time, they are labeled as "South Asian American" diasporic works rather than "Asian American" ones, for the latter usually refer to East Asia. Planetary thoughts inspire us to think whether there are more neglected cultures under the umbrella term of "Asian American." For instance, in her recent book, *Other Asias,* Spivak urges us to pluralize the continent Asia. She writes: "We must therefore attempt to think it as one continent in its plurality, rather than reduce it only to our regional identity" (214). In addition, the fact that Lahiri's writing makes explicit the Bengali culture in some way also indicates that the diaspora groups should not be generalized. In one interview, Lahiri expresses her ideas: "[I hope] at least in writing about these [Indian American] characters, you can prevent those

generalization [of immigrants]" (Lahiri, "Jhumpa Lahiri Talks with BookForum".) In such efforts, her works indeed reveal her attempts to break the stereotypical idea of taking diaspora as a monolithic group. Under the name of American diaspora, there are various heterogeneities worthy of noticing.

A lot of elements in Lahiri's diasporic works respond to Spivak's claim of "planetarity," which proposes self-othering, respecting alterity, and most importantly, highlighting the kinship among human beings. In applying Spivak's ideas to the reading of Lahiri's novels, I hope to not only seek some possible solutions to the problems of globalization, such as uniformity or commercialization of literature and identity, but also to unravel the planetariness in Lahiri's diaspora works.

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Hence this thesis will employ Spivak's innovative concept of "planetarity" to argue how we can form a different human relationship with a new collectivity that embraces all human beings. My argument will focus on the realms of literature and identity. So I would like to read the Indian American writer Jhumpa Lahiri's works, *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth,* to echo Spivak's insights. This thesis will be divided into four chapters. The introductory chapter will provide an overview of Lahiri and the concept of planetarity. The second chapter, a theoretical basis of my thesis, aims to discuss Spivak's idea of "planetarity" in two aspects: the realm of literature and that of the diasporic identity. Spivak believes that the best way to realize the concept of planetarity is to combine area studies and comparative literature, which inspires me to read diasporic literature in this light. In addition, planetarity also reminds us of examining Asian America(n) (literature) in multiple ways. As for the agenda of identity, I will try to argue how the diasporic identity changes from the root identity to the relation identity, a concept emphasized by Édouard Glissant. Based on

this theoretical frame, the third chapter will focus on the textual analysis. I will center on Lahiri's two works, *The Namesake* and a trilogy from *Unaccustomed Earth*, and employ the above-said theoretical concepts to analyze them. In this section, I will center on the issue of the relation identity and maintain that the emotion of love is the collective affect that bonds human beings and argue how this idea corresponds with Spivak's assertion of a planetarity which searches for the sameness among human beings. The concluding chapter will discuss the feasibility of this utopian project of planetarity. In the end, I will also briefly sketch the possible contributions of my thesis.

My essay centers on Spivak's concept of planetarity and aims to study Lahiri and her diasporic works in a new way, a way which is different from traditional multiculturalism and the emphasis on the root-identity reading. Echoing the title "Unaccustomed Earth," I hope to study the second-generation immigrants in a different and "not-the-same-as-the tradition" way, and wish to observe our world from a brand new angle.

Chapter Two

Planetarity, Literature, and Identity

Like Fredric Jameson who worries about the "McDonaldization" of globalization, Jeffrey J. Santa Ana also maintains that transnational capitalism transforms American citizenship into a cultural consumption, and he argues that "Now framed as conformity to stylized consumer subjectivity, assimilation is itself a commodity that one desires in order to rid oneself of difference and identity" ("Affect-Identity" 19). Santa Ana points out directly that in the process of globalization, the quest for one's cultural identity and the desire to assimilate into the mainstream culture, especially American culture, inevitably become a cultural consumption. The diversity of culture is thus easily reduced to sameness. For this reason, Spivak proposes a new concept, "planetarity," in opposition to globalization, and she anticipates a better world where all human beings can form a new collectivity without homogenizing the cultural others.

Spivak regards planetarity as a different universality which may replace the capital-dominated globalization with a new type of inclusiveness that embraces diversity and kinship. Looking from an ecological perspective, we will agree that the earth is an organic whole which contains numerous distinct units, and it is "an undivided 'natural' space rather than a differentiated political space" (Spivak, *Death* 72). In this system, humans are just a part of nature, and each of us is unique and different. In other words, we are the same species inhabiting on the earth, yet we have our own individual features. In addition, Spivak asks us to think that living on the same planet, we human beings are only one of the species which shares the resources of the earth with other living creatures, not its dominator. Thus, she reminds us that

we should be able to transcend barriers and maintain a close relationship with others. Spivak therefore writes, “If we imagine ourselves as planetarity subjects rather than global agents, planetarity creatures rather than global entities, alterity remains underived from us, it is not our dialectical negation, it contains us as much as it flings us away” (*Death* 73). In fact, her lines suggest that we need to keep the others in mind and “other ourselves.”

Such a concept is close to the idea of the “uncanny,” which Spivak draws from Sigmund Freud. In his important passage “The Uncanny,” Freud finds the definition of “the unheimlich” from the abnormal man:

> It often happens that neurotic men declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This *unheimlich* place, however, is the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning. … Whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself, while he is still dreaming: ‘this place is familiar to me, I’ve been here before,’ we may interpret the place as being his mothers’ genitals or her body. (“The Uncanny” 245)

Freud associates the feeling of the uncanny with the symbol of female genital organs. The genitals are unfamiliar to neurotic men, but they are everyone’s home, for all of us are born from here. Retaining the importance of familiar/unfamiliar, Spivak shifts the allegorical reading from female genital organs to the planet and tries to deal with the agenda of self and others. In her analysis of literary works such as *Heart of Darkness*, *Season of Migration in the North*, and *Pterodactyl*, Spivak employs the concept of the “uncanny” to read colonialism. She maintains:

> The Heimlich/Unheimlich relationship is indeed, formally, the defamiliarization of familiar space. But its substantive type does not have to

> be the entrance to the vagina. Colonialism, decolonization, and postcoloniality involved special kinds of traffic with people deemed "other" —the familiarity of a presumed common humanity defamiliarized, as it were. (*Death* 77)

In *Season of Migration in the North*, for the narrator, the colonizers are familiar because of their human characteristic; at the same time, they are also unfamiliar for the colonized due to their cruel colonizing acts. In addition, the protagonist, Conrad, in *Heart of Darkness*, is also studied from the perspective of the uncanny. Analyzing Conrad's behavior, Spivak claims Conrad is familiar for his civility and humanity, yet unfamiliar because of his savagery. Based on the two instances, Spivak unfolds her argument that the concept of the uncanny, according to Freud, refers to defamiliarization of one's home; but she further develops a deeper meaning of home into the commonality of human beings. Therefore, the mindset of the uncanny can be put into the discussion of the culture of the Other and self, and she maintains the double-edged feeling—the Other in the self—is best to be located on the planet, which is her essential viewpoint of planetarity.

Keeping ourselves being in the mindset of the uncanny, we would find the cultured Others are familiar to us in the way they inhabit on the same planet, although the features of their cultures may seem unfamiliar to us. Thus, imagining ourselves as planetary creatures is thus one of the ways to embrace difference and identify ourselves with alterity, which probably never derives from us. Matt Waggoner also echoes Spivak's idea by saying: "Planetarity renders home uncanny, un-homelike, and unfamiliar; it defamiliarizes home" (140). Indeed, othering ourselves is not only to embrace alterity but to defamiliarize what we have been so accustomed to. More importantly, it also reminds us of the forgotten diversities and heterogeneity obliterated by the trend of globalization and capitalism.

Spivak goes on to argue that keeping a sense of the "uncanny" in mind and otherizing ourselves do not necessarily mean that we cannot own a collectivity, or a camaraderie friendship. She embeds her discussion in Jacques Derrida's book *Politics of Friendship* and claims: "There can be no politics without collectivity. Derrida begins his book by offering the practical difficulties of forming a collectivity without a group that at least presents itself as a collectivity of friends" (*Death* 28). Derrida's point assists her in the argument that the new collectivity of planetarity must align with many collectivities fabricated with different cultures. In this way, Spivak further advises that we can still maintain a relationship with our cultural others without changing our own mode of being and our cultures. Receiving and respecting others, learning cultural difference from them, and defamiliarizing ourselves do not mean to give up our own cultural legacies and difference. Take feminism for example, women may fight for equality, but it does not mean that they have to give up their womanhood.

In brief, Spivak's planetarity concept stresses the diversity and alterities by proposing the co-existence of all living creatures on the same planet. In this light, she urges us to always trace the others in mind. In doing so, Spivak may hope to avoid the problem of multiculturalism which is often criticized. Like Spivak, Santa Ana argues that it is very often that multiculturalism is represented in the sugar-coated metaphor of "a melting pot," which alleges that every race is on equal terms. However, it unavoidably becomes a cultural consumption in the highly capitalized age of globalization because minority groups are usually fossilized and stereotyped. Therefore, Spivak urges us to cultivate a new collectivity that can move beyond the multiple alterities already created by dominant discourse and a new path to an inclusiveness that embraces all types of difference. Spivak hopes that by thinking "planetarily," we can set up a new kind of affiliation and form a new consensus, so

that we bring all people together for a better world.

Limits of Names and Labels: Planetarity and Literature

Apart from the above discussion about planetarity, Spivak also sees planetarity as a literary trope. Sharing the same idea with Spivak, many scholars observe the development of literature in the era of globalization and see planetarity as a new way to approach the traditional concept of comparative literature. Masao Miyoshi in his essay "Turn to the Planet: Literature, Diversity, and Totality" makes a review of literature from 1980s to the very beginning of 2000s, and tries to predict the development of literature. He observes that the literary discipline is changing from Edward Said's *Orientalism* which represents a beginning for "equality and the open mind" (283-84), to the discourses of Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Arjun Appadurai which signifies the replacement of political economy by hybrid culture. Miyoshi claims these critical works are the hallmarks of the development of postcolonial discourse during the past few decades. Nevertheless, as a foreseer, he attempts to expect a new direction for the futural literary discipline. Having realized that global consumerism and neo-liberalism are changing the world, as well as the literary and cultural fields, Miyoshi thus warned that globalization was nothing but an economic exclusion. Rather than returning to the nation-state, he proposes a true totality that includes everyone on earth, which is the future of global ecology. To achieve this collectivity, he expects literature will play a part in nourishing the hope of building the common bond to the planet. Apart from Miyoshi, Susan Bassnett reviews comparative literature in the twenty-first century and calls for a new future for literary discipline in her essay "Reflections on Comparative Literature in the Twenty-First Century." Bassnett argues that a new comparative literature has to undo the trend of globalization and prevent dominant cultures from appropriating emergent ones. She

maintains that Spivak's planetarity has a "to-comeness" quality that can embrace all the diversity on earth. Drawing on the principles of planetarity which includes "othering self," the multiplicity, and the commonality of all human beings, I also would like to elaborate on applying this concept to the realm of literature, and I hope to emphasize Asian American literature in particular.

"To be human is to be intended toward the other" (Spivak, *Death* 73)—this is Spivak's main argument in *Death of a Discipline*. What she mainly concerns is the literary discipline relating to "the Other's literature." She notices that an overwhelming presence of the discussion of the "Other" is emerging in the field of humanities and social science, which not only becomes Western cultural consumption but also testifies to the domination of European and American authorities. Therefore, she proposes a planetary thinking to the literary discipline and maintains that the concept of planetarity provides a critical theoretical counterpart to defamiliarize and transcend the boundaries drawn by European hegemony.

Spivak argues, founded on inter-European hospitality, comparative literature used to be presided over by Western or European countries, and it was studied from a politicized perspective. The term of "comparative literature" was originally derived from a methodological process of science—the comparative anatomy, and it served as a way to confirm a hypothesis. In the nineteenth century, the term was adopted by a series of French anthologies and was used to teach literature. Later, the term was introduced into different European countries as German, England, and so on. Susan Bassnett claims, the concept of "comparative literature" "which involved a consideration of more than one literature was in circulation *in Europe* in the early years of the nineteenth century" (*Comparative Literature* 12; emphasis added). At that time, the objects of comparative literature were limited to European countries, and the core of this study aimed at the mutual influence of each other. Philaréte Chasles in

1835 endeavored to elucidate the goal of influence study and its functions as such:

> The attraction, the sympathies, the constant vibration of all these [European countries] living, loving, exalted, melancholy and reflected thoughts—some spontaneously and others because of study [of comparative literature]—all submitting to influences which they accept like gifts and all in turn emitting new unforeseeable influences in the future. (qtd. in Bassnett, *Comparative Literature* 13)

Chasles in this paragraph points out the importance of influence study in comparative literature. In addition, he suggests it is crucial to trace how the spirit of a nation or a people may influence other writers and literature in another country. In his assertion, Chasles "paints an idealistic picture of international literary harmony," and emphasizes "the mutuality of influences and connection" (Bassnett, *Comparative Literature* 13). However, the paradox of comparative literature came. While the comparatists attempted to make comparisons, it is believed that they tend to have the sense of superiority to their cultures. Therefore, Bassnett notes, the comparatists in the nineteenth century "kept insisting that comparison took place on a horizontal axis, that is, between equals" (*Comparative Literature* 19), and hereafter, scholars and critics tended to deal with only European works and writers. The result of this perspective therefore suggests another form of cultural colonialism. The cultures outside Europe were excluded without doubt, and they were considered as the object and the receiver of "influence"—those who need to be affected and require the education of European culture. François Jost also believes that even though comparative literature discloses "the splendid multi-formity of European and even universal letters," we also have to be aware of "their oneness and unity beyond all appearance" (9). While they celebrate the harmony and connection of European cultures, they also despise other cultures and attempt to carry out the "oneness"—their culture as universal value—through the

cultural colonialism sugar-coated with the name of "influence" and civilizing mission. Till now, comparative literature still only centers on Europe, North America later included, but comparatists' mentality of imperialism does not disappear. Therefore, it is impossible to claim comparative literature without biased nature, which makes Spivak conscious of the limits as well as the hazards of comparative literature, and she endeavors to propose some changes.

Spivak declares, comparative literature should be moved beyond the parameters of Euro-centricism or U.S. perspective, and we have to consider the resources of area study. Area study is the aftermath of the Cold War, and it is founded and backed up by federal grants and great foundations. Charles Wagley offers explicit observation of how area study was raised:

> To meet the demands of war, scholars of diverse disciplines were forced to pool their knowledge in frantic attempts to advise administrators and policy makers…. The war also showed the need for trained personnel for most foreign areas…. In these Army Specialized Training Programs and Civil Affairs Training Schools many professors had their first experience with curricula organized by area rather than by discipline, and many students made a real beginning in the study of foreign areas in their languages. (qtd. in Spivak, *Death* 6)

Although area study originally is derived from political reasons, we may find it seldom combined with politics. Rather, area study is mainly the interdisciplinary research that focuses on heterogeneous fields of geography, music, philosophy, art, history, media, and other realms which comparative literature less accentuates. In addition, area studies relates to "areas," while comparative literature's focus is confined to merely European "nations." Spivak understands what distinguishes area study from comparative literature is that the former can transgress borders and

frontiers. For this reason, she urges that the marriage of area studies and comparative literature is able to help the latter expanding its scope from nation to region and produce a new relationship for literature. Moreover, the new comparative literature is able to embrace other literatures and cultures due to the supplement of area study's means of research, among which Spivak especially highlights the importance of learning native languages of others:

> Comparative Literature and Area Studies *can* work together in the fostering not only of national literatures of the global South but also the writing of countless indigenous languages in the world that were programmed to vanish when the maps were made. (*Death* 15)

Due to the characteristics of area studies and the use of various native languages, the new comparative literature can step out from the restrictions of Eurocentric hegemony, offer a chance to let those forgotten areas reappear, and help readers understand the "others" in the world. In this way, the new comparative literature does not just transcend boundaries. Moreover, it tries to embrace and re-present the world. In addition, the influence study which the old comparative literature emphasizes can broaden its scope, and the relation and connection between every corner of the world can be manifested. Hopefully, the new comparative literature could contact the world with responsible efforts. Spivak expects the new comparative literature could play the pioneering role in interpreting planetarity which puts much emphasis on the alterities and the relationship between human beings. As long as it bears others in mind, the new comparative literature could achieve the goal of "writing the self at its othermost" (Waggoner 131), or write an uncanny version of literature which pursues variety by trying to put oneself in others' shoes.

In my opinion, the new comparative literature which combines area studies with comparative literature helps us to know others and keep them in mind, and assists us

in re-examining diaspora literature from a different angle. According to Spivak, comparative literature emphasizes hospitality, connection, and the relationship between European countries, whereas area studies focus on the knowledge of every region in the world. This may well serve as a useful reading strategy for reading diaspora literature. Diasporic literature is grounded on the foundation of nation, home, dislocations, exile, and identity. Critics as Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur approve of the value of diaspora: "Part of the value of thinking about different diasporas in transnational settings is that it offers an alternative paradigm for national identification" (8). The main theme of diasporic literature usually centers on the protagonist's ambivalent attitude toward his/her national identity. However, I think the insistence on the national identity or root identity narrows down the perspective of diasporic literature. In this light, we may need a new way to observe diasporic literature.

The new comparative literature Spivak proposes helps observe diasporic literature in a different way. It is often in the process of self-negotiation that he/she finally finds that his/her identity is not grounded on the root but built on the sense of belonging, the interaction with others, and the emotion of love. In my observation, the core of influence study—transcending national boundaries—can be applied here. Comparative literature used to delve into the mutual influences in cultures and literatures among European countries. In analyzing the diasporic identity, I attempt to associate from the perspective of influence study which comparative literature emphasized, with the concept of self-othering which is the nature of area study that assist in understanding others beyond national categories. In Lahiri's works, through self-othering, the protagonist, the second-generation immigrants, learns to concern about others and thereby to be able to identify himself/herself with those who once seemed strange and uncanny to him/her. This metaphorical self-othering may rid the

estrangement between countries as well as the prejudice and hegemony of American and European countries. Further, as the character opens his mind to embrace others, he is able to acknowledge the fact that his life is piled with numerous events, and his identity is actually influenced by different cultures. It is impossible for him to deny any "influences" he had received. In this case, the intimacy and the relation with others as well as with the world therefore could be manifested. If we look from this perspective, I assert, diaspora indeed accords with the important nature of planetarity which urges human beings to reconsider the relation between human beings as close, without barriers, and mutually influenced.

While propagating the idea of planetarity in order to urge us to reflect on the significance of alterity, Spivak also reminds us of the danger of reducing the third world literature and the Other to a single category. Due to the fact that English is a globally dominant language and that the objects of research in the field of old comparative literature are mainly European countries and North America, the languages of the third world countries are usually ignored or merged into the category of "the Other." Spivak criticizes the western academia's homogenization and ignorance of the literature of Southern Hemisphere. She suggests that students could understand the Other through learning their native languages, so that they may read literary texts written in these languages: "We must take the languages of the Southern Hemisphere as active cultural media rather than as objects of cultural studies" (*Death* 19). In doing so, Spivak tries to unravel the difference and values of each culture.

When we reconsider this problem of "the Other," we find yet another problem about categorization; that is, we tend to heavily rely on a very rough geographical division, such as Asia, African, and so on, without emphasizing too much on the very difference inside each continent. When discussing American literature, for example, we tend to categorize minor literature by dividing them into Asian American literature

or African American literature, which often eradicates the difference and diversity of Asia or Africa hidden behind the general terms. Therefore, I would like to discuss the problem in terms of the relation between Asia(n) (Americans) and South Asia(n) (Americans) to argue that multiplicity should not be ignored. In my thesis, I will employ the ideas delineated in the works of Lavina Dhingra Shankar and Rajini Srikanth, Lisa Lowe, and Spivak, her recent work "Our Asias" in particular, to elaborate on how the idea of planetarity helps unravel the diversity buried by the name of Asia.

Lavina Dhingra Shankar and Rajini Srikanth in *A Part, Yet Apart* attempt to figure out what constitutes Asian American literature and what is the position of South Asian. They maintain that in a broad sense, the term "Asian America" is a geographical term because it "encompass[es] all people who originate from Asia and live in this country [America]" (3). Originally, the term "Asian American" was created and used by Chinese and Japanese community during the Civil Rights Movements and the Third World People Movement in 1960s and 1970s. The real intention was to build up a coalition of different people with Asian origins. However, the phrase never gives a clear definition of who, with different national origins or cultural backgrounds, can be included. In addition, because the very first community coining the term "Asian American" was Chinese and Japanese, it is easier for the common people to associate the term with East Asians. But with more immigrants from different parts of Asia entering into America, the term becomes problematic and vague. At the early stage, the term "Asian American" refers to the Chinese and Japanese only. It was not until recent years that Koreans, Filipinos, and Vietnamese were taken in. South Asian Americans, those whose origins are Bangladesh, Shutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka seldom fit into the category. Shankar and Srikanth argue that the definition of the term is too limited because it merely

"focuses on 'consciousness'—or what we call felt identity—and commonly includes only people from East and Southeast Asia" (3).

Thus, they think that the scope of the term "Asian American" has to be broadened; otherwise, the term will become a vehicle for the homogenization of immigrants' various layers of ethnicity, and it will narrow down the scale of Asian American Literature. Hsiu-chuan Lee also notices the problem, and she comments on the term "Asian America." She writes: "It is clear that 'Asian American' should not be reduced to a cultural icon, a fossilized ethnic label, which excludes 'different' types of Asian Americans" (362). Lee agrees that the category of Asian American is still too limited, and it should not be fossilized into a rigid stereotype; thus, she suggests the term be revitalized. She offers an interesting viewpoint from Jacques Lacan, and argues "Asian American" remains "not-whole" (pas-toute).[2] She states that we have to admit "some part of itself remains underneath or outside the territorial confinement and temporal linearity of a nationalist representation, that something repressed or simply missing is always in the process of (re)emergence" (362). The term "Asian America" is too vague for people to conceive the constitution of it. Lee thinks that some parts are still left behind the existent representation. Thus, it is crucial to excavate the multiplicity under the term and prevent it from being solidized as an ethnic label.

Likewise, Lisa Lowe in her essay "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian-American Difference" also stresses the multiplicity inside Asian America. She argues against treating Asian Americans as an amorphous vague mass. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Asians in America were

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[2] Lee makes a short introduction to Jacques Lacan's idea of "pas-toute" which is from Lacan's analysis of women's jouissance. Lee summarizes the concept as follows: "Being 'pas-toute,' in which Woman is never completely represented or appropriated by the phallic symbolic. [sic]. She is there in the symbolic order 'in full' (a plein); but there is 'something more' (en plus)" (362).

managed by exclusion acts, internment, or prohibition from certain citizenships. Lowe regards all of the above as acts which "made use of the racialist constructions of Asian-origin groups as homogeneous" (139). She maintains that in order to destabilize the dominant discursive determination of Asian Americans, it is necessary to re-consider Asian Americans as heterogeneous. In this essay, Lowe evokes three terms: heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity to underscore that Asian Americans are distinct culturally, historically, socially, and even economically. Lowe's observations help us to diversify Asian America. They also respond to Spivak's planetarity and distinguish Asian American literature from the stereotypical Chinese and Japanese immigrant stories. By adopting the above-mentioned scholars' viewpoints, I hope to highlight the diversities of Asian America.

But how do we put the goal of diversifying Asian America into practice? Spivak offers a solution in her "Our Asias," a chapter from *Other Asias*. The critical work not merely echoes her discussion of planetarity but also emphasizes the idea of alterity by "othering" Asia. She emphasizes that we need to see Asia(n)s in multiple ways, and she encourages people to think beyond the rigid boundaries of nations and regions. The traditional division of "Asia" into West Asia, East Asia, South Asia, and so on, is mainly a geographical conception, but it is easy to fall into the pitfall of regionalism. Discussing Asians in the United States, Spivak worries about the danger of limiting the term "Asia" to merely serving Japanese and Chinese immigrant's identity in America even though she appreciates Asian Americans' efforts to build up a sense of solidarity. For Spivak, the image of Asia should not just "supply the dominant demand for multiculturalism by only focusing on our region" ("Our Asias" 236), to serve as "the ground for (new) immigrant identity politics" ("Our Asias" 225). Rather, she persuades us to think from the angle of the continent rather than from the country inside it. And it is essential to consider Asia in its plurality in terms of diversified

religions, histories, cultures, and the like, "without necessarily confining it to the outlines of the named continent" ("Our Asias" 221).

One engaging example, the metaphor of *Qing-hua-ci* (青花瓷 "Blue and White Porcelain") proposed by Jung Su, makes explicit the diversity within the term "Asia." By reviewing the history of *Qing-hua-ci*, Su argues that the design and craftsmanship of this ceramics comprise an intertwinement of different cultures in Asia. After a circling travel from the West Asia to the East Asia, the ceramic arts culminated in China, especially in *Jing-de-Zhen* (*Jing-de County*景德鎮). China thereby carried forward the techniques to make the porcelain and exported the porcelain wares back to Persia in quantity and influenced other countries' manufacturing skills. Due to the delicate skills and exquisite products it advances considerably in the Ming Dynasty, China becomes another name of ceramics. However, it blinds the fact that this porcelain is actually entangled with various techniques from different countries, and that the complex heterogeneity within Asia should not be overlooked. In the foreword of the special issue, "Asia and the Other," of the journal *Concentric*, Su invites us to see the cover of this issue, which features this blue floral pattern (*Qing-hua*) on porcelain.[3] She urges the readers to see it in a new metaphorical way: "The delicate branching-out and intertwining of blue stems and blossoms are meant here to embody Asia's subtle multiplicity, its complex heterogeneity over against the Western conception" (3). Moreover, this rhizomic dissemination of ceramics also embodies a "traveling aesthetics of porcelain-making skills" (5). Because the technique and the design of the ceramics are mutually influenced in Asia, for Su, it is exactly this characteristic of "its sameness-and-difference, its historical-geographical eastward flow that periodically circle back on itself" (5) that responds to Spivak's argument of

[3] For more information, see the cover and the foreword "Thinking Otherwise: Asia Revisited," of the special issue, "Asia and the Other," of the 34.2 *Concentric* issue.

a pluralized Asia.

While propounding the idea of looking at cultures as interrelated and mutually influenced, Spivak in her essay intends to argue against the stereotypical regionalism, and attempts to free the image of Asia with more multiplicity. She asserts, "'Culture is its own irreducible counterexample,' 'culture alive is always on the run'" ("Our Asias" 238). It is impossible to deny any elements constituting Aisa. We may even say the Asian diaspora groups spreading all over the world are able to represent Asia, for there is no "authentic" Asia. This may also be congruent with the idea of planetarity and its relation with literatures and cultures. Spivak in *Death of a Discipline* also maintains "planetarity may be a necessary supplement to the reconfiguration of 'Our America' [Our Asia] for cultural studies" (96) in the way of comprehending all of the lived experiences and cultures neglected elsewhere. Having examined Asian American literature from the perspective of planetarity, we are likely to find that we cannot exclude other cultural elements other than Asia (especially East Asia) and North America from the so-called Asian American literature, and we have to admit that literatures and cultures are in a going-on-and-with system. Only when we are able to otherize the self and to think the globe otherwise can we see our cultures, literature, and identity with a much broadened scope.

Relation－Relays and Relates: Planetairty and Diasporic Identity

Planetarity puts much emphasis on the relationship and siblinghood of human beings which gradually replace regionalism and rigid nationalism. With an emphasis on analyzing the diasporic identity, the concept of planetarity may well serve to demonstrate the fact that descendants of the first-generation immigrants have not insisted on the national root and the place where they come from; however, I argue, relation with others, on the contrary, is crucial in constituting their subjectivity.

Therefore, I would like to look at Édouard Glissant's critical work *Poetics of Relation* to contend that the importance of relation may overtake root identity, particularly in the case of second-generation immigrants. I hope in doing so, there will be a new way to read diasporic works.

There is a tendency for readers to study diasporic identity in singular terms, which is to see the offspring of the first-generation immigrants as the object of "culture clash" (Brah 40). Borrowing Avatar Brah's critical work *Cartographies of Diaspora*, I attempt to deconstruct the myth of "culture clash" which may be problematic. When analyzing Asian immigrants in Britian, Brah points out that "culture clash" especially happens when the second generation immigrants navigate the borderland of two cultures—the inherited one and the acquired one. For Indian Americans, the younger generation may experience the conflicts of Indian and American cultures. More often than not, critics may celebrate this group have two homelands and multiplicity of their cultures. However, Brah argues, this kind of argument is doubtful in several perspectives. The first reason lies in putting identity in the notion of two cultures, such as American or Indian one, is too narrow. As I have already noted before, the difference within one culture should be taken into consideration. Thus, there will be more possibilities of "intra-ethnic" cultural collisions. Brah criticizes, reading identities "in terms of a simple bipolar cleavage, then is quite untenable" (41). This binary position may also neglect the possibility of "inter-ethnic" clash, which is the second reason Brah addresses. She attempts to emphasize the interaction of cultural encounter, which may echo the spirit of influence study of comparative literature. The relationship and mutual influence between cultures should be underscored. Critics like Vijay Prashad, refutes culture as a "timeless trait," instead, it is "a living set of social relations" (112). In addition, Stuart Hall also denies the notion of cultures as a fixed site and "common historical

experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people,' with stable unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning" (393). Prashad's and Hall's lines underpin the fact that culture cannot be reduced to an alienated national category, and it is inappropriate to embed identity in an over-simplified national or regional narrative. More importantly, it also suggests, we should reconsider the insistence on the "root" in the case of interpreting the identity of the second-generation diaspora.

Brah's repudiation of culture clash is in fact a refusal of root identity. Glissant calls the term root identity because the identity is based on the tradition of history, filiations, and territory. He elaborates his argument by tracing the bloodline in the West. He maintains, "In the Western world the hidden cause (the consequence) of both Myth and Epic is filiation, its work setting out upon the fixed linearity of time, always toward a projection, a project" (47). This concept of origins of the world is like a bloodline, it precedes individual will and roots in the minds of the subsequent generation. Glissant further points out:

> The retelling (certifying) of a 'creation of the world' in a filiation guarantees that this same filiation—or legitimacy—rigorously ensues simply by describing in reverse the trajectory of the community, from its present to this act of creation. This view is not at the origin of every Western myth, but it is the view that prevailed, determining the evolution of these cultures. (47)

Therefore, to connect oneself to the filiated tradition, in some way means to maintain the sense of rootedness and legitimacy. In addition, it is believed traditionally, the occupation of territory is to be linked to identity. Glissant argues, "Identity will be achieved when communities attempt to legitimate their right to possession of a territory through myth or the revealed world" (13). Such an assertion reaffirms the fact that traditional identity is linked to a reassurance of lineage through the tenure of a

land. Both territory and history-based filiation influence the subsequent generations' conception of their identities. They have a "tendency toward filiation, reaching back as far as possible through ancient time" (Glissant 47). Their belief in territory and filiation is lineal, and such a conviction is a persistence to root and origin, which conforms to the concept of root identity Glissant later elaborates.

Based on the above-said argument, the definition of root identity is explicitly explained by Glissant. He argues that root identity lies in tracing the bloodlines, and he summarizes it as follows:

> *Root identity*
>
> —is founded in the distant past in a vision, a myth of the creation of the world;
>
> —is sanctified by the hidden violence of a filiation that strictly follows from this founding episode;
>
> —is ratified by a claim to legitimacy that allows a community to proclaim its entitlement to the possession of a land, which thus becomes a territory;
>
> —is preserved by being projected onto other territories, making their conquest legitimate—and through the project of a discursive knowledge. (143-44)

According to Glissant, root identity is highly relevant to a knowledge of the past which is passed lineally. However, there is a tendency of "thinking about One" instead of "thinking about All" (Glissant 49). Embedded in the concept of roots which is like a monolithic, root identity eschews individual will and the possibilities of any factors constituting one's identity. The generalization of identity annihilates the over-determination of it, and it is easily reduced to regionalism and cultural essentialism. Especially analyzing diasporic identity, we are likely to see the limit of root identity. Glissant addresses his concern: "when identity is determined by a root,

the emigrant is condemned (especially in the second generation) to being split and flattened. Usually an outcast in the place he has newly set anchor, he is forced into impossible attempts to reconcile his former and his present belonging" (143). Therefore, root identity cannot be applied on a full scale, and Glissant proposes an alternative to it—relation identity.

Glissant contrasts relation identity with root identity, and he hopes to offer an alternative to the interpretation of identity. Springboarding off the important concepts from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Glissant develops his argument of relation identity from the metaphor of "rhizome." Deleuze and Guattari criticize the notion of being rooted, for "The root is unique, a stock taking all upon itself and killing all around it" (Glissant 11). For them, the root rejects all of the social bonds constituting one's identity. So they challenge the concept of root and attempt to develop an entrenched root "system," or a network spreading in the ground and in the air. Although the ground of the concept of rhizome is based on a notion of root, Deleuze and Guattari tend to emphasize more its structure and complicated relations with others. Glissant reiterates the structure of rhizome as an intricate system with several roots spreading outward and being interconnected with others "with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently" (Glissant 11). Therefore, the system of roots is quite different from the single root I have mentioned before. The latter one is a lineal and totalitarian symbol, while the former contests the limits of root and questions the priority of history and bloodline. What really matters is not the history and territory the ancestors passed down; rather, the relation with others is the point we should be concerned about.

Glissant directly correlates the idea of rhizome to the concept of relation identity. He argues that "The notion of the rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root. Rhizomic thought is the principle behind what

I call the Poetic of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with others" (11). Because the rhizome leads to "a multiple relation with others" (Glissant16), the poetics of relation identity is more than a singular understanding of one's history. It suggests a capacity bearing more variations and fluctuations which make up identity intricately, and it also arouses an awareness of our relationship with others. Identity itself is actually a process of self dialect and correction, and "a system of relation, as an aptitude for 'giving-on-and-with' [donner-avec]" (Glissant 142). Therefore, it is not possible to locate one's identity in a priori and pre-determent constituent, and it is also unfair to see identity in a generalized value of root and history. Concluding these arguments, Glissant defines relation identity as such:

> *Relation identity*
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> —is linked not to a creation of the world but to the conscious and contradictory experience of contacts among cultures;
>
> —is produced in the chaotic network of Relation and not in the hidden violence of filiation;
>
> —does not devise any legitimacy as its guarantee of entitlement, but circulates, newly extended;
>
> —does not think of a land as a territory from which to project toward other territories but as a place where one gives-on-and-with rather than grasps.
>
> Relation identity exults the thought of errantry and of totality. (144)

What is highlighted here is the interdependence and chaotic network among people. One's experience and consciousness replace the inert monolithic root. In this statement, the poetics of relation provides a more explicit understanding of identity.

Moreover, Glissant further points out that the existence of others may be essential to our understanding of the relation identity. "We 'know' that the Other is within us

and affects how we evolve as well as the bulk of our conceptions and the development of sensibility" (Glissant 27). Through the rhizomic network, we are able to note how we are influenced by others. This statement responds to Spivak's argument. Planetarity teaches us to reconsider the relation between human beings by thinking people are co-existing on the same planet. All of us are interdependent and mutually influenced. For this reason, we can claim that others may play an important part in constituting our identity. Besides, the knowledge of others, as Glissant or Spivak suggests, should not be discussed from a political or national perspective. Planetarity pursues the understanding of others through their languages, and Spivak argues we free ourselves from thinking of the cartography-based division of people. In doing so, we are able to form a new collectiveness and relation among human beings. Similarly, relation identity argues against the "compact national entity" (Glissant 18) of root identity. It emphasizes that the relation with others is boundless, without limits. Glissant even accentuates uprooting may be similar to the spirit of errantry and exile, which "are experienced as a search for others" (18). In the journey, it is not difficult to find out the diversity of others, and in this light, we can look at our relation with others through a broadened lens. Deconstructing the political entity and re-examining the relationship with others are the main proposal of Glissant and Spivak, and this essential stand may well serve to look at the issue of the second-generation immigrants' identity.

Lahiri's works, for example, aim at depicting the second generation immigrants' struggle against multiple cultural conflicts and their plight of having the hybrid identity. The second generation's identity changes from "root identity," an identity which the first generation tends to stick to, to "relation identity," which sees identity as a system of relations and an aptitude for "giving-on-and-with" (Glissant 142). The root identity is hard to maintain for immigrants (especially for the second generation), the reason lies in "usually an outcast in the place he [the second generation] has newly set

anchor, he is forced into impossible attempts to reconcile his former and present belonging" (Glissant 143). In addition, the root identity leads to a generalization of universal value. It denies individual will and any other possibilities constituting one's identity. Due to the complex background of trans-nations and displacement, to locate diasporic identity in the fixed history and territory, or a big totalitarian root, is not tenable. Therefore, relation identity is a form that challenges the generalized universality and the hegemony of globalization by shedding lights on the importance of interdependency among human beings. Glissant argues the ecological vision of relation is one of the instances to solve the problem of the generalizing tendency of globalization. For example, Jeffery J. Santa Ana maintains that diasporic identity is easily commercialized and assimilated into American identity, thus losing its individuality and resulting in regionalism. It often falls into the pitfall of the totalitarian root, persisting in regionalism and territory. On the contrary, relation identity tries to show the connectedness of human beings since we all live on the same planet. Hence, we are able to discover the others' existence and we are indeed related to them. Similarly, in Spivak's view, planetarity advocates a type of inclusiveness and comprehensive collectivity which differs from capitalist uniformity. It pursues all diversity and stresses siblinghood and expects that all people can live together without hierarchy. The second-generation diaspora people tend to rid the limits of root and the restraints of territory. Instead, what really matters is how they interact with the world and widen their identity connection. Therefore, I believe by underlining the importance of relation, it can offer some alternative to some problems about diasporic identity and globalization.

But how do we form a relation with others and further understand others? Considering the nature of relation identity and the new collectiveness Spivak maintains, I think the emotion of love plays an important role in binding human beings

together because it emphasizes resemblance, which leads to identification. I intend to borrow from the following works to support my arguments. Sara Ahmed's works, including "In the Name of Love" and "The Skin of the Community: Affect and Boundary Formation," are essential to my thesis, for they provide a theoretical base; that is, we see love as a power of building siblinghood and relationship. Furthermore, to discuss affect and emotions of Asian Americans, I think Santa Ana's essay "Affect-Identity: The Emotions of Assimilation, Multiraciality, and Asian American Subjectivity" offers ample theories and examples, and it probes into the issue of how emotions affect immigrants' attitude toward identities. Santa Ana draws on emotions to deal with Asian American identity from the perspective of commercialized emotions and schizophrenic feelings in the era of globalization, which is helpful in analyzing Lahiri's works.

Incorporating these theoretical works, I attempt to explore how the emotion of love works to enable the building up of the relation between people in the following sections. In spite of the fact that love is my major concern, in the context of relation identity and planetarity I will not focus on the analysis of the types of love, such as racial love, familial love, erotic love, and so on. Neither do I try to plot the relation between these types of love. Rather, my main focus is how the pull of love towards others, for the characteristic of love plays an essential role in drawing people together. In addition, I also question how others could become an object of love. Discussing from a boarder perspective, I intend to argue that the emotion of love can be transferred into a collectivity and help create an ideal. In my thesis, this ideal, I maintain, is aptly planetarity. Placing planetarity within the context of my above argument, I hope to underline how love and relation are essential to the formation of one's identity and an ideal community.

From my point of view, the emotion of love could bind people together, and it

happens when the subject identifies with the object. In one chapter of *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* entitled "In the Name of Love," Sara Ahmed directly points out that "love, after all, has often been theorised as a sticky emotion that sticks people together" (125). According to Ahmed's definition, the pull of love towards others relates to the identification with them: "it is through forms of identification that align this subject with this other, that the character of the loved is produced as 'likeness' in the first place" (Ahmed, "The Skin" 108). Ahmed traces Freud's example in analyzing how a little boy forms an ideal image from his father, and she believes identification is the earliest emotional tie with others. "A little boy will exhibit a special interest in his father; he would like to grow like him and be like him, and take his place everywhere" (Freud, *Group Psychology* 60). The father is the ideal ego for the boy, and he serves as the image the boy wants to be. In the process of identifying with his father, the little boy has to imitate him and tries to be like him. Observing this case, Ahmed maintains identification is an emotional tie, and it is a "towardness" to others. She writes, "Identification is a form of love; it is an active kind of loving, which moves or pulls the subject towards another" ("In the Name" 126). This act of loving is grounded on the sameness and likeness; therefore, we can claim: "I love or hate them because they are like me, or not like me" (Ahmed, "The Skin" 108). The quest for sameness in others may confirm the connection between others and me. It is the sameness and resemblance with others that form the bond and thus create the sense of identity, and it is this characteristic that makes the work of love possible.

In this light, I do believe that love not only can bind two people together but also can serve as the binding force among all human beings. Love helps us to find out the connection with others through tracing sameness, and thus it helps to imagine "the face of community made up of other 'me's" (Ahmed, "The Skin" 107). More precisely, love is a universal human emotion that pulls all people together, which enables us to

see what we have in common and further to imagine an ideal community. The ideal community will be formed "through their shared orientation toward an object" (Ahmed, "In the Name" 130). Incorporating Freud's theory into her own, Ahmed discusses how love works to connect people in the domain of family, nation, and culture respectively. By showing love, people are able to be with each other, and toward to the ideal object such as family or nation. Therefore, Freud claims that "love is the center of everything" (Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontent* 29). Love is essential, for it enacts as an affective bond which is crucial for the framing of subjectivity, sociality, and even civilization.

To be brief, love helps to form a community. In this thesis, I claim, planetarity is an ideal community and the object of love. To form this utopian community, we have to build the sameness and the collectiveness, which has to do with Spivak's discussion of the uncanny. From Spivak's point of view, the uncanny feeling which marks "Other-in-the-Self" denotes not only the unhomely part but also the familiarity between human beings, which is the true meaning of planetarity. As I discussed before, I claim that the unfamiliar part is the difference between each other, such as the appearance, cultures, languages, and so on, while the similarity between human beings is the fact that we are the same species living on the planet, on loan. Having emphasized these attributes, Spivak goes further to highlight the fact that people are related. Extending her ideas to a broader scope, I argue, love binds people together because it enables people to see similarities among them, and it anticipates a possibility of forging the longing for the collectivity among human beings. Through love, we are able to see the resemblance in others, and try to relate to them as well as embrace their difference. This kind of uncanny feeling, recognizing their difference while discovering love as the shared emotion of us, helps us conceive human beings are related and influenced by each other. In this way, I maintain that if we are aware of

our need for aligning ourselves with others, and everyone thinks so, the emotion of love will truly help map an ideal community. Thus, love becomes the shared feature required to keep people on the planet together. In other words, besides being the same species on the planet, the emotion of love is, I argue, the other similarity owned by all of the human beings. The community of the planet is formed by people's mutual toward-ness grounded on love, and it will be achieved if people move toward it and keep it in mind. Ahmed maintains, because of the emotion of love, everyone is allowed to enter the ideal community: "by displaying 'my love,' I show that I am 'with' you. It is 'love,' rather history, culture or ethnicity that binds the [planet] together" ("In the Name" 135). Roland Barthes's line echoes Ahmed's idea: "It is love the subject loves, not the object" (*A Lover's Discourse* 31). In this sense, love is the unique factor which binds people together and makes people walk toward the planet. As long as people bear planetarity in mind, they know it is essential to identify with others, and take them as one part of me, which is exactly what planetarity means and what love functions for. Jodi Dean's lines also suggest love is an affect of solidarity with others: "I present reflective solidarity as that openness to difference which lets our disagreements provide the basis for connection…. [it is] the kind of solidarity that grows out of intimate relationships of love and affection" (17). Dean's statement, for Spivak, is an appropriate way to think of planetarity as the new collectiveness and as the imperative for human beings to love each other in order to evoke the sense of planetarity. Furthermore, his notion of openness to alterity and difference may remind us of others again. The others should be any-body, without limits or conditions. It also suggests that based on sameness and an unconditional love, any-body can become one part of the community of lovers and the loved. In the name of love, we might step closer toward the goal of planetarity; besides, in the act of love, we learn that we human beings are closely correlated to one another.

Corresponding to relation identity, love stresses our bond with others, especially in the context of planetarity. We know our identity is built on the adding-on system. In the following chapter, I will focus on the argument that identity (especially the second-generation diasporic identity) is not decided by ethnicity or history only; rather, it is correlated to others on the planet, in which love plays a critical role. By incorporating Lahiri's works into my theoretical frame, I hope to underscore the arguments elaborated in this chapter.

Chapter Three

A Turn to the Relation Identity: Reading Jhumpa Lahiri's Works

> Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil. My children have had other birthplaces, and, so far as their fortunes may be within my control, shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth.
>
> —Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Custom-House" 11-12

> The surname, was a first and crucial step toward making individual citizens officially legible, and along with the photograph, it is still the first fact on documents of identity.
>
> —James Scott, *Seeing Like a State* 71

This chapter aims at two of Lahiri's works, *The Namesake* and "Hema and Kaushik,"a trilogy from her most recent collection of short stories, *Unaccustomed Earth*. I think Spivak's concept of planetarity could be incorporated into Édouard Glissant's concept of relation identity and thereby facilitate the analysis of the second generation's diasporic identity in two of Lahiri's works. In these stories, Lahiri uses the symbol of name and the act of photographing respectively to delineate how the characters' identity is transforming from root identity to relation identity. Centering on this statement, I would like to maintain that the emotion of love plays an important role in the formation of relation identity, because it serves as a sticky power which connects people with each other. In addition, the emotion of love, corresponding to relation identity, also stresses our bond with others and how our identity is built on the

going-on-and-with system. Therefore, looking at Lahiri's works from the above-said perspective, I am going to argue that toward the end of both stories, the protagonists, Gogol and Kaushik, come to realize that their identities are related to others, and it is love and siblinghood that liberate them from their previous prisons of identity.

What's in a Name? : Root / Relation Identity in *The Namesake*

Lahiri's first novel, *The Namesake*, delves deeply into the lives of immigrants. The Gangulis, a Bengali family who emigrates to the United States, starts their painstaking struggles for adjustment in the new land. The story begins with the life of a couple, Ashoke Ganguli and Ashima Ganguli, who were born in Calcutta and emigrated to America for a better future. Introducing the story with a scene of child-birth in the hospital, Lahiri uses Ashima's pain of giving birth to her first child as a metaphor for beginning the life in a foreign land as non-stop contractions. In America, this newly migrated young couple have no relatives, no friends, and no things that "ha[ve] felt normal" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 5-6), but they have to work and raise children in an unfamiliar country. In addition, for them, the first generation immigrants, homesickness is another everlasting and incurable symptom. "I want to go back" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 33), is often mentioned when they are unaccustomed to American life and culture. However, brought up in America, their children, Gogol and Sonia, assimilate into the new environment much better than their parents and have different ways of living and thinking. Thus, more often than not, they are engaged in generation gaps and identity crises. In *The Namesake*, Gogol's name is the most obvious cultural conflict which triggers the crisis of cultural identity. Moreover, the name also implies how Gogol is trapped in the myth of root identity. It is not until the very end that he comes to realize that the name represents how his identity is built in the relation with others.

Regarding the protagonist's name, "Gogol Ganguli," as the main metaphor in *The Namesake*, is in fact a reflection of Lahiri's personal experience. Lahiri was not born with the name "Jhumpa." In one interview, she mentions, like other Indians, she has a pet name and a good name. The former is used for families and friends, while the latter is for the public. However, "Jhumpa," the name with which we know her as a writer, is her pet name, not her good name. Her legal name is "Nilanjana Sudeshna," which is foreign to us. Living in America, Lahiri thinks that a more easily pronounced name is much more preferred; thus, she has a name change. However, this act incurs lots of complaints from her relatives, but Lahiri explains as such:

> But when I was enrolled in school the teachers decided that Jhumpa was the easiest of my names to pronounce and that was that. To this day many of my relatives think that it's both odd and inappropriate that I'm known as Jhumpa in an official, public context. (Lahiri, "Jhumpa Lahiri on Her Debut Novel")

It seems Lahiri's name is also an accident, but the insistence on the use of pet name also allows Lahiri to assert her autonomy to the public, and show the version of herself to be known. Her personal experience is revealed through the protagonist Gogol Ganguli's name change in *The Namesake*. Likewise, Gogol also encounters the problem of naming and name change, which discloses a series of identity crises in his life.

Having read some critics' ideas about name and naming, I would like to argue that there is a powerful connection between names and self-identity. Understanding the true meaning of one's name and conforming to it is a process of constructing one's identity. One has to learn the pronunciation of one's own name, what it means, the name-giver's expectation, and even other people's acknowledgment. Finally, he becomes his name and an individual with his own persona and devotion. Therefore,

the process of becoming a subject is connected with the imposition of name. Barbara Bondenhorn and Gabriele vom Bruck maintain that name "inaugurates the actor's identity and inform him in an authoritative manner of what he is and what he must be" (14). As long as we give someone a name, we not only grant him a condition of identity, but convert "anybody" into "somebody," who is conferred with the name-giver's expectation. Thus, name suggests self and the other's integration, which makes one's identity complete. In addition, Michael Lambek argues the act of naming, "in endowing its referent with identity, fulfills a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for realizing that object as an entity" (119). Therefore, we know that one's name is strongly associated with his/her formation of identity and the entity of personality. Looking from this perspective, we are likely to suppose that as long as a person has problems in understanding and identifying with his/her name, the crisis of developing identity will hence follow.

Judging from the above-said statement, I argue, Gogol's name plays an important part in the formation and negotiation of his identity in his life. The name "Gogol Ganguli" is an incidental mistake which occurs because of a series of coincidence. The name "Gogol" is given to the Ganguli's baby as a pet name while they are waiting for their Grandmother's letter which is supposed to grant him a suitable and blessed name. It is an Indian custom that everyone has two names, a pet name for family use and an official name for the public. However, because of the loss of Grandmother's letter, his pet name (Gogol) is mistaken for his official name. Throughout his life, Gogol suffers the grotesqueness and strangeness connoted by the Russian name. Ashoke Ganguli names his son "Gogol" as a tribute to the Russian novelist Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol because Gogol's short story, "The Overcoat," rescues him from an accident in his youth. However, the problem lies in that the name is neither Indian nor American. So Gogol makes great efforts to figure out the

meaning of his name and the probable reason for his father to give him the name, but this attempt turns out to be in vain. His unusual name may be regarded as a penetrating symbol of his own ambivalent cultural identity. It implies that he is trapped in four different worlds, America, India, Russia, and more remotely, England.[4] Gogol is annoyed by the strangeness and uneasiness of his name. To get rid of the foreignness of the name, he changes it to "Nikihil," whose shortened form, "Niki," sounds both Bengali and American. By doing so, he thinks he can start a new life in the university and cast the past away from him. However, the old name still pops up in his life and haunts him all the time.

For Gogol, the uneasiness of his name actually comes from his anxiety over root identity. In this light, I argue, in *The Namesake*, Gogol's name is associated with the concept of home and root. In his memoir *Out of Place*, Edward W. Said once analyzes the relation between name and home. When he is young, he finds his English classmates' names were "just *right*," and he says, "I cannot recall ever hearing any of them refer to 'home,' but I associated the idea of it with them, and in the deepest sense 'home' was something I was excluded" (Said, *Out of Place* 42). From Said's viewpoint, name implies a sense of home. The last name usually symbolizes the lineal bloodline inherited from his ancestors, and it also serves as a root which is based on history, territory, and filiation. Gogol's last name "Ganguli" not only indicates the Indian heritage the Gangulis are connected to, but connotes the colonial history in India. Additionally, with that name, Ashoke builds up a nexus of imaginary relations between his son and his homeland. Although the first name does not necessarily symbolize one's origin, it indeed shows the name-giver's expectation of the name-receiver. For the name-giver, giving a name to others can be a means of

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[4] Gogol's last name "Ganguli" does not originate from Bengali. Lahiri explains: "Ganguli is a legacy of the British, an anglicized way of pronouncing his real surname, Gangopadhyay" (*Namesake* 67).

self-generation, because it "becomes the agency to which the recognition of the identity [of the subject] is confided" (Derrida 250).

In a way different from his last name, Gogol's first name suggests his father's conception of home and root which his father expects Gogol to conceive. According to Sara Ahmed, home is "the space from which one imagines oneself to have originated, and in which one projects the self as both homely and original" (Ahmed, *Strange Encounters* 77). Ashoke Ganguli names his son after the Russian novelist Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol to commemorate the accident in which Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol's novel saves him. This experience in one sense symbolizes Ashoke's rebirth, which is why Ashoke believes he is from Gogol's "The Overcoat." Therefore, Ashoke names his son Gogol to signify his resurrection from an accident and probably a rebirth in America as well. He hopes in doing so, his son is able to conceive what enables his father's rebirth and where their root is. But both of the first name and last name do not make sense for Gogol; therefore, the insistence on root, home, and root identity is untenable for Gogol.

These two homes or roots—the bloodline which the last name suggests and the imagined origin of Ashoke's rebirth which the first name implies, are neither understood nor accepted by Gogol. For a second-generation immigrant like Gogol, the meaning of home is rather different from what their parents have in mind. Home for the elder generation of diaspora is an ancestral origin, where they think they will eventually go back. One of the reasons for this is they think they cannot be fully accepted or accustomed to the host country, so they always regard the original homeland as the authentic home. In order to keep the connection to home, they need to build up a collective sense of solidarity; for example, Gogol's parents hold several union parties with other Indian friends in America. In addition, the first-generation immigrant's definition of home is usually linked to the geographical territory that is

seen as the place of their origin. Therefore, home is "where they are from," rather than "where they are." As long as the children are bestowed by their parents with the responsibility of returning home, they are forced to turn back to their parental origin rather than the place where they live. Therefore, I maintain that the second generation is the "returnee" who is "forced" and without their own will, to turn back to the place of their parent's imagined homeland. When the parental home is territory-bound, the pursuit of root for the second-generation immigrants will become a challenge, a burden, and a mission impossible. For Gogol, India is a strange country where he seldom visits in his life. In addition, the Indian ceremonies and meetings held by his parents and their Indian friends appear to be meaningless routines for him. Though his parents try to send him to numerous language and culture classes every week in the hopes of nurturing them with Indian upbringing, Gogol hates them. Besides, Ashoke never tells him the horrible traffic accident and how Nikolai Gogol's book saves him. Gogol is quite annoyed by his name and knows nothing about the meaning behind it. What he learns from the name Gogol is nothing but the pain and trouble when anchoring his identity. In depicting Gogol's contempt for his name, Lahiri writes,

> For by now, he's come to hate questions pertaining to his name, hates having constantly to explain. He hates having to tell people that it doesn't mean anything in "Indian."…He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian. He hates having to live with it, with a pet name turned good name, day after day, second after second….At times his name, an entity shapeless and weightless, manages nevertheless to distress him physically, like the scratchy tag of a shirt he has been forced permanently to wear. (*Namesake* 76-77)

The homeland imagination and "the tendency toward filiation, reaching back as far as

possible through ancient time" (Glissant 47) will lead to problems in constituting his identity. The reason lies in the fact that the roots and the far-away history do not make so much sense as relation does for the second generation. Moreover, responding to Glissant's critique of root identity, we find that the root identity is limited when we confront it with the condition of diaspora. When the second generation is caught in the rift between different cultures, it is impossible for them to trace the origins of their belonging and reconcile them with their present situation.

An incident happening in a graveyard also provides an example of the difficulty in keeping and tracing the root in a newly-arrived land, which illustrates the limits of root identity for diaspora. Named after the Russian novelist Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol, Gogol does not think he gets any blessings or positive returns from his namesake. For him, the novelist is nothing but a mad man, a Russian writer, and his father's favorite author. Gogol even refuses to admit that the man has anything to do with him; in addition, they have nothing in common at all. Lahiri writes, "He hates his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is" (*Namesake* 79). He also hates his name is so apparent and rare that no man except the Russian novelist shares the same name with him. Gogol's namesake haunts him all the time and is the cause of his solitude and up-rootedness in his American reality. In one field trip to the graveyard when Gogol is in the sixth grade, his classmates scamper between the rows of the dead to look for their own names on the tombstones. Unlike his classmates who find lots of namesakes such as "Collins," "Smith," and "Wood," Gogol understands there is no "Gogol" or "Ganguli" here. "Gogol is old enough to know that there is no Ganguli here. He is old enough to know that he himself will be burned, not buried, that his body will occupy no plot of earth, that no stone in this country will bear his name beyond life" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 69). This passage clearly argues against the root identity which "will be achieved when communities attempt to legitimate their right to possession of a

territory" (Glissant 13). As an Indian American, he never finds any stones on which "Ganguli" will be written, which means he has no ancestors and roots here. In addition, Gogol himself will not occupy the land and leave any remains to his offspring to trace their root. In this trip, what he learns is the disjuncture of history, filiation, and the impossibility of tracing root here.

Besides, in *The Namesake*, Ashoke names his son "Gogol Ganguli," expecting Gogol to return to his father's root, which from my point of view, is a trauma. Root identity tends to take one for all, which means one's identity is judged by history or the traditional myth. This, however, may easily annihilate one's individual will. Naming, according to Judith Butler, is a violence which precedes the name-receiver's will. In Gogol's case, his father names him out of an insistence on roots. Butler in *Excitable Speech* maintains that "Power comes to appear as something other than itself, indeed, it comes to appear as a name" (35). Names and naming have the power and violence over the one being named. This power relation is between name-receiver (the addressed) and the name-giver (the addressor). Butler argues that the subject of the addressed exists by being recognized through a name, and he is brought into a symbolic social order and time through the act of naming. So the name-giver plays an important role in assigning the name and conferring the potential for creating cognitive and social consonance around identity to the name-receiver. However, in Gogol's case, the names that bring the addressed into existence "are not their own making." Being named, in Butler's view, is therefore "traumatic" (*Excitable Speech* 38). Gogol's traumatic experiences come from his father's naming—an act of imposing the imagination of root and home on him. Name is like a pact, two subjects (the addressor and the addressed) have come to an agreement to recognize the same object or the meaning of the name. Gogol and his father cannot reach a consensus on the name; therefore, the name for Gogol is not only something beyond his will and

knowledge but also a trauma. Butler writes, “Because I have been called something, I have been entered into linguistic life, refer to myself through the language given by Other, but perhaps never quite in the same terms that my language mimes” (*Excitable Speech* 38). Gogol cannot comprehend the meaning of his name and naming, but he has to bear the name which precedes his will and strive to live in a linguistic world he cannot understand. Gogol is not able to tolerate this name, and thinks it is “like the scratchy tag of a shirt he has been forced permanently to wear” (Lahiri, *Namesake* 77), especially when this legacy of parental cultural roots is something he never realizes, but has to bear throughout his life. Therefore, such a predicament results in a sense of insecurity in his identity and subjectivity formation that haunts him all the time.

To shy away from the traumatic experience and the limits of root identity, Gogol hopes to rid them by a name change. Unfortunately, the name change leads him to another pitfall. Gogol’s eagerness to change his name only reveals his anxiety over his painful past and his longing for assimilation. On the one hand, by repudiating his name, Gogol is repudiating his filiation and his father’s homeland; on the other, when assuming a more Americanized name, he is asserting his American-ness. According to Glissant, such kind of act is rooted in “the thought of self and the territory” (144). Gogol has the strong will to separate his self from his parents’ cultural tradition and adhere to another culture which he is more familiar with. But he never realizes in this way he is still trapped by the territory-based thinking. In addition, the name change indicates that the crisis of his identity is commodified and homogenized. His identity is influenced by globalization which imposes “the same system of exchange everywhere” (Spivak, *Death* 72). This name change also corresponds to Santa Ana’s argument, in which he asserts: “assimilation is itself a commodity that one desires in order to rid oneself of difference and identity” (19). Moreover, the symbol of name change indicates Gogol cannot escape from the impact of globalization and is forced

to conform to the American hegemony, which means he was still obsessed with the longing for assimilation and acceptance. In other words, Gogol was still dominated by the thought of region and territory, and he endeavored to proclaim his American-ness and eradicate his Indian-ness, which is a sign of being stuck in the myth of root identity.

However, the name change not only signifies Gogol's efforts to eschew root identity (although in some way he fails), but also unravels the fact he is actually related to the past and other people, which is the main point I aim to discuss—the new idea of relation identity. After acquiring a new name, Gogol feels uneasy because the name "Nikhil" still sounds weird to him. Lahiri writes:

> He doesn't feel like Nikhil. Not yet. Part of the problem is that the people who now know him as Nikhil have no idea that he used to be Gogol. They know him not only in the present, not at all in the past. But after eighteen years of Gogol, two months of Nikhil feel scant, inconsequential. At times he feels as if he's cast himself in a play, acting the part of twins, indistinguishable to the naked eye yet fundamentally different. At times he still feels his old name, painfully and without warning, the way his front tooth has unbearably throbbed in recent weeks after a filling, threatening for an instant to sever from his gums when he drank coffee, or iced water, and once he was riding in an elevator. He fears being discovered, having the whole charade somehow unravel.… (*Namesake* 105-06)

In my opinion, Lahiri makes this paragraph a prelude of relation identity. As I mentioned before, naming correlates closely with the formation of identity. This paragraph suggests the character's name enacts as a medium connecting his experience and the past to him. Gogol and Nikhil imply the protagonist's spilt self. "Gogol" represents the root his father expects him to inherit; at the same time, the

"foreignness" of the name may connote the "stranger" Nikhil despises. On the other hand, "Nikhil" denotes a desire to assimilate into American society on a full scale. When others call him Nikhil, the shadow of "Gogol" haunts him over and over again. Therefore, the new name does not make him feel better; rather, it keeps reminding him of his old name and the past he is eager to leave behind. The uncanny strangeness resurfaces frequently when others call him Nikhil. He feels awkward and uneasy about the new name, for he always worries about the revelation of his past. For this reason, when others address his new name, he feels the substitution sounds wrong to him, it seems "correct but off-key" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 106). In fact, the sneaky and surreptitious mindset of Gogol suggests the impossibility of breaking up with the past thoroughly. Here I do not mean to emphasize the importance of root itself; rather, I endeavor to maintain that the past is a knowledge of becoming and a poetic of relation. No one can "stop it to assess it nor isolate it to transmit it" (Glissant 1). We are all involved in our history and the past, and vice versa. More specifically, one cannot deny the past, since the past and what he has experienced constitutes his life and identity, which is what relation identity means. Therefore, in Gogol's case, knowing him as "Nikhil" at the present moment is not enough. Only when the "Gogol" in the past is understood is the process of their relation identity formation complete.

After Ashoke tells Gogol the story about his naming and the terrible traffic accident he undergoes, Gogol starts to understand how he is closely connected to the unknown past and the uncanny part aroused from his name. As Gogol listens to his father telling the story of that near-fatal accident, he imagines the picture of the catastrophe, and tries to "imagines life without his father and a world in which he does not exist" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 123). This accident and the reason of naming enable Gogol to connect himself with the accident, his father, and what happened thereafter. In fact, his identity is constituted by a series of events, or "as a system of

relation" (Glissant 142). Now that he understands the truth hidden for so many years, he is able to appreciate the foreign past in his mind and take the name and the uncanny part as the interdependent constituents in his identity. Therefore, Gogol finds, "suddenly the sound of his pet name [Gogol], uttered by his father as he has been accustomed to hearing it all his life, means something completely new, bound up with a catastrophe he has unwittingly embodied for years" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 124).

According to Julia Kristeva,

> The foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself….The foreigner comes in when the conscious of my difference arises, and he disappears when all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners. (1)

The sense of foreignness manifests itself when confronting one's sense of difference, and it is eradicated when it becomes lucid that we are all strangers. By recognizing himself as a foreigner and receiving the foreignness within him, Gogol is capable of recognizing that the strangeness "is the hidden face of our identity" (Kristeva 1). Therefore, it is possible for him to reconcile with the foreignness and form a relation identity by developing an appreciation of others. Incorporating this into the context of planetarity, we are able to learn that the strangers dwelling in ourselves have no difference from us, since difference is the similarity we have all experienced in our life. Moreover, in the light of planetarity, we also learn that as the same species on earth, we need to keep close relationship with others without emphasizing too much on hierarchy. Among the various types of human relationships, I argue that love functions as a nexus of maintaining the harmony and human relations. In *The Namesake*, this standpoint will be underscored in my following analysis of Gogol's change of attitude after the death of his father, Ashoke.

Shortly before his father passes away, Gogol knows from Ashoke the story of his name. Then, he starts to think about the meaning implied in "the language given by Other" (Butler 38). He comes to realize that it is love that solidifies bonds and relationships and help bring reconciliations. In the end of the novel, Gogol finds that identifying himself with the mainstream Americans is not what he wants, and he confesses "he still felt guilty at times for changing his name, more so now that his father was dead" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 244). It is not until then that he realizes his life and his identity are a process of "givng-on-and-with"(Glissant 142). Near the end of the novel, Gogol deeply reflects on his life:

> In so many ways, *his family's life feels like a string of accidents, unforeseen, unintended, one accident begetting another*. It had started with his father's train wreck, paralyzing him at first, later inspiring him to move as far as possible, to make a new life on the other side of the world. There was the disappearance of the name Gogol's great-grandmother had chosen for him, lost in the mail somewhere between Calcutta and Cambridge. This had led, in turn, to the accident of his being named Gogol, defining and distressing him for so many years. He had tried to correct that randomness, that error. And yet it had not been possible to reinvent himself fully, to break from that mismatched name…. *And yet these events have formed Gogol, shaped him, determined who he is*. They were things for which it was impossible to prepare but which one spent a lifetime looking back at, trying to accept, interpret, comprehend. Things that should never have happened, that seemed out of place and wrong, *these were what prevailed, what endured, in the end*. (Lahiri, *Namesake* 286-87; emphases added)

Gogol recalls a series of events happening in his life, and he realizes all of them have formed him and determined his identity, which may be interpreted in the light of

Glissant's statement about relation. When examining one's relation to the world, Glissant asserts, "Every expression of humanities opens onto the fluctuating complexity of the world" (32). This sentence implies that one's life is part of the life of this world, and one can never rid oneself of the network of this world. By emphasizing one's relation with the world, Glissant regards relations as a process of becoming which enables a person to establish one's identity. Thus, identity itself can be regarded as a system of relation, and relation is always multiple, which drives human beings chaotically onward. Judith Butler in *Giving an Account of Oneself* also states how one gets involved in social relations:

> From the outset, it comes into being through an address I can neither recall nor recuperate, and when I act, I act in a world whose structure is in large part not of my making—which is not to say that there is no making and acting that is mine. There surely is. It means only that the "I," its suffering and acting, telling and showing, take place within a crucible of social relations. (132)

Although the formation of identity in social relations is complicated, chaotic, and unexpected, it suggests the contact with different others. It is these others that help constitute identities. So, in the earlier quotation from *The Namesake*, we find that Gogol's discovery of the story about his name triggers all the sequential events that constitute his life, whether he likes it or not. From the story, Gogol realizes blood and national belonging signified by names no longer bother him. What he cares now is how he connects himself with others in this world via his name:

> Without people in the world to call him Gogol, no matter how long he himself lives, Gogol Ganguli will, once for all, vanish from the lips of loved ones, and so, cease to exist. Yet the thought of this eventual demise provides no sense of victory, no solace. It provides no solace at all. (Lahiri,

Namesake 289)

Here the function of naming is underlined. Just like what Butler contends, the subject exists by being recognized through a name, and because of his/her name, the subject is brought into the relation with others. If the name is nullified, the relation with the world also comes to an end. Without love and his beloved ones which constitute and enrich his life, Gogol's life would be meaningless. Therefore, he starts to embrace his parents' Indian friends and cultures that he had avoided before. In doing so, Gogol is able to otherize himself, which suggests he is able to see others' difference without hierarchy, and he can accept them as well as think from their stands. Moreover, Gogol realizes that the true love is the love he shares with his parents and friends. By sharing love with the people around him, he knows better how to cherish what he has. It seems that Gogol places him on a planetary scale and looks at others from a new perspective. He then realizes that it is not merely root that matters. What constitutes him is always related to the people around him.

In addition, near the end of the novel, Gogol Ganguli starts to read Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol's novel, which suggests, "to read the story, he believes, would mean paying tribute to his namesake, accepting it [his name] somehow" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 92). Besides, it implies he has recognized the name "Gogol" as "the first thing his father had given him" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 289) which unravels the curtains of his life. For the first time, he understands what his father once mentioned to him: "We all came out of Gogol's overcoat" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 78). For Gogol, the underlying meaning of this sentence implies that a series of critical events which happened after his father's accident shape his life and formulate his identity. In addition, Lahiri also uses the Russian novelist, Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol's work "The Overcoat" as a parallel to Gogol's pursuit of a new name in *The Namesake*. "The Overcoat" delineates the story of Akakii Akakievich, an impoverished government clerk and

copyist, who saves all his money to buy an overcoat. However, the coat is soon stolen after he purchases it. Akakii makes great efforts to ask for help from the police and authorities to look for his overcoat, but finally in vain. After he dies, his ghost haunts the town to complete his undone will. It is not until Akakii finds his overcoat and punishes the authorities does his ghost disappear. Like *The Namesake*, naming is important in this story. The meaning of "Akakii Akakievich" in Russian is similar to "John Johnson," suggesting everyman and ordinary person. Moreover, the syllable "aka" in his name means "like" and "same," which echoes Akakii's life of sameness and single-mindedness. Akakii's story manifests how a name influences one's identity and persona. Another parallel between Lahiri's novel and Gogol's is the protagonists' desire for freedom. The efforts Akakii makes to get his overcoat and chase after the robber is similar to Gogol's striving for the meaning of his name. Toutonghi mentions that both of them ask for freedom, "freedom from desire, freedom from a name" (79).

It is from this moment Gogol starts to read the book that the hybrid histories behind the name "Gogol Ganguli" starts to make sense to him. Judging from this perspective, his Indian heritage and the past he once endeavored to eliminate are not meaningless, and he will no longer suffer from it once he figures out its true meaning. The Russian tradition and other cultures (Bengali, British, and American) embedded in the name are essential constituents of his identity. In other words, the alterity buried under the name should be noted. No culture should be neglected. Lahiri explains early in the beginning of the novel that the name "Gogol Ganguli" suggests "he who is entire, encompassing all" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 56), which also suggests the protagonist eventually embraces all the love given to him and all the others that constitutes his life.

The Namesake focuses on the dilemma of the second-generation Bengali immigrants, of which Gogol Ganguli is representative. Although being trapped in the

pitfall of root identity, Gogol eventually understands that he cannot deny any parts of his culture because all of them form a contributing part to the making of his identity. Furthermore, if the name implies one's identity, then we may say that in the end of the novel, Gogol is able to transform from an insistence on root identity to relation identity by recognizing the value of love and siblinghood. Examining the novel from this perspective, we may see that the spirit of planetarity fits well in the plot here. As long as we see love as the shared resemblance, we are able to relate to each other and accept all of the diversity of others. This is also Spivak's uncanny mindset which is accentuated in the concept of planetarity. In a similar light, I will analyze Lahiri's another work, "Hema and Kaushik," a trilogy from *Unaccustomed Earth* in the following section.

Photo-Graphs[5]: Relation Identity in "Hema and Kaushik"

In Lahiri's more recent work, *Unaccustomed Earth*, immigrants, the relation, and the emotion of love carry no less weight than that in *The Namesake*. The story "Hema and Kaushik" likewise explores how the second-generation Indian Americans deal with the problem of their identity.

"Hema and Kaushik" is a trilogy which tells of the overlapping life of two Indian Americans, Hema and Kaushik, a girl and a boy of similar age. Both of them are the second-generation immigrants. The first story, "Once in a Lifetime," is narrated by Hema in 1974. In this year, Kaushik Choudhuri and his parents leave Cambridge and go back to India. Seven years later, the Choudhuri family returns to America again

[5] According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the noun "graph" refers to "A kind of diagram in which a system of connexions is expressed by spots or circles, some pairs of which are colligated by one or more lines." In addition, "graph" is also the "system expressed by one of these diagrams" (763). More specifically, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines "graph" as "a drawing that uses a line or lines to show how two or more sets of measurements are related to each other" (706). Based on these definitions, I hope to accentuate that photographs enact as a means to relate human beings with each other and that the essential role photography plays in constituting relation identity in this text.

because Kaushik's mother needs better medical care to get her cancer cured. When they prepare for the resettlement, they stay at Hema's home in Massachusetts. In that period of time, Hema's parents find that "Bombay had made them more American than Cambridge had" (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth* 235), which conflicts their life in many ways. The second story, "Year's End," happens after the death of Kaushik's mother. Kaushik, who enters university now, delineates his confession of the loss of the mother and the change of his father, who remarries with an Indian woman with two children. His father's new life, however, makes Kaushik even lonelier than ever. In the end of this short story, he leaves his home and drives to a farther place alone. The final story, "Going Ashore," talks about how a series of coincidences bring Hema and Kaushik together in Rome after almost twenty years. Hema is a Latin professor at Wellesley, and will soon marry Navin, a parent-approved Hindu Punjabi man. As for Kaushik, he is a hired, world-roving war photographer. Due to a series of incidence, they met in Rome and develop a short affair which makes them recall their childhood and memories they have in common.

The three short stories describe how Hema and Kaushik develop different sense of belonging and home from their parents. As I have discussed in *The Namesake*, the immigrant parents often have nostalgia for where they come from after their immigration. What they accentuate is the traditional concept of root. Their children, on the contrary, do not consider it necessary to return to the "roots" their parents adhere to. From my point of view, the route of life may be more relevant to them—what they experience and how they relate to others could be more essential to the formulation of their identity. Looking at the identity from the same perspective, James Clifford argues that identity is not permanently fixed by homelands, chosen or forced. It should be "as sites of worldly travel: the difficult encounters and occasions for dialogue" (Clifford 12). His idea responds to the spirit of errantry in Glissant's

discussion of relation identity. Both of them argue against the totalitarian root which fossilizes one's identity; more important than that, they welcome diversities encountered in relation, which emphasizes the flexibility of identity.

The protagonist in Lahiri's story, Kaushik, is a typical character of errantry. He moves with his parents between India and America several times, and his family enjoys traveling around the world. The frequent moves, quite different from Gogol's case, never make him feel belonged to any place. Unlike Gogol, Kaushik has a very different attitude toward the question of identity. In this story, the metaphor of photograph and photographer is closely related to the formulation of his identity. By exploring this metaphor, I hope to unravel that Kaushik's identity is a relational one rather than the one only based on root.

Not getting stuck in any particular place, Kaushik feels at ease in traveling and being outside. The usual way most people lead, that is to live in a place for all life time and die there, is not his cup of tea. He knows himself well and admits "I never belonged to any place that way" (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth* 320). For this reason, it is difficult for him to feel attached to any place. Lahiri depicts him in this way:

> Kaushik never fully trusted the place he'd lived, never turned to them for refuge. From childhood, Kaushik realized now, he was always happiest to be outside, away from the private detritus of life. That was the first thing he'd loved about taking pictures---it had gotten him out of the house. (*Unaccustomed Earth* 309)

His attitude to places and territories echoes the spirits of errantry and nomadism Glissant addresses, focusing on routes rather than roots. It may also explain well why he loves taking pictures. Thus, when he grows up and becomes a hired stringer, he seldom stays at the same country for a long time, and one of the reasons lies in the fact that " [he has] reached an end [there], that's all" (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth*

321). On the other hand, he thinks that keeping him at a fixed place is "a death of photographer" (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth* 308)—it will be difficult for him to take decent pictures. Quite different from Gogol, who struggles between two cultures, Kaushik does not have the sense of belonging due to his frequent moves. The dilemma of root identity does not seem to bother him at all. Perhaps it is more appropriate to say that because he is a photographer, he has a more relational identity which "exults the thought of errantry" and is more away from "the hidden violence of filiation" (Glissant 144).

Throughout his life, Kaushik always keeps away from his root and origin, which can be illustrated by his career as a photographer. On the one hand, roots imply the territory, the country, and geographical origin. In Kaushik's case, he neither longs for assimilating into the American society, where he grows up, nor does he expect to return to India, where he stayed for seven years in childhood. Probably because of frequent travels and the immigration, his parents do not have so much feeling of nostalgia, and their sense of home is diluted. Therefore, Kaushik, unlike other second-generation immigrants or "returnees," is not forced to achieve the might-be-failed-return. In this way, Kaushik is able to look at where he lived from a much detached angle. Examining his indifference to root by relating this to the nature of his job, we are likely to find that he chooses a job which has nothing to do with his roots. As a photographer, he thinks "his origins were irrelevant" (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth* 310). Behind the camera, his race and origin do not get so much attention as his skill of shooting does. In addition, this job "allowed him permanently to avoid the United States" (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth* 305), and it permitted him to keep away from his sad memory of losing his mother and his father's second marriage. Therefore, this job may be the best way to stay away from these two lands. The traditional definition of home, which is linked to the geographical territory, is thereby

meaningless to him.

On the other hand, while Kaushik denounces roots, it also suggests that he repudiates the filiation. Here I am not talking about the blood line inherited from ancestors several centuries ago; instead, I borrow from Freud's idea of seeing female genitals as one's origins to argue that the image of mother not only represents where one comes from but also symbolizes how one establishes his/her filiation. In Kaushik's case, father does not signify filiation, as we naturally tend to do. This untraditional way of building one's filiation is mainly because for Kaushik his father's second marriage is a complete betrayal to him, his mother, and his family. By becoming another woman's husband and other children's father, he destroys Kaushik's longing for a complete home. Viewing Kaushik's case in this light, it will not be too difficult to understand why father does not signify filiation or home. After his mother's death, which is symbolic of the loss of his origin and filiation, Kaushik then totally repudiates his root, a symbolic act reflected by his choosing photography as his lifelong career. Therefore, we may say that Lahiri uses photography as a trope to metaphorize Kaushik's repudiation of filiation and root, a symbol indicated by his loss of Mother. Carrying a shoebox full of his mother's pictures to a cliff overlooking the bay, Kaushik scatters part of the pictures down to the sea and buries the rest of them in the soil. Destroying these photographs, therefore, means erasing the existence of the Mother and annihilating memories of the past and the family.

A photograph, Roland Barthes claims in his critical work *Camera Lucida*, "is a certificate of presence" (87). It is usually correlated to the concept of history. Susan Sontag also holds a similar idea, saying that photograph is "the look of the past" (*On Photography* 4), and it "promote[s] nostalgia" (*On Photography* 15).[6] This small

[6] When Susan Sontag talks about the features of photography in her critical work *On Photography*, she mainly denounces the discrimination and indifference created by photographers and the act of photography. Borrowing some of the features she mentions in the book, however, I try to focus more on

frame of print authenticates the existence of the person who stares into the frame of camera; the person was there and had a good time at that moment. In other words, photographs preserve personal memories. Looking at them easily makes one feel nostalgic. Thus, for Kaushik, photos prove his mother's existence and ratify his feeling of home and the sense of root. When analyzing family photographs, Sontag claims "photography came along to memorialize, to restate symbolically, the imperiled continuity and vanishing extendedness of family life" (*On Photography* 9). Kaushik's disposal of his mother's photographs in some way implies his break with family bonds, the past, and the family history. "History is hysterical: it is constituted only if we consider it, only if we consider it, only if we look at it" (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 65). Out of sight, out of mind. For Kaushik, the best way to recover from sadness is to overlook these photographs. This explains why he chooses to neglect the past he experienced. Moreover, not looking at them, Kaushik cuts himself free from the tie of filiation and root.

Though Kaushik loses his mother, he refuses to build up any connection with his father's family. Soon after his mother passed away, in order to seek for a new companion, his father gets married again with an Indian widow who has two daughters. His father asks him to accept his step mother and step sisters with love and generosity. However, Kaushik refutes his father's request coldly: "I has lost a parent and was now being asked to accept a replacement," "It's not easy for me" (Lahiri,

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the positive side of photography and employ her analyses to elucidate how Kaushik interacts with others and how he builds up his relation identity through photography. Sontag may originally mean to criticize photography, which seems to contradict my interpretation of Kaushik's photography. However, in a sense, I hold a different view from Sontag. What I want to emphasize is not how photography or the mass media paralyzes the audience's feelings; rather, I focus more on the characteristics of photography and photographs themselves. That explains why I quote the first chapter of *On Photography*, "In Plato's Cave," because it offers a very useful survey of photography's features, which does help analyze Lahiri's stories. In addition, although Sontag sensibly criticizes photography in *On Photography*, she is not against photography per se; rather, the key point of her criticism is people's gradual loss of a sense of morality and sympathy due to their frequent exposure to the mass media. Therefore, I believe that it does make sense to read Lahiri's stories according to Sontag's definitions of photography. Not unaware of the negative impact of photography mentioned by Sontag, I in fact hope to highlight the positive effect that photography may otherwise achieve.

Unaccustomed Earth 266). If photographs symbolize the existence and traces of history, Kaushik expresses his protest against his father's second marriage by refusing to take pictures of his new family. When being together with his father's new family, he leaves his camera at school on purpose, and "know[s] that [he] would not want to document anything" (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth* 280). Kaushik's intention is obvious. He does not want the new family to become one part of his memory. Since he has lost his root, he does not expect any replacement of it, not to mention taking the new family as "extendedness of family life" (Sontag 9).

For a second-generation diaspora man like Kaushik, the meaning of root is much less significant than that of the relation with others. In Kaushik's case, the frequent travels deprive him of identifying himself with territories. The diasporic background weakens his loyalty to any nations. In addition, the loss of Mother dispossesses his sense of filiation. He can hardly base his identity on roots. However, this uprooting helps him to formulate another identity—relation identity. As a photographer, he travels around the world and therefore builds his relation with the world through his camera and pictures. Sontag in her critical work *On Photography* maintains that using camera is a form of participation in the world, and "[t]o photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world" (4). By taking pictures, one is able to turn the object into his collection; thus, photographing in this sense is to package the world. Being a photographer, Kaushik connects himself to people and interacts with the world. He shoots and collects the pictures, "And he knew that in his own way, with his camera, he was dependent on the material world, stealing from it, hoarding it, unwilling to let it go" (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth* 309). In the process of traveling and photographing, he also develops the spirit of wandering and errantry, which constitutes and valorizes his identity.

Glissant in *Poetics of Relation* argues that errantry has lots to do with relation identity. He contrasts the concept with root identity, because in this instance of errantry, roots are lacking. To clarify the thought we have to trace the purpose of journey in western tradition. When a man is in exile, it does not mean he is helpless or inferior; on the contrary, the experience of voyage and exile is considered to be necessary to conquer a land or territory, and furthermore, to complete the self fulfillment. This kind of theme often appears in epics, such as *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, and *The Old Testment*, to name just a few. They are the instances which go beyond the pursuit or the triumph of rootedness. At that time, most people get their identity through the occupation of territory, which is root identity. But the voyagers form their identity in an opposite way. In the journey of conquering and visiting, they are able to find their difference from others who are visited or invaded on the land. Glissant points out that the difference depends on "I [the voyager] can think that my strength lies in the voyage and that your [the invaded] difference is motionless and silent" (17). Through the triumph over the rooted ones, the voyagers strengthen their values and wills. Thus, by the parallel of self and others, as well as the errantry and territory, the travelers build up their journey identity by the victory over the compact national entities. In other words, those in exile do not form an identity through an occupation of territory; rather, their identity is determined by the dialectic of self and other. The experience of encountering others strengthens their belief in themselves and their identity, by which they constitute the relation identity Glissant proposes:

> In the context uprooting can work toward identity, and exile can be seen as beneficial, when these are experienced as a search for the Other (through circular nomadism) rather than as an expansion of territory (an arrowlike nomadism). (18)

In other words, the encounter with others and the dialectic of self and others are

helpful to the formation of one's identity in the context of errantry. Thinking of errantry, therefore, is to think of others, and it is the fundamentals of the relation identity that Glissant calls on. In chapter two, I have discussed that Glissant's statement of relation is based on a thought of rhizome. Refuting the totalitarian root, Glissant argues that the relation identity is like the entrenched rhizome in which the roots are intertwined or spreading everywhere. It is also how errantry functions. It implies that the relation identity, which denies roots and totality, is constructed and extended through the relationship with different others.

From the discussion above, we know that the relation identity is built up through the interaction with others rather than being rooted. As a photographer who travels around the world, Kaushik benefits from the ability of going to the other corner of the world in ten minutes and disappearing at any moment. The nomadism and the exilic life make him realize that being a photographer has nothing to do with Indian-ness or American-ness and that his identity should not be determined by root and bloodline but a system of relation and a process of "giving-on-and-with" (Glissant 142).What he pursues is a spirit of errantry which emphasizes mobility and is freed from the limit of roots. As a world-roving war photographer, it is easier for Kaushik to develop a relation identity. Like a wanderer, traveling around the world without being trapped in any fixed place, Kaushik meets different people and interacts with them through photographing. Helmut Gernsheim explains how photographers and photographs are able to connect to others:

> Photography is the only 'language' understood in all parts of the world, and bridging all nations and cultures, it links the family of man. Independent of political influence—where people are free—it reflects truthfully life and events, allows us to share in the hopes and despair of others, and illuminates political and social conditions. (qtd. in Sontag, *On Photography* 192)

Photographs have the ability to correlate various people, because taking photos is neither to invade them nor to grab anything from them. Rather, it only visits them and presents the reality of various life styles and characteristics of people through photographs. Kaushik takes pictures of an old man under a tree, a flee-bitten dog, a group of women who are laughing, and a young girl with a gap-toothed smile, to name just a few. It is easy to link all kinds of people in this way. One of the most important reasons is that photograph itself does not discriminate, "for the practice of photography is now identified with the idea that everything in the world could be made interesting through the camera" (Sontag 11). For this stand, Kaushik is able to "connect to strangers in this way, and [wins] the willingness of strangers to connect him" (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth* 316). Therefore, to photograph different people is thus to build up a connection to them. As Glissant's analysis in relation identity suggests, relation identity is linked to "the contradictory experience of contacts among cultures" (144). By sharing their emotions and cultures, Kaushik is able to form an identity through being related to them. This kind of identity is not based on root and filiation; on the contrary, it is grounded on embracing the world. We find that taking pictures and collecting them, which suggests to "package the world" (Sontag 4), is similar to the idea of planetarity, for it helps embrace others without hierarchy and discrimination. In addition, maintaining the uncanny feeling on the planet—same in the emotion of love yet different in various cultures—Kaushik is able to be in others' shoes and relate himself with them, thereby building up his value and identity.

Another instance of how Kaushik forms his relation identity is revealed in his experience of taking photos in the war. His career as being a photojournalist enables him to wander through Latin America, Patagonia, Mexico, Guatemala, and other countries in war. Kaushik's photogenic subjects center on the cruel facts of the war. He photographs the scenes of smashed buildings and villages and the appearances of

bloody corpses. In these photos, Kaushik captures the cruelty of the war: "their faces bloated, their mouths stuffed with dirt, their vacant eyes reflecting passing clouds over their heads" (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth* 305). In his nearly twenty-year career, he takes countless pictures of corpses that he could not remember each picture he shoots.

More importantly, he regards photographing not only as a job but also as an ethical task—to relate one human being to another on earth. One of the instances happens when he is wandering on the street of Morazán. He sees a man who is shot in the head, and the blood pours like a river away from his skull. Kaushik's instinct teaches him to take pictures of the dying man. Before the police and the ambulance arrive, the man passes away. Kaushik is the only person recording what has happened, so he thinks, "though he had not saved the man's life, he'd felt useful, aware that he had done something to mitigate the crime" (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth* 305). In addition to this example, Lahiri describes in another case that he "hand[s] the images over to a human rights agency so that relatives could attempt to identify the disappeared" (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth* 305). He does these things out of sympathy and empathy. This is because he is related to them, and he hopes the viewers of his picture may also share the same feeling with him. Susan Sontag in another critical book *Regarding the Pain of Others* discusses the relation between war and photography, and she explores how war photographs affect people in modern society. She clearly points out: "In fact, there are many uses of the innumerable opportunities a modern life supplies for regarding—at a distance, through the medium of photography—other people's pain"(*Regarding the Pain* 13). Photographs represent the reality and the evidence of someone or something's existence. The shocking pictures on the field are easy to arouse people's emotions of hatred, sadness, and love. Through photographs, Kaushik provides the evidence to appeal to the society's attention to consider the meaning behind wars and to conceive others' sorrow.

For Kaushik himself, he is able to feel other people's pain in a more direct way in photographing. Photograph itself is not discriminating, because "the camera is a kind of passport that annihilates moral boundaries and social inhibitions, freeing the photographer from any responsibility toward the people photographed" (Sontag, *On Photography* 42). For this reason, Kaushik can look at other people's pain in an equal stand, or from a planetary perspective. As a photographer, though what he can do is limited, such as taking pictures or uploading them to a website of humanitarian organizations, yet he learns to otherize himself and tries to be in others' shoes; furthermore, he connects others through the shared emotion of love without considering race, class, and religion. When taking the pictures of those who are injured or dying, Kaushik understands their feeling and tries to think from their angles. Therefore, he confesses taking pictures in some way does not affect him, in order to catch the moment of an instant, he photographs "before even asking if they were okay" (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth* 317). His words suggest that he learns to care about other people's feeling and keeps them in mind. Ahmed argues, when one can feel other people's pain and sadness, he can "enter into the relationship with the other" (21). Therefore, other people's pain may be his. By sharing their sadness, he is with them, and his identity is constituted. Planetarity also encourages us to do so. Spivak intends to remind us that we should break barriers between human relations. In Kaushik's case, his sympathy for others and his refusal of bias is a manifestation of planetarity which accentuates instead of attenuating human relations.

Lahiri's trope of war provides us with a new way to reflect on planetarity. The photographs on the newspapers and the images in television authenticate the verisimilitude of war. When we look at the photos and the reports of wars, we find we are shocked by the cruelty of war. Therefore, we tend to feel sympathy for the disaster and try to feel as they do. However, Sontag thinks this is not enough. We have to

rethink its motivation and who starts the war. For the sake of profits, human beings fight with one another. This is not what we would like to see. Sharing the same concern with Spivak, Sontag requests people to think we are the same species and live on the same planet; in addition, we should reflect on "how our privileges are located on the same map as their [others beset by war] suffering, and may—in ways we might prefer not to imagine—be linked to their suffering, as wealth of some may imply the destitution of others" (102-03). To think so is to bear others in mind. Human beings should not exploit one another and reduce ourselves to the products of capitalism. As long as we can take others in mind and think from the perspective of planetarity, human beings are able to find a new way to get along with others and form a new collectiveness which can bring people together.

Let us go back to the text. When Kaushik travels around the world during the war, he finds that since he has the ability to connect himself to others, he does not have any reason to avoid his past and family. Although he always thinks that being photographer has nothing to do with his root, yet how irrelevant it is? Similar in Gogol's case, Lahiri makes a compromise for Kaushik here. Although Kaushik escapes away from his root all the time, the encounter with Hema, the girl he knew twenty years ago, implies a willingness to see his root as one part of his identity. When Kaushik meets Hema, he finds there is an intimacy between them. Kaushik confesses to Hema that she is the first person he sleeps with who happens to know his mother. More specifically, "she is the only person he's met in his adult life who had any understanding of his past, the only woman he wanted to remain connected to" (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth* 326). In this way, he realizes that his past and his root cannot be thrown away arbitrarily; even though they are once foreign to him, they constitute his identity and shape what he is. Besides, without the love of his family and his friends, his identity and value cannot be built completely.

To sum up, the mutual influence and interdependence of people are the true meaning of relation identity, which echoes the concept of planetarity. Both of Glissant's ecological vision of relation and Spivak's planetarity thinking emphasize the relational interdependence of all lands and the whole earth, and they both try to replace the idea of territory with the planet earth. The new relationship expresses an intolerance of territory and regionalism which make people regard them as the possessors of the land. Besides, it urges us to reconsider whether the insistence on territory and root identity is tenable. Both Spivak and Glissant expect a new way that goes beyond regionalism and that is able to form a collectiveness based on siblinghood and love. In this story, Lahiri uses the metaphor of taking pictures to make Kaushik related to the world, his family, friends, and the planet. Therefore, we find that Kaushik's identity is as his name suggests: "the sentiment of love," which has more to do with the relation to the world in which he builds the bonds of affection and love.

Chapter Four

Conclusion: Planetarity as an Impossible Utopia?

Opposing the concept of "globalization" which imposes "the same system of exchange everywhere" (Spivak, *Death* 72), planetarity pursues a different collectiveness or inclusiveness that underlines the diversity and kinship among human beings. To achieve this goal, we human beings should remind ourselves of always keeping others in mind. Spivak's idea of "others" is not just restricted to the simple concept of multiculturalism. It can be understood in a broader sense: we may look at this issue from the perspective of ecology and environmentalism rather than the differentiated political space. The alterity of planetarity refers to god, nature, animal, and other radical others. In the light of the above ideas, Spivak urges the reconsideration of human relationships. She argues that humans are related to each other while cultures can never hinder our mutual communication. In this thesis, I argue that what binds human beings together lies in the fact that we share with the same emotion of love.

I employ Spivak's innovative concept of "planetarity" to argue how we can form a different human relationship with a new collectivity that embraces all human beings. Based on this premise, I appropriate planetarity to discuss the realm of Asian American literature and diasporic identities. Furthermore, in this thesis, I center on the Indian American writer Jhumpa Lahiri's works, *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth,* to illustrate Spivak's viewpoints.

In chapter two, Spivak's idea of "planetarity" is discussed in the fields of literature and identity respectively. According to Spivak, planetarity is well served to aid the development of new comparative literature. Combining the merits of both

area study and traditional comparative literature, this new approach is able to build a relationship among different areas of the world and take others into consideration. By adopting this new approach, Spivak expects to revive the inter-relation between regions and the mutual influence of literature. Besides, another major argument is that we should re-examine the diversity and heterogeneity under the name of "Asian America" and that there are still some parts overlooked by our present representation. As Spivak mentions in *Other Asias*, it is critical to think beyond the limited name of "Asia," and we need to consider Asia in terms of plural and diversified cultures, histories, and the like.

In addition to treating planetarity as a literary trope, I also apply it to the discussion of diasporic identities which emphasizes more on the relation identity. Backed up by the concept of planetarity which highlights the mutual relationship between people, the relation identity argues against the conventional totalitarian concept of root identity. In this thesis, I draw largely on Édouard Glissant's idea of the relation identity as the basis of my analysis of the second-generation immigrants' identity and re-evaluate the thought of root identity which the traditional diaspora group tends to adhere to. As the offspring who were born and grow up on a newly-settled land, the second-generation immigrants are less often bothered by the thought of root. Rather, in Lahiri's works, we find that they are inclined to develop another type of identity based on the interaction with others. In the course of their interaction, I argue, the emotion of love plays a powerful role in sticking people together. Knowing that it is love that connects self and others, one is able to understand that his/her life and identity are actually built up by the interaction and relationship with others. Thus, the series of events happening in one's life will be interpolated and drive him/her onward to move, and the contact with other people also constitutes what he/she is now. Therefore, for the second-generation immigrants,

it seems "relation" is more essential than "root" when it comes to the question of identity.

Chapter three draws on the above-discussed statement and focuses on Lahiri's two works, *The Namesake*, and the story "Hema and Kaushik" in *Unaccustomed Earth*. *The Namesake* aptly uses the metaphor of the name as a means to delineate how Gogol's identity is transformed from the root identity to the relation identity. At first, Gogol is trapped in the load of several cultural traditions. He thus suffers from the hybridity of his cultural background. He rejects his Indian filiation which his parents wish him to keep; at the same time, he turns to his American affiliation he is always familiar with. In the act of name change, Gogol believes he can lead a happy life hereafter. Nevertheless, his new name "Nickhil" more often than not reminds him of his past and what he despised before. Because of these associations, Gogol senses all these events in his life, whether he likes or not, constitute the man "Gogol." In addition, his existence will be meaningless without those who love him, and those who call his name. While we look at this name change from the perspective of planetarity, we find it crucial for Gogol to think beyond the limited category of nation. What is more essential lies in the understanding of love which is the shared collectivity on the planet, and it is this unique characteristic which binds human beings together.

Likewise, in "Hema and Kaushik," Lahiri also shows how the protagonist Kaushik, the child of Indian American immigrants, develops his relation identity through his interest in taking photographs. As a kid or as an adult, Kaushik used to refuse his roots and filiation. He thinks it better for him to stay outside because he can get more freedom. Being a photographer, Kaushik has more chances to travel around the world and is thus equipped with the ability to connect with people through taking pictures. This experience helps him package the world, interact with different

people, and share feelings with those he never meets. This experience may be manifested in his experience of serving as a journalist in the war. Photographing the people who are in pain, Kaushik feels their pain in a most immediate way. He learns to love and feel empathic with others, which is the key tenet of planetarity. Photography not only assists him in correlating with others who are foreign to him, but also reminds him of how love really counts in his life. All he needs to do is appreciate those people and events which constitute his life and embrace those who love him.

By analyzing diasporic identities, I maintain that love could be a decisive element in shaping the second-generation immigrants' relation identity. By recognizing the true value of love, they are able to find the way they are related to the world and how they play an important role in the network. In brief, Spivak urges us to build up a new collectivity to resist the homogenizing tendency of globalization via the power of love.

However, many of us may have some reservations about the feasibility of Spivak's project. The planetary love, according to Spivak, is to include all of the human beings on earth, no matter what religion, race, and gender they belong to. "To be human is to be intended toward the other" (Spivak, *Death* 73), thus speaks Spivak. She teaches us to care about others, keep them in mind, and love them as we love our family. What is implied in Spivak's project is a love for the people you may not know. Echoing Spivak's statement, Kaja Silverman draws a similar ideal picture as follows: "The textual intervention I have in mind is one which would 'light up' dark corners of the cultural screen, and thereby make it possible for us to identify both consciously and unconsciously with bodies which we would otherwise reject with horror and contempt" (81). Silverman suggests we need to put us in the place of those who are not like us and therefore have long been neglected or rejected. She proposes an ideal

world in which people love anybody, and everyone is part of a community; that is, he or she loves others and is loved by others. Both Silverman and Spivak advocate a love for all human beings, especially those who are foreign to us. In other words, we may say that this is an unconditional love which educates people to love everybody without expecting a return. But is that possible? This kind of love is close to a humanistic fantasy. Indeed, it is difficult for us to do so. Especially after the event of 911 in 2001, the faith and belief in other people seem to recede. How can we love others whom we do not know? And how can we show our passion for and care about them, if we will eventually get hurt? When Spivak proposes a new collectivity based on planetarity, how does she put it into practice in reality? I believe it is not easy to form a collectivity in the heterogeneous and diverse reality in which we live.

Spivak may have predicted the above query, so she defends for herself in *Death of a Discipline*. She points out that this book is for the future readers who concern about the future. In addition, by proposing the concept of planetarity, she wants to "emphasize the unimaginable future to come" *(Death* 32). She knows her utopian idea may be difficult for us to achieve in our contemporary times. But she argues that what she writes, in a utopian sense, provides a way to help people work toward that horizon. Here she calls on the importance of literature. Spivak believes that literature is able to evoke our imagination and bring people to where we cannot arrive in reality. "Teleopoiesis" is the term she employs from Derrida to underline the function of imagination-making in literature. The term combines the Greek prefix "tele" (far off) with poiesis (imagination making), and it refers to "reaching toward the distant other by the patient power of the imagination" (Spivak, "Harlem" 125). The project of planetarity, for Spivak, is metaphorically "an impossible figure and therefore calling on telepoiesis" (*Death* 97). In reality, planetarity is difficult to materialize, so Spivak pins her faith on literature. She believes that literature not only helps people to

imagine but prefigures a better future. If we do not even have the ability to imagine a better future, how can we expect its arrival?

If we agree with Spivak's above statement, we may say that the ideas of planetarity are never castles in the air. It may seem utopian, but without a utopia we will not have a dream to accomplish. Planetarity reflects the defects of our contemporary world and shows how much we need to work onward to improve it. While globalization is an exclusion, planetarity serves as an inclusion. It is Spivak's hope that we have a vision for a better future where people learn to love one another, and human beings can form a wonderful community. This idea is also affirmed by Ahmed, which I also agree with: it is this utopian love that makes people reconsider their relationship and thus "find perhaps a different kind of line or connection between the others we care for, and the world to which we want to give shape" (Ahmed 141). Thinking from this perspective, Spivak's planetarity does have its positive value in evoking an awareness of self-reflection and love.

All in all, my thesis centers on Spivak's idea of planetarity and its application to the study of Lahiri and her diasporic works. I think the title of *Unaccustomed Earth* fits the argument of my thesis well. Literally, "earth" may denote the planet Earth or the land. Therefore, using "earth" to connote both the planet earth and the land, Lahiri not only vividly visualizes the restless feeling of diaspora but also echoes the lines she quotes from Hawthorne:

> Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same-worn-out soil. My children have had other birthplaces, and so far as their fortunes may be within my control, shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth. ("The Custom-House" 11-12)

The paragraph points out that it is always for future generations to leave their homes

and settle down to a new land. The title story precisely captures this theme to show the parents and the children's loss and the imperative to "strike their roots into unaccustomed earth" (Hawthorne, "The Custom-House" 11-12). This story delineates the days when an old father visits his daughter and grandson. At his daughter's home, he helps his daughter with housework and plays as a "cultural translator" for his grandson by teaching him Bengali and Bengali cultures. Due to these reasons and the old father's loneliness, his daughter strongly suggests he should move to her house and live with them thereafter. However, he refuses. He firmly believes only when he leaves can his daughter and her family have a whole new life. What the old father leaves with them is a garden in which he plants flowers and vegetables. If the garden can be thought of as a symbol of the soil and the land, then it may be very clear as to what message Lahiri intends to convey in this book: though the future generation leaves their home and moves to a new land, the original culture and family's love are always with them. Reading Lahiri's story in this light, we may say that Lahiri's works not only reveal the unaccustomed feelings the diaspora may have but also manifests the importance of love and family for the diaspora people. I hope by studying Lahiri's works from such a perspective, which departs from a common emphasis on multiculturalism and the root identity, I am able to cultivate a new mobility and agency of diasporic identities and its emotional dimensions.

If we interpret the "earth" in the title "Unaccustomed Earth" as the planet Earth, we will need to look at Spivak's concept of planetarity, which highlights the uncanny mindset. Planetarity encourages us to reconsider our relation with Earth and other people. Refuting the uniformity of globalization, Spivak argues that we should not regard ourselves as the dominator of the earth; instead, we are only the inhabitants on it, and we really need to reconsider our relation with each other. Accordingly, we have to otherize ourselves and grasp the uncanny feeling in order to place others in

our mind. Interpreting the title as the planet Earth, we need to notice that we get so accustomed to the way we live and feel comfortable with "McDonaldization" that standardizes everything and take everything for granted. It is imperative for us to otherize ourselves, so that we may re-consider the other side of globalization with a more critical eye. Take Lahiri's works for example, the title *Unaccustomed Earth* not only may suggest that we should study the second-generation diaspora people in a more detached, "not-the-same-as-the tradition" way but also implies that we should look at ourselves with a more "foreign," "unaccustomed" attitude, as if we are looking at ourselves from a different planet. Furthermore, Lahiri is in a way echoing Spivak's idea by suggesting that even though we are in different places, we will never feel alone, so long as we are bound by the feelings of love. Spivak's planetary idea might seem too utopian, but her vision does lead us to an alternative way to observe diaspora identities and broaden the scope of comparative literature studies. Her pursuit of this goal may also function as a "teleopoiesis," which helps us have the courage to dream the seemingly unimaginable future. By reading Lahiri's works in the light of Spivak's planetarity in this thesis, I hope to provide a new way to interpret Lahiri's works and thereby look at ourselves and the world from a most "unaccustomed" angle.

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