The impact of ‘new hybrid identities and culture’ is not only seen upon the diasporic women but also upon the female subjects of the ‘host society’. The ‘association’ of the host subjects with the diasporic subjects, ironically, ends up in displacing not only the diasporic but also the host subjects. This chapter makes highlights such ironic displacement and the peculiar dilemma faced by the ‘dissociated’ hosts. The ‘association’ may be the result of matrimony, friendship or acquaintance, but it definitely leaves an indelible mark on the psyche of the host subjects, compelling them to refashion their own roles or to reconfigure their associate’s identity vis-à-vis their own society. In their own land, they become outsiders experiencing discrimination. Such dissociated subjects carry twin identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’ merged into one, and they end up at “a Bakhtinian kind of heteroglossal dialogue of different identities in which they connect with each other and become hybrids” (Singh 24).

Since no utterance is independent or “monumental” (Bakhtin and Volosinov 72), the immigrant voice also seeks active response from the dominant voice. The multiple immigrant voices from the periphery, address the dominant host located at the centre, resulting in a dialogic relation. This discourse further leads to the problematics of host society because the bicultural pulls or the multiple voices
result in the creation of a new culture to which both the immigrants as well as the hosts have to adapt.

The intermixture of cultures and races, and the cross-cultural dialogue gives rise to two structures: “a structure of attraction, where people and cultures intermix and merge, transforming themselves as a result, and a structure of repulsion, where the different elements remain distinct and are set against each other dialogically” (Young 19).

The constant ‘speaking across’ the line of difference results in creating multiple identities that enter into a dialogical encounter with each other. This dialogic collision has varied impacts on the host subjects. The hosts may imbibe certain cultural traits of the immigrants or may try to mould the displaced subjects and cast them into the frame of a new race and culture.

Thus, the dissociated hosts may be categorised as ‘receptive’ or ‘refuting’ i.e. accepting or rejecting. This classification is symbolic of the immigrant and expatriate distinction in the diasporic subjects. The receptive hosts, like the immigrants, represent an optimistic and forward looking attitude, whereas, the refuting hosts, like expatriates, build a shell around themselves, not allowing the alien ideology to penetrate it.

The postmodern/poststructuralist approach of cross-cultural studies contributes to a cohesive society that requires a focus on both the immigrants and the hosts. “The impact of immigrants on the economy and on society is shaped not only by characteristics of the
immigrants themselves but also by the basic features of the society that those immigrants have joined” (Reitz 1005). Hence, the immigrant or expatriate features of the diasporic subjects also result from the ‘receptive’ or ‘refuting’ attitudes of the host society.

It is not only the hosts who help the diasporic characters to establish either the assimilatory or multicultural traits. But hosts are also greatly influenced by interactions with the newcomers. Due to the exposure to different cultures, the locals experience a profound impact on their values, language, attitude, behaviour and interpersonal relationships. This interaction may further create ‘receptive’ or ‘refuting’ hosts.

Keeping the global perspective in mind, Dominguez states: “Cultural diversity leads to opportunity. . . . Intercultural communities have the ability to collaborate creatively and work together to innovatively solve problems” (qtd. in Fodrowski 2009). Therefore, the displaced and host subjects should cohere and strive to reach a confluence.

Jean Marie Gustave Le Clézio is a major French writer who depicts the existential pangs of the affected host citizens; and the impact of immigration on the hosts’ immediate surroundings, their contemporary notions of community, identity and rights. Le Clézio is the winner of the 2008 Nobel Prize for Literature. He is described as “an explorer of a humanity beyond and below the reigning civilization” (“Author Le Clézio”). This statement justifies that Le Clézio writes
about the cultural conflicts, and magnificently portrays the impact of
diaspora on the host society. His breakthrough as a novelist came
with *Desert* (1980), which contains the images of a lost culture in the
North African desert, relegated to a secondary position due to the
brutality of the European immigrant society. The main character in
this work, “the Algerian guest worker Lalla, is a utopian antithesis to
the ugliness and brutality of European society” (“The Nobel Prize”).

Another work of Clézio with a similar attempt at foregrounding
the dilemma of host society due to cultural confrontation is *Onitsha*
(1991). Clézio’s own diasporic experience lies hidden in the
background of this novel. At the age of eight, Le Clézio and his family
moved to Nigeria where his father had been stationed as a doctor
during the Second World War. *Onitsha* is the story of Finton, a youth
who travels to a place called Onitsha on the eastern bank of River
Niger in Africa. He goes there with his mother to join the English
father he has never met. It is through Finton’s point of view, that
Clezio provides us with the horrified perspective of the host African
society on racism.

Le Clezio’s early diasporic experiences in Nigeria, the long stays
in Mexico and Central America from 1970 to 1974, and his cross-
cultural marriage with a Moroccan named Jemia, are of a decisive
significance to his works which are replete with the themes of
memory, exile, cultural conflict and the acculturation crisis of both
the diasporic and host subjects. Some other works of Clézio like
Revolutions (2003) and L’African (2004) also deal with the similar leitmotif and seem to emerge from the author’s memories.

Margaret Chatterjee is one such Indian English writer who personifies the central theme of this chapter. She herself represents the affected host subject whose experiences are endowed with cultural pluralism. In her attempts at acculturation she shows the receptive attitude by marrying an Indian and settling in India. She declares in an interview: “I am completely assimilated in India and feel unhappy if anyone considers me a foreigner” (qtd. in Mathur, “An Interview”). Having completely imbibed the Indian sensibility, her works are replete with Indian thought and culture, especially the Bengali middle-class traditional characters. Thus, on a personal as well as literary level, Mukherjee has refuted Rudyard Kipling’s dictum that East and West shall never meet.

Chatterjee’s willing assimilation with the adopted culture is incorporated as a theme in some of her short stories like “Encounter”, “Pahari Story” and “The Excursion”, stories in the collection At the Homeopath’s and Other Stories (1973). As the name suggests, Margaret Chatterjee’s story “Encounter” deals with the Indian-English encounter and the mutual understanding that develops out of this confrontation. The heroine of “The Encounter” is a British citizen, who comes across a Bengali youth named Hari, in India, and is so influenced by his love for India, that she gradually begins to feel attracted by “the mysterious East” (Chatterjee 42). The story is
therefore, an intermingling of East and West. The other story “Pahari Story” is about the English woman Katherine who begins to identify herself so completely with the hill people in India that the return to her origin seems impossible for her. Declining her decision to go back to England she tells her servant: “There will be no packing tomorrow, Abdul, Miss Sahib will not be going, she too is a Pahari, don’t forget” (Chatterjee 18). “The Excursion” highlights the intimacy between an Indian girl, Gita, and a French Priest, Paul. Paul falls so deeply in love with Gita, that he would not like to go back to France if he were “permitted to stay” (Chatterjee 56) in India. The various characters in these stories were outsiders at a certain stage, but their confrontation with receptive hosts kindles in them a sense of belonging. Therefore, these stories not only foreground the diasporic characters but also their host counterparts.

The influence of the locals on these diasporic characters is so intense that they succeed in pulling them out of the arena of immiscibility and dawning over them a sense of familiarity. The analysis of Chatterjee’s stories justify Mathur’s assertion that: “The writer seems to have lived through the day-dreams, dilemmas and decisions of these characters before she allowed herself to be assimilated in this country and become a total insider” (Modern Indian Fiction 160).
Le Clezio writes about the experiences of the host society, and Margaret Chatterjee herself is the prototype of a dissociated host subject.

Since this thesis emphasizes the cultural dislocation, specifically of women, the present chapter also highlights the complexities of belonging of the female host subjects. In this chapter, the works of the three authors–Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri–are critically analysed from the women’s perspectives. Keeping the female psyche in focus, this text foregrounds how “the dominant and the subordinated within societies, interact, struggle and negotiate their differences” (Bromley 4). This negotiation not only alters the subaltern/displaced women’s identity but also the identity of women belonging to the dominant/host society. Milton Gordon has proposed that cultural assimilation implies participation on the part of both immigrants and host society. Hence, the postmodern cross-cultural experiences of displaced and hegemonic women are “marked by borrowing and lending across porous national and cultural boundaries that are saturated with inequality, power and domination” (Rosaldo 217).

Women, being ‘the subaltern’, face both cultural and patriarchal marginalization. Hence, when they come in contact with the displaced subjects, they become victims of dual marginalization in their own society. This marginalization or alienation further relegates them into the state of ‘existentialism’. Such existential predicament of the
women, caught up in cultural pluralism, is depicted in these works through host women’s sense of loneliness, alienation and attempts at subverting the traditional values and patriarchal authority. Simone de Beauvoir has contributed one of the most influential sentences to the twentieth century feminist thought when, in *The Second Sex* (1981), she writes: “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (Beauvoir 295). Donna Harraway, a leading thinker in contemporary American feminism and cultural theory, sees this sentence at the heart of the evolution of the modern feminist movement. The emphasis on becoming, as against fixed essences and qualities, serves to connect de Beauvoir’s idea with ‘existentialism’.

‘Existentialism’ originated in the philosophical and literary writings of its exponents like–Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Kirkegard, Neitzsche and Martin Heidegger. But this “timeless sensibility” (Kaufmann 12) has gradually evolved into multiple themes. This chapter interprets the existential theme as an individual’s quest for meaning in a culturally chaotic world of dialogic collision. It refers to the initial sense of alienation or marginalization experienced by the dissociated host subjects, and their consequent attempt at asserting their identity which is free of any cultural limitations.

The various character portrayals discussed in this chapter, remind us of the three words that Sartre emphasises–“anguish, abandonment and despair” (Sartre 350). But, three of the diasporic writers discussed in this chapter have ultimately depicted the self-
assertion, adaptability and assimilation of the dissociated hosts into
the new roles which justifies that, “Man is nothing else but what he
proposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is
therefore, nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but
what his life is” (Sartre 358).

Spivak points out that, “if the subaltern can speak . . . the
subaltern is not a subaltern any more” (158). Therefore, the
postcolonial dissociated host females show the existential desire to
generate a new identity, a new voice and a centre for the new ‘self’. By
re-configuring their new identity in their own land of origin, they
undergo/experience the ‘existential catharsis’.

This chapter deals with those particular works of the three
diasporic writers–Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri–
that befit Bill Ashcroft’s statement that power is “always subject to
interpolations by marginal agents, to appropriation and
transformation” (224). Power, here, refers to the dominant host and
the marginal agents refer to the displaced/marginalized diasporic
women. Their cross-cultural contact leads to transformation–
acculturation or alienation–not only of the diasporic but also the
native women.

The interaction of the hosts with the displaced subjects coaxes
them to understand the confusion of such subjects in their new
environment. They begin to share that ‘diasporic space’ with the
immigrants “where belonging and otherness is appropriated and
contested” (Brah 242). This sharing of the diasporic space shifts the hosts away from the primary community and perplexes their identity issues. Such jeopardized host identities do not conform to the “communal will that educates and guides” (Tönnies 32). They disregard the authority and take the essential steps towards reframing their own identity or restructuring the diasporic women’s identity in accordance with their own society.

Anita Desai has a multicultural parentage. Her father is an Indian and mother, Toni Nime, a German. Desai’s mother is a perfect example of a dissociated host subject, whose cross-cultural confrontations resulted in her marriage with an Indian, D. N. Majumdar (Desai’s father) and her permanent settlement in India. Desai seems to have incorporated her mother’s experience in the novel _Bye-Bye Blackbird_ through the displaced identity of Sarah. The other two works of Desai which emphasise the impact of cultural interplay on the host subjects are _Fasting, Feasting_, and her collection _Diamond Dust and Other Stories_.

Both Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri have mixed marriages. Mukherjee has married a Canadian, Clark Blaise, and Lahiri has married an American, Alberto Vourvoulias Bush. Mukherjee and Lahiri represent the diasporic subjects, whereas their husbands symbolise the dissociated hosts. Consequently, they are in an appropriate position to write about the natives caught in the multicultural dilemma of “being and belonging” (Gikandi 639). The
works of Mukherjee that encapsulate the theme of host dissociation are *Jasmine, The Holder of the World, Middleman and Other Stories* and *Darkness*; and all the three works of Lahiri, viz.–*Interpreter of Maladies: Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond, The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth* also unravel the similar motif of the hosts caught in the cultural mosaic where the existential sense of not belonging dawns on them. This chapter delineates the binaries of ‘native’ and ‘diasporic’ and how these two are decentred or destabilized by the contrary pulls of cultures, ideals, values and traditions.

Anita Desai’s fictions are marked by ‘existential’ themes. Aspects of ‘existentialism’ are reflected in her characters in the form of fragmented individuals, alienated and estranged, both emotionally and spiritually, from the ‘normal society’. According to Dr. S.P. Swain:

> Her central theme is the existential predicament of the individuals projected through the problems of the self in an emotionally disturbed milieu. Delicately conscious of the reality around them, her protagonists carry with them a sense of loneliness, alienation and pessimism. (164)

Existential predicament in Anita Desai’s fiction is not primarily due to some philosophical or spiritual dichotomies of the self. The existential pangs from which her diasporic as well as the western characters suffer are generated due to rootlessness and maladjustment caused by cross-cultural encounters.
This chapter primarily focuses on the ‘dissociated’ female host subjects in Anita Desai’s *Bye-Bye Blackbird, Fasting, Feasting and Diamond Dust and Other Stories*. Sarah in *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, is one such existential character, struggling to grasp her real identity, that she feels has been overshadowed by her husband’s ‘alien identity’.

“Staring out of the window at the chimneypots and the clouds, she wondered if Sarah had any existence at all . . .” (*BBB* 35). Mrs. Patton in *Fasting, Feasting* is another ‘dissociated’ character showing mild existential pangs. The tremendous impact that Arun's diasporic identity has on Mrs. Patton’s psyche, is reflected through her will and denial of traditional American values prevalent in her house. It is in Mrs. Patton, that Arun “has found the one person in the land who is in the same position as he; that makes for comradeship, there is no denying that, but it does not necessarily improve anything” (*FF* 162). Beth, in the story “Winterscape” (from the collection *Diamond Dust*), is another character who is not able to strike a balance in the new intercultural society. Her cross-cultural matrimonial alliance has ironically caused her own marginalization from society.

*Bye-Bye Blackbird* is a novel set in London. Through the characters of Adit and Sarah, it explores the cultural confrontations of East and West, in relation to race, culture and language. The inter-racial marriage of Adit Sen and Sarah leads to their identity clash. Sarah’s association with her immigrant husband causes her marginalization within her own society. “She wondered, with great
sadness, if she would ever be allowed to step off the stage, leave the theatre and enter the real world—whether English or Indian, she did not care, she wanted only its sincerity, its truth” (BBB 35). Adit’s migration to an alien land causes Sarah’s psychological migration into a new culture. Cultural bonds, racial hostility and social ostracisation coax Sarah to build a shell around her, not allowing her own British society to penetrate it. Gradually, she emerges as a survivor with the will to re-invest her life. Her ‘dialogical-cultural’ existence motivates her to find a ‘third space’. Allowing the two selves to coexist, she becomes a hyphenated identity, “where the hyphen marks a dialogic and non-heirarchic conjuncture” (Radhakrishnan, “Ethnicity” 121).

Sarah, ironically, becomes an immigrant in her own native land. She is like the mythical king of Uma Parameswaran’s poem Trishanku, who hangs between earth and heaven, symbolizing ‘an ambiguous identity’. Her entire existence is split into two different roles—“when she was not playing them, she was nobody. Her face was only a mask, her body only a costume” (BBB 35). The real Sarah is lost between two worlds and when she moves from one to the other, there is “an automatic and switch–swift adjustment” (BBB 30). Even Adit once noticed her anxiety as:

An anguish, it seemed to him, of loneliness—and then it became absurd to call her by his own name, to call her by any name: she had become nameless, she had shed her name as she had shed her ancestry and identity, and she
sat there, staring, as though she watched them disappear.

(*BBB* 31)

William Safran points out about the expatriate minorities that, “they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and place to which they or their descendants would/should eventually return when conditions are appropriate” (qtd. in Kalpana and Sujaritha 291). Adit is one such expatriate, who in the beginning blindly admires England and is ready to offer his love and loyalty to England. As we approach the middle of the novel, the Anglicized Adit realizes the hollowness of his life in London. Despite his earnest efforts, he always becomes a victim of racial discrimination and is regarded a second grade citizen and an intruder.

Then he hears a word in the tube or notices an expression on an English face that overturns his latest decision and, drawing himself together, he feels he can never bear to be the unwanted immigrant but must return to his own land, however abject or dull, where he has, at least, a place in the sun, security, status and freedom. (*BBB* 86)

His sham existence seems to him—a charade, which he finally decides to quit and go back to India in search of his roots.

Adit’s immigrant sensibility gradually succumbs to an expatriate’s nostalgic yearning. Such expatriate sensibility has been supported by diasporic theorists like Edward said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, whose “works have voiced the need
to subvert the metanarratives of the west, to let the repressed cultures of minority subcultural groups emerge into their own hybrid modes of self articulation” (Gupta 38). Adit is a diasporic character who tries to assimilate or hybridize with the adopted culture of his wife, Sarah. But unable to ‘re-root’ himself in England, he decides to ‘re-route’ and go back to his land of origin–India. Ironically, it is Sarah–his docile wife or the ‘receptive dissociated’ host–who has to sever her roots from the world of her childhood, and strike them in the original home of her husband, Adit.

In England, Sarah has to suffer and face discrimination for getting married to an Indian. She has to bear the taunts and jibes of her colleagues, who remark: “If she’s that ashamed of having an Indian husband, why did she go and marry him?” (BBB 37). The two contradictory roles–one of an Indian wife at home and the other of an English woman at work–are nerve-racking for her. Therefore, she seeks a perfect identity with a singular role. Whether Indian or English, she only cares about the sincerity of her existence. She is a ‘pseudo-expatriate’ who doesn’t like dwindling between two roles. The attitudinal hostility of the English intensifies her obsessive desire to escape from their curiosity and personal questions. “She darted along the pavements, . . . hurrying her step at the sound of approaching footfalls as though she were fleeing, holding this thing, this weakness inside her coat, hidden from them, from their curiosity, their questions, their touch” (BBB 30).
A sense of unreality haunts Sarah when she wonders about her two roles–Mrs. Sen, and the Head’s secretary. She feels guilty of being an impostor. Her existential characteristic of loneliness arises out of her circumstances of forging dual identities. To end this tension between pretence and actuality, she yearns for genuineness–may it be Indian or British. She notices the same falseness of her husband’s existence whose “whole personality seemed to her to have cracked apart into an unbearable number of disjointed pieces, rattling together noisily and disharmoniously” (BBB 200). Adit’s decision to go to India, during the war, brings her emancipation from all the mental conflict, pain and predicament she is going through. “For both Sarah and Adit reality exists at two schizophrenic planes, the two planes of the two cultural traditions and the merger takes place only with Adit’s decision to return to India” (Jain, Stairs to the Attic 33). Sarah quietly accepts the will of Adit. While leaving her native country, “she felt all the pangs of saying good-bye to her past twenty-four years. . . . It was her English self that was receding and fading and dying, . . . and then her instinctive reaction was to clutch at something and hold on to what was slipping through her fingers already” (BBB 221). By brushing aside her nostalgic longings, she sheds her hyphenated identity, and assimilates and acculturates herself into a new ‘real’ identity. Frantz Fanon said, “In this world in which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate my cycle of freedom” (qtd.
in Bhabha 8-9). Sarah, too, decides to travel and invent a new existence for herself, which is free, stable and sincere.

The next work of fiction that is analysed in this paper is Anita Desai’s *Fasting, Feasting*. The novel is divided into two parts. This paper is mainly concerned with the second part of the novel that deals with Arun’s stay with the Patton’s in the U.S.A. Hence, the second part of the text lays emphasis on the cross-cultural encounter, and the dialogic condition of belonging to multiple cultures. Since my research primarily delves into the problematics of female identity, the ‘dissociated’ characters of Mrs. Patton and Melanie are scrutinized in this chapter.

After finishing high school, Arun is sent to America for further studies. During summer break, when the hostel has to be vacated, Arun’s boarding arrangement is made with an American family–The Patton’s, on Bayberry Lane. In America, “he had at last experienced the total freedom of anonymity, the total absence of relations, of demands, needs, requests, ties, responsibilities, commitments. He was Arun. He had no past, no family and no country” (*FF* 172). With Arun’s arrival, a sense of estrangement quietly enters into the lives of the members of Patton family. Arun’s ‘association’ with the Pattons, influences Mrs. Patton and her daughter, Melanie in a totally opposite manner. Due to the cross-cultural incursions, Mrs. Patton’s new identity of an ‘Indophile’ begins to surface, whereas, ‘Indophobic’ traits become visible in Melanie’s character.
Mrs. Patton, being a ‘receptive’ host, welcomes ‘Ahroon’ and “tries to be over caring, over friendly and even overbearing” (Rani 404). Her admiration for India is vividly portrayed in her words: “my sister’s written and told me how different your food is from ours. She’s lived there–oh, twenty years or more, and writes me these amazing letters. My I’m amazed by what she tells me, I am. India–gee!” (FF 177). She shows her concern towards Arun by telling him: “you can’t go on going out and walking into town for every meal. . . . It’s clear you’ve got to do your cooking and eating here, . . . but if you tell me how you like things, I’ll try to fix them just so. You’ll only need to tell me how” (FF 178).

Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak believes that, “In the field of rational analysis, a feeling of recognized kinship is more desirable than nationalism” (Boyarin and Boyarin 86). Arun seems to have developed this kinship with Mrs. Patton, who tries to give ‘exotic’ and ‘oriental’ touches to the American culture in her home. In the U.S., Arun gains a surrogate mother in Mrs. Patton. Arun is a vegetarian and she herself decides to give it a try:

My sister told me many Indians were vegetarians. I’ve always wanted to be one myself, . . . but never could–never knew how–you know, my family wouldn’t have liked it. But I’ve always liked vegetables best. . . . Look, Ahroon, You and I–we’ll be vegetarians together! I’ll cook the vegetables, and we’ll eat together. . . . (FF 179)
Stuart Hall has described “cultural identities” as, “Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (Hall 225). Mrs. Patton is one such ‘cultural identity’ who is ready to absorb Arun’s culture. Arun’s ‘Indianness’ slowly begins to overpower her American identity and she unconsciously starts sinking into the mould of a displaced identity. Her self-imposed disarrangement drifts her away from her family and her culture. Like all other characters of Anita Desai, she too, falls into the realm of solitude and alienation.

When Mrs. Patton tries to tell her husband that she has decided to turn into a vegetarian, “he reacted by not reacting, as if he had simply not heard, or understood” (FF 185). This non-accommodative, reserved and distant attitude of Mr. Patton, towards the cross-cultural influences on Mrs. Patton, suggests the unbridgeable gap existing between the centre and the periphery—the centre, represented by the host culture, and the periphery, represented by the alien culture. This ironically leads to the isolation of Mrs. Patton in her own land. Her enchantment with India is visible even at the end of the novel where she inquires about the tea presented to her by Arun, by asking “Is it herbal?” (FF 228). Her attempts at acculturation, push her to the fringes of her own society, causing her to dwell in the hyphen. Thus, her ‘association’ with Arun, leads to her gradual ‘dissociation’ from her family, culture and her nation.
Melanie, on the other hand, considers herself socially, culturally and racially distinct from Arun. Melanie represents the dominant culture that denies or subordinates the ‘other’. “She turns her pale face towards him (Arun) and even in the darkness he can read its expression: Get out, it says, and he does” (*FF* 188). Melanie cannot accept the alien intrusion into her family. Mrs. Patton’s hospitality towards Arun and her being so much influenced by an outsider, stimulates the dejection in Melanie, who deeply opposes the ‘self’ being monopolised by the ‘other’. Her hatred towards Arun—an intruder—is clearly brought forth when she says to her mother, “I won’t eat anything you cook. You can give it to the eat. Give it to him!’ She points dramatically at Arun. ‘I’m not going to eat any of that poison. Everything you cook is–poison!’” (*FF* 207). Mrs. Patton’s excessive concern for Arun and neglect of Melanie, instigates Melanie’s aversion for the immigrants. Her ‘refuting’ attitude doesn’t allow the immigrant sensibility and culture to subjugate her own identity. The hegemonic characteristic of the host society is vividly portrayed in Melanie’s behaviour when she goes out swimming with Mrs. Patton and Arun.

They [Melanie and Arun] try to find a way to walk that will not compel them to be side by side or in any way close together. But who is to follow whom? It is an awkward problem. . . . Throwing him her most contemptuous look, she strikes off the path,
ostentatiously refusing to pass by him. He wants to yell ‘Melanie!’ and demand her company, demand attention, but restrains himself and continues along his way. (FF 219-220)

The cultural confrontation has an indirect impact on Melanie, as it leads to Melanie’s ‘dissociation’ from her mother Mrs. Patton—who seems to have submitted to the influences of an alien culture by imbibing certain traits of it through Arun. Thus, the cross-cultural opposition further leads on to the familial opposition.

The third creation of Desai that deals with the leitmotif of immigration and its affects on the receiving society is “Winterscape”, one out of the nine short stories in the collection *Diamond Dust and Other Stories*. This story highlights the immigrants’ ‘attempts’ of coping, adjustment and acculturation in a foreign society and the consequent impact on the host society’s receptivity.

Beth (a Canadian Christian) having married Rakesh (an Indian immigrant), becomes a victim of unconscious marginalization and attempts to come to terms with the estranged self. Having indirectly attained a marginal status, she endeavours to discover meaning of her new existence in “a world irremediably absurd where one is a stranger to oneself as well as to other people” (Cruickshank 52).

Beth married Rakesh because after completing his education in Canada, he refuses to return to India and settles down in Canada by completely acculturating himself to the new surroundings. Though,
Beth copes successfully with the bi-cultural situation prevalent in her house, but the sudden arrival of Rakesh’s Ma and Masi (who are real sisters) from India, aggravates Beth’s insecurity about the assertion of her subjective self. She “felt herself tense at the thought of not just one, but two strangers, foreigners, part of Rakesh’s past, invading–their house” (“Winterscape” 26). Beth’s reluctant attitude towards the foreign influence indicates her fear of losing her Canadian identity.

When Rakesh reveals the truth to Beth about his Aunt, Anu, being his real mother (as she gave birth to him); and his mother, Asha, being his surrogate mother (as she raised him up), Beth is caught up in the maze of cultural clash. Beth and her mother, Doris cannot understand the values and traditions of the East. Doris says: “Two sisters loving each other–that much? That’s what’s so daft–who in her right mind would give away her baby to her sister just like that? I mean, would you hand yours over to Susan? And would Susan take it? I mean, as if it were a birthday present!” (“Winterscape” 37). For Beth and her mother, Doris, the cultural rift is unbridgeable. It is beyond them to understand and cope with the nuances of cultural differences.

A research proves that, “the host individuals tend to have less centrality than compatriots, showing an overall secondary role in the personal networks of immigrants” (Domínguez and Jareigo 309). Similarly, Beth only provides secondary assistance to Rakesh by justifying his existence to other fellow host subjects (like her mother,
Doris), but it is Rakesh who has to carve a niche for himself “ranging from the immersion in one’s culture of origin to the immersion in the dominant or host culture” (Cabassa 132).

Beth may be reticent about her concern and protective attitude towards Rakesh’s past and his Indian kith and kin, but it is subtly revealed by Desai in the following conversion of Beth with her mother, Doris:

Doris added quickly. ‘And all that expense–why’s he (Rakesh) sending them (Anu and Asha) tickets? I thought they had money: he keeps talking about the farm as if they were landlords__’

‘Oh, that’s where he grew up, Mum. They sold it long ago–that’s what paid for his education at McGill, you know. That costs’. . . .

‘They sold it a bit at a time. They helped pay for our house, too and then set up his practice’. . . .

Doris said, ‘I’m just worried about you–dealing with two Indian women–in your condition__’

‘I guess they know about babies,’ Beth said hopefully.

(“Winterscape” 37-38)

When, the two mothers arrive, Beth does every possible thing to help them adapt to the new surroundings. But unable to cope up with the situation, she notices the mothers’ “first Euphoria and excitement soon led to little nervous dissensions and explosions, then to
dejection” (“Winterscape” 46); and soon “the hours dragged for her, in the company of the two mothers, . . . and just so many times she could invent errands that would allow them all to escape from the house so crowded with their hopes, expectations, confusion and disappointment” (“Winterscape” 43-44). Like an existential character, Beth feels doubly alienated—from her ‘self’ and her ‘culture’. She feels restless and estranged at the thought that she is not being sincere either to herself or to Rakesh’s mothers. The consciousness of the reality around her generates in her a sense of loneliness, alienation and pessimism. She is caught in different roles—Beth, Mrs. Rakesh and a daughter-in-law—but is unable to adopt any. She, like a typical existential character, fits perfectly into

The world of Anita Desai’s novels [which] is an ambivalent one; it is a world where harmony is aspired but often not achieved; and the desire to live life fully with proper zeal and love, clashes, at times violently, with the desire to withdraw and keep inwards. Instinct, emotion, passion appear to be strangers in the world of sordid daily routine.

(Bala and Pabbay)

In the process of associating completely with Rakesh and his mothers, Beth (a receptive dissociated host) begins to drift away from her own identity.

After the departure of the mothers, “She (Beth) had cooked dinner, . . . she lit candles on the table, as though it were a
celebration” (“Winterscape” 48), an occasion to celebrate her freedom from the existential pangs of alienation. But, while having dinner, Rakesh noticed “the photograph she had newly taped to it [the refrigerator]–with the view of the white window, and the two widows in white, and the whirling snow” (“Winterscape” 48). Beth’s acts of cherishing the mothers’ memory through their picture and singing “softly into the baby’s dark hair: ‘Ma and Masi–Ma and Masi together’” (“Winterscape” 25), are evidences of her deep seated relation with them. She may pretend to live a content life in their absence, yet she cannot erase any marks or memories of her association with them.

The cultural contrast brought out in these fictions shows the marginalization or exclusion of both the diasporic as well as the host society, through the characters of Adit, Arun, Rakesh, Asha and Anu, Sarah, Mrs. Patton, Melanie and Beth. Most of these host characters portrayed by Desai are ‘receptive’ as they do not assert the ‘self’ and help the ‘others’ to merge with the adopted culture without denying their traditional values and institutions. These displaced characters “disrupt the current hegemonic relationship between ‘dominant’ and ‘minority’ positions” (Lowe 138). Hence, it may be concluded that the relationship between two culturally diverse subjects leads to the ‘dissociation’ or displacement of not only the diasporic but also the host subjects–who face the crisis of ambivalence in their own land of origin.
Bharati Mukherjee’s collection of short stories *Darkness* deals with the expatriate experiences of diasporic individuals. These stories collide with Mukherjee’s own experiences of exclusion in Canada. “Until Atlanta—and it could have been anywhere in America—I had thought of myself, in spite of a white husband and two assimilated sons, as an expatriate. In my fiction, and in my Canadian experience, ‘immigrants’ were lost souls, put upon and pathetic” (Mukherjee, *Darkness* 1). This chapter is a humble attempt at portraying the influence that these ‘lost souls’ have on the native female subjects.

Ann Vane is one such native Canadian in the story “Isolated Incidents” who projects the existential traits of alienation and absurdity in her own land of origin. Being a Human Rights Consultant, Ann witnesses the plight of the semi-assimilated identities at the cost of racial discrimination. Her job is to file complaints from the diasporic people against problems concerning Human Rights. In the beginning “she had tried too earnestly to correct the nation’s wrong. Now she saw problems only as a bureaucrat. Deal only with the sure things. Pass the others off. Get documentation. Promise nothing” (“Isolated Incidents” 81). This detached view of Ann is the output of her job-restrictions and her constant failed efforts to support the neglected community. She is aware that, “Torontonians were proud of their subway, their politeness, proud of their moral spotlessness. This, after all, was not New York. Assault on John Mohan Persawd and dozens like him would always be considered
isolated incidents and not racial” (“Isolated Incidents” 82-83). But this awareness engulfs the Canadian identity of Ann and she willingly begins to drift away from an identity and a culture that appeared ruthless when viewed from the diasporic perspective. While, filing the two specific cases of racial discrimination in Toronto of Dr. (Miss) Supariwala and John Mohan Persawd, Ann is amazed that, “They came to her, cowering, crying, thundering, insulting–rehearsed or spontaneous–and still they found reasons for staying where Ann herself, on bad days, found few” (“Isolated Incidents” 79).

Though Ann has accepted “imperfections in the world, her own limitation” (“Isolated Incidents” 83), yet she feels that she has shed an incredible part of her ‘self’. Her constant confrontations with the preys of racism repose her into a position that “would otherize and objectivize her rendering her vulnerable to the violence of gaze” (Chow 123). These ‘isolated incidents’ have such a deep impact on the psyche of Ann that she begins to feel estranged in her own native land; and her contemporaries begin to view her as the ‘other’.

Her thoughts of selling her house on Tranby, leaving Toronto, moving to Los Angeles to visit her friend, Poppy Pennigton and becoming a script writer are an evidence of her detachment from the ‘self’. Her plans do not materialize because: “It wasn’t fear or frugality that kept her back. She lacked ferocity of desire. That was her failure” (“Isolated Incidents” 90). This lack of ferocity in Ann is due to the
mental upheaval caused by the identity crisis. She is unable to identify a coherent, single self amidst the contradictory cultures.

By the end of the story, Ann laments the fact that “She would not stand in line with Donald Sutherland, not Ann; she would remain in Toronto surrounded by Chinese and Indians and Jamaicans. . .” (“Isolated Incidents” 93). This final decision of Ann, hints at her desire to cater to the needs of the ‘others’ by enlarging her ‘self’ in the diasporic ‘in-betweenness’.

Ann Vane is a receptive host who attempts to help the displaced subjects to locate a center in the new world. For her “mutual assimilation and acculturation of the dominant and the immigrant communities,” is, “a two-way metamorphosis” (Holt 2) that involves accepting the ‘other’ and moulding the ‘self’.

Bharati Mukherjee’s other collection of short stories *The Middleman and Other Stories* deals with the characters who are middlemen or interpreters between two cultures. Hence, the stories portray the interdependence of both the diasporic and the host subjects. Christine Gomez remarks: “The theme of these is immigration and the reciprocal effect of the immigrants and American life on each other” (139). The two stories in this collection that explore the transformation in host subjects are “Fathering” and “The Management of Grief”. These stories represent the existential predicament of all the diasporic as well as the dissociated hosts leading to their invisibility and anonymity in the wake of cultural
fusion. Mukherjee comments in an interview: “The immigrants in my stories go through extreme transformations in America and at the same time they alter the country’s appearance and psychological make-up” (Carb 648).

Sharon in “Fathering” is one such disturbed host whose initial receptive traits soon turn refutive when her Vietnamese boyfriend Jase, rescues his Vietnamese daughter, Eng from Saigon and brings her home to America.

Once upon a time Sharon used to be a cheerful, accommodating woman. It isn’t as if Eng was dumped on us out of the blue. She knew I (Jase) was tracking my kid. Coming to terms with the past was Sharon’s idea. I don’t know what happened to that Sharon. (“Fathering” 118)

Sharon’s assimilation soon gives in to objection when she witnesses the alien culture becoming dominant in her house and her American identity being jeopardized by the foreign influence. This cross-cultural juncture, forces Sharon into “a site of contestation: a discursive space where different and differential subject positions and subjectivities are inscribed, reiterated or repudiated” (Brah 208).

Sharon’s dislike for Eng is rooted in Eng’s unwillingness to reconcile with the new world. Unable to understand Eng’s territorial rootedness, she blames Jase of being manipulated by Eng and accuses Eng of bringing a rift in their assimilated life: “Everything was fine until she got here. Send her back Jase. If you love, send her back”
(“Fathering” 123). Hence, Sharon’s receptive and refutive behaviour is the consequent reaction against Jase’s immigrant and Eng’s expatriate approach towards acculturation. The dilemma of Jase is the dilemma of a dissociated host who is caught between an immigrant’s optimism and an expatriate’s nostalgic anchoring. To break out of this dilemma, Sharon decides to leave Jase and reconcile with her ethnic identity.

Bharati Mukherjee describes her American experience and the confluence of two cultures very explicitly:

I was not right to describe the American experience as one of the melting pot but a more appropriate word would be ‘fusion’ because immigrants in America did not melt into or were forged into something like their white counterpart but immigration was a two-way process and both the whites and immigrants were growing into a third thing by this interchange and experience. (Mukherjee, Darkness 3)

This ‘fusion’ is depicted in this collection of short stories. Even the concluding story of the collection “The Management of Grief” deals with this ‘two-way process’ and delineates the impact of dislocation on both the diasporic and host individuals; and how the traditions and values are “transmitted to [subordinated or marginal groups] by a dominant or metropolitan culture” (Pratt 6), or vice-versa. Judith Templeton in this story is a dissociated host who exists in a zone, that Foucault terms as a “heterotopia,” and defines it as “a borderland of
resistance and freedom where possible worlds and multiple voices co-exist” (qtd. in Trodd 244).

“The Management of Grief” is a story about the consequences of a plane crash. An Air India Jet flying to Canada, explodes off the West Coast of Ireland. Mukherjee remarkably describes the impact of the disaster on the victims’ relatives in Canada and how the Irish officials try to empathize with these isolated Indian families. Mrs. Bhave is one such affected Indian who has lost her husband and two sons in the air crash. She is surprised at the reaction of the Irish authorities. “The Irish are not shy, they rush to me and give me hugs and some are crying. I cannot imagine reactions like that on the streets in Toronto. Just strangers, and I am touched. Some carry flowers with them and give them to any Indian they see” (“The Management of Grief” 187). Thus these Irish officials symbolize the hosts who are receptive and offer a multi-cultural vision. Their sympathetic attitude towards the Indians is an attempt at negating the binaries of self and other.

Once Mrs. Bhave returns to Canada, she meets Judith Templeton, a Canadian social worker, for support in rescue operation of air crash victims. Judith represents a displaced host identity who, when portrayed in Bakhtinian terms, is “A person [who] has no sovereign internal territory, he [she] is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself [herself], he [she] looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another” (Bakhtin 287). Judith views ‘others’ (the diasporic subjects) not through her ‘self’ but through ‘the
eyes of another’. This ‘another’ (new identity) is the outcome of the bicultural situation caused by the constant confrontation with the displaced victims of the air crash. This cross-cultural contact forces her into a ‘liminal space’ where her own identity undergoes transformation because “within this liminal space traditions are engaged in dynamic process and weave into new culture” (N. McLeod). But no two cultures or identities can engulf each other completely. Judith justifies this incomplete identity metamorphosis, through her lack of Indian sentiments and perspectives: “We have interpreters, but we don’t always have the human touch, or may be the right human touch” (“The Management of Grief” 183).

Judith is aware that bicultural tensions may influence one’s identity profoundly but are unable to devour it completely. Hence, the host subjects are affected in the cross-cultural site of contestation, but the extent of the impact varies with every individual.

The next work of Mukherjee under emphasis in this chapter is *Jasmine*. Though the novel mainly unravels the series of adventures which the heroine, Jasmine, undergoes during her journey from Punjab to California, but at every step of her transformation she confronts the various host subjects who act as significant stimulants in her attempts at assimilation. Helena Grice writes: “Mukherjee’s characters do not simply claim America, they transform it” (83). Hence the various native characters that come in contact with Jasmine, not
only help Jasmine redefine her ‘self’ but themselves get claimed in the process of assimilation.

Jasmine becomes Jazzy, when she meets Lillian Gordon, a kind Quaker lady who renames Jasmine and teaches her the ways of America. Besides Jasmine, she has also sheltered three Kanjobal women in her house who have lost their husbands and children to an army massacre. “She wasn’t a missionary dispensing new visions and stamping out the old; she was facilitator who made possible the lives of absolute ordinariness that we [Jasmine and other diasporic characters] ached for” (Jasmine 131). In the process of teaching malleability to the immigrants, Lillian herself undergoes a certain transformation of character, while harbouring the illegal, undocumented immigrants. She begins to consider herself to be a caretaker of these lost souls. She “taught us all to cook hamburgers and roasts, to clean toilets with cleaners, . . . to scrub pots and pans with pre-soaped balls of steel wool instead of ashes and lemon rinds, so we could hire ourselves out as domestics” (Jasmine 134).

Lillian, as a true receptive dissociated host, seems to have re-identified herself as a caretaker and converted her home into a habitat for the culturally estranged individuals who are the preys of cross-cultural encounter.

Lillian Gordon represents to me [Jasmine] the best in the American experience and the American character. She went to jail for refusing to name her contacts or disclose
the names and addresses of the so-called army of illegal aliens she’d helped “dump” on the welfare roles of America. \textit{(Jasmine} 137\textit{)}

Lillian Gordon seems to inhabit an in-between space which is “a site indisputably, of conflict and violence but also one of context, exchange, negotiation, hybridization and change” \textit{(Berman} 221\textit{)}. She is in conflict with her own ethnicity and fellow citizens, and enters into a negotiation with the diasporic characters.

Next we see Jasmine as ‘Jase’ in the house of Taylor and Wylie Hayes as a caregiver to their adopted daughter, Duff (another cross-cultural victim). She recalls: “Duff was my child; Taylor and Wylie were my parents, my teachers, my family” \textit{(Jasmine} 165\textit{)}. The Hayeses represent the receptive hosts who willingly absorb the alien identities, help to mould them and themselves get altered in the process of hybridization. \textit{“Victoria Carchidi observes the transformative aspects of intercultural connection, noting how each contrast elucidates and highlights its counterpart” (Lazure} 91\textit{)}. Therefore, Jasmine’s quest for identity is not individual but it encompasses the problematics of the host subjects whose association with Jasmine ushers displacement in their own sensibilities.

Another work of Mukherjee that explores the theme of dislocation in a bicultural set up is \textit{The Holder of the World}. But this transformation in identity, arising out of cultural collision, is stretched over temporal and spatial boundaries. This novel
has a wide canvas that sweeps across continents and centuries, cultures and religions. Immigration, exile, alienation and foreign lands have always been the colour of Mukherjee’s palate and with *The Holder of the World*, she uses the familiar tones and shades to create a universe of infinite possibility and eternal time. (Sattar 6)

It is a story about two white women, one, Hannah Easton, living in the seventeenth century and the other, Beigh Masters, living in the present. Through this work, Mukherjee presents:

the difference between the Old and the New Worlds, represented by America and India, as a clash of value systems, a confrontation between an austere, stark society and a culture in which nothing is more important than the celebration of beauty. (N. Kumar 125-126)

The extraordinary feature of this novel is how Beigh Masters, the host, presently living in America (the New World), feels dissociated due to the seventeenth century diasporic journey of Hannah Easton to India (the old world).

Beigh, lives with her Indian lover Venn Iyer and works as an assets researcher. Her latest job is to unravel the mystery of ‘The Emperor’s Tear’ (a precious ancient diamond). Over the last three years, Venn Iyer’s Indianness seems to have shed some colour on Beigh because the earnestness with which she begins her search evidently represents the curious Indian aspect of her identity.
Beigh finds out that ‘The Emperor’s Tear’ belonged to the last Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, from whom it was stolen during a battle against Raja Jadav Singh, the Hindu lover of the seventeenth century Puritan woman Hannah Easton (also called Salem Bibi in India). This detection centres her focus on Hannah, in whom she discovers a remote relative of hers. From then on, Beigh begins to piece together Hannah’s life and her cross-cultural experiences and remains unaware of her own identity crisis. “It isn’t the gem that interests me. It’s the inscription and the provenance. Anything having to do with Mughal India gets my attention. Anything about the Salem Bibi, precious–as–pearl feeds me” (HW 5).

Musing over Hannah’s diasporic journey, Beigh wonders at the large gulf existing between the two worlds: “What must these worlds have thought, colliding with each other? How mutually staggered they must have been . . .” (HW 12). Beigh feels outrageous when she realises how torn Hannah may have felt betwixt the opposing cultures and identities. Thus, we notice that Beigh’s dejection is a consequence of Hannah’s displacement.

On the other hand, Hannah also becomes Beigh’s accompanist in her odyssey and search, and continues to provoke Beigh to “Fly as long as hard as you can, my co-dreamer! Scout a fresh site on another hill. Found with me a city where lions lie with lambs, where pity quickens knowledge, where desire dissipates despair!” (HW 19).
Therefore, Hannah’s traits of a wanderer begin to appear in Beigh who may be physically separated by time and space from Hannah, but spiritually and mentally she feels connected to Hannah. Beigh declares in the beginning of the novel: “I live in three time zones simultaneously, and I don’t mean Eastern, Central and Pacific. I mean the past, present and future” (HW 5).

Beigh Masters sidelines her research on the gem and plunges deep into the realm of Hannah’s extraordinary life. “I know where she came from and where she went. I couldn’t care less about the Emperor’s Tear, by now. I care only about the Salem Bibi” (HW 19). This dive into Hannah Easton’s history transforms Beigh’s sensibility with the resultant change in her personality. Hannah’s displacement is therefore not solitary but also leads to the dissociation of Beigh’s identity because:

The encounter between two subjects is not between two ‘I’s, but two ‘we’s, and each ‘we’ is a narrative construction, a textually bounded ‘we’ whose boundaries can be attenuated with an acceptive of the ambiguities and paradoxes imminent in the stories through which the collective self is lent coherence. (Shapiro 194)

Though the encounter here is not direct, yet the impression it leaves on the encountered cannot be effaced.

Mukherjee skilfully compares the seventeenth century Indian and seventeenth century Puritan American society with the present
day American society, and shows how the host subject (Beigh) of the new world develops an affinity with the diasporic subjects (Rebecca and Hannah Easton) of the old world. “Like Rebecca [and Hannah], I have a lover. One who would seem alien to my family. A lover scornful of our habits, of self effacement and reasonableness, of our naive or desperate clinging to an imagined community” (HW 31).

This work of Mukherjee, that juggles cultures over the temporal and spatial boundaries, remarkably portrays the impact of a historic diasporic subject on the psyche and sensibility of the present dissociated host.

Simone de Beauvoir has followed Sartre’s brand of existentialism in her work *The Second Sex* (1981). Her work emphasises a world of plurality of existence, in which the existent ‘I’ is in constant interaction with ‘other’ existence. “Existence is fundamentally communal in character and believes that without the others, I cannot exist. This gives rise to a polarity” (Bhagwant 60). This plurality of existence is applied in this chapter to the cultural context where, the female host subject experiences the existential predicament in her own society due to cultural plurality. This version of existentialism becomes evident in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri, where the female host subjects’ sense of alienation and ability to transcend the cultural limits is emphasized.

The entire oeuvre of Lahiri—consisting of *Interpreter of Maladies: Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond*, *The Namesake* and
Unaccustomed Earth—is critically analysed in this chapter to foreground the various female hosts whose connections with the diasporic subjects, ironically, leads to the contamination of their own identity and adversity towards the native society.

Miranda in the story “Sexy” (from the collection Interpreter of Maladies) exemplifies the role of such existential host subjects. The story “Sexy” is written from an American girl, Miranda’s, point of view, who is involved in an illicit relationship with a Bengali, Dev, settled in Boston. This extra-marital relation with Dev, who is already married, begins to overpower the sensitivity of Miranda and she begins to feel a strong desire to absorb Indian culture. “Now when she and Dev made love, Miranda closed her eyes and saw deserts and elephants and marble pavilions floating on lakes beneath a full moon” (“Sexy” 97). Miranda’s involvement with Dev, juxtaposes the two opposing cultures and this juxtaposition triggers the degeneration of Miranda’s American identity and she longs to assimilate with Dev’s Indian identity because this assimilation would lead to their complete physical and mental unification. Miranda’s receptive traits represent her urge “to get a perspective beyond one’s own nation, to see some sort of whole instead of the defensive little patch offered by one’s own culture, literature, and history” (Said, Culture and Imperialism 49).

But Miranda’s assimilatory traits soon turn ‘refuting’ when her friend, Luxmi, constantly refers to her cousin’s husband who has deserted his wife and son Rohin for an American woman he meets on
a flight. Miranda begins to find a curious parallel of this incident in her own life with Dev. Her dejection is further enhanced when Rohin echoes Dev by calling her “sexy” and defines it by forming a lexical meaning of it as “loving someone you don’t know” (“Sexy” 107). Rohin reveals that, “He (Rohin’s father) sat next to someone he didn’t know, someone sexy, and now he loves her instead of my mother” (“Sexy” 108). This interpretation of the word ‘sexy’ shatters Miranda’s faith in Dev who always calls her “You’re sexy” (“Sexy” 91) during love-making. Miranda begins to realize the never bridgeable gulf that exists between herself and Dev. “Due to the cultural alienation we witness hindrance in the attainment of a total sexual assimilation. Hence culture plays a pivotal role in shaping of human sexuality, even as it is biologically determined” (Sah 79).

Luxmi’s adamant disapproval of such illicit relations and Miranda’s recognition of the pain she notices in Rohin’s story of his mother’s suffering, make Miranda realize the harm she is causing to her ‘self’ and to Dev’s marital life. She decides:

She would see him [Dev] one more Sunday, she decided, perhaps two. Then she would tell him the things she had known all along: that it wasn’t fair to her, or to his wife, that they both deserved better, that there was no point in dragging it on. (“Sexy” 110)

Miranda’s physical and subsequent mental separation from Dev is the outcome of the inconvenience caused by their relation and her
consequent realization that their affiliation lacks any thriving future. Hence, Miranda ends up as an existential character with no complete adherence to any one culture. She is a semi-assimilated identity in her native society.

Being the second generation immigrant, Lahiri is well conversant with the American sensibility and through the portrayal of Mrs. Croft in “The Third and Final Continent” she justifies that immigration not only disturbs the migrants but also affects the original residents.

Mrs. Croft, above ninety years old, is truly a ‘refuting’ host who does not allow the alien culture to impinge upon her ‘self’. The old American lady rents out her rooms only to bachelors from Harvard or Tech. Mrs. Croft belongs to the values of old America. Though she has rented her room to a Bengali commerce graduate, yet she maintains only the necessary contact with him, as for her, he is and will always remain a stranger. Mrs. Croft endeavours to establish a safe distance from the Bengali tenant even in the “dynamic interactionist space” (Clifford 54). Her old American beliefs are visible in her disapproval of her daughter talking to a bachelor who is an outsider to the American world that she is quite possessive and proud of. She insists that the Bengali gentleman should repeat ‘splendid’ each day to her statement that America’s greatest achievement is the unfurling of the American flag on the moon.
Though the Bengali gentleman is “Eager to learn and adapt, to reconcile the differences” (Nityanandam 53), yet Mrs. Croft’s deep rooted American sentiments do not allow him to invade her space.

Another work of Mukherjee that delves deep into the psyche of the native subjects is *The Namesake*. The protagonist of the novel, Gogol Ganguli, being a second generation immigrant provides the third point of view. Gogol who changes his name to Nikhil, feels more attached to his birth place (America) than his roots (in India). “Easily adapting to the life around him, Gogol provides the perfect example of the acculturated alien, who makes the land of exile his homeland” (Nityanandam 91). But in America he is still referred to by the Americans sociologist–panellist as ‘ABCD’, that is, ‘American-born confused desi’.

In this chapter the emphasis is laid on Gogol’s association with an American girl named Maxine Ratliff. By bringing together these two cross-cultural characters in the novel, Lahiri “brings alive the multiple selves constructed painstakingly to make sense of the unknown world [the U.S.A.] that is as much a land of opportunities as it is of conflict and confusion” (Nayar). The conflict of these two culturally diverse characters further leads to the impact on the identity of Maxine, who accepts Gogol’s American ways, but when she finds him drifting towards his ethnicity and culture, she steps back and decides to leave him. Thus, Maxine is categorized as a ‘refuting’ host who does not allow Gogol’s identity to cast a shadow on her own. She avoids
straddling two cultures as it indicates loss of roots and social dislocation.

As long as Gogol immerses himself completely in the American culture, tradition, belief, values and mannerisms, Maxine remains associated with him. “Gogol moves in with Maxine in her parents’ house. He is conscious of the fact that his immersion in Maxine’s family is a betrayal to his own” (*NS* 141). She willingly accepts Gogol as family. But when she visits his parents she realizes that, “Ashima doesn't want her for a daughter-in-law. She’d (Ashima had) been startled that Maxine addressed her as Ashima and her husband as Ashoke. And yet Gogol has been dating her for over a year now” (*NS* 166). Being with Gogol in his parents’ company, Maxine realizes that “he is so different” (*NS* 38).

Though, Gogol tries to assimilate completely yet his attempts fail sometimes and he is torn between his “affiliation and filiation to the two cultures” (Nayak 134). Maxine notices his failure at Americanisation, because she is still very different from Gogol as:

Maxine is open about her past, showing him photographs of her ex-boyfriend in the pages of a marble-papered album, speaking of those relationships without embarrassment or regret. She has the gift of accepting her life; as he comes to know her, he realizes that she has never wished she were anyone other than herself, raised in any other place, in any other way. (*NS* 138)
Gogol, on the other hand, is very conservative about his past, he wants to erase his past and rewrite every episode of it in fresh American ink. When Maxine deciphers that Gogol is the “epitome of an American-Indian hybrid who vacillates between his Indian identity and American nationality” (Chabbra 75-76), she decides to distance herself from him as she herself does not want to fall prey to the ‘existential catharsis’.

Maxine’s alienation from Gogol is triggered further by the death of Gogol’s father Ashoke. Ashoke’s death brings about a significant metamorphosis in Gogol who begins to think as an Indian and understand the values of his family. This racial awakening of Gogol endangers his relation with Maxine and she asks him “to get away from all this”. But Gogol’s denial: “I don’t want to get away” (NS 182) acts as a signal for Maxine to terminate her affair with Gogol. When Gogol performs the Bengali last rites of his father, Maxine concludes that, like all other migrants, Gogol also believes in extending his “beliefs, traditions, customs, behaviours and values . . . possessions and belongings to new places” (J. McLeod 211).

Therefore, Maxine represents one of those native characters who willingly accept the immigrants absorbing the host culture, but themselves cannot succumb to the absorption by the émigré culture.

“The East-West divide is fundamental to Lahiri’s characters but the truth is people everywhere today inhabit mixed orders of reality” (A. Kumar 92). This emphasises that no two cultures in the global era
remain sacrosanct and every culture or identity in a cross-cultural situation displays survival strategies. Therefore, characters like Gogol when expected to merge completely with the adopted culture, always depict signs of isolation or alienation. Hence, Maxine’s attempt at Gogol’s overall cultural conversion fails as Gogol adopts the survivor’s technique of multiculturalism.

Another native character portrayal by Jhumpa Lahiri in “Hell-Heaven” (a story in the collection Unaccustomed Earth) is of Deborah who depicts the traits of a receptive host experiencing existential pangs in her own land of origin.

Deborah, a philosophy student at Radcliffe, marries Pranab Chakraborty, who like many other Bengalis, has come to America to study engineering at MIT. Deborah undeniably mingles with the Bengali ghetto that Pranab has created around himself. In the narrator’s eyes “Deborah remained by his side, attending the weekend parties that Pranab Kaku and my parents were becoming more involved with, gatherings that were exclusively Bengali with the exception of her” (“Hell-Heaven” 68). She picks up some Bengali words from Pranab like–da, boudi, khub bhalo and aacha; and learns “to pick up certain foods with her fingers instead of with a fork” (“Hell-Heaven” 68). By assimilating with Pranab’s culture she begins to drift away from her own. Her bicultural existence justifies Lyotard’s statement that in a postcolonial situation “it is both possible and necessary to
break with tradition and institute absolutely new ways of living” (qtd. in Gandhi 7).

After their marriage and after having twin girls, Srabani and Sabitri (also called Bonny and Sara), Deborah and Pranab begin to avoid the Bengali community.

Their absences were attributed, . . . to Deborah; and it was universally agreed that she had stripped Pranab Kaku not only of his origins but of his independence. She was the enemy, he was her prey, and their example was invoked as a warning, and as vindication, that mixed marriages were a doomed enterprise. ("Hell-Heaven” 75)

But this perception proves wrong as it is Pranab who willingly shuts his past to explore a new life in the new world. Deborah is one of those dislocated people in a multicultural society who “live in an environment of want, intimidation and discrimination, and their private area of family life is constantly under invasion and attack” (Jain, “Stranger Come Home” 96). Deborah’s innocence is revealed in her confession to the narrator’s mother when on the phone, she admits:

“I was so horribly jealous of you back then, for knowing him [Pranab], understanding him in a way I never could. He turned his back on his family, on all of you, really, but I still felt threatened. I could never get over that.” She told my mother that she
had tried for years to get Pranab Kaku to reconcile with his parents, and that she had also encouraged him to maintain ties with other Bengalis, but he resisted. (“Hell-Heaven” 82)

Thus, we witness an ironic situation where the diasporic subject (Pranab) willingly drifts away from his ethnicity and the host (Deborah) struggles to make him cling to it by reminding him of “the loss of something left behind forever” (Said, Reflections on Exile 173).

Twenty three years after their marriage, Pranab and Deborah get divorced. “It was he [Pranab] who had strayed, falling in love with a married Bengali woman, destroying two families in the process” (“Hell-Heaven” 81). This shock and grief further aggravates Deborah’s existential pangs, as she seems to belong nowhere. Her desertion by Pranab at the age of forty leaves her stranded in an ‘in-between’ space where she can neither cling to the adopted Bengali culture nor her ethnic origin. Hence, the sense of alienation and uprootedness clouds the life of Deborah, who “having been deterritorialized” from her origins is “awaiting to be reterritorialized” (Radhakrishnan, “Adjudicating Hybridity”). Thus, the intercultural position reduces her to anonymity in her own country.

The various works of the three aforementioned authors deeply scrutinized in this chapter aptly describe the identity crisis of those host subjects who are caught in the cross-cultural scenario, and are “subject to the interior dislocations, lostness, madness, of what
Lukács calls transcendental homelessness” (Said, Reflections on Exile 536). The host subjects under analysis seem to get dislocated once they come in any contact with the diasporic subjects. The varied illustrations in this chapter prove the myriad possibilities of cultural opposition on these natives who face the crisis of ambivalence in their own land of origin.

Foucault asserts that: “we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another” (qtd. in Soja 17). Similarly, the diasporic arena occupied by both the émigré and the host creates a neutral space that ruptures the contrary concepts of self/other, marginalized/dominant, because cultural plurality may depute the diasporic or the host subject into any category irrespective of their location.

By going beyond the discourses of boundary, it is possible to understand these ‘new hybrid identities and cultures’, which impact not only upon the diasporic but also upon the members of the ‘host’ society to such an extent that in time the notions of ‘diasporic’ and ‘host’ may be rendered existentially and analytically redundant. (Bromley 9)

Hence the cross-cultural narratives project the existential predicaments of both the diasporic as well as the host subjects.
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