Minority Cosmopolitanism

SUSAN KOSHY

Ethnic Canons and Cosmopolitan F(r)ictions

THE "GESTALT OF SCALE" THAT SHAPES OUR UNDERSTANDINGS OF the minority and the cosmopolitan is due for an overhaul (Smith 195). An unexamined logic of small and large governs our use of these terms. The frequent conflation of the minority with the subnational and the cosmopolitan with the global misconceives the complexity of both. It denies worldliness to the former and particularity to the latter. It misses their imbrication, past and present. It is inattentive to their production in networks and circuits that are irreducible to scale. I want to initiate new ways of thinking about the minority and the cosmopolitan by conjoining the historically divergent projects of ethnic studies and studies of cosmopolitanism. To do so goes against the grain of prevailing practice. Despite sharing common interests in cross-cultural interactions and mobile subjects, scholars in both areas have pursued separate paths and occasionally defined their projects antagonistically. This essay disregards the boundary markers of these fields and, more broadly, urges creative trespass of fields focused on the study of difference.

Till now, cosmopolitanism has been tangential to ethnic studies scholarship. The political claim that founded ethnic studies was a demand for the recognition of minority cultures in the nation. This founding rationale has produced a lingering ambivalence in the field toward denationalizing literary figures and trends. Additionally, cosmopolitanism's desire to recast identities in transnational frames and even to question the idea of identity has sown wariness about its political valence and efficacy for antiracist projects oriented to domestic contexts. As a result, in ethnic canons writers with a cosmopolitan focus are treated with salutary neglect—counted in bib-

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https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2011.126.3.592 Published online by Cambridge University Press

liographies and anthologies but infrequently accounted for in research.

Building canons around difference, always a tricky business, has only become more complicated.[1] The topography of literary production and consumption has been transformed as writers and texts travel, ethnic literature is taught and translated in multiple national venues, and writers' locations, audiences, and subject matter resist ready alignment. The growing internationalization of ethnic literary production has produced a heterogeneous range of texts, which challenge the established boundaries of ethnic and world literature. Because they focus on minorities, these texts have been slow to win recognition as world literature even though they depict transnational movements and identifications that diverge from those in canonical ethnic narratives. The problems of classification precipitated by these changes are vividly illustrated in a terse exchange between Jessica Hagedorn, editor of a major anthology of Asian American short fiction, *Charlie Chan Is Dead* (1993), and a reviewer for the *New York Times*, Sven Birkerts. Birkerts's criticisms of the selections in the anthology turn on two issues: the teeming heterogeneity of the contributions ("just too many different kinds of inclusions") and what he sees as the corollary effect of ethnic overstretch ("'Asian American' has here become a term so hospitable that half the world's population can squeeze in under its banner"). Hagedorn's retort to Birkerts insists on the need for inclusiveness as timely and strategic: "Since this is the first anthology of its kind, is this really the time to be narrow?" (Letter). She reiterates the position she takes in the introduction to the anthology, where she boldly proclaims the international diversity of the contributors: "Some were born in the Philippines, some in Seattle. A few in Hawaii. Others in Toronto or London. . . . Seoul. Greeley, Colorado. India. Penang. Moscow, Idaho" (xxix–xxx). However, her introduction offers only the briefest gloss on the quandaries of categorization: "Asian American literature? Too confining a term, maybe. World literature? Absolutely" (xxx). Hagedorn's reaching for but setting aside the term *world literature*—its untenability as a title for her first collection—suggests the difficulty of yoking minority and cosmopolitan.

The distance between the two perspectives that emerges in this encounter—between the Asian American writer-anthologist and the general reader—reveals the gap between the internationalization of ethnic literary production and the nation-centric criteria for organizing the ethnic canon in multiculturalism. However, the question marks that punctuate Hagedorn's terms, "Asian American literature?" and "World literature?," signal a hesitation underlying her transnational stance, a tension barely registered before it is swiftly settled with the forceful "Absolutely." The problem of defining the scale of the minority is tellingly compressed into just two lines hinting at both the difficulty of elaborating this question and the insistent pressure for articulation.

The skirmish with Birkerts seems to have convinced Hagedorn that the ideological stakes of the cosmopolitan question warranted a more explicit linkage between Asian American identity and cosmopolitanism in the sequel volume, *Charlie Chan Is Dead 2*, published a decade later. Emblazoned on its cover is the subtitle *At Home in the World*. In the introduction, Hagedorn makes the unambiguous declaration "We continue to assert and explore who we are as Asians, Asian Americans, and citizens of the world" (xxxii). Her persistent engagement with cosmopolitanism as a writer and an editor reflects the continuing, even growing, salience of this framework in contemporary Asian American fiction. Yet despite the embrace of cosmopolitan themes and forms by many writers, including Hagedorn, scholars in the field have been slow to engage the cosmopolitan visions of minority writers.

The ambivalence toward cosmopolitan analytics in ethnic studies is paralleled by

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2011.126.3.592 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the marginalization of race, ethnicity, and non-Western cultures in discussions of cosmopolitanism. The positioning of the new cosmopolitanisms at a remove from, if not in opposition to, the identity politics associated with ethnic studies has discouraged generative linkages across these fields. Furthermore, despite repeated calls to disarticulate cosmopolitanism from its European genealogy and to expand the range of cosmopolitan subjects to include marginalized figures such as servants, women, and guides,[2] such shifts have been more often proclaimed than practiced. As Sheldon Pollock wryly notes, "[A]nalyses of cosmopolitanism are themselves rarely cosmopolitan" (596). To date, non-Western histories and cultures of cosmopolitanism constitute a limited portion of scholarship on the topic, and thus, despite a conscious effort to reorient the field, the default mode of cosmopolitanism is still Western.

As minority identities become increasingly transnational and the Eurocentrism of dominant versions of cosmopolitanism is contested, theorizations of minority cosmopolitanism offer invaluable resources for understanding the reterritorialization of identities and cultures and the costs and contradictions of globalization. I coin the term *minority cosmopolitanism* to refer to translocal affiliations that are grounded in the experience of minority subjects and are marked by a critical awareness of the constraints of primary attachments such as family, religion, race, and nation and by an ethical or imaginative receptivity, orientation, or aspiration to an interconnected or shared world. Crucially, I argue, minority cosmopolitanism is constituted through a paradoxical relation to cross-cultural contact, registering the disruptions and asymmetries of intercultural encounter while sustaining an openness to its transformative possibilities.

As my analysis will show, minority cosmopolitanism can break down the opposition between the ethnic and the cosmopolitan by highlighting (1) that minority narratives often carry non-Western modes of cosmopolitanism that offer alternative visions of cross-cultural exchange and transnational affiliation, (2) that the relational definition of the minority against the majority contains an implicit comparative cultural perspective that lends itself to cosmopolitan articulations, and (3) that a vertical hierarchy of scales that relegates the minority to the subnational misses the dynamic, "scale-jumping" properties of the minority in globality.[3] Thus, the heuristic of minority cosmopolitanism brings to the fore what is often obscured in customary invocations of the minority: its centripetal and centrifugal energies—its centripetal capacity to intensify affiliations of race, ethnicity, and culture and its centrifugal capacity to extend these affinities outward into inventive affiliations. The analytic framework of minority cosmopolitanism can thus dislodge a Eurocentric genealogy of cosmopolitanism from primacy and make room for more complex and labile understandings of the minority.

This essay analyzes the minority cosmopolitanism of Jhumpa Lahiri's collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) to show how its narratives of worlding contest contemporary economic and political processes of globalization and Eurocentric accounts of globality. The cosmopolitanism the stories envision takes as its central figure the diasporic citizen, but Lahiri's variations on the figure expand it so that it can contain worlds. Although the main characters in the stories cover a range of categories—new immigrant, refugee, resident alien, member of a racial minority—diasporic citizenship encompasses these differences and is presented not as an identity but as a condition under globalization that affects the long-settled and the migrant in multiple locations. Through this figure, Lahiri pushes us to imagine an impossible hospitality from the position of the other who cannot feel at home.

The figure of the diasporic citizen is also refracted through Lahiri's feminist concerns

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2011.126.3.592 Published online by Cambridge University Press

with gender and sexuality in displacement. Lahiri approaches these issues elliptically, not by representing feminist subjects so much as by focusing on how incursions of domestic spaces unsettle the divide between private and public and disturb the distinctions between familiar and stranger. Further, she uses the structure of the short story cycle to juxtapose culturally distinct forms of heterosexuality in and across the stories, critiquing Western and Indian heteronormativity through the vehicle of comparison. If, as Amanda Anderson observes, cosmopolitanism's "forms of detachment and multiple affiliation can be variously articulated and variously motivated," Lahiri's cosmopolitanism captures unforeseen affinities that emerge in the pores of the everyday and unsettle the given meanings of affiliation, kinship, and belonging (267).

Finally, the framework of minority cosmopolitanism draws attention to and tracks the scale-traversing aspects of everyday practices of transnationality. On the one hand, the stories zoom in on small happenings and circumscribed settings, maintaining a spatial focus on the home and a formal and thematic focus on the slight, inconspicuous, and fleeting events and affects in daily life. They light up "the nonepic everday" (Yaeger xv). On the other hand, the fitful intimations of the quotidian are hooked into wider social forces that operate at a remove from the narrative action but exert an ineluctable pressure on it. This narrative oscillation is reinforced through the form of the short story cycle, where meaning emerges as parts constellate and reconstellate into wholes in the act of reading. Thus, the aesthetic of *Interpreter of Maladies* insists on the linkages between the home and the world by placing individual lives and stories against an ever-shifting cosmopolitan horizon of meaning.

Exorbitant Citizenship

The elusiveness and fluidity of identities in *Interpreter of Maladies* have abetted a perception of its rootless cosmopolitanism. The locale shifts constantly, offering glimpses of a constellation of characters: Indian, American, and Indian American, living in or moving between the United States, India, and Britain. Racial and national differences, often key categories for reading ethnic fiction, assume a flickering quality in these stories, now incandescent, now faint, an unsteady source of illumination. Often racial or national differences remain a latent force in the action, and the narrative energy stems from conflicts triggered by gender, sexuality, or generational difference ("The Treatment of Bibi Haldar," "A Real Durwan," "A Temporary Matter," and "This Blessed House"). The tenor of the narration is oblique, muted, nuanced; the plots frequently focus on short-lived relationships, chance encounters, and unanticipated outcomes, thereby resisting exemplarity.

The reception of Lahiri's fiction reflects the difficulty readers have in reconciling her representation of difference with her cosmopolitanism. Rehearsing a favorite theme of mainstream reviews, a *New York Times* reviewer notes:

> The generational conflicts Lahiri depicts cut across national lines; the waves of admiration, competition and criticism that flow between the two families could occur between Smiths and Taylors in any suburban town; and the fight for connection and control between Hema and Kaushik—as children and as adults—replays the tussle that has gone on ever since men and women lived in caves.
>
> (Schillinger)[4]

For this reviewer, Lahiri's universalism derives from her ability to render ethnicity transposable. Fundamentally, such formulations pit ethnic particularity in opposition to universalism and elide the extent to which the suburban setting, the class background of the characters, and the quotidian concerns of the stories, rather than the representations

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of ethnic or national differences, conjure the universal effects reviewers laud in the fiction.

To counter the persistent evacuation of particularity in the reception of Lahiri's work, one must understand the historical context from which her minority cosmopolitanism emerges. Lahiri was born in London to Indian immigrants from Bengal, and her family later relocated to the United States, where she grew up and has lived since. Her diasporic ties were shaped by frequent family visits to Calcutta, which along with suburban settings in the Northeast forms the background for many of her stories. Her family's experience is part of the postindependence history of economic migration from India to the developed world, frequently referred to as the "new diaspora" and distinguished from the "old," or subaltern, diaspora of the nineteenth century, consisting mainly of indentured workers dispersed to other colonial territories (Mishra). Many of Lahiri's characters are educated, middle-class Indians who migrate to or are settled in the United States or are second-generation Indian Americans. She is careful to distinguish between the chosen migrations of some of her male characters and the involuntary journeys of the wives who follow them after their marriages are arranged.

The new-diasporic imaginary of her fiction is shaped by the legacies of colonialism and nationalism in the subcontinent that haunt South Asian visions of location and belonging. Two bloody partitions, one in 1947 (which produced India and Pakistan), the other in 1971 (which created Bangladesh from Pakistan), carved three nations out of a subcontinent. These traumatic events sundered long-established linguistic and cultural communities to establish novel nations organized around religious majorities.[5] The divisions and violence and the stream of refugees produced in their wake provide the background for the exploration of belonging and identity in stories like "A Real Durwan" and "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine." In "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine," even as East and West Pakistan are riven by civil war, the hospitable bond that develops between Lilia's Indian parents and their East Pakistani guest refutes the bloody logic of partition: "Most of all I remember the three of them operating during that time as if they were a single person, sharing a single meal, a single body, a single silence, and a single fear" (41).

Shifting boundaries, dispersed populations, and divided communities have created uniquely unsettled national forms in modern South Asia. Indeed, diaspora consciousness permeates modern South Asian national identity to an unusual degree, in part because the birth of new nations coincided with the formation of two kinds of diaspora: "endo-diasporas" resulting from the scattering of groups to neighboring countries in South Asia and "exo-diasporas" resulting from the scattering of populations to distant countries outside the region (Koshy, Introduction 10). The displacements that accompanied partition in the subcontinent have sown new nations with endo-diasporas; at the same time, the close ties maintained between South Asian nations and their postindependence exo-diasporas have intensified a sense of a nation whose community is incongruent with its national boundaries. Consequently, the simultaneous birth of postcolonial nations and their endo-diasporas and exo-diasporas has heightened the consciousness of national boundaries as "shadow lines" (Ghosh, *Shadow Lines*). The repeated allusions to the gap between political maps and affective communities and between places of residence and places of belonging in Lahiri's stories grow out of this fraught history of nation formation and dispersal in the subcontinent.

The incongruence between national and cultural identity, instead of being perceived as a sign of failed nationhood, can instead serve as a resource for rethinking the terms of national membership. In this vein, another diasporic Bengali writer, Amitav Ghosh, observes:

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> It is impossible to be imperfectly Indian. . . . Were it possible to be an imperfect Indian, everybody in India would be. This is not merely because India has failed to develop a national culture. It is not a lack; it is in itself the form of Indian culture. If there is any one pattern in Indian culture in the broadest sense it is simply this: that the culture seems to be constructed around the proliferation of differences (albeit within certain parameters). To be different in a world of differences is irrevocably to belong. ("Diaspora" 77–78)

Ghosh gestures toward the imaginative possibilities of "imperfect" national attachments that, in his work as well as Lahiri's, are channeled into an exploration of cosmopolitanism. His insight can be pressed into the service of a larger theoretical argument about the cosmopolitan potential of the plurality of attachments nourished by postcolonial histories of migration and political membership.

In *Interpreter of Maladies*, the lack of correspondence or lag between cultural and political citizenship characterizes both ends of the hyphen in the South Asian diaspora. The noncoincidence of nation (the cultural identity binding a population as a people) and state (the political body with sovereign jurisdiction over a territory) in both locales is emphasized in narratives of characters who may have formal citizenship in a state but are excluded from or tangential to its cultural-national genealogies. These forms of what I name *exorbitant citizenship* expose the limits of civil rights in securing belonging and stress the myriad ways in which gender, religion, race, class, and sexuality configure the norms of proper citizenship.

Exorbitant citizens are those whose citizenship is eccentric, erratic, or irregular because they fall outside hegemonic cultural narratives of membership or are denied the full rights of citizens. The term emphasizes the differential incorporation of citizens into polities. Minorities, indigenous people, queers, the Romani,[6] the homeless, and diasporic groups are paradigmatic exorbitant citizens. While the attachments and allegiances of exorbitant citizens have typically been viewed as suspect by states, I argue that exorbitant citizenship offers a rich archive of recalcitrant imaginings of community, worldliness, and belonging. My use invokes the connotations of wildness, extravagance, abnormality, excess, and transgression embedded in the word *exorbitant*. It also activates the etymological sense of the *exorbitans* in Roman law, anomalous instances lying outside "the intended scope of a law" ("Exorbitant").

The exorbitant citizenship that Lahiri explores is diasporic citizenship, but the power of her stories springs from her ability to render the predicament of diasporic citizenship so that it resonates with the broader predicament of dislocation under globalization. Though diasporic citizenship in her stories speaks of a specific experience of dispersal, it does so in a way that speaks to disparate experiences of displacement.

In *Interpreter of Maladies*, diasporic citizenship embodies a subsemantic alienation that persists across generations and geographies, that is characterized by the marking of the here and now by an elsewhere, and that stubbornly resists resolution into a single national identity. Thus, the diasporic citizen becomes a vehicle for minority cosmopolitanism by reconfiguring "imperfect" or plural national attachments as a mode of inhabiting the earth. The stories train the reader's focus on the affective aspects of citizenship, on the processes of detachment and reattachment or naturalization, but they do so to question the inclusiveness and inevitability of national identities. They invoke a cosmopolitanism in which the partial belonging of the minority illuminates the precariousness of cross-cultural encounter, the blindness and insight of unfamiliarity, and the provisionality of human "residence on earth" (Neruda). The sources of this minority cosmopolitanism lie in postcolonial histories

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of nation (un)making and migration in which diaspora and nation, instead of being defined antagonistically, have been coconstituted.

Naturalization's Ordinary Affects

Ordinary affects are the varied, surging capacities to affect and be affected that give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies, and emergences. . . . At once abstract and concrete, ordinary affects are more directly compelling than ideologies, as well as more fractious, multiplicitous, and unpredictable than symbolic meanings.

—Kathleen Stewart

Interpreter of Maladies makes apparent divisions and affiliations that can be folded neither into multiculturalism's existing identity categories nor into Western cosmopolitanism's identity-bracketing universalism. In this respect, Lahiri's work is affiliated with the new cosmopolitanisms that are oriented, as Bruce Robbins observes, toward emergent forms of transnational connectivity:

> We should not and perhaps cannot accept the old cosmopolitan ideal of transcending the distinction between strangers and friends. Still, we all depend on what Blanche DuBois calls the kindness of strangers. Less than kin or friendship but a good deal more than polite or innocent nonrelation, *designating a field rather than an identity*, this phrase is one way of describing the test and invitation offered by cosmopolitics. (3–4; italics mine)

Robbins's comments illuminate the disruption of familiar identities and the concomitant prominence of field frames in Lahiri's fiction. These field frames are captured in the unusual, even eccentric, relationships on which many of her stories turn: a young Indian American girl and an East Pakistani / Bangladeshi visitor to her home, a hundred-year-old white American landlady and her Indian tenant, an Indian immigrant nanny and the white boy she cares for, a durwan and the families in the building she guards, and an Indian tour guide and an Indian American family. The stories juxtapose the possibilities of connection across differences and the possibilities of estrangement in sameness. Familiarity can mask the estrangement of intimates ("A Temporary Matter," "This Blessed House," and "Mrs. Sen's"), and unfamiliarity can elicit profound connection ("When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine," "Sexy," and "The Third and Final Continent"). These narratives suggest that neither identity nor difference can presage the terms of intimacy and exchange in contemporary relationships. Collectively, the stories reveal not only the growing relevance of relationships to those who are less than kin and more than stranger but also, and more important, the dislocation and consequent unreliability of the very categories through which we demarcate the familiar and the unfamiliar.

Diasporic citizenship offers Lahiri a powerful vehicle for exploring emergent field frames and unsettled identities. *Interpreter of Maladies* brings into view characters whose affiliations confound the citizen-alien binary and whose identities have been unfixed from their moorings in kinship, place, and nationality. The stories present an assemblage of affective experiences of deferred, incomplete, or inaccessible belonging that exist despite the legal and political guarantees of citizenship. Thus, the collection sheds light on "inclusionary forms of exclusion," whose injuries are hidden because they are covered over by nominal citizenship (Carbado 638). The diasporic citizen inhabits an indeterminate space of belonging that aggregates the discrepant identifications and trajectories associated with contiguous words like *resident alien*, *immigrant*, *exile*, and *minority subject*. But it is the process of naturalization as much as a specific identity like immigrant or refugee that is the subject of Lahiri's fiction.[7]

Lahiri's stories explore naturalization not just as a formal process by which citizen-

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ship is acquired but also as a social process that extends beyond the conferral of formal citizenship and follows multiple, unpredictable pathways. Accordingly, her stories trace practices of accommodation, the everyday acts and affects through which characters adapt to unfamiliar surroundings and imagine communities in the face of exclusion or nominal inclusion. The title and epigraph of Lahiri's second collection of short stories, *Unaccustomed Earth*, taken from Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Custom-House," signal the pivotal importance of naturalization in her fiction: "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." Hawthorne's passage affirms the regenerative power of diasporic movement through the naturalistic metaphor of transplantation. But Lahiri's citation of the passage is pensive, ironic. Interrupting Hawthorne's hopeful forward trajectory, the stories in *Unaccustomed Earth* (as well as in *Interpreter of Maladies*) show transplantation to be an uncertain, wayward process yielding unanticipated prospects and setbacks.

Hawthorne's anticipatory vision of diasporic renewal and paternal hope of generational flourishing are refracted in Lahiri's transnational feminist retelling of the affective pathways and crossways of naturalization. Sexual reproduction, the vehicle of diasporic revitalization in his horticultural analogy, emerges in Lahiri as the site of gender and generational relations that interrupt, reroute, or scramble prospective (be)longings. The intentionality that inaugurates dispersal in Hawthorne's utterance "My children . . . shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth" becomes in Lahiri a space of uncertain agency, its illocutionary force undercut by the transitivity of intergenerational promise, its purpose hostage to myriad social forces and turns of circumstance. Thus, in shifting scales and tonalities, Lahiri's stories of naturalization fill in the multidirectional surround of intentionality in Hawthorne's prospective diasporic vision while simultaneously drawing out and changing its meanings.

Lahiri's narratives of naturalization also reconstruct hegemonic visions of cosmopolitanism by elaborating an ethics of affiliation grounded in minority experiences of exclusion or partial inclusion. To figure postcolonial dispersals, Lahiri refits the classic trope of cosmopolitanism, the host-guest relationship. As Derrida explains, the Western philosophical tradition conceptualizes cosmopolitanism through a host-guest relationship, in which the guest is a stranger or foreigner and the host is the master of the household, with sovereignty over his home. The predicament of diasporic citizenship revises the hegemonic paradigm of cosmopolitanism in two ways: it dismantles the native-stranger binary and undoes the governing distinction between guest and host. In its place, a minority cosmopolitanism grounded in diasporic citizenship constructs a figure who is a host-guest, defined by movement between the two positions. Still a guest in the host country (often despite formal citizenship), the diasporic citizen invokes a cosmopolitanism defined by "unhomeliness" (Bhabha 9). Lahiri uses the trope of the host-guest to explore the multiple attachments of diasporic citizenship and to envision alternative possibilities for cross-cultural connection and community in an interconnected world. Many stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* turn on rituals of hospitality (housewarming parties, caretaking, welcoming visitors, chaperoning tourists) and feature characters who extend or receive hospitality (tour guides, doorkeepers, hosts, guests, care workers, and tenants).[8]

The framework of naturalization links the stories set in India ("A Real Durwan") and the United States ("This Blessed House,"

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"The Third and Final Continent," and "Mrs. Sen's"). "A Real Durwan" explores the precarious incorporation of Boori Ma, a Partition-refugee woman, into the tight community of an apartment building in Calcutta and her eventual expulsion when she is falsely accused of stealing. Her position as a resident of the building and an alien to its inhabitants is emblematized in her role as durwan, a threshold figure who guards the border between inside and outside. As a durwan, she performs the functions of a host in receiving visitors, but her real position is that of a tolerated guest whose welcome wears thin as the community prospers. Her liminal status is evident in her position as neither a host nor a guest, and her plight highlights the ethical limits of the political resolution of postcolonial nationhood. As a refugee who crossed the border from East Bengal (Pakistan) to West Bengal (India), she is an "impossible subject" of Partition, whose "chosen" nationality requires her involuntary migration.[9] Her partial inclusion in the apartment community is a metonym for the tenuous incorporation of endo-diasporic South Asians in postcolonial nations.

But Boori Ma is not only an alien, she is also a queer figure who exposes the heterosexual and gendered codes that structure citizenship. Her poverty and age lay waste the bodily signs of gender identity, and her job as durwan renders her other than feminine: "Though under *normal* circumstances this was no job for a woman, she honored the responsibility" (73; italics mine). Furthermore, she lost her family and possessions in the turmoil of Partition and subsists outside the tight circles of family, property, and neighborliness through which belonging and community are naturalized. Her uprooting and homelessness at the story's end throw open the cosmopolitan question of the refugee's place in a world of nations. Lahiri reveals how formal inclusion covers over black holes of exclusion in the nation, thereby reframing a national political problem as an international ethical problem. In this story, the minority becomes a conduit for the cosmopolitan as a singular narrative of dispossession opens up the question of collective responsibility for those who are unsheltered by the states that house them.

In "This Blessed House," the focus shifts to a middle-class Indian American couple living in the suburbs. Here Lahiri foregrounds the gendered dynamics of diasporic citizenship, revealing the points of friction between racialized heterosexuality and naturalization. The story opens with Sanjeev's creeping recognition that his fancy house, a proud trophy of his economic mobility, may belong to him only in name. The house is mined with tokens of its prior Christian owners, the discovery of which disrupts preparations for the newlyweds' housewarming and offers an apt metaphor for the hidden impediments to naturalization. For Sanjeev these tokens are prickling intimations of the gap between legal and cultural citizenship. The ironic commentary on naturalization is further refracted through the parallel plot of Sanjeev's bewildered discoveries about the unforeseen entailments of marriage. He is brought up short when Twinkle, the beautiful woman he agreed to marry at his parents' urging, balks at throwing the items out of their home.

Twinkle's delight in and Sanjeev's aversion to the Christian knickknacks disallow a straightforward reading of naturalization as either coerced or consensual; the story ironizes both his prudence and her whimsicality. On the one hand, his calculated efforts to cordon off and preserve his cultural identity in his home while pursuing economic mobility outside it are defeated by his discoveries and his wife's resistance. On the other hand, her giddy pleasure in the mementos and her impulsive, quirky eclecticism suggest a avoidance from the dilemmas of alienation that makes her eager assimilation murkier than it first appears. Moreover, her avoidance is enabled by her beauty, femininity, and charm (neatly symbolized by her name),

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2011.126.3.592 Published online by Cambridge University Press

which smooth the field in which her naturalization is negotiated. At the end, Sanjeev is resigned to having the thirty-pound silver bust of Christ displayed on their mantelpiece, and his confidence that ownership secures belonging gives way to a weary acknowledgment of the limits of his authority.

A scene of hospitality in which Sanjeev fails to assume the role of host at a party that climaxes in a treasure hunt for the former owners' Christian souvenirs exposes his limited access to citizenship. An eager host when the party begins, he is reduced at the end to an exhausted spectator. But the story does not simply dramatize the pathos of partial citizenship by demonstrating his lack of the patriarchal authority that guarantees hospitality: "the host, he who offers hospitality, must be the master in his house, he (male in the first instance) must be assured of his sovereignty over the space and goods he offers or opens to the other as stranger" (Derrida 14). It reimagines hospitality through the experience of displacement. Sanjeev's unexpected "pang" of affection for Twinkle indicates his recognition of the messy entanglements of attachment and the necessary imperfection of its objects (155). This affective responsiveness transforms his lack of mastery into an altered mode of habitation and hospitality that registers only as a fragile, incipient possibility at the end of the story.

"This Blessed House," like all the other stories in the collection, is haunted by the consciousness of characters who are not at home even at home. The feeling of not being at home is a marker of diasporic citizenship, an effect of attachments that position such minority subjects inside the nation formally but between nations culturally. The persistence of unhomeliness also emphasizes the inhospitability of a liberal, universalist model of citizenship that requires a transcendence of ethnic identity. Thus, although formal naturalization promises incorporation into the host nation, it cannot resolve the loss of cultural identity and leaves a remainder. This remainder is both the stigmata of diasporic citizenship and the source of its cosmopolitan possibilities.

The unhomely, Homi Bhabha explains, is a paradigmatic postcolonial experience that captures the "estranging sense" of dislocation "that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations." Bhabha excavates the psychic terrain of the unhomely as the vivid, often terrifying apprehension of displacement, the moment when "the recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions . . . and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (9). Bhabha's analysis focuses on dramatic recognitions of unhomeliness expressed in shock, terror, or revolutionary awakening. In Lahiri's fiction, however, the unhomely is more muted and recessive, rendered not as a sudden "invasion" of history into the domestic space but as endemic to it. In her stories, unhomeliness emanates from incremental and ongoing structural adjustments to domesticity in response to dislocation. It is embedded in the everyday acts, habits, and routines of accommodation. To suggest that quotidian strategies of accommodation harbor the unhomely, as Lahiri does, is to foreground the ambivalence of accommodation, its creative power and its latent violence.

In *Interpreter of Maladies*, the practices of accommodation offer an intricate affective map of naturalization at three levels: first, at the individual level they highlight the development of psychic capacities or resistances in the face of pervasive experiences of displacement in the contemporary world; second, at the domestic level they illuminate the latent pressures and aftershocks of displacement on gendered and heterosexual arrangements; and third, at the quotidian level they reveal how the ordinary affects of everyday life mediate the structural shifts associated with globalization.

In *Interpreter of Maladies*, "The Third and Final Continent" and "Mrs. Sen's" illustrate the contradictory aspects of accommodation.

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2011.126.3.592 Published online by Cambridge University Press

They are contrasting stories of stalled and ongoing naturalization, but notwithstanding the starkly different gendered trajectories they trace, both critique and decenter heteronormative scripts of citizenship. They reveal how the pressures of accommodation bring into view affinities that transgress the boundary between familiars and strangers. These unlikely relationships foreground field frames that offer an understanding of affinity and alienation different from those available through the familiar identity categories of husband, wife, mother, American, and Indian. This critique provides a vehicle for articulating emergent cosmopolitan affiliations that are, as embryonic connections, often fragile and fleeting, glimpsed rather than materialized.

In plotting naturalization, many of Lahiri's stories ironically target what Elizabeth Povinelli calls the "intimate event," or the coalescence of the romantic couple at the core of liberal citizenship (4). In *The Empire of Love,* Povinelli contends that by identifying romantic love with the "autological subject" (autonomous, self-making, and free) and consigning non-Western forms of intimacy to the "genealogical society" (constrained, collective, and unfree), liberalism simultaneously elevated the heterosexual couple to the position of the exemplary liberal subject and relegated its others to "liberal intimacy's nightmare—the genealogically determined collective" (182). According to Povinelli, the purported universality of romantic love depends on liberalism's power to disembed its truths from its imperial history: "The semiotic operation of the intimate event so saturates the horizon of everyday life that it no longer seems a 'semiotic operation' but just the way people do things" (191). Lahiri's challenge to romantic love's universalist claim is twofold. First, her stories deny thematic centrality to romantic love and ironize its certainties. Second, and more obliquely, Lahiri revises the narrative conventions in which this claim is implanted and through which it performs its cultural work.

Her critique of the intimate couple focuses on its multiple dispersed effects: its monopolistic hold on the social imagination because of its displacement of other modes of intimacy and social life and its insinuation into the very conceptual forms of citizenship. The juxtaposition of Euro-American and Indian intimacies in Lahiri's stories subtly dismantles colonial binaries without according superiority to either side.[10] Alternative attachments feature prominently as the conduit for cross-cultural understanding in her stories, whereas romantic relationships confound the possibility of connecting, particularly across cultural differences. Tellingly, the two words that instigate cross-cultural misunderstanding in "Sexy" and "Interpreter of Maladies" are erotically charged: "sexy" and "romantic." In "Sexy" the power of romance to intercept and thwart understanding is driven home to the striking white woman Miranda when her married Indian lover's compliment to her, that she is sexy, is later glossed as "sexy means loving someone you don't know" (107). In this story, interracial romance, a long-favored plot device to signify the bridging of racial and national differences in stories of intercultural encounter, is invoked only to be undermined (Koshy, *Sexual Naturalization*).

In place of the by-now-ubiquitous narrative of immigration or naturalization as a love story, "The Third and Final Continent" offers the relationship between an Indian tenant and his American landlady and, in the penumbra of that plot, the story of the narrator's relationship to his wife. The transposition of one kind of intimacy (romantic love) into two others (host-tenant bond, arranged marriage) undercuts a foundational myth of the immigrant as a certain type of desiring subject. By subordinating the erotics of conjugality to the ethics of hospitality, Lahiri focuses naturalization through the cosmopolitan question of the obligation to the other rather than through the nationalist question of the strength of immigrant desire. In

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"The Third and Final Continent," both plots involving Mrs. Croft and Mala are pointedly antiromantic, but they are nevertheless suffused with affect, which is unexpected, incremental, and difficult to categorize and disturbs conventional assumptions about kinship, familiarity, and mutual obligation.

The Americanization of the narrator begins when he moves in as Mrs. Croft's tenant, noting pointedly, "I had never lived in the home of a person who was not Indian" (177). He is a resident alien in his new house and his new country. His naturalization commences with a comic ritual that comes to define his bond with his landlady. On his first day in her home, Mrs. Croft cites the recent American moon landing with patriotic pride and insists he mimic her sentiments about the event, "Say 'splendid'!" The illocutionary force of this affective demand takes the form of an order or exercitive, a speech act that involves "the exercising of powers, rights, or influence" (Austin 150). The narrator's response indicates his acute awareness of the conditional hospitality afforded by assimilation and its resemblance to other exemplary moments of interpellation, such as when he recited multiplication tables after his teacher and when he repeated Sanskrit verses after the priest at his marriage (179–80).

Yet the depiction of naturalization as a force field of power relations does not preclude the possibility of attachment. A turning point in the naturalization of the narrator comes when he visits Mrs. Croft with Mala and discovers the old lady in bed after a fall. Mrs. Croft triumphantly recounts how she was rescued after dialing 911 and then asks the narrator what he thinks of her action. His reply infuses with feeling the word with which she had earlier taught him to speak his admiration for America: "As stunned as I was, I knew what I had to say. With no hesitation at all, I cried out, 'Splendid!'" (194). The ambiguity of "I knew what I had to say" suggests both the formality of the repetition of the word (I knew *what* I had to say) and the inner compulsion (I knew what I *had* to say). These meanings are caught up and intensified in the phrase that describes the tenor of his utterance, "with no hesitation at all." His declaration affirms his admiration for the resourcefulness and independence of a singular American woman, but the repetition marks a difference as his attachment bypasses the icons of national culture (American flag, moon landing) and swerves toward an individual as its preferred object.

His naturalization has another facet: it requires from Mrs. Croft a reciprocal recognition of his difference. As he introduces Mala to Mrs. Croft, he recognizes in the visibility of his wife's difference his former self. His acknowledgment of his wife is a crucial precondition to his naturalization, but equally critical is Mrs. Croft's acceptance of Mala. Fittingly, the two plots and their distinct modes of attachment, which have run alongside each other so far, are brought into revealing relation when Mala stands up to greet Mrs. Croft:

> Mala rose to her feet, adjusting the end of her sari over her head and holding it to her chest, and for the first time since her arrival, I felt sympathy. I remembered my first days in London. . . . Like me, Mala had traveled far from home, not knowing where she was going, or what she would find, for no other reason than to be my wife. . . . I wondered if Mrs. Croft had ever seen a woman in a sari, with a dot painted on her forehead and bracelets stacked on her wrists. I wondered what she would object to. (195)

The quickening of the narrator's sympathy signals a shift. Memories of his days as an uncertain guest in a strange land transform his understanding of being a host, and his hitherto dutiful hospitality to his wife is infused with a more compassionate idiom of welcome. The minority cosmopolitanism of diasporic citizenship is enunciated in his movement between the roles of guest and host.

The convergence of the two plots during this meeting and the affective blockages

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2011.126.3.592 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and surges between them offer an allegory of naturalization. The encounter serves as a switch point for affective energies; it marks a shift from the detached tone in which the narrator has described the exigencies of immigration so far: "In a week I had adjusted, more or less" (175). His matter-of-factness gives way to the subdued amazement of the closing lines: "I know that my achievement is quite ordinary. I am not the only man to seek his fortune far from home, and certainly I am not the first. Still, there are times I am bewildered by each mile I have traveled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept. As ordinary as it all appears, there are times when it is beyond my imagination" (198). The use of anaphora highlights the incremental nature of naturalization and its grounding in quotidian activities and everyday attachments. The delayed force of affects that swell in the meeting between Mala and Mrs. Croft, abate, rise again in the narrator's reflections on Mrs. Croft's death, and then flood the narrative in these concluding sentences counters the archetypal story of immigrant love as romantic desire. Instead, Lahiri unobtrusively substitutes arranged marriage for romantic love as a metaphor for immigration and naturalization and connects it to the host-tenant relationship between Mrs. Croft and the narrator.

The link between arranged marriage and naturalization is established in a number of ways. The narrator's decisions to emigrate to the United States and to marry are concurrent and narratively intertwined and are shown to be pragmatic and dutiful; they are characterized by a measured sense of the accommodations required and the costs of the enterprise, as when he says of his impending marriage, "I regarded the proposition with neither objection nor enthusiasm" (181). The first five nights of their marriage are awkward and unromantic—Mala turns away from him and cries because she misses her parents, and he reads his guidebook by flashlight, "anticipating my journey" (181). The episode undercuts a series of cultural assumptions that ground "liberal loving": that romantic desire is the sine qua non of marriage, that marriage appropriately expresses individual rather than collective aspirations, and that the individualism expressed in romantic desire figures the proper citizen subject (Povinelli 181). The reorientation of readerly expectations is slow, its full implications apparent only at the end, when the narrator's attachment to his wife and his new country have taken root from unpropitious beginnings. The turn to other forms of intimacy and to mutual obligation to narrate naturalization enables Lahiri to explore the complex reciprocities on which naturalization depends, to render visible unlikely affinities across differences, and to challenge the implicit heteronormativity of conventional narratives of American citizenship.

Depicting the narrator's naturalization through his relationship with Mala and Mrs. Croft also concentrates attention on ordinary affects as a crucial site of mediation between social structures and subjectivity. Ordinary affects are shown as rife with barely articulated apprehensions and responses that elude interpellation, often despite the semblance of conformity. Conspicuously, most of Lahiri's stories turn on small events and "temporary matters," but the quiet force of her stories emanates from their ability to scramble the hierarchy of scales, bringing the small into unexpected relation to the large and thereby throwing scalar expectations out of kilter. For instance, "The Third and Final Continent" belongs to the most paradoxical of genres, the epic short story. With an unnamed narrator who stands in for a generation of middle-class post-1965 Indian male immigrants, many accompanied or followed by wives, the story narrates an epic migration, but Lahiri alights on a series of quirky encounters and thick quotidian details to create the eventfulness of this journey. The gap between the historical and the quotidian is dramatized in

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2011.126.3.592 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the contrast between the publicly commemorated moon landing that forms the backdrop of the narration and the unmarked achievement of the protagonist in surviving on three continents, an achievement that rests on innumerable minor accommodations. The story pointedly sidesteps the classic milestones of immigrant *bildung*—the first house, the birth of children, professional success—substituting in their place "each mile I have traveled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept."

This attention to everyday life brings into view the dislocations produced by migration and globalization, but from a perspective far removed from macrostructural causes. As Henri Lefebvre explains, "It is everyday life which measures and embodies the changes which take place 'somewhere else,' in the 'higher realms.' The human world is not defined simply by the historical, by culture, by totality or society as a whole, or by ideological and political superstructures. It is defined by this intermediate and mediating *level*: everyday life" (45). Lefebvre reminds us that the everyday, though typically associated with the trivial, repetitive, and commonplace, contains seeds of possibility because it "reveals the inability of forms to grasp content, to integrate it and exhaust it" (64). Everyday life is thus identified by familiar forms but also by energies through which they unravel and are transformed. It reveals the stresses, latencies, and tensions of the present in a manner impossible for macroperspectives of globalization to register.

In "Mrs. Sen's," a story of stalled naturalization, Lahiri explores the field of ordinary affects as labor. She melds the figure of the diasporic citizen to the figure of the care worker to render visible the unhomely affects of economic migration and low-end affective labor. The diasporic citizen as care worker anatomizes accommodation by juxtaposing two forms of affective labor, the low-paid labor of child care and the unpaid emotional labor of the wife in an immigrant household. This focus enables a feminist critique of the devaluation of care work and points to the subjective costs of the postmodernization of the economy. It also reveals the centrality of heteronormative family structures to the productivity of late capitalism by comparing the structural adjustments required in immigrant families with the precarious adaptations in a white single parent's household. Mrs. Sen's struggle to adjust to the demands of her American life sheds light on an invisible, undertheorized aspect of the 1965 Immigration Act: the connection between the provisions giving preference to skilled immigrants and the provisions facilitating the reunification of family members. The story powerfully conveys the way the neoliberal logic that privileges skilled immigration infiltrates the family forms that constitute its emotional infrastructure; the narrative also links the affective pressures on immigrant families like the Sens to those on other nonnormative American families.

"Mrs. Sen's" looks at an immigrant husband who works as a math professor, while his wife provides cheap child care for a divorced white working mother by supervising her son, Eliot, after school. Eliot's mother, having limited means and facing long commutes, turns to Mrs. Sen when a number of makeshift child-care arrangements fall through. The demand for flexibility and mobility permeates all these working arrangements (sites of potential cosmopolitical affiliation), and the story probes the contradictions and displaced effects of these arrangements by considering who provides affective labor, at what cost, and for whom (sites of actual racial and gender division).

Through the story of Mrs. Sen's "failed" naturalization, her refusal to adapt, we get a glimpse of the subjective transformations entailed by the new global economy. The narrative form through which the subjective pressures of a postmodern economy are explored

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2011.126.3.592 Published online by Cambridge University Press

is the coming-of-age story. But Lahiri gives it a provocative twist, linking two characters whose isolation in their nuclear families and sympathetic connection to each other produce a story that questions normative ideas of coming of age. The parallels in Eliot's and Mrs. Sen's situations reflect their common position at the stress points of kinship structures that absorb the costs of professional demands on workers. In mainstream American family life, the valorization of independence, autonomy, and self-sufficiency is partly an accommodation to the reduced provisions for family life and the radical privatization of social reproduction in the late twentieth century. Lahiri's story critiques the cultural norms through which this affective deficit is normalized by casting a shadow over Eliot's seemingly successful transition to independence. The story ends on his first day home alone:

> It was the last afternoon Eliot spent with Mrs. Sen, or with any baby-sitter. From then on his mother gave him a key, which he wore on a string around his neck. He was to call the neighbors in case of an emergency, and to let himself into the beach house after school. The first day, just as he was taking off his coat, the phone rang. It was his mother calling from her office. "You're a big boy now, Eliot," she told him. "You okay?" Eliot looked out the kitchen window, at gray waves receding from the shore, and said that he was fine. (135)

The boy's reactions are conveyed through a succession of images that are in tension with his spoken sentiments. The gap between his emotions and his words is symptomatic of cultural pressures in which the repression of such feelings is a necessary accommodation to the limits of care.

Like Eliot, Mrs. Sen encounters expectations of independence and self-sufficiency as pathways to her Americanization. Hers too is a coming-of-age story, though in a gendered, immigrant register that reveals the coercion behind expectations of instant female adjustment and accelerated assimilation. The crux of the conflict between Mr. and Mrs. Sen is her inability to drive a car. If the acquisition of a house key marks Eliot's successful adjustment, a driver's license marks hers. Driving is a quintessentially American form of independence and a recurring trope for the promises of the New World. It symbolizes possibilities of adventure, opportunity, control, and new horizons, which Mrs. Sen refuses.

Her attachment to the world she left behind in Calcutta brings into critical focus the emotional emptiness of her new life in the United States and, on a larger level, the commodification of care in a capitalist society. Mr. Sen is away at his university most of the time because as a new immigrant he is eager for the permanence that gaining tenure ensures, just as Eliot's mother is consumed by her work and has little energy left for her son. Mrs. Sen's inflexibility in the face of demands to adjust is manifested in affective excesses such as her sudden weeping and anger. Mr. Sen and Eliot's mother achieve their independence through a series of displacements in which the costs of the affective labor of social reproduction are distributed down the social system along hierarchies defined by race and gender.[11] The connection between Eliot and Mrs. Sen comes from their shared position at the end of these linkages.

The parallel between Mrs. Sen's and Eliot's predicaments is affirmed through the sympathetic connection between the two characters, but the parallel between Mrs. Sen and Eliot's mother is disavowed by the latter. The relationship between the two women is especially fraught because of the intimacy of the affective labor performed and the racial difference between them. To obtain child care, Eliot's mother is forced to enter Mrs. Sen's home, where she has to negotiate the employer-employee relationship against the host-guest relationship. The codes of the workplace collide with the protocols of hospitality. Her presence in Mrs. Sen's home cre-

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2011.126.3.592 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ates unspoken tensions as the lines between kin and stranger, inside and outside, work and home are redrawn through Mrs. Sen's position as surrogate parent and host-worker. In the charged space of the home, two working mothers encounter each other—one is a mother who works, the other a worker who mothers. The tensions of the exchange are managed by the rituals of hospitality, which signal an alternative realm of encounter that Eliot's mother refuses to accede to. Her terse civilities indicate her refusal to engage the other woman on any terms other than a minimal contractual obligation. Her insistence on care as a commodity sets aside a cosmopolitan ethics of care.

The devaluation of care played out in the foreground through the relationship among Mrs. Sen, Eliot, and Eliot's mother has in its background Mrs. Sen's relationship to her husband as an unpaid caregiver. While her work in the home facilitates his labor in the workplace, the isolation it entails for her is not a reality he can readily accommodate. For Mrs. Sen, the affective lack in the heterosexual arrangements of an immigrant marriage are counterposed to her memories of female homosociality in India:

> "Whenever there is a wedding in the family," she told Eliot one day, "or a large celebration of any kind, my mother sends out word in the evening for all the neighborhood women to bring blades just like this one, and then they sit in an enormous circle on the roof of our building, laughing and gossiping and slicing fifty kilos of vegetables through the night. . . . Here, in this place where Mr. Sen has brought me, I cannot sometimes sleep in so much silence." (115)

This is not simple nostalgia for a prior life; rather, it contrasts her experience of the complementarity of heterosexuality and female homosociality in the world she left behind with the impossibility of female homosociality in the new world and the intensification of this loss through the isolation of the conjugal relationship, which is marked by sporadic attentiveness, absence, and silence. Her refusal to assimilate stems from her unwillingness to relinquish the emotional fullness of her past for the paucity of her new life and from her resistance to the affective disciplining of the substitution.

Affective labor, paid and unpaid, provides a site where the ethical and economic imperatives of care collide in a postmodern economy and presents a vivid image of the subjective transformations effected by globalization. As global capitalism strains to establish a functional compatibility between family regimes and capitalist productivity, it links individuals as seemingly distant and disparate as Eliot and Mrs. Sen through lateral networks that redraw the boundaries between the home and the world and between kin and stranger. The juxtapositions made through its cross-cutting plot lines—Mr. and Mrs. Sen's marriage, Mrs. Sen and Eliot's exchanges, Mrs. Sen and Eliot's mother's work relationship, Mrs. Sen's ties to her family in Calcutta—point to adjacencies and linkages produced by globalization that are filtered out or devalued by racial or gender divisions and by the exigencies of capitalist exchange. "Mrs. Sen's" engages the cosmopolitan question of formulating an ethics adequate to these multiple, often exploitative transnational adjacencies and linkages by looking at the forging, sustaining, refusing, and neglecting of attachments between Mrs. Sen and those she cares for or lives with. By exploring the affinities between these characters, Lahiri emphasizes the importance of mapping the field in which identities are redefined and communities transformed. In this story and others, the disruptions of intimate domestic space and its reconfiguration by the regimes of the state and the marketplace offer a way of figuring cosmopolitanism anew.

The disrupted identities contained in diasporic citizenship (resident alien, immigrant,

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2011.126.3.592 Published online by Cambridge University Press

member of a racial minority) reveal the varied forms of minority becoming and their cosmopolitan potential to traverse scales and figure emergent transnational affiliations. Lahiri's attention to the everyday acts and affects of accommodation that shape the uncertain course of naturalization brings out the difficulty of containing attachments in citizenship without remainder. Instead of simply resolving the problem of belonging by asserting a claim to national membership, her stories also attend to the cosmopolitan ethical possibilities contained in an unhomely vision of "unaccustomed earth." Reversing the truism that cosmopolitanism embraces being at home in the world, Lahiri elaborates a minority cosmopolitanism that emanates from not being at home in the world.

Notes

My thanks go to audiences at the University of Pittsburgh, Duke University, the University of British Columbia, and Middlebury College whose responses to my presentations helped refine my thinking on diasporic citizenship and on Lahiri's work.

1. For a useful discussion of the ethnic canon, see Palumbo-Liu.

2. Studies that emphasize the Eurocentrism of cosmopolitan theory and call for a closer attention to the diverse subjects and locales of cosmopolitanism include Cheah and Robbins; Clifford; Held; and Nussbaum et al.

3. Neil Smith defines scale jumping as the movement of local political claims to the national or international level. He sees the increase in scale jumping as symptomatic of new geographies in late capitalism (193). This essay leverages the concept of scale jumping to foreground the dynamic properties and changed configuration of the minority in global capitalism.

4. These comments refer to Lahiri's second short story collection, *Unaccustomed Earth*, but they speak more generally to the themes of her fiction.

5. In Bengal the history of partition was even more fraught. The province of Bengal lay at the epicenter of the nationalist movement against British rule and became a territory intensely contested among nationalist factions. The British partitioned Bengal in 1905 to weaken the nationalist movement, but after riots and protests against the colonial mandate, it was hastily reunited in 1911. In 1947 it was repartitioned, this time in response to Hindu and Muslim demands for separate nations. Finally, in 1971 East Pakistan separated from Pakistan to constitute the new nation of Bangladesh.

6. I use *Romani* rather than the more common *Roma* or the disputed and pejorative *Gypsies*. I prefer *Romani* for its gender neutrality; *roma* is the plural form of *rom*, a Romany word for "man" or "husband."

7. I use *naturalization* to cover the cultural, social, and political processes of adaptation to alien environments. Naturalization encompasses assimilation but is not restricted to it. Lahiri's attention to naturalization over the more familiar and focused subject of assimilation might explain the difficulty readers have in discerning the larger designs in her fiction.

8. John Claborn, a student in my graduate seminar, pointed out to me this feature of the book.

9. I borrow the term "impossible subject" from Mae Ngai, who uses it to refer to the construction of the illegal alien in the United States as "a person who cannot be and a problem that cannot be solved" (5).

10. Lahiri's critique of Indian marriages, evident in "Mrs. Sen's," becomes more sharply focused in *Unaccustomed Earth*.

11. For research on affective labor under globalization, see Ehrenreich and Hochschild; Lan; Constable; and Parreñas.

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