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***INHABITING ALTERITY: THE AMERICANNES OF FEMALE  
PROTAGONISTS IN JHUMPA LAHIRI NARRATIVES OF  
DISLOCATION/ RELOCATION***

**Abstract:** *This paper argues that Jhumpa Lahiri builds in her 2004 novel *The Namesake* an identity narrative that uses the private rather than the public, the small, apparently insignificant detail rather than spectacular, life-changing events in order to create an alternative plot that supplements the central one, built around the protagonist Gogol/Nikhil. This alternative plot focuses mainly on two secondary female characters whose personal trajectories are crucial to the story of identity formation in the novel. Ashima, Gogol's mother, and Moushumi, his (not for long) wife provide, through their personal narratives, accounts of the shadow process of inhabiting the "otherland" through revaluations of the domestic as part of a wider narrative of female dislocation/relocation that corresponds to a need for a nomadic, space-free understanding of identity in contemporary South Asian American fiction.*

*Lahiri's text thus becomes emblematic of a shift in narratives of migration from a prototypically postcolonial unidirectional act of "translation" to a reconceptualization of migrant experience as nomadic, as "deterritorialization" rather than "reterritorialization" (to use Deleuze and Guattari's terms). This allows for a more flexible back-and-forth movement between the poles of the motherland/otherland opposition, suitable both to the status of contemporary diasporic communities and that of contemporary Indian fiction in English, which in the novel Ashima gets to perform in real life, while Moushumi performs it (in ways that sometimes offend 'real life' norms) through literature. In this context Americanness as a concept widens its theoretical boundaries to accommodate more flexible definitions. These definitions respond to Gayatri Spivak's concept of the female migrant in the United States as a perpetual "Resident Alien" by proposing a viable nomadic version of this female migrant, in the sense defined by Rosi Braidotti in *Nomadic Subjects* (1994): "not fluidity without borders but rather an acute awareness of the nonfixity of boundaries."*