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CULTURAL DISSOLUTION AND RE(BIRTH) IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S THE LOWLAND

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Abstract: *Jhumpa Lahiri's novel The Lowland traces the traumatic effect of a family event upon members of different generations – wife (Gauri), brother (Subhash) and daughter (Bela) – whose lives continue to unfold outside India. The analysis discusses the vegetal metaphors of specific plants and roots employed by Lahiri in order to illustrate the emergence of different patterns of (up) rooting that weave the fabric of her transmigrant characters. By closely investigating the intersecting axes of groundedness and deterritorialization, the paper aims to disentangle the significance of the rich Deleuzian imagery that surfaces in the cultural configuration of transplanted individuals, with a focus on Subhash. More specifically, the discussion sets out to establish whether the abundance of rhizomatic elements is meant as a glorification of nomadic subjectivity that implicitly idealizes uprootedness as a precondition for the enlargement of cultural perspectives. The present paper analyzes Subhash's cultural outlook, arguing that his self-transformation entails a symbolic killing of some Indian traditions paralleled by the birth of new outlooks. This process of regeneration situates the protagonist beyond the possibility of fixed allegiances, in a transcultural dimension. The analysis considers theories regarding nomadism, transnational migration and the significance of transgression as a strategy of cultural reinvention.*

Introduction

The present analysis relies on the cultural studies premise that culture is expressed by means of symbolic forms linked with a specific social context that is embedded in their texture (Ganser 20). Considering Jhumpa Lahiri's own background of transplantation¹, this paper assumes that the literary text is a repository of cultural experiences of South Asian relocation. Without arguing that *The Lowland* is representative for the cultural evolution of South Asian transmigrants, I consider that it offers alternative perspectives on the outcome of contemporary debates regarding migration, transnational networks, and East-West cultural encounters. Relying on intersecting theories about transculturality, nomadism and transnationality, the paper discusses the cultural evolution of the novel's male transmigrant protagonist, Subhash. More specifically, the analysis investigates Lahiri's vegetal metaphors of (up)rootedness, aiming to establish the whether Lahiri promotes transmigrant identity

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¹ Jhumpa Lahiri was born to Bengali immigrant parents in London in 1967 and she grew up in the USA. Her fictional and autobiographical creations revolve around themes related to South-Asian transmigrant transplantation, cultural clashes and transcultural dialogues between the American and Bengali cultural outlooks.

negotiation exclusively along lines of deterritorialization, fluidity and heterogeneity.

Transcultural transgressions

Transculturality “has long been considered a key theoretical notion for the study of migrant writing, since it is related to contemporary phenomena of migration and globalization. Transculturality involves the transgression of spatial and temporal boundaries and a questioning of the clear binaries connoted by them (Alexander 141). One of the implications of the transcultural paradigm is that cultures are incomplete sets of practices that need to interact and enrich themselves through cultural exchanges: “A transcultural model begins from the assumption that an individual or a cultural identity is never complete in itself because of its relations in a field of differences” (Berry 134). As individuals realize that their familiar cultural spheres do not cover the whole set of human aspirations, they are more inclined to accept the validity of other cultural worlds. In this way, the need to transcend the boundaries of their own cultures shapes a transcultural perspective that frees them from a limited range of options. The idea of cultures as self-transcendent entities is an important principle of transculturality that accounts for the necessity to acknowledge the relevance of other cultural worlds.

The transcendent nature of transcultural processes implies transgressive strategies of contesting established cultural norms. The idea of transgression carries geographical connotations, given its literal meaning of “crossing a boundary” (Cresswell 21). At this point, the notion of “transiency of identity” (Ganser 25) provides further clarification to the epistemological end of transgression. Coming from the Latin *transire* (“to go across”, “to pass”), the term couples the idea of spatial and temporal change with the dynamics of identity. On the one hand, the concept encodes the continuous flow of identity change along a temporal axis, its state of constant becoming that defies the possibility of essentialist perspectives (Ganser 25). On the other hand, the notion also makes reference to processes of identity transformation triggered by individuals’ mobility across “shifting borders and territorialities” (Ganser 25).

Transnational migration and nomadic itineraries

Considering the link between cross-border mobility, transgression and possibilities of transcultural transformation, the present discussion correlates transcultural processes with a cultural studies approach to transnationalism, a special type of consciousness generated by the individuals’ multiple identifications, de-centered attachments and simultaneous being here and there (Vertovec 5-6). A transnational outlook on migration redefines immigrants as transmigrants, i.e. immigrants who build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders by their engagement in networks of relationships that connect them to two or more nation states simultaneously (Basch et al. 7). The concept of “transmigrant” distinguishes between transnational multiple belonging and the connotations of uprootedness and permanent settlement abroad associated with the notion of immigrant (Basch et al. 4). At the same time, it aims to discard the idea of transient stay inherent in the migrants’ customary scenarios of temporary work migration

(Basch et. al. 4). Considering the fine distinctions between the above concepts (i.e. migrant, immigrant, transmigrant), I will employ the term “transmigrant” when analyzing Subhash’ transcultural metamorphosis in relation to his transnational status.

Nomadism has been glorified as a new paradigm for thinking subjectivity with a focus on deterritorialization, movement and connectivity (O’Sullivan, “Cultural Studies”). According to Deleuze and Guattari, nomadology is an epistemological condition that enables the crumbling of conceptual foundations, “proceeding from the middle, through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing . . . to move between things, establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings” (25). In devising their conceptual framework, Deleuze and Guattari seem to rely on a binary structure (rhizome vs. root), where the rhizome becomes the privileged symbol of multiplicity, fluidity and becoming: “Make rhizomes, not roots, never plant! Don’t sow, grow offshoots! Don’t be one or multiple, be multiplicities!” (25). The fluid connotations of rhizomatic patterns are also correlated with their anti-genealogical core, that differentiates them from ordered “lineages of an arborescent type” (Deleuze and Guattari 21). Rhizomes are also characterized by “short-term memory” (16) that entails “forgetting” as a coordinate of identity negotiation (16). Given their transgressive connotations, nomadic practices have been envisaged “as acts of resistance against hegemonic control over space as well as over the subject and its socio-cultural location” (Ganser 169).

Despite the rich implications of conceptual nomadism, one should avoid creating a new binarism that would render it superior to a settled condition. One argument is that not all kinds of movement are inherently beneficial (Kronlid 27). Therefore, we should not “trade the myth of the sedentary lifestyle, border and frontier, territory and proximity, for the myth of mobility, flows and networks” (Cattan 86). Along similar lines, Sten Pulz Moslund considers that the valorization of movement, nomadism and fragmentation creates new dichotomies as it privileges regimes of mobility over conditions of settlement (14). Interestingly, Guattari and Deleuze also signal their awareness of the necessity to transcend the binary discourse they employ in building their theory: “Each time, mental correctives are necessary to undo the dualisms we had no wish to construct but through which we pass” (20). Considering these theoretical notions, the paper continues with the analysis of the primary corpus, attempting to trace Lahiri’s outlook on transmigrant identity in terms of rooted and rhizomatic coordinates. More precisely, the discussion sets out to establish whether the author promotes the transmigrant condition exclusively in terms of rhizomatic multiplicity.

The Lowland: striking roots/ rhizomes along migration routes

The novel’s plot is initially placed in Calcutta, around the late 1940s, when two brothers (Subhash and Udayan) are born. In the late 1960s, Subhash applies for a PhD in the United States, while Udayan joins the Naxalbari movement² in India. (He

² Leftist political manifestation ignited by the West Bengal peasant uprising against the landlords’ feudal policies (Mustafi, “Naxalbari”). Brutally repressed by the police, the

is eventually executed by the police, while his parents and wife witness the whole scene). Subhash maintains connection with his brother especially via letters and finds out about Udayan's marriage to a girl named Gauri. After his brother's death, Subhash temporarily returns to India, where he is moved by Gauri's condition. Finding out that she carries Udayan's child, Subhash proposes to Gauri in order to protect her. Away from India, Gauri gives birth to a girl, Bela, but her marriage with Subhash does not work. Gauri chooses an academic career over motherhood, secretly leaving for California, where she gets a teaching position.

Subhash realizes that his migration is linked with the unstated competition between him and his brother. By making the decision to relocate, Subhash feels he has made a transgression that matches Udayan's boldness: "He'd wanted so much to leave Calcutta, not only for the sake of his education but also—he could admit this to himself now—to take a step Udayan never would. In the end this was what had motivated him" (Lahiri 38). Seen from this angle, Subhash's departure to America seems sparked by his desire to assert his choices as an autonomous being. Subhash's free-willed uprooting reveals the character's transcendent urge, an important step that usually paves the way for transcultural understanding. Considering his need for an independent life, one may assume that his border crossing enterprise aims to go beyond South Asian cultural conventions that privilege interdependent notions of identity (Miller 4).

In his early immigration days, Subhash displays mixed feelings about his arrival to a novel space. On the one hand he is excited by the possibility of discovering a different culture: "He was proud to have come alone to America. To learn it as he once must have learned to stand and walk and speak" (Lahiri 38). At the same time, his enthusiasm is paralleled by feelings of inertia springing from Subhash's perceived lack of familiar references: "he was drifting far from his point of origin" (Lahiri 38). Subhash gradually overcomes his nostalgic outlook, manifesting his willingness to build a new life in America. Under his roommate's (Richard) supervision, Subhash learns how to drive, being attracted by the possibility to explore his new surroundings. The first letter Subhash sends to Udayan expresses his intention to cancel the distance between America and India. Thus, Subhash chooses to write his impressions about the common physical features of the American and Indian landscapes. By joining two different contexts on the basis of perceived commonalities, Subhash renders his ability to undo the effects of physical separation from home:

As strange as it sounds, when the sky is overcast, when the clouds are low, something about the coastal landscape here, the water and the grass, the smell of bacteria when I visit the mudflats, takes me home. I think of the lowland, of paddy fields [...] They call the marsh grass spartina. I learned today that it has special glands for excreting salt, so that it's often covered with a residue of crystals. Snails migrate up and down the stems. It's been growing here over millennia, in deposits of peat. Its roots stabilize the shore. Did you know, it propagates by spreading rhizomes? Something like the mangroves that once thrived in Tollygunge. I had to tell you. (Lahiri 41)

insurgency triggered a chain of violent confrontations between the guerrilla revolutionaries and the Indian state.

Subhash's ability to focus on similarities rather than differences illustrates his willingness to adapt to a different setting, while maintaining connections with his native space. Moreover, his impressions illustrate the character's conception of identity as an intersection of grounded structures and uprooted elements. As the analysis will demonstrate, this quotation abounds in Deleuzian rhizomatic symbolism. According to biological research, spartina is "a perennial rhizomatous grass that grows in intertidal zones", being characterized by "high adaptability to harsh environments" (Pham, "Smooth Cordgrass") and a special manner of reproduction: "*S. alterniflora* can also spread clonally by rhizomes. When pieces of rhizome root break off, they can sometimes regrow into a new plant that is also a genetic clone to the original" (Pham, "Smooth Cordgrass"). At the same time, mangroves interestingly share some characteristics of the spartina. They are tropical plants, "brilliant adapters" (Warne, "Forests"), endowed with a complex system of "interlocking roots" that can "stabilize shores" (Warne, "Forests"). Mangroves are able to survive via their highly complex rooting system made up of: "above-ground breathing roots and shallow below-ground anchoring roots" (Duke, "Mangroves"). If we couple the image of "migrating snails" with the rhizomatic nature of spartina and mangroves, it becomes clear that the author employs a vocabulary of fragmentation and becoming to capture the scenario of cultural change in condition of migrant dislocation.

I interpret Subhash's letter as an attempt to convey his strategy of creating a new identity in the context of transmigrant relocation. As the common feature of spartina and mangroves is their propensity to form multiple roots, this idea reinforces Subhash's regime of multiple belonging, facilitated by his transnational condition. (Subhash is engaged in patterns of travel between India and America and he also maintains connections with India via letters). In this context, the idea of interlinked, strong roots may be a metaphor for Subhash's own efforts to create a new home away from home. This highly suggestive imagery foregrounds the heavy stress Lahiri lays on popular themes associated with fiction of migration and the Deleuzian vocabulary of deterritorialization, heterogeneity and reconstruction. Despite its strong evocative power, the juxtaposition of these notions in a single paragraph creates a sense of artificiality, as if the author deliberately used consecrated concepts to suggest the interpretation of her characters in terms of fragmented, plural, liquid, mobile identities. However, upon closer investigation, Lahiri's hyperfluid pattern of deterritorialized identity seems tempered by the idea of stable references. This balancing element of settlement is expressed by the mangroves' capacity to sustain ground. The fact that a rhizomatic plant endowed with interlaced roots is also connected with the potential for offering steadiness, illustrates the intersection between vectors of deterritorialization/uprootedness and elements of continuity/settlement. Hence, despite the letter's obvious focus on rhizomatic patterns, it also indicates Subhash's transnational condition. This peculiar status involves an ambivalent self-definition: maintaining connections with India, while creating a new home in America. The faceted symbolism of mangroves and spartina points to an intersection between axes of sameness/continuity and forces of becoming in the transmigrant profile. This suggests that Lahiri transgresses a binary vision, preferring to blend rooted structures and rhizomatic patterns in Subhash's profile. As the next section demonstrates, Subhash eventually finds a sense of continuity in America, by

symbolically killing some of his inherited traditions while adopting new cultural practices.

Rhizomatic roots and transcultural changes

Subhash's relationship with Holly, an American separated by her husband, is a strong indicator of his urge to overstep traditional norms. Subhash feels comfortable in Holly's presence, especially because she seems interested in his accounts about India. At the same time, Subhash regards this affair as part of his redefinition away from family constraints. "In her [Holly] cramped bedroom, setting aside his guilt, he cultivated an ongoing defiance of his parents' expectations" (Lahiri 63). Subhash's self-assessment reveals that he perceives the act of crossing physical borders as an opportunity for uncontrolled transformation. However, his ability to transgress Indian cultural standards is weakened by the memory of his cultural roots that prompts Subhash to evaluate Holly through his parents' grid: "Her situation, her child, her age, the fact that she was technically another man's wife, all of it would be unthinkable to his parents, unacceptable. They would judge her for those things. He didn't want to put Holly through that" (Lahiri 63). Subhash's affair may be read as a metaphor for the first stage of his transcultural change, as it illustrates his will to transgress accustomed norms. Although the relationship ends at Holly's suggestion, it marks Subhash's adoption of a "new clandestine path" (Lahiri 63). I argue that this surreptitious route foregrounds the character's appeal to transcultural reconstruction, afforded by his transnational crossings.

Another scene that points to Subhash's transcultural mindset is his attraction to Christian architecture. At some point, he witnesses the marriage of an older couple in a Christian Church placed in the Narragansett Bay area. The matrimonial event reminds Subhash of his loneliness and makes him think of his future arranged marriage, as if it were a certain fact: "He wondered what woman his parents would choose for him. He wondered when it would be. Getting married would mean returning to Calcutta. In that sense he was in no hurry" (Lahiri 38). At the beginning of his American adventure, Subhash does not question his evolution along Indian traditional norms. Although he does not appear keen on becoming a husband, he seems compliant with the possibility of an arranged marriage, therefore loyal to his cultural roots. However, the same scene reveals Subhash's longing to become familiar with different traditions. The architectonic simplicity of the church makes a strong impression upon Subhash, who wishes to merge with the setting: "He felt the strange urge to embrace it . . . It was an interior at once pristine and vibrant, bathed with light. He wanted to sit inside, to feel the pale walls around him (Lahiri 38). Subhash's fascination with a Christian place of worship illustrates his willingness to get acquainted with different traditions, despite his Hindu background. Interestingly, the American church calls to Subhash's mind a different, yet familiar place of worship from Calcutta: "For some reason the church reminded him of the small mosque that stood at the corner of his family's neighborhood in Tollygunge. Another place of worship designated for others, which had served as a landmark in his life" (Lahiri 38). The fact that Subhash can establish a connection between two sites of worship different from his own religion underlines his capacity to think beyond his Hindu

allegiance. His ability to transgress cultural boundaries may be linked with the protagonist's familiarization with cultural plurality prior to migration. A former colonial city, Calcutta has been characterized as a multicultural space, whose layered cultural fabric is woven by multiple ethnic communities (Bonnerjee 9). Therefore, Subhash displays an attraction to culturally different symbols that does not change his religious affiliations, but indicates his ability to find meaning in patterns of cultural otherness. In a symmetrical fashion, his marriage ceremony to Elise Silva replicates the ritual witnessed by Subhash in his youth. First, because it represents a second marriage and then because it takes place in the same church. We may regard these overlapping circumstances as proofs of Subhash's evolution along a transcultural direction. His decision to remarry late in life with a Portuguese origin woman illustrates his eventual transgression of Bengali traditional norms.

Anti-genealogy: suspended roots and transcultural becoming

Subhash's choice of raising his brother's daughter and their special bond represent the most forceful proofs of his transcultural becoming. I consider that Lahiri has chosen to create this atypical relationship precisely to convey uncustomary possibilities of cultural transformation. At this point, I will reiterate my argument that *The Lowland* is abundant in Deleuzian-Guattarian imagery pointing to unconventional manners of accounting for the relationship between cultural identity, tradition and serpentine paths to transformation. Subhash's first letter to Udayan is not the only obvious reference to vegetal metaphors associated with processes of transmigrant uprooting. At some point, Subhash remembers how he and Udayan used to draw mangrove trees as pupils in Calcutta:

As part of their life-science lesson they drew pictures of mangrove trees. Their tangled roots above the waterline, their special pores for obtaining air. Their elongated seedlings, called propagules, shaped like cigars. They learned that if the propagules dropped at low tide they reproduced alongside the parents, spearing themselves in brackish marsh. But at high water they drifted from their source of origin, for up to a year, before maturing in a suitable environment. (Lahiri 17)



Fig. 1. Aniram. "Mangrove Forest."
Dreamstime.com

The special features of the mangrove trees can be linked with the transmigrants' potential to enrich the values of the host country via their adaptation mechanisms. Holder of a transmigrant profile, Subhash is both separated from and connected with his origins by means of access to transnational networks (travel, letter writing). In this case, the mangroves' interlaced roots point to his rhizomatic-like capacity to form a set of simultaneous allegiances to more cultures. At the same time, the mangroves' symbolism

alludes to the antigenealogical connotations of the rhizome that characterize Subhash and Bela's relationship. By creating this solid father-daughter bond, Lahiri may

promote the idea that (cultural) identity need not be strictly conditioned by one's native culture or genetic origins. At this point, the significance of the mangrove is particularly striking, as implied by the plant's capacity to provide "nursery and breeding sites of marine and arboreal life, and . . . physical shelter and a buffer from episodic severe storms, river flows, and large waves" (Duke, "Mangroves"). The idea of refuge evinces Subhash's need to ground his life in a stable context, which is eventually fulfilled. At the same time, Subhash himself becomes a host for Bela, her only stable identity reference that transcends the relevance of blood ties.

The mangrove-rhizome imagery is interestingly completed by a specific Bengali symbol, the banyan tree, also known as "the immortal tree of India" (Jo, "Banyan"). During Subhash and Bela's visit to India, on Bela's twelfth birthday, he takes her picture next to a banyan tree. The particularity of this plant, its epiphytic nature, is represented by a strange manner of growth. The seeds of the banyan tree are carried and dropped by birds on the top branches of other trees. Hence, the banyan tree begins its life attached to the upper part of a different host, from where it sends aerial roots to the ground (Jo, "Banyan"). Considering these facts, I think that Bela's photograph is meant to convey the antigenealogical nature of her bond with Subhash:

They stopped under an enormous banyan. Her father explained that it was a tree that began its life attached to another, sprouting from its crown. The mass of twisted strands hanging down like ropes, were aerial roots surrounding the host. Over time they coalesced, forming additional trunks encircling a hollow cone if the host happened to die. Posing her before the tree, her father took her picture (Lahiri 162).



Fig.2. Mashchenko, Sergiy. "Banyan Tree."
Dreamstime.com

On this day meant to commemorate Bela's origins, he chooses to explain the banyan's tree special nature. Once again, Lahiri's vision seems infused with Deleuzian-Guattarian conceptual vocabulary, given that the French philosophers associate the Indian banyan tree with a rhizomatic configuration, that has "aerial roots" (15), "Buddha's tree itself becomes a rhizome" (Deleuze and Guattari 20). Lahiri's symbolic correlations blend into a transparent code of significance,

as she establishes an analogy between Subhash and Bela's bond and the epiphytic survival of the banyan tree. In this metaphoric configuration, Subhash may be considered the host that embraces Bela, without being her genetic parent, while Bela represents the young banyan seed that becomes attached to Subhash and gradually forms her own, aerial roots. At the same time, this vegetal imagery can also be read as an analogy for Subhash's relationship with the two cultural traditions that have shaped him. More specifically, Subhash may be considered an epiphyte by virtue of his cultural transplantation that renders his survival conditioned by his attachment to the American culture. At the same time, the idea of aerial roots inherent in the

banyan's image simultaneously indicates Subhash's suspension from his "organic" cultural roots as well as his capacity to deal with his pendulous condition, by forming bonds with the American cultural space. Also called the "walking tree" (Jo, "Banyan"), this specific Indian plant is employed as a symbol of mobility and transformation, considered to signify "the process of an individual's personal growth and development" (Jo, "Banyan"). Given its rich connotations, the banyan tree may be interpreted as a metaphor for Subhash' transcultural metamorphosis, as he can form new, albeit suspended roots when transplanted into a different cultural setting.

Subhash's transcultural development transgresses a dual model based on an opposition between entrapping roots and freeing rhizomes. The vegetal imagery employed aligns with the Deleuzian search for a transgressive framework that embraces an intersection between roots and rhizomes: "Thus, there are very diverse map-tracing, rhizome-root assemblages, with variable coefficients of deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari 4). Accordingly, Subhash's rhizomatic profile blends his Indian inheritance with the aerial roots that he develops in the American setting.

I interpret Subhash's ability to discard traditional values as a process of cultural death that enables his rebirth into a different set of cultural conventions. During one of his travels to India, Subhash feels that he no longer belongs to his native space: "Though he looked like any other Bengali he felt an allegiance with the foreigners now. He shared with them a knowledge of elsewhere. Another life to go back to. The ability to leave" (Lahiri 89) Subhash's perceived affiliation with non-Indian travelers underscores his understanding that transnational mobility entails the freedom to redefine across physical and cultural borders. Unlike Lahiri's previous works, *The Lowland* seems devoid of a rich Bengali cultural input as an important coordinate of the transmigrants' profile. In this novel, the author chooses to insert Indian cultural information mostly as she describes the characters' physical travel to Calcutta or when she presents episodes from their pre-emigration life. Perhaps this lack of cultural specificity associated with the transmigrant characters is meant to suggest the rhizomatic "short-term memory" (Deleuze and Guattari 16). In this respect, the rather diluted Bengali cultural references also point to the anti-genealogical nature of rhizomes, and emphasize the importance of cultural transgression. These mechanisms help Subhash partially forget his cultural roots and transcend the idea of fixed belonging. Bran considers that Subhash is overwhelmed by his past decisions and consequently "avoids involvement in American society", taking refuge in an "individualized existence" (313). However, the analysis offered in this paper suggests that Subhash overcomes his initial alienation and connects with the context of relocation. Even if his metamorphosis does not acquire the radical drive upheld by Gauri, the character illustrates the possibility of a gradual, smoother change.

Conclusions

The conspicuous Deleuzian imagery that surfaces in *The Lowland* may imply that Lahiri's promotes an idealized vision of the nomad/ rhizomatic condition, as a generator of enlarged cultural perspectives. Interestingly, the author's concern with accelerated transmigrant mobility appears as a more recent theme of her narratives.

This slight shift of focus suggests her increasing interest in the possibility of cultural negotiation in the context of transnational relocation. Moreover, her preoccupation with issues of identity redefinition by means of voluntary transplantation becomes more apparent in the author's autobiographical confessions about her need to relocate to Italy³. Despite the apparent glorification of the nomadic condition, a profound reading of *The Lowland* suggests that the author succeeds in dismantling a binary vision, given that roots and rhizomes eventually blend into a transcultural outlook. This process of identity metamorphosis suggests a simultaneous instance of cultural death and rebirth, as illustrated by Subhash's cultural selections. Moreover, a close reading of the entire novel reveals that all characters involved in nomadic travel, especially Gauri and Bela, are in a constant search for balance, between the urge to renounce attachments and the need for regeneration along grounding coordinates. ⁴Therefore, nomadism/incessant mobility does not necessarily entail a beneficial status, as suggested by the protagonists' endless wavering between rooted structures and fluid escapes.

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³ *In Other Words* presents the author's transnational travel between the American East Coast and Rome, focusing on the challenge to express herself as a writer in a newly acquired language, i.e. Italian.

⁴ A detailed analysis of these two characters illustrates their constant struggle for a sense of completion that unfolds within their nomadic fleeing. The significance of their nomadic transgression is discussed in two different papers, in course of publication: "Diffused Gender Codes and Transcultural Outcomes in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*" and "Nomadic Paths to Transcultural Becoming in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* and *In Other Words*".

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