Reading Between the Lines: Race, Culture, and Bounded Identity in Multicultural Societies

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Abstract

This thesis demonstrates the colonizing impact of multiculturalism on in-between subjects. In-between subjects are defined as individuals whose identities form at the interstices of two or more cultures. Using evidence from the narratives of *The Namesake*, *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, and *Londonstani*, this research describes a set of structurally embedded cultural concepts – rooting, marking, deference, and communication. These concepts contribute to the scripting of the essentialized identity roles that limit the recognition, inclusion, and participation of in-between subjects. Further, these conditions impose a double-bind on in-between subjects; in performing essentialized identities, in-between subjects deny their own free participation and expression, but to not perform an essentialized identity would mean sure exclusion and marginalization. The evidence points to a possible solution, however, in the form of safe spaces and relationships where difference is unscripted and alterity fills the space between Self and Other.

Ce travail démontre les effets colonisant de la multiculturalisme sur les "in-betweens." Les in-betweens sont des individus ayant une identité constituer au croisement de deux ou plusieurs cultures. Avec des données prises des récits de *The Namesake*, *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, et *Londonstani*, ce recherche décrit des concepts enfoncés dans la structure sociale – le racinement, la marque, la différence, et la communication. Ces concepts contribuent à la création des personnages hyper-culturelles, dont l'effectualisation limite la reconnaissance, l'inclusion, et la participation des in-betweens. En effectuant ces personnages, les in-betweens perdre leurs voix et leurs droits de participer. Par contre, s'ils n'effectuent pas ces personnages, les in-betweens seront exclus et marginalisés. Les espaces et les relations ou il ne faut pas distinguer entre soi et l'autre pour comprendre la différence offrent une solution; c'est là ou les in-betweens peuvent trouver le soutien communautaire qu'il faut pour assurer la participation.

Introduction

This thesis examines the interactions of in-between subjects – persons whose identities are constructed at the interstices of two or more cultures – with the dominant culture. The experiences of in-between subjects demonstrate the endurance of the colonizing logic in plural and multicultural societies. In the context of plural societies today, colonialism is less a project of imperial territorial conquest and control and more one of internal political stabilization through the conquest of identity. Under territorial colonialism, colonizer, subject, colonized territory, and alien rule are all easily distinguished. Turning the language of colonialism onto settler societies, however, is more complex. Relying on evidence drawn from three works of literary fiction (M.G. Vassanji's *The In-Between World of Vikram* Lall, Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, and Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani*), I advance three arguments. First, in settler societies, colonization has shifted from a project of territorial expansion to a project of inward-reaching subjugation and co-optation of bodies and their agency. Second, whereas colonizers once used guns and physical violence to control subjects, colonization now relies on essentializing categories and restricted roles. Finally, the language and concepts used to categorize and cast difference are themselves tools that perpetuate the quotidian, non-physical violence of colonization.

My examination of the endurance of colonization even after the decline of most formal colonial rule, particularly in its focus on plural and multicultural societies, necessarily implicates liberalism and liberal approaches to plurality and difference. The 'inward-reaching project' invoked in my first argument can be understood, for example, as the assimilating impulse of liberal models of citizenship

and multicultural rights. The mapping of colour lines onto the boundaries of liberal society, as well as the limited extension of liberal rights and recognition, has received some scholarly attention.[1] I draw on these discussions in my analysis of the treatment of in-between subjects under the dominant culture. This research identifies problematic gaps in the language liberalism has used in attempting to redress the abovementioned tensions, demonstrating how this language produces violence in the everyday experiences of in-between subjects.

In examining violence in this way, I attempt to address macro-level structural inequalities – ethnocentrism, and racism, for instance – by looking at their micro-level consequences. I focus on psychical[2] and social forms of violence. Although these consequences may not be quantified as readily as the physical, sexual, social and economic violence produced by structural inequality, they are of direct consequence for the free exercise and expression of identity. By examining the essentialization of identity roles available to in-between subjects, I demonstrate a cyclical liberal exclusion. Bound to perform essentialized identities by the conditions of inclusion set out by liberalism, in-between subjects are not free to participate as themselves. By consequence, though they may participate in liberal society to some degree, they are obstructed from making meaningful contributions to liberal democracy. This

[1]Fredrickson (2002) provides a concise description of racial exclusion in assimilative cultures and of the historical emergence of race as a ground of exclusion and national consolidation. Derrick A. Bell, Jr. (in Delgado and Stefancic, 2000) provides a chilling deconstruction of the subordination of the rights of people of colour to preserve the relative privilege and inclusion of Whites. Delgado and Stefancic (2001, pp. 21-25) address double standards in the application of constitutional law and the administering of liberal rights and freedoms.

[2] The dismemberment of in-between identities and the sacrifices made by in-between subjects are well articulated in the work of Madan Sarup and Bryant Keith Alexander. See Chapter One.

systematic exclusion raises concerns over the effectiveness and/or the foundations of the liberal multicultural model.

The categorization of in-between subjects using terms such as 'immigrant communities,' 'ethnic groups,' and 'diaspora' in academic work on difference, multiculturalism, and plurality is in itself an act of oppression and misrepresentation.[3] In advancing my third argument, I speak directly to the importance of recognizing in-betweenness in scholarly research. To relegate in-between subjects to restrictive and essentializing categories is to rely on markers of race, ethnicity, and culture to assign the in-between subject a specific Otherness that does not reflect their identity. Classifying in-between subjects as Others denies their unique position within democratic plurality, and lays the groundwork for their exclusion from liberal citizenship. Ultimately the flaw I expose is one of essentialization – race, culture, and ethnicity are continually deployed, in academic discourse as in everyday life, in ways that limit and stigmatize subjects marked out as different.

My analysis treats racial, ethnic, and cultural essentialization as relatively indistinct.[4] These three forms of essentialization feed into one another in processes of Othering. I focus on how dominant cultures enact categorizations on in-between subjects. When these categories are abstracted from the subjects they represent and

[3] Imtiaz Habib (2008, pp. 11-12) discusses the construction of group identities and communities through processes of Othering. Habib posits that 'black community' and racial groups are constructed not as categories of people familiar to one another, with common interests, but as people who stand out as different against the measure of Whiteness and are grouped accordingly. Habib further asserts that the naming of races and the construction of taxonomies produce difference.

[4] The variance amongst these terms does highlight important differences in how groups and identities form. These differences, however, are of little significance in this research.

applied to other subjects whom they do not accurately describe, they become tools of the colonizer. The concepts of race, ethnicity, and culture are each constructed on particular sets of traits. Generally, these categories are separated as follows: race is determined through physical attributes; ethnicity through geography, language, and history; and culture through aesthetic, value, and behaviour preferences. These distinctions, however, are fuzzy at best. The categories are not discrete, and many of the traits used to populate one category will bleed into another. Though identity group labels may be applied on the basis of racial, ethnic, or cultural markers, the resulting essentialization produces a violence of universalism.

The force of these essentializing constructs has much to do with their deep social entrenchment. Their pervasiveness can be understood through the processes of colonization at the heart of liberalism. Liberalism's encounter with the Other does not engage the Other on their own terms, but converts the Other from barbarism to civility. Under colonialism, this conversion is supported by an inferiorization of the Other[5] - an inferiorization that fixes relationships amongst races, cultures, and what we might call an early ethno-national identity. In the post-colonial era, the need for conversion is reiterated because the (barbarian) Other lives amongst members of the dominant culture in liberal society. But in today's liberal pluralist states, inferiorization is sanitized, preserving liberal civility. The rapes and massacres used to subjugate and eradicate the Other under colonialism are replaced with discourse that stigmatizes difference as weakness, underprivilege, and vulnerability. Theory and institutions formalize this inferiority, cementing the

[5] Fanon (1967); Habib (2008)

privilege of the liberal and civilized over the ambiguous, politically and ethically unreliable, different Other.

Starting from these assumptions, my project uses experiences of in-between subjects to expose the falsity of the claim that the end of the physical violence of colonialism has meant an end to colonial violence against the Other. Labels such as immigrant community, ethnic group, and diaspora are simultaneously too far-reaching and inadequate when applied on the basis of arbitrary traits and markers of difference. This type of essentialization excludes subjects from membership in the dominant culture. In practice, this exclusion can look like segregation, marginalization, disenfranchisement, and other formal inequalities. Liberal solutions to these problems have taken the form of multicultural and pluralist policies that both preserve Otherness and extend conciliatory rights to excluded peoples.[6] Such policies seek to redress the liberal sins of constructing and excluding the barbarian; by reinforcing the boundaries of exclusion, however, they provide a convenient but violent solution.

The elements of racialization built into the exclusion of in-between subjects both overemphasize the significance of the Othered culture for the in-between subject and project one set of constitutive experiences onto too great a diversity of subjects. The dominant culture/Othered culture dichotomy fails to provide an alternative locus of belonging for people who, though not immigrants, ethnos, or members of some diaspora, are excluded from the dominant culture. Here our thinking and scholarship fail to recognize that subjects who are excluded on the basis

[6] See, for example, Will Kymlicka's *Multicultural Citizenship*

of traits and markers, even those without commitments to, value for, or experiences rooted in another country, do not experience the social, the political, or everyday life under the dominant culture in the same way as normalized subjects. Although a relationship to a cultural experience rooted in another country may dissipate across generations, enduring essentialization fosters a similar in-between experience even beyond the first and second generation of citizenship.

The problem of misrepresenting in-betweenness begins with language and theory inadequate for the purposes of describing diversity. The taxonomic separation of dominant and Othered groups in much of the literature on pluralism has long served as a coping mechanism for the demands that plurality makes of power. Understanding in-betweenness as part of the Other and not part of the dominant group, or a grouping of its own, has been an easy way of incorporating one marginalized group into a set of models we believe are structured to overcome marginalization.[7] Adapting people to categories in this way, however, makes theory and language (and the models and policies through which they are deployed) inappropriately static. An effective analysis of the experiences of in-between subjects, then, must begin with a more precise and representative description of this identity.

Earlier I described in-betweens as persons whose identities are constructed at the interstices of two or more cultures. Though not inaccurate, this definition leaves

[7] Think, for example, of the recent debate over the permissibility of the Niqab within the public sphere in Québec. That niqabis are a minority within the 'Muslim' minority and marginalized within the historically marginalized group 'Women' seriously limits their political clout. The application of these labels to niqabis makes it possible to see these individuals as Others making demands of the state and incursions into the dominant culture, rather than as individuals whose citizenship is undifferentiated, but whose rights and needs vis-à-vis the state are articulated differently.

out some relevant information about how in-betweens reach this in-between space, how in-betweens are situated in relation to constitutive cultures, and how traits and marking influence the formation of the in-between identity. A number of factors work at once to produce the experience of in-betweenness in individuals living in plural societies. Like many inhabitants of plural society, they may be the descendants of immigrants, or naturalized immigrants themselves. Their identities and experiences are informed both by the dominant culture under which they live and by some connection to an Othered culture, whether their connection to this Othered culture be voluntary or not.

In earlier drafts of this work I used the language of immigrants and race to describe in-between subjects. These options seemed insufficient; in-betweenness is produced neither by virtue of a connection to an immigrant homeland, nor by virtue of racialization. These conditions say nothing of the connection to the dominant culture that draws the in-between subject out of the heart of the immigrant community, race, or ethnic group and into the margins. Reliance on the language of immigration and race leads back to the problems of essentialization. Ultimately, ancestral history and physical traits tell only a very partial story, and do not provide insight into less visible but equally important aspects of the in-between identity. Another option is to start at a full-fledged identification with and belonging under the dominant culture, working our way out toward difference.

One should, however, take caution with this approach to in-betweenness. I am immediately concerned with complicity in the systemic privileging of the dominant culture as 'normal' and with the problem of race blindness. To understand

in-betweens as members of the dominant culture who differ only in ancestry and appearance would once again lead us to an inappropriate solution. The narrative evidence examined in this thesis suggests that, even where the in-between subject successfully performs dominant culture normalcy, ancestry and marking remain grounds of discrimination and exclusion. Knowledge of this double-standard of belonging, however, brings us closer to recognizing what informs in-betweenness. Although in-betweenness cannot rightly be understood as a derivative of either the dominant or the Othered culture, the encounter between the individual and both cultures has a significant impact on identity formation.

Rather than describe in-betweens in terms of factors that carry with them the implication of some other identity group – skin colour, ancestry, traditions, and so forth – I describe in-betweenness as a particular set of experiences. In-betweenness is a constant doubleness. In relation to *both* the dominant and the Othered culture, the in-between constantly experiences both lack and fulfillment. Lack comes in two forms – as those aspects of the individual that are not reflected in the culture, and as the failed recognition that fragments of the individual are rooted in that culture. Fulfillment takes the shape of the reflection of fragments of the self in a culture. This fulfillment makes ties to both the dominant and Othered culture endure. The constant tension of partial belonging and partial rejection renders the place of the in-between subject in relation to society perpetually insecure.

Concepts such as immigrant community, ethnic group, and diaspora have been useful to social scientists in the analysis of encounters between dominant and Othered cultures. These concepts, however, take on power of their own, and have

resonance in more than just the academic realm. These terms can be found in political discourse, in education systems, and in the interactions of subjects with superiors, peers, family, and everyday institutions. With considerable constructive weight behind them, these terms colonize the lives of in-between subjects; in supporting false presumptions about where in-between subjects do and do not belong, they provide a foundation for repeated misrecognition and misinterpretation of in-between subjects. While such misperception has clear academic and political consequences, it also limits agency and free self-expression for those whose difference is subsumed under false categorizations.

Throughout this thesis I refer to the people whose experiences I seek to bring to attention as in-between *subjects*. This might seem a counter-intuitive choice for a project that takes up commitments against structural oppression and violence. In doing so I seek to underscore that bounded, exclusive identities and essentializing categories are embedded in the structures and institutions of power, and so not easily destabilized. These constructs act upon people with in-between identities. Their hegemony is such that they cannot easily be escaped or dismantled through personal agency. Much as in systems of slavery and indentured labour, the structure of this new colonization limits the capacity of in-betweens to affect change and produce meaningful challenges to the status quo.

Though the problems of essentialization of immigrant and cultural groups have entered into public and academic discourse, the hegemony of these categories in describing difference is often overlooked. My analysis of narratives of in-between experience draws on arguments from symbolic interactionism and dramaturgy

theories in sociology. This framing is employed with the intent of exposing the burdens of performance that these miscategorizations create. As discussed above, the terms I am concerned with are not simply suspended over subjects at the level of theory and discourse; they descend into daily lives, creating behavioural expectations. In convincing the dominant culture that it has apprehended the core of all difference, these terms dictate interaction between in-between subject and dominant culture. Obliged by power imbalance to participate in society on the dominant culture's terms, in-between subjects are severely restricted in their capacity to perform in accordance with their own experience and identities. I further establish the theoretical framing and methodological treatment of these issues in Chapter One.

Although the texts I examine in this thesis do not all make explicit reference to colonialism, all three emerge out of a context in which historical dynamics of colonialism matter. All three novels focus on encounters between subjects of South Asian descent and some dominant culture, and all were published between 2004 and 2006. Literature written by, for, and about people of South Asian descent is nothing new; this set of texts, however, reflects a relatively recent shift. In the past two decades, the children of the 1960s and 1970s wave of South Asian migration have articulated their own identities and ideas of belonging. These articulations have in turn raised questions of what it means to be South Asian outside of South Asia. It is also worth noting that all three texts are published in the wake of 9/11. The shift from positive discourses on multiculturalism to the securitization of minority (and particularly brown) identities brings old colonial tensions to the fore.

In drawing on the immediate context - the historical time, place, and politics - of its primary character each narrative exposes the endurance of the colonizing logic. Vik Lall's story is told in the context of Kenyan liberation and the new formation of the Kenyan state. Despite British decolonization, colonial logic persists in the relationship between the dominant African Kikuyu culture and various Others within the Kenyan territory. Gogol's narrative is removed from the dominant discourses of black/white American race politics. The subtlety of the encounters between Bengaliness and the American dominant culture, however, reminds us that history and physical violence are not the only sites of colonial oppression. In Jas's narrative, the encounter between a marginalized whiteness and a Desi Rude Boy dominant culture invokes colonial history explicitly. This history is made current by exploring tribalism and revisiting imperial conquest in the wake of 9/11. The full force and impact of colonial logic is demonstrated in the recounting of each character's experiences.

All three sets of experience demonstrate the colonizing logic that governs the interaction of in-between subjects with the dominant culture. Through this logic difference is Othered and inferiorized, while different individuals are co-opted, made subject to the advancement of the dominant culture. As an Asian, Vikram is treated both as inferior to the dominant Kikuyu, and excluded from an Africanness he has been immersed in since birth. Indianness in Gogol's life is treated as something alien, irrational, and undesirable, from which he must distance himself. Jas's Whiteness is a recurrent point of exclusion, and his experiences indicate a deep internalization of inferiority. The bodies and lives of all three characters are used to support the projects of key representatives of the dominant culture. Though they are

expected to honour a relationship to the dominant culture, the difference of in-between subjects is not honoured in turn.

In Chapter Two I discuss the normalization both of the dominant culture and of difference. In the first instance I bring attention to the expectations the dominant culture sets out for how individuals will think, speak, and behave. In the second, I address the idealization and essentialization of difference, which have comparable influence in shaping expectations about identity. In describing the normalization of dominant culture and difference I expose the marginalization of in-betweenness. Examining interactions between our three primary characters and representatives of their respective dominant cultures (particularly interactions that address perceptions and expectations about identity), I demonstrate the colonization of the identities of in-between subjects. Both forms of normalization exclude the identities of people who live between the margins of dominant culture and racial, ethnic, or cultural groups. At the same time, these normalizations limit in-between subjects to a choice of two equally misrepresentative sets of conditions for recognition and participation. In the final section of this chapter, I examine alterity as an in-between identity space that disrupts the dichotomy of dominant and Othered culture, examining the conditions under which alterity emerges.

Chapter One: Rooting, Narrative, Performance, and Voice

Literature Review

My work emerges from a theoretical context that is itself an in-between space. The academic ancestry of this thesis includes postcolonial, critical race, and liberal theories. Liberal thought has long set the terms of how I have understood multiculturalism, pluralism, and difference. These terms – those that isolate, concretize, and stigmatize difference, as discussed above – have never quite matched up to experience. Postcolonial and Critical Race perspectives have been equally influential; they have granted me the option of adopting a perspective that understands difference not as norm and deviation from the norm, but as a natural condition acted upon by power. Finding myself at the interstice of these three paradigms, my natural impulse was to interrogate the inconsistency of a set of perspectives that have so much to say about the same people.

What I have found most striking is that, even as it attempts to accommodate difference and resolve problems of violence and exclusion, liberal thought seems unable to escape treating people who are different as problematic objects. Postcolonial and Critical Race theory, on the other hand, problematize structure, conditions, actions – but not people. A project that claims a commitment to destabilizing structures that oppress people who are different cannot rightly ground itself in a theoretical perspective that devalues these people. Thus, I have rooted my work in Critical Race and Postcolonial paradigms that take up the logic of colonization (sometimes under the banners of empire, ethnocentrism, white supremacy, privilege, or whiteness), using it to speak to liberal thought.

Much of the literature addressing the entrenched consequences of the construction of non-white, non-European peoples as barbaric is beset with an internal struggle over how best to undo this legacy of the colonial project. One of the focal points in this debate has to do with normative attitudes on the perception of difference. Proponents of colour-consciousness argue in favour of recognition, seeing recognition as a prerequisite for working through discrimination and inequity. Race-blindness advocates, on the other hand, argue that recognition of difference perpetuates inequity-producing discrimination and encourages segmentation and fragmentation. Some of this literature is contextualized within the recent shift toward understanding difference as productive and empowering, while some precedes or excludes this shift.

In the early and mid-1990s, proponents of race-blindness cautioned against the essentializing power of difference, but also sought to avoid potential fragmentation attributed to the recognition of voices of the oppressed. The anxieties of the field seem primarily built around a concern of what might be lost with such admissions. In "Between Individualism and Fragmentation" Elizabeth Fox-Genovese articulates this concern, stating that, "[u]nless we acknowledge our diversity, we allow the silences of the received tradition to become our own. Unless we sustain some idea of a common culture, we reduce culture to personal experiences and sacrifice the very concept of America."[8] Though Fox-Genovese's argument ultimately turns on privileging an exclusive notion of American culture, her concern for balance between difference and commonality has been rearticulated many times over twenty years.

[8] Fox-Genovese, 1990, p. 29

The opposition set up by Fox-Genovese, though popular amongst race-blindness advocates, is not universally accepted as a by-product of acknowledging and empowering difference. In "Progressive Race Blindness?: Individual Identity, Group Politics, and Reform" Hutchinson provides a lengthy examination of arguments for progressive race blindness. At the heart of this set of positions are varying assumptions about race consciousness: that it discourages integration; that it essentializes groups; that it reproduces historical injustice; that it socializes people of colour to self-select into poverty; and that it, and its effects, can be dismantled. [9] Hutchinson notes that such arguments treat difference itself as the root cause of colonial violence, and therefore as a social fact to be quarantined; this approach, however, ignores the complex historical rootings and continued social effects of discrimination against difference.[10]

Proponents of race-consciousness see sensitivity to difference in theory, law, and policy as one means of undoing deeply rooted, structural co-optation of racialized bodies. Discussing the current state of race policy and political theory, Brown defends the continued necessity of race-conscious policies in the US, arguing that "[i]f America is to achieve a larger measure of racial equality, we think the government must use public policies to root out enduring racial inequality."[11] Race-consciousness provides two key arguments: that not targeting policy for racialized subjects will only perpetuate injustice; and that assuming that racialized subjects and white people receive the same treatment under the liberal status quo ignores the deeply rooted eurocentrism and white privilege at the heart of liberalism.

[9] Hutchinson, 2002, pp.1458-1465
[10] Hutchinson, 2002, pp. 1465-1475
[11] Brown, 2003, p. 32

I am interested in Brown's work on whitewashing race in the American legal and electoral systems and Hutchinson's work on colour-blindness in Critical Legal Theory because they bring attention to the equal problems of essentializing liberal whiteness as a natural identity for all and essentializing subjects as having specific racial identities. Whether they encourage a single, monolithic culture, or reinforce racialized group boundaries, both essentializations oppress subjects who are different in the interest of preserving or enhancing the power of the dominant culture.[12] Work on whitewashing and colour-blindness examines the impulse to establish social order out of race, particularly at the point of overcoming one form of oppression, often with the cost of creating another. Though this impulse is reflected in each narrative, the arguments Brown and Hutchinson present about race relations in the US have broader applicability to the extent that they capture the logic through which one practice of colonizing violence comes to replace another.

In turning a blind eye to the inequity of maintaining the status quo, arguments like Fox-Genovese's effectively recolonize difference and different subjects under the liberal dominant culture. Where Fox-Genovese objects to opening the canon up to myriad personal experiences, however, a mid-1990s activist turn in ethnic studies pushes for precisely this type of destabilization. Vered Amit-Talai and Caroline Knowles argue that the proliferation of new identities that emerged out of the post-modern shift towards individualism fails to emancipate the oppressed; their argument is based not in the fear of reproducing systems of oppression, but in the failure to attach to these new identities the type of political empowerment that would constitute a true break from histories of exclusion and

[12] Hutchinson, 2002; Brown 2003

marginalization.[13] Though arguments for the maintenance of the liberal status quo may be borne of a value for social cohesion, because this status quo is highly exclusive, it continually fails to include different subjects.

Postcolonial literature scholar Susheila Nasta, in her approach to difference and the encounter with dominant liberal whiteness, substitutes notions of home and inclusion for Critical Race theory's focus on whitewashing and race-consciousness. For Nasta, home "is not necessarily where one *belongs*, but the place where one starts from."[14] Both Nasta and Sara Ahmed describe home as a familiar space whose orderliness can be disrupted by the introduction of new lives and bodies.[15] Ahmed sites 'homing devices' as ways in which we find our way home (whether finding our way home means a return to or a first encounter with the familiar).[16] Some homing devices, however, can be used to send us home, back to our starting points, rather than to somewhere we truly belong. Where histories of the dominant culture are privileged over histories that acknowledge the presence of difference it becomes easy for marked, disruptive bodies to be sent home to ghettos of difference and essentialized spaces of the Other.

Migration, both as an individual act and as a global reality, has destabilized the orderliness of home. Nasta links the Eurocentric, white liberal bounding of participation and personhood directly to the racial constructions of home and abroad in the Empire. In *Home Truths*, Nasta examines the simultaneous belonging and exclusion of British South Asians in the context of imperial constructions of home

[13] Amit-Talai & Knowles, 1996, p. 12
[14] Nasta, 2002, p. 1
[15] Nasta, 2002, p. 2; Ahmed, 2006, p. 9
[16] Ahmed, 2006, p. 9

and colony.[17] Frequently 'sent home' to the colony, but also deeply bound up 'at home,' in the British public consciousness, the British South Asian illustrates in-betweenness well. Ahmed describes this in-betweenness as a migrant orientation, "the lived experience of facing at least two directions: toward a home that has been lost, and to a place that is not yet home." The connection to the colony, however distant it might be relative to a connection to Britain, leaves the in-between subject constantly disoriented from home.

As the in-between subject performs essentialized roles rooted in either dominant or Othered culture they must also distance themselves from those aspects of the self which are not consistent with these roles. In his treatment of the relationship of individual identity to essentialized identities that circulate in society, Madan Sarup argues that individual identities are often misconstructed as limited, particularly in relation to the defining traits of group difference.[18] For Sarup, this misconstruction fuels a repudiation of fragments of individual self-identity; as societies produce their own images of normal and different, this misconstruction can lead to fragmentation and tension within the individual. For Sarup, the simple act of misrecognition, with its limiting and distorting power over the subject, produces a gap between how we are known and how we know ourselves. Empowered only through enactment of limiting and misconstructed roles, the racialized subject is alienated from a real and self-representing agency.

The burden of performance has the effect of training in-between subjects to send themselves home – to dislocate and repudiate fragments of their own identities

[17] Nasta, 2002, p. x
[18] Sarup, 1996,

and to express these fragments only in limited safe spaces, if at all. For Stuart Hall, the key to overcoming the pain of exclusion and homing is to root and expand safe spaces by reclaiming hidden local histories.[19] Hall poses the hidden local history as a means of destabilizing hegemonic dominant culture narratives of belonging. By rooting the historically marginalized in local space, their identities become particular to time and place, but also embedded in larger national narratives. For in-betweens, however, the barriers in reclaiming local histories are great. The internalization of essentialized roles and the legacies of long-standing structural exclusion make it difficult to unearth local roots.

Examining the de facto segregation of black communities in the United States, John Calmore describes the racialization of space as "the process by which residential location and community are carried and placed on racial identity."[20] Calmore's analysis fixes on physical space, particularly the policing of the boundaries of black areas of residence within the urban centre. In a comparable study that examines the construction of community within the black middle class, Karyn Lacy refines the notion of space such that we can understand individual lives as being racially segmented. For Lacy, space connotes more than the neighbourhood or the suburb - spaces are the loci, both physical and social, of various sets of behaviour that constitute a full life.[21]

Both Calmore and Lacy's arguments about space have implications for the rooting of the in-between subject. In both cases, we see the isolation of difference in limited spaces, and the stigmatization of those spaces as spaces of difference. This

[19] Hall, 1997
[20] Calmore, 1995, p. 1235
[21] Lacy, 2004, pp. 914-924

isolation and stigmatization is entrenched in every day experience, where expressions of Otherness are often limited to private spaces. Some liberal discourses and policies claim the protection of cultural expression in the private sphere as the construction of cultural safe spaces; these acts, however, have the consequence of privileging the white, Eurocentric normal in the public sphere while quarantining difference. For the in-between subject to perform the expected identity in either public or private spaces, then, they must constantly suppress fragments of the self.

Writing about Spanish-English bilingualism, Jane Hill points out a rigid and severe distinction between acceptable (English speaking) and unacceptable (Spanish speaking) performance in the public sphere.[22] Hill goes on to describe the silencing, disempowering effects of this ordering of public space across boundaries:

> Among the most poignant of the intricate ambiguities of this duality are that worries about being "disorderly" are never completely absent from the intimacies of the inner sphere, and people who successfully negotiate outer sphere order are vulnerable to the accusation that they are "acting White," betraying their friends and relatives.[23]

Hill's work captures a certain perversity in the colonizing logic of the liberal dominant culture. On the one hand, subjects cannot participate freely, fully, or successfully in the public sphere without alienating themselves from difference. On the other, any success in the public sphere jeopardizes the capacity to 'pass' – to perform the expected identity – successfully in the private sphere.

Examination of the in-between subject's encounter with the dominant culture in public spaces likely seems natural given my interest in dominant culture colonization. Examination of the encounter with the Othered culture in private,

[22] Hill, 1998, p. 681
[23] Hill, 1998, p. 681

racialized spaces might seem like less of a logical necessity. I choose to include these encounters in my analysis. Although difference is so often and so easily relegated to private spaces, in the in-between experience these spaces fail to provide a safer space for the free expression of identity. Bryant Keith Alexander's 2004 article "Racializing Identity: Performance, Pedagogy, and Regret" examines expected performance of blackness within a black community. Alexander draws attention to the relationship between expectation and performance, citing *skin* as a crucial site of entrenched colonization.

The stakes of identity performance are high within racialized communities because private, racialized spaces are supposed to be safe spaces. In these spaces subjects are supposed to be free to express and engage in ways not possible in dominant culture-ruled public spaces. For in-between subjects, this means recognizing and honouring particular forms of difference, but not expressing *all* aspects of one's identity at once. Alexander explores "criterial beliefs"[24] as signifiers that tie racialized subjects to specific, often essentialized roles. Alexander writes of regret for what people expect out of their encounters with his skin - not simply because his identity is not crystallized in his skin, but also because he does not perform the full history of that skin. "Lately, I've been feeling my melanin not just as pigmentation that marks my body, or the felt tone and texture of Black skin, but the resonant traces of history and the politics of race."[25]

For in-between subjects, making manifest some traits, and not others, in everyday performances affects a sort of hiding. In their work on 'Everyday Life

[24] Appiah, 1996, p. 34, as cited in Alexander, 2004, p. 15
[25] Alexander, 2004, pp. 23-24

Sociology,' Adler, Adler, and Fontana provide key insights into how conditions of performance shape agency. Adler et al focus on the agency of the performer, arguing that selective performance emerges from a desire to hide.[26] This argument neglects the agency enacted on the performer in contexts where social norms of identity and identity-based behaviour are deeply rooted; it is instructive, however, to the extent that such hiding relies on careful parsing of the distinction between member and non-member behaviours on the part of the in-between subject. This helps us to locate the points at which roles scripted by the dominant culture can be distinguished from the identity of the in-between subject.

Much of the work that roles and performance do in the analysis of the narratives is consistent with the models presented by Erving Goffman and Kenneth Burke, who introduce performance and its related concepts to the language of the social sciences. Burke's description of institutions as agencies for dominance and control not only frames dominant culture scripts as an agency of control; it also employs the language of performance - acts, agents or actors, purpose, and scene - to construct a system of meaning.[27] In his 1947 review of *A Grammar of Motives*, Robert E.L. Faris states, "[a] political constitution can, for example, be viewed as a body of *acts*, performed by *agents*, with a *purpose*, to serve as a *scene* of further action, hence being an *agency* for controlling human behaviour."[28] Here we can understand essentialized roles as a body of expected behaviours, performed by in-between subjects. This summary of Burke's dramatism communicates the colonizing control of the dominant culture over the in-between subject.

[26] Adler, Adler, & Fontana, 1987, p. 223
[27] Burke, 1945, pp. xv-xxiii
[28] Faris, 1947, p. 449

The position of the in-between subject within this structure, and further, the conceptualization of the in-between subject in this research, deserves critical scrutiny. The subject is implicated in the structure I describe both actively and passively; the in-between enacts roles and is acted upon when cast in an essentialized role by the dominant culture. This duality should raise questions about the motives and mindset of the in-between subject, particularly in terms of how much a subject might identify with the performed identity. Goffman's sincerity/cynicism continuum of belief-in-performance[29] captures this concern:

> As suggested, the cycle of disbelief-to-belief can be followed in the other direction, starting with conviction or insecure aspiration and ending in cynicism. Professions which the public holds in religious awe often allow their recruits to follow the cycle in this direction, and often recruits follow it in this direction not because of a slow realization that they are deluding their audience - for by ordinary social standards the claims they make may be quite valid - but because they can use this cynicism as a means of insulating their inner selves from contact with the audience.[30]

Described in these terms, the in-between subject need not be understood as a non-thinking, passive object with no recognizability save to be acted upon. Whatever our assumptions about the subject's disposition to performance may be, essentialization and its unique relationship to the physical person do create limits on the range of scripts a subject is free to adopt. In evaluating how far essentializing roles and language go in colonizing the subject, then, we must be conscious of the structural limitations on the agency and free-choice of in-between subjects.

[29] Goffman, 1956, p. 12
[30] Goffman, 1956, p. 12

Methodology

Exclusion from the voices and language of the dominant culture creates an additional challenge to the free participation of the racialized subject. The language of the dominant culture and the academic elite (the languages/discourses of power) is not one that can be accessed and manipulated readily by the aggrieved other. The rationale for the use of literary narratives as a foundation for critique is captured well by Riggins, Conklin, and Van Dijk,[31] who argue that the formal structures and texts of the political are suitable only for majoritarian engagement and participation, failing to provide a forum for the voices of minorities. The turn to alternative forms of participation and expression – literature, music, art - is crucial to our understanding of people who are excluded by structures of power. Further, discourses constructed by dominant culture elites about the nature of difference and discrimination may enact violence against 'the different.' Not only do these discourses deny excluded people any agency in self-definition, they also prevent these people from expressing their own views and needs within democratic institutions. Effective translation from literary to political meaning, however, requires negotiation of the relationship between metaphor and truth.

In the social sciences, metaphor is often considered to be a lens that manipulates or distorts observation of fact and empirical reality. Engaging with texts that are not commonly treated as the objects of social scientific enquiry requires more of the researcher than the passive encounter with objective reality. That engagement with systems of meaning that are unfamiliar to the discipline would require the researcher to engage in active interpretation, however, is not sufficient

[31] Riggins, 1997; Conklin, 1998; Van Dijk 1997

reason to avoid the use of literary texts. The political scientist engages variously in acts of interpretation in order to better understand social and political realities. Whether through translation, historical contextualization, comparison, or statistical measurement, the work of the political scientist is to draw objects through their relevant systems of meaning in order to expose in them some kernel of truth. The standards of discourse analysis are designed to aid the social science researcher in doing just this - working through the systems of meaning created through literary authorship in order to access some underlying fact.

The philosophy and methods of critical discourse analysis adopted here reflect the perspectives of Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak. Fairclough's views on the links between language and power imbalance and on the influence of language in shaping social institutions[32] and Wodak's treatment of the social as text[33] inform both the criteria used to establish the relevance of specific passages (data selection) and the treatment of textual narratives as reliable living representations of the social and the political (data interpretation). While the use of discourse analysis in this research is in part influenced by limited data availability, this choice is also guided by strengths of the method itself, particularly its capacity to accommodate complexity and access meaning. Frameworks for conceptualization and analysis provided by Fairclough, James Paul Gee, and Teun Van Dijk combine contexts, meanings, power dynamics, and locations in contributing to our understanding of social texts.

In building the analytical approach for this research I was conscious of two desires: to identify politically relevant meaning in atypical sources; and to render this meaning legible to institutionalized social science. In pursuit of the first, I adapted

[32] Fairclough, 2001
[33] Wodak et al, 2009

my framework of analysis in order to pull apart multiple layers of meaning and action within each narrative. In pursuit of the second, I was careful to establish common meaning between text and theory through the analytical process. In order to navigate the fluidity of these two analytical functions, I rely on one integrated framework of discursive queries. This framework is based on adaptations of Gee's model of 6 elements of constructed social meaning (semiotic building, world building, activity building, socio-culturally situated identity and relationship building, political building and connection building) his 18 question framework for assessment of social meaning, Fairclough's four degrees of textual presence and absence (foregrounded information, backgrounded information, presupposed information, and absent information), and Van Dijk's 8 element schema for political debate analysis.

In applying discourse analysis methods to my three chosen narratives I have engaged in a process-driven research project. At the outset of my research, I took as my point of departure three source texts (discussed in some detail below) and an assumption that these texts could contribute to my grasp of the relationship between the in-between subject and the dominant culture. To parse fact from metaphor, texts were distilled into passages of action and dialogue. These passages were then reduced to interactions – evidence of engagement between in-between subjects and a dominant culture. These interactions were analysed using two sets of categories, in a process described below. The result of this analysis is a set of generalized conclusions about the standards of identity and belonging applied to in-betweens and the conditions for exclusion and withdrawal of participation rights. These

conclusions are legible under the discursive standards of political science, but still constituted by the same basic facts and meaning as the initial texts.

Practically, my work began with a review of the texts guided by a selection from Gee's framework. Further study of interactions between racialized subjects and the dominant culture required a move away from the chronologies, symbols, and tales of each text. This shift has the dual effect of deemphasizing creative particularities while exposing the basis – the core dynamics of participation - for the reconstruction of textual evidence in the form of narratives of social and political phenomena. Over 240 interactions were analysed for content relating to three categories identified based on review of the available literature. In the course of this analysis, additional categories that describe the relationship between in-between subject and dominant culture became evident,[34] and each interaction was reclassified and annotated under the revised set of categories. Analysis through Van Dijk's analytical schema for the description of Others in Western parliaments exposes the norms embedded in these interactions.

While I do not argue that the three novels analysed here provide a comprehensive sample of the gamut of experiences represented in South Asian diasporic or post-immigrant literature, they do provide strong evidence that should encourage scholarship, as it has encouraged mine, to reflect critically and build new hypotheses on existing models of difference, belonging, and citizenship. I treat these literary texts as cases of dominant culture scripting and racialized performance – my project is a comparative analysis of oppression and barriers to participation, not of literary device and symbolism. My goal in retelling the stories of Jas, Gogol, and

[34] Normalcy, indigeneity, misrecognition, passage of boundaries, exercise of belonging, and accessing and assimilation.

Vikram in the language of political science is to illustrate that dominant cultures set out false and coercive roles for in-between subjects, to the extent of arresting their voices and their exercise of agency in both public and private engagement. These narratives are nuanced, diverse, and complex, but share in common a project of representing a disjointed experience of racialized subjects in plural societies.

Set in late- and post-colonial Kenya, *The In-Between world of Vikram Lall*[35] tells the story of Vikram, sometimes Vik, sometimes Lalljee, as he struggles to live a life set out for him by accidents of birth and history. A vignette of the transition from White Colonial rule to African-led independence, this narrative describes a particular form of alienness - the experience of the Asian (or Indian) - primarily in relation to the dominant construction of Africanness, though also in the context of the tensions between Whiteness, Europeanness, colonizers and Blackness, Africanness, colonized. Vikram's role, in this context, is scripted as Asian, and nothing but. Vikram's public interactions are heavily regulated through the reinforcement of boundaries between Asian and African and the designation of Asian public spaces and roles. His private life becomes a space for the re-enactment of this performative Asianness. Narrating in the first person, Vikram recounts his own struggles in performance and hiding, with focus on how his choices and opportunities are shaped through the construction of Asianness in the Kenyan context.

Vikram's narrative focuses on three periods in his life - his childhood experiences of the politicization of race during the Mau Mau uprising, the establishment of new boundaries and norms in his early adulthood, and the cementing of race roles in his adult life. His personal and professional relationships

[35] M.G. Vassanji, 2004

reflect the shifts in power and racial politics of his time. Vikram's childhood relationship to the white Bruce family, particularly Annie, haunts him for much of his life; Vikram's frequent recollections of Annie after the Bruce murders and the end of colonial rule remind us of the relationship to Whiteness and colonial history that remain just beyond the foreground throughout the narrative. The remaining relationships that lend meaning to Vikram's narrative are situated within the relationship between dominant culture and racially excluded other. Relationships to Africanness and Asianness are represented in Vikram's professional engagements and family, respectively. These relationships are particularly influential in the scripting of Vikram's racialized role as Asian. His sister Deepa and lifelong friend Njoroge remind us of the rooting of his life in an experience of Asianness that is distinctly, transcendently, and transgressively Kenyan.

The Namesake[36] examines the life of the Ganguli family from the late 1960s to the late 1990s, over the span of the first thirty years of the life of Gogol, the first son of Ashima and Ashoke. Although significant portions of the novel tell the stories of Ashoke and Ashima, both of whom were born in India and relocate to Boston as adults, my analysis focuses primarily on Gogol's experiences. Unlike *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, this narrative is not contextualized in contemporary racial politics. Though Gogol is born in the year of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination and his life develops over the course of decades of significant change in the racial culture of the U.S., public racial politics are not so much as incorporated into the background of this narrative. There is a notable absence of Blackness from Gogol's interactions with alterity - a fact that is contrasted sharply by the self-conscious

[36] Jhumpa Lahiri, 2003

relationships to Blackness in *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* and *Londonstani*. Interactions across the bounds of racialized group identities are instead couched in terms of misunderstanding and non-communication. The impact of these conditions on the incursion of the public on the private is represented frequently throughout the narrative.

Gogol himself is a character full of contradiction and coconstitution. Both publicly and privately, he seems always constrained by the incongruence of Bengaliness and Americanness. By the same token, however, these two modes of being are constant for Gogol; in each interaction he is as much compelled by them as he is constrained. Gogol negotiates this tension throughout his life, at school, with peers, with the Bengali friends and community of his parents. The tension is perhaps best represented in his relationships with Max and Mo, romantic relationships given considerable attention in the narrative. These relationships are of interest in their representations of engagement with both the private and the public. On the question of the private, these relationships confront the reader with a tension between adhering to one of two sets of expectations attached to Bengaliness in the American space - to assimilate or to resist. With respect to the public, I am interested in the publics Gogol has access to and how his engagement with these publics is mediated by his relationships to Max and Mo.

The cultural context of *Londonstani*[37] is perhaps the most complex arrangement of dominant culture-racialized subject relations addressed in this research. Set in the early 2000s in the London, U.K., suburb of Hounslow, this text provides a narrative of nested dominant cultures. Protagonist Jas, a nineteen year-

[37] Gautam Malkani, 2006

old white male, narrates his own experience engaging with the Desi Rudeboy culture enforced by young men of Punjabi descent in Hounslow. The immediately relevant political context, then, is less the social, political, and cultural inequality faced by racialized people in Britain than the reactive enforcement of Desiness in spaces dominated by British South Asian youth. Jas's access to both public and private spaces governed by Desiness thus depends on his relationship to the other members of Hardjit's crew - Hardjit, Amit, and Ravi. These three actively enforce performance of the dominant culture identity, with a normative expectation that the dominant culture will saturate personal and societal norms and behaviours. Thus, they regulate not only Jas's participation in public life, but also his choices in private life.

Jas's interactions with Hardjit, Amit, and Ravi centre primarily on various activities that the crew engage in to reinforce their own power - image building, (violent) competition with rivals, and informal trade. The assimilation of Jas into these spaces, however, requires a degree of performative training that extends into the private realm as well; through engagement with the crew, Jas learns Desi rationality, consumption, and custom and is groomed for and gains access to Desi private spaces. Two aspects of this narrative are particularly troubling. First, the performance of dominant culture roles seems to create distance between Jas and non-Desi private and public spaces, rendering him foreign to his own origins. Second, rigid restrictions are placed on Jas's participation in Desi-governed spaces, both in terms of the extent to which he is integrated and the limits placed on his constructive agency. In this narrative, we once again see a gendered discrepancy between public and private - Jas's experience of the private is regulated by the

mothers of the other members of Hardjit's crew. The feminization of private spaces raises questions about passivity that are relevant to an understanding of hiding and the limits of performance.

The question of case selection has not been far from my mind throughout the research process. At first glance, aside from a shared origin in the ever-broad body of South Asian diasporic literature, these novels appear to have little in common. The narratives are anachronistic, take place in remarkably different states, and represent different regimes, institutional arrangements, and race politics. These differences, however, are precisely what lend this research the potential to provide general insight into the nature of the relationship between dominant culture and racialized subject, particularly in terms of oppressive incursions on the freedom of the subject in what is typically understood to be a protected space of individuality. Though they depict historical and geopolitical particularities, these narratives are all produced by authors of South Asian descent in the early 2000s; emerging from a shared diasporic political climate, these narratives present a cohesive set of questions of race and identity politics relevant to an understanding of race and identity today.

Chapter 2: Writing Normalized Identities, Exclusion, and Alterity

Introduction

Normalized identities, whether created in the image of a dominant or an Othered culture, are highly specific. They are specific to the society in which they emerge. They are specific to the demographic and migration patterns of that society. They are specific to the structure in which they operate. Most importantly, they are specific to the dominant culture that produces them. Both identities establish norms of behaviour for in-between subjects. The dominant culture identity establishes an image of a naturalized, normalized, neutral person that reflects the values and rationality of the dominant culture. The Othered culture identity defines the content of what occurs within the boundaries of immigrant communities, ethnic groups, and diaspora, but does so based on the dominant culture's interpretations of Otherness. The result is a normalized Othered culture identity that is particular to the dominant culture. This normalized identity is not a true representation of difference.[38]

In this Chapter I discuss rooting, marking, deference, and communication – components of the scripts of normalized identities. Rooting, marking, deference, and communication are general categories used to organize observations drawn from each narrative. Referring to specific interactions in each text, I provide a comparative analysis of normalized dominant culture identity and normalized difference. This analysis establishes the common basis of normalized identities and the double-standards that emerge in everyday experience. The results of this analysis

[38] Essentialized Othered culture identities, as I define them, are not simply constructions of the other that map onto an internal, domestic culture 'us' and an external, independent culture 'them.' Rather, they are prescriptive and specific to a dominant culture. Essentialized Othered culture identities construct an alterity that exists only in relation to a particular dominant culture, and becomes the only acceptable expression of identity difference for Others and in-between subjects.

help us to understand how in-betweenness produces systematic exclusion and how the agency of in-between subjects is monopolized by these two normalized identities. The final section of this chapter examines interactions in which identity is unscripted and often transgresses normalized scripts. These unscripted performances of in-betweenness or 'alterity' provide some idea of how to expand the description of difference in plural societies.

We are introduced to Vikram Lall's Kenya at a time of great political and social upheaval. The narrative of Vikram's experience as a racialized Indian or Asian in relation to the Kenyan African dominant culture provides us with insight into the dynamics of identity-normalization. In this narrative, normalized identities become entrenched within the Kenyan social structure (or the structure of those parts of the population and territory to which we are exposed) through competition amongst elites seeking power and privilege. The foundations of these identities are evident in Vikram's childhood, when various identities are newly politicized. As the narrative evolves, the impact of political and social positioning and elite agency advances the standing of Kikuyu identity beyond others. The meaning of Asianness in the Kenyan context remains under-articulated throughout these struggles. As the Kenyan political reality stabilizes, normalized identities and their power arrangements become entrenched. Vikram's adult life shows us that the decolonization of Kenya brings with it a new colonization of in-between subjects.

Normalized identities govern Gogol's participation in the American public space. These identities are deployed against Gogol in an environment structured by both the formal institutions of state and society and the institutions of culture and national history. Normalized identities confront Gogol at school, at work, in his

interactions with peers and colleagues, and are embedded in the architectures of state and nation that Gogol encounters throughout the narrative. They do not exclude Gogol, as a racialized subject, by matter of rule. In their bias towards Whiteness and a specific subset of European ancestry, however, they do render Gogol's full participation in public spaces precarious. Failure to perform these identities does not preclude Gogol (or his family) from formal citizenship, or even partial recognition within the American space, but does create significant barriers to their participation.

The narrative of *Londonstani* provides a vivid depiction of the brutality with which dominant cultures control in-between subjects. In Londonstan (the London suburb of Hounslow Heath) Jas's peers enforce the dominant culture identity as much through overt aggression and brutality as through teaching and socialization. This enforcement is an essential component of the narrative, giving us insight into the power of dominant culture elites as enforcers and gatekeepers of their own privilege. Normalized identities take root in various interactions - in relationships of kin, brotherhood, and in inter-familial engagement, as well as in aesthetic experiences of greeting, of respect, and of pleasure. The harsh and extreme depiction of the relationship between the in-between subject and the dominant culture in this narrative speaks to the violence of colonizing identities. With the context of these three narratives in mind, I turn now to more specific discussion of the constitutive features of normalized identity.

Rooting, marking, deference, and communication can be thought of as vantage points in a broader plane of identity. Each feature is, at times, treated as the definitive indicator of an individual's identity. The questions of where a body is from, what that body looks like, where a person's loyalty lies, and what language a

person speaks are often used to make claims about individual identity. In this analysis, however, these features are taken together in order to provide insight into their intersections, and into how they are jointly deployed in claims made on the identities of in-between subjects. It is outside of the scope of this thesis to provide a full account of the algebra of identity that uses rooting, marking, deference, and communication as its terms. I have attempted, nonetheless, to address some of the points at which these features add to and detract from broader identity claims.

Rooting

Latent notions of rootedness, homing, belonging and indigeneity, are found in each of the three narratives. These ideas are embedded in the structural relationships between dominant society, difference, and in-betweenness. Rooting, as a general category, refers to myths, practices, symbols, and histories that locate the individual in a cultural space. Rooting has an interesting and powerful relationship to territory. Since it establishes a connection between the individual and a culture, rooting supports the dislocation or 'sending home' of subjects who fail to reproduce the dominant culture identity. As Othered cultures in fact exist within the same territory as the dominant culture, such subjects are pushed out of a shared cultural space, and have roots only in the shared territory.

Rooting connects the subject to a deep history of local events, lives, and folklore. Privilege embedded in the social structure, however, ensures that over time only certain local histories survive. Bolstered by social, political, and economic supports, dominant culture narratives proliferate and become the default for indigeneity. Local histories of difference, by contrast, receive far less structural support, and often vanish or become buried. Local histories of difference are

replaced with the histories of distant places and cultures. Versions of these distant histories become the dominant culture's narrative of Othered culture history. Although they do not represent the lived experience of difference within the society, these distant histories provide an external reference point to which Othered culture identity can be excluded and relocated.

Discrepancies in the processes and historical conditions through which normalized identities emerge produce certain differences at the level of rooting. For the dominant culture, a sense of rooting seems to accumulate and deepen over time, reinforcing existing relationships and privileges. The dominant culture identity is recognized and strengthened when rooted to the local by birthright, by a sort of cultural indigeneity, and by cultural fluency and knowledgeability. For the Othered culture, rooting is extraterritorial, and focuses on effacing the individual's legitimate connection to the local. Othered culture identity is diminished through inversion of birthright, alienation from local territory, and exclusion from local social life. These double standards require a careful negotiation on the part of the in-between subject.

The in-between is rooted to the dominant culture in some ways – being born into it, adhering to some of its myths and endorsing some of its symbols. Sharing some of the standards of rooting associated with the Othered culture, however, renders the in-between subject insecure, perhaps even as threatening, vis-à-vis the dominant culture. In-between subjects are at home in neither of these arrangements. These subjects are born into the dominant culture, but are also attributed a sort of inverse birthright to an Othered culture that is not truly theirs. Local histories of difference are central to the experiences of in-between subjects; although these histories may be brief and not as deeply rooted as the histories of the dominant

culture, they give roots to the diversity and experiences of exchange that shape in-betweenness. These factors work together to create conditions in which the in-between subject is present, but not fully included.

Negotiating birth in The Namesake

Discussion of birth and rooting resurfaces at various points in the narrative of *The Namesake*. The novel opens by describing the circumstances of Gogol's birth, anchoring the narrative in his life and experiences in New England.[39] Gogol's birth and early life are characterized in terms of negotiation between two cultures. Described as haphazard,[40] Gogol's initiation into the world involves repeated improvisation on the part of his parents, who adapt Bengali ritual that American territory and institutions cannot support. In one such act of improvisation, Ashima and Ashoke substitute "a clump of cold Cambridge soil dug up from the backyard"[41] in a Bengali ritual that predicts a child's future path. Gogol's life, from its earliest formation, is rooted to both Bengaliness and Americanness through cultural structures and material, physical realities.

Despite an apparent and necessary relationship to the American territory he inhabits, Gogol's belonging within that space is repeatedly depicted as uncertain and precarious. Such interactions bring to light how double-standards of belonging are reinforced when dominant culture histories are privileged over other histories. On a class trip studying regional history, Gogol recognizes that his names will not appear

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[39] The choice to anchor the narrative in New England, the frontier of much of conceptual America in American literature and history, is arguably of great significance to the projection of *The Namesake* as an American story. In locating Gogol's experiences at the heart of the American space, the author sets up a narrative of in-betweenness that can be a part of the American experience in a way that a narrative set in an exceptionally cosmopolitan space like New York City or Los Angeles would not.

[40] Lahiri, 2003, p. 25

[41] Lahiri, 2003, p. 40

on the tombstones in a centuries old graveyard. This register of the historical rooting of peoples in America produces no evidence to convince Gogol that a person like him might have been a part of American national history. The crayon impressions he takes of graves of dead American strangers remain in Gogol's family home until his mother's return to India. The record of the only encounter that implicates Gogol in the history of the American nation, these crayon impressions are remembered only when Gogol packs up the Ganguli home in preparation for Ashima's departure; that Gogol is only rooted at the moment of his uprooting demonstrates the precariousness of his alterity.

The almost constant crisis of belonging for the in-between subject is reproduced when the in-between subject is directly exposed to racial double-standards. Gogol's birth and heritage are easily destabilized by Lydia, a principal figure of the white American dominant culture. Using place of birth as a key marker of belonging, Lydia is unable to locate Gogol as American or Indian. Lydia is aware of the possibility that the child of Indian parents may be American-born and a citizen. Gogol's vague Otherness, however – his name, his family's cultural practices, his marked body – overshadows and jeopardizes the dramaturgic effectiveness of his birthright. Lydia's invocation of an inverse birthright, rooting Gogol in Indianness, is a reminder of the ease with which the in-between subject is pushed out of the American cultural space.

Constructing indigeneity in The In-Between World of Vikram Lall

The most prevailing and exclusive of the normalizing scripts that mediate Vikram's relationship to the new Kenyan culture in *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* relies on the naturalization of Kikuyu identity as an authentic, universal, and

indigenous Kenyanness. Within this narrative, the scripting of indigeneity as part of the Kenyan normal has its origins in the Kenyan independence struggle, particularly the importance of the largely Kikuyu Mau Mau fighters. Mau Mau initiation and oathing ceremonies, as the narrative depicts them, emphasize a relationship between subject and the Kenyan territory mediated by blood, soil, flesh, and spirituality.

Though Vikram is initiated into an indigenous Kenyanness through one such ceremony,[42] the early narrative gives evidence that his Asianness is uniquely made indigenous as well. The Asian population of Kenya, over generations, embeds itself into the structure and historical life of the Kenyan nation. The legends surrounding Vikram's grandfather's work on the East African Railway locate Dadaji and the other patriarchs of the Indian community through the same notions of blood, soil, flesh, and spirituality.[43] The railway – a constructed incursion on the African territory, introduced through the colonial will, but nevertheless a fact of Kenyan national infrastructure – recurs throughout the narrative as a symbol of Vikram's rootedness.[44] The bounds of indigeneity, however, are drawn within the African Kenyan dominant culture in such a way that the blood of the normal is understood as emerging from local soil - Asians and other racialized subjects cannot access indigeneity because they are not local, not really Kenyan.

Though the Asian Other is allowed into Kenyan public space, strict gatekeeping maintains the bounds between African Kenyanness and any interloping

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[42] Vassanji, 2004, p. 99
[43] Vassanji, 2004, p. 60
[44] Vassanji, 2004, p. 63 (the recounting of the history of the Lall family, and other Indian families of the region, as rooted in the construction of the railway); Section 3 (Vikram's work on the railway brings him back to his childhood home, physically, and symbolically back to his families history. This is particularly clear in the opening pages of the section, which depict Vikram and his grandfather riding the railway back to Nakuru.); Section 3 (Janice and Mungai's cottage, an abandoned railway station, becomes a safe haven for Vikram, and the site of recurrent visits in the later narrative).

racial or ethnic groups. Though some of the (white) racialized subjects expelled from the Kenyan space are Kenyan-born, their relationship to 'alien' rule renders them Other. This link to an externalized nation and culture destabilizes the legitimacy of the White presence in the African Kenyan space. The Asian subject cannot so clearly be sent home. The indigenous roots of Asian subjects disintegrate with the partition of India. Their privileged connection to the colonizer gives these subjects an alternate home in the Empire, but they lack an indigenous connection to a white homeland. This ambiguous relationship to national spaces renders Asian indigeneity insecure. Though they cannot perform to the Kenyan standard of rooting, they lack viable roots outside of Kenya.

Cultural Embeddedness in Londonstani

In *Londonstani*, the impression of a deep rooting in Desi culture has the strongest impact on Jas's legibility and participation within spaces governed by the Desi dominant culture. This cultural embeddedness is signaled in many ways throughout the narrative - in the explanation and observation of various Desi rules, values, and customs; in knowledge of Desi political and religious histories; and in reproduction of Desi aesthetic standards (as discussed below). Jas's adept projection of a Desi cultural formation earns him some access and privilege within Desi spaces. His reproduction of Desi cultural formation in his performance of identity marks him as properly socialized – properly controlled and shaped through the strength of Desiness. This embeddedness, however, is destabilized by Jas's competing rooting in Whiteness.

The crisis of Jas's legitimate rooting in the Desi cultural space is perpetuated by the proximity of Whiteness. Unlike the narratives of *The In-between World of*

Vikram Lall and *The Namesake*, in *Londonstani* the possibility of a home or space for the Othered culture seems much more realistic. We see repeatedly, however, that Jas himself does not feel rooted in White cultural spaces. Jas's recounting of his experiences within White spaces are characterized by conflict and voicelessness. At school and in social interactions, Jas's self-expression is hindered by a stutter. Despite interventions from his parents and his teacher, Mr. Ashwood, Jas only finds the freedom to use his voice in his exposure to Desiness. Performing a normalized Whiteness, Jas expresses frustration with the limits placed on him and the limits of the space he occupies.[45] Although Jas has spent much of his life in spaces of Whiteness, his embeddedness in White culture does not make the White space a suitable home.

That Jas is embedded in both dominant and Othered culture makes his rooting either partial or insecure. His interactions within spaces of Othered White culture are characterized by a lack, but a desire to (re)gain the privileges associated with belonging in Desi spaces. Despite Jas's effective performance of a Desi rooting, within Desi spaces the legitimacy of his belonging is continually questioned. When Jas acts in the capacity of brother he is viewed with suspicion[46] and serious restrictions are placed on his voice.[47] In both spaces, Jas is required to repudiate aspects of his identity in order to conform to the structural limits. These conditions of belonging mute Jas's voice. Despite a sustained performance of rootedness in both spaces, Jas, as in-between, is able to secure his participation and belonging in neither.

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[45] Malkani, 2006, pp. 26-28; pp. 33
[46] Malkani, 2006, p. 175
[47] Malkani, 2006, pp. 259-270

Marking

Marking refers to the various ways in which identity and identity performance might be visible. Of the four components of essentialized identities, marking is perhaps the most openly discussed as a potential site of discrimination and essentialization. Marking enters into real life public discourse in discussions of profiling, segregation in public and commercial spaces, micro-level racism, and more. This discussion addresses issues of intent, agency, and meaning connected to marking with varying success. Consideration of intent, agency, and meaning should impact analytical use of marking because only some forms of marking are within the control of the subject. This limited control must be accounted for when we examine the impact of marking on the in-between subject's ability to negotiate normalized identities.

In reproducing images of normalized identities, marking appeals to the familiar. By embodying the image of the dominant or Othered culture, in-between subjects can make themselves recognizable. Here, again, we see a double standard. The dominant culture understands personhood through its own experiences. The in-between can approximate the dominant culture image through two sets of practices; by dressing, grooming, and carrying the body in particular ways, and; by consuming the food, art, and ideas the dominant culture values. While these patterns hold for the Othered culture as well, Othering is also linked to physical features in a way dominant culture belonging is not. Whereas the physical features associated with the Othered culture are stigmatized, features associated with the dominant culture are treated as neutral and without meaning. No matter how convincingly an in-between

subject might assume dominant culture markings, any trace of Otherness found in the body can be cause for exclusion.

Some forms of marking can be deployed and adapted through agency – manner of dress, manner of speaking (although accent is not subject to control in all cases), and religious practice, for example. The subject has less power in moderating other forms of marking. The meanings of physical features, particularly those frequently associated with racial identities (eye shape, hair colour, texture, and shape, skin colour, etc) vary according to context. Some subjects, under some circumstances, will successfully pass as one or another normalized identity by adopting or emphasizing certain markings. Those markings that are difficult to moderate, however, may intervene in the perception of identity. The social meanings attached to these markings contribute to the colonization of in-between bodies.

The variety of traits, practices, styles, etc. that fall under 'marking' poses a challenge for in-betweenness; it is nearly impossible for the in-between subject to avoid or suppress all forms of marking associated with Othered culture identity. At the most basic level, skin colour, facial features and hair texture cannot be effaced. When these markers evoke the image of the Other, the in-between subject has little power to adapt. The persistence of criterial beliefs about such markers limits the effectiveness of the in-between subject's performance of dominant culture identity. Thus, in-between subjects never pass in the dominant culture, and always bear a resemblance to the excluded Other.

Consumption and the American aesthetic in The Namesake

Adherence to aesthetic scripts has a direct impact on legibility and participation in the American spaces of *The Namesake*. In their fashion, their musical

and pop-culture interests, and the foods they prefer, Gogol and his sister Sonia adhere to scripts of the American normal. They approach enactment of American Christmas with a robustness not extended to Bengali and Hindu celebrations, but these enactments remain partial, as the Gangulis do not have access to the social and familial capital needed to fully stage a performance of the American Christmas.[48] Perhaps most telling is Gogol's experience of Maxine's parents' aesthetic - in his interactions with Maxine's family, little is explained, and nothing is compromised or improvised. The ease and lack of self-consciousness with which Lydia and Gerald participate in and share their own tastes betrays the normalization and neutralization of particular aesthetic within the American.

Aesthetic consumption and other forms of marking give us insight into the distinctions between the Othered cultural identity and distinct but unrecognized identities. Consider the distinction implied in *The Namesake* between Indianness and Bengaliness. Although the narrative develops an elaborate image of Bengali culture as experienced by Gogol and his family, members of the American dominant culture seldom engage with Bengaliness. The few interactions in which members of the dominant culture do articulate the essentialized Indian identity demonstrate a lack of familiarity with Bengaliness.[49] Indianness, then, can be realized through superficial markings, with little reference to individual behaviour. Bengaliness, by contrast, is articulated through specific acts of aesthetic consumption, including practices of hospitality[50] and the maintenance of Bengali systems of meaning through ritual

[48] Lahiri, 2003, pp. 64-65
[49] Lahiri, 2003, p. 39 (Judy, the landlord, projects the stereotype of Indians as vegetarians onto the Gangulis, not knowing the particularities of Bengali beliefs and practices); p. 46 (Ashima is referred to as "that Indian lady" by a stranger on the subway); p. 156 (Maxine describes Bengali naming practices and Gogol's struggle with them as cute)
[50] Lahiri, 2003, pp. 145-150; p. 290

consumption.[51] The inconsistency in the depth of meaning of cultural consumption creates a challenge for the in-between subject.

Gogol's negotiation of aesthetic consumption involves a complex dynamic of attraction and repudiation. As a teenager, Gogol's acts of hiding regard superficial markers of his in-betweenness, particularly his Russian name. He enters into adulthood with a name that conforms more readily to a scripted Indianness. Distanced from his own in-betweenness, Gogol shifts towards preserving the boundaries of two cultural identities. Dominant and Othered culture identities are supposed to be distinct and mutually exclusive, but Gogol's in-betweenness points to a space where these identities overlap. Gogol personifies a jeopardization of boundaries that pushes essentialized identities into crisis. Though he seems to value aesthetics and artifacts of both cultures,[52] Gogol rarely finds spaces in which his cultural consumption can transgress borders. In both spaces, Gogol fails in his attempts to achieve belonging through conformity; by working so much to preserve the distinctiveness of his cultural identities, Gogol exacerbates the structural failure to accommodate his in-betweenness.

Marking and passage in The In-between World of Vikram Lall

In *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* marking has a strong influence in setting the boundaries of identity and belonging. Further, the relationship between adaptable and more permanent forms of marking is highly specified. At first glance, each group seems to have a particular set of looks, a language, to live in a specific area, and to adhere to a distinct set of cultural norms and practices. The central characters and representative figures of identity groups in the narrative – Vikram's

[51] Lahiri, 2003, pp. 38-40
[52] Lahiri 2003, pp.11-112; p. 208; pp. 136-141

parents, Njoroge, Paul Nderi, Annie, Sophia, and others – conform to the standards of normalized identities. Identity, and how it maps onto bodies, is not questioned in the interpersonal interactions and business of everyday life. Attention to the margins (which we are granted through Vikram's quiet observations), however, demonstrates that boundaries are more porous and marking less fixed than the performances of these characters would indicate.

Africans, Asians, and Europeans come into frequent contact and live in close proximity. This blurring of spatial boundaries disrupts the exclusivity of identities, allowing relationships to form where an essentializing identity structure deems they should not. We see such relationships in the kindnesses extended between Njoroge's family, the Lalls, and the Bruces, where Njoroge is nurtured by Vikram's mother,[53] as are Deepa and Annie by Njoroge's grandfather.[54] Even within these groups, however, the presence of difference destabilizes the structural arrangement of identities. Vikram is aware of distinctions between his Hindu Punjabi family and their Muslim Punjabi friends, and later of the bounds that separate him from Yasmin, a Muslim Gujarati love interest. Though they are all considered Asian, the heterogeneity of these sub-groups brings attention to the failure of the dominant narrative to describe difference.

Vikram's observations of the peculiarities of his world further support the arguments that dominant narratives of identity misrepresent and restrict in-between subjects. Vikram's location within this world reveals a number of overlapping in-betweens. Through the narrative, Asianness is treated as in-betweenness – not quite African, not quite European, and difficult to parse. Vikram's Mahesh Uncle, an

[53] Vassanji, 2004, p. 47
[54] Vassanji, 2004, p. 74

Indian-born radical Marxist who supports the Mau Mau freedom struggle, and Sakina Dadi, a Masai-born woman who marries into and effectively performs Punjabi Muslimness, expose the additional in-betweenness at the margins of an essentialized Asian identity. Sakina Dadi and Mahesh Uncle are treated as unremarkable until their transgressive markings come into conflict with the dominant narrative.[55] So long as in-betweenness does not disrupt the order of the dominant culture, it may be overlooked; yet when and why in-betweenness will become transgression is often beyond individual control.

Reproduction of the Desi aesthetic in Londonstani

The Desi aesthetic experience is both a first point of contact and one of the most accessible scripts for Jas. In adopting this aesthetic in many aspects of his conduct and projected image, Jas mitigates the strength of the exclusionary effects of his racialized difference; in learning to communicate in the Desi pidgin, to consume regularly the common fare (food, entertainment, particular brands) of Desiness, and to adopt Desi standards of self-presentation, Jas effectively dons layers of Desi stage make-up, obscuring his racialized Whiteness. Within spaces governed by the dominant culture, the Desi aesthetic is relatively ordinary - constructed as organic, natural and normal. In reproducing the Desi experience, Jas inscribes this dominant culture identity onto his own body, ensuring his recognition and participation in the Desi space.

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[55] Vikram is unaware that Sakina Dadi is from a Masai tribe until her son, Saeed Molabux, of Masai and Punjabi Muslim descent, is nearly arrested under suspicion he may be a Mau Mau fighter. Only when the superficial physical markers of Africanness become politicized does Sakina Dadi's performance of the adaptable markings of Asianness come into question. (See pp. 34-40). Mahesh Uncle's anti-colonialism and sympathy for the Mau Mau sets him apart from the rest of the Indian community. Although this destabilizes his belonging in Asian spaces, his loyalty to the African cause secures his place in the broader Kenyan space (pp 30-31; pp. 122-135). In the later narrative, however, Mahesh Uncles Marxist leanings bring him into conflict with the dominant culture, leading to his expulsion from Kenya.

The disposition taken toward difference by key figures of Desiness exposes the power of the deep structural embedding of essentialized identities. Jas spends much of his time with Hardjit, Arun, and Amit – Hardjit's crew. Hardjit, with the sometimes hapless support of Amit and Arun, enforces a strict set of rules of Desi conduct.[56] Chief among the transgressions of concern to Hardjit and his crew are displays of Coconuttyness.[57] The Coconut – brown outside, white inside – is physically marked to reflect the dominant culture, but performs adaptable aesthetic markings more consistent with the Othered culture. In the eyes of the Desi dominant culture, this willful enactment of difference threatens the natural (or naturalized) superiority of dominant culture identity.

This perceived threat gives Jas's in-betweenness a degree of political consequence. Coconuttyness is objectionable not simply because it transgresses deeply embedded group boundaries, but also because it smuggles fragments of the White British Othered culture into the dominant culture space. To avoid the sanctions associated with transgressive displays of Whiteness, Jas repeatedly distances himself from the White aspects of his in-betweenness. Jas often describes his pre-initiation self as coconutty and poncey, with indications that he sees these as negative traits. In several interactions, we see Jas distance himself, often through physical or verbal violence, from friends or family whose contact would reinscribe these qualities of Whiteness on him.[58] Although these sanctions against Whiteness regard externalized manifestations of identity, they require deeper acts of violence against the self on the part of the in-between subject.

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[56] Malkani, 2006, p. 39; p. 41; p. 42; p. 45; p. 54; p. 60; p, 61
[57] Malkani, 2006, pp. 20-24
[58] Malkani, 2006, pp. 12-13; pp. 145-149; pp.198-204; pp. 338-340

Deference

Deference can be understood as a subject's behaviour towards the values, morals, beliefs, and norms associated with a normalized identity. Deference might otherwise be labeled as loyalty, patriotism, or commitment. This component of essentialized identity has a direct role in limiting a subject's agency. As values, morals, beliefs, and norms are not highly visible, deference to these aspects of a culture must be demonstrated through acts. For those attempting to pass into a culture, this requires meticulous observation of rules and social cues. Further, in order for the in-between subject to convincingly perform a normalized identity, deference must be absolute. Rooting and marking compound the double-standard of deference; whereas the belonging of in-between subjects is constantly in-question, non-in-betweens enjoy a greater freedom to contest cultural norms, values, and beliefs. Signs of dissent or prioritization of the values of another culture jeopardize the appearance of absolute deference; the subject's capacity to effect change or recognize the value of multiple cultures is thus inhibited.

Deference to the dominant culture involves a demonstrated understanding of what is considered meaningful and valuable in that culture. The subject demonstrates deference to the dominant culture by expressing views and engaging in acts that advance the dominant culture; by participating in dominant culture rites, customs, and traditions, and by conforming to the views and practices of other members of the dominant culture. Deference to the Othered culture, however, is subject to a different sort of scrutiny. Deference to the Othered culture is not signaled through engaging, expressing, or advancing the values of the Othered

culture. Instead deference to the Othered culture is imputed into behaviour that deviates from dominant culture norms.

Perception impacts whether or not a subject passes as sufficiently deferential to the dominant culture. Perceived deference to the Othered culture and perceived deference to the dominant culture, however, are not judged according to the same criteria. Certainly, active endorsement of Othered culture values through conformity, participation in custom, and behaviours that advance the position of the Othered culture are taken as a demonstration of such deference. A number of additional factors, however, contribute to a perceived deference to the Othered culture. Critique of dominant culture norms, sustained friendships or familial ties to members of the Othered group, and behaviour that deviates from the dominant culture norm (even when enacted in private spaces) can all become grounds for Othering.

Under these conditions in-between subjects encounter considerable challenges in negotiating deference. While some in-between subjects may be able to successfully hide ties to Otherness, for others these ties are self-evident. Further, in both cases, such hiding can come at great personal cost. Severing relationships can mean a loss of family and formative friendships, along with systems of social and emotional support. Non-participation in certain traditions, customs, and observances can isolate the in-between subject. Not hiding, however, can be equally if not more costly. Displays of a lack of deference to the dominant culture can lead to exclusion from the public sphere. A lack of trust, recognition, and esteem from the dominant culture impedes the in-between subject's ability to participate freely in public life.

Visibility and compromise in The Namesake

Gogol's interactions with the Ratliffs demonstrate the impact of the deep embedding and normalization of dominant culture traditions and values. Maxine Ratliff and her parents are described as unselfconscious, oblivious to the cultural specificity of their tastes, values, and way of life. That the Ratliffs take for granted the privilege and neutralization of their culture is demonstrated in a number of the details of Gogol's first dinner at the Ratliff home.[59] In one illustrative exchange, Gogol points out the unique beauty of the windows of the Ratliff house; despite her long inhabitation of this house, Maxine is unaware of the cultural architecture that surrounds her until it is brought to her attention.[60] Maxine's acceptance of her life stands in stark contrast to Gogol's disposition toward his family's Bengali cultural practice.

The narrative draws out the distinction between Gogol's family and the Ratliffs. Where Maxine respects and reproduces her parents' cultural lifestyle, Gogol feels pressured and controlled by his parents.[61] Gogol's resistance to performing deference to Bengaliness seems to be tied to interactions in which he must negotiate the inconsistencies between dominant culture expectations and in-between and Othered culture realities.[62] Upon the death of his father, however, Gogol is called back to the Bengali space. He willingly attends to the values and practices of Bengaliness, despite the threat this poses to his participation in American spaces.[63] In those instances where he does perform deference to Bengaliness, we see that

[59] Lahiri, 2003, pp. 129 - 136
[60] Lahiri, 2003, p. 132
[61] Lahiri, 2003, p. 138
[62] Lahiri, 2003, pp. 93-96; pp. 115-117; pp. 145-150
[63] Lahiri, 2003, pp. 176-188

Gogol both is unable to extricate himself from and accepts his subject-position within the structure of Bengaliness.

For Gogol, the challenge of performing deference as an in-between subject is less a question of fitting in than it is a question of staying in. Gogol is able to perform deference effectively enough that his belonging and participation in either space are secure. Only when Gogol attempts to pass through the dominant/Othered culture boundary or participate in both spaces simultaneously does his deference come into question. Although his relationship with Moushumi Mazoomdar provides a connection to both cultures, ironically, it fails as a space of in-betweenness. For Moushumi, this relationship signals such a deep deference to Bengaliness that it inhibits her own in-betweenness, distancing her from those aspects of her identity formed apart from Bengaliness. Despite the ease with which their Bengali-Americanness would seem to fit, in this case Moushumi's experience of in-betweenness demonstrates the destabilizing power of culturally dislocated aspects of the self.

Nested deference in The In-Between World of Vikram Lall

As the narrative of *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* progresses, participation becomes increasingly bound up in a commitment to the supremacy of Kikuyu Africanness. Particularly in the later narrative, performance of deference is political and salutary. Performances of deference do not secure belonging in the African space, but legitimate participation by demonstrating loyalty. This loyalty is both encouraged and enacted through a variety of stagings and performances. Notable among these: the taking of oaths and paying of tribute to the Mau Mau, and later to Jomo Kenyatta, who becomes the embodied image of Africanness. In his

childhood, Vikram is administered such an oath - a source of conflict as his Africanness is contested and challenged in other interactions. As an adult, Vikram renews this commitment through government service and tribute to Kenyatta and other power-holding Africans.

Deference to the Othered cultural identity is a contradictory requirement for participation of essentialized subjects in the African space. Deference to essentialized Asiannness is superficial; because Asianness is relegated to Asian and private spaces, maintaining Asian familial ties, living in Asian-populated regions, and exercising political influence only in limited spheres seem to indicate an appropriate deference. The segregation, rather than integration, of the Othered subject is purposive. The maintenance of a commitment to Asianness ensures that Othered subjects will not breach the bounds of African privilege. Honouring Asianness implies an honouring of the structural position of Asianness, a deference which reinforces the stability of African dominance.

The familial ties that separate Asianness from Africanness are also central to the performance of deference within private, Indian spaces. The maintenance of Indianness through familial ties requires more of Vikram than simply keeping an Indian family. Deference to Indianness requires maintenance of Indian lineage, ties to India, Indian domestic customs, and strong networks of kin. The standards of deference applied to the essentialized Asian identity are minimally invasive; deference to Indianness, however, demands a significant share of time, energy, and resources in Vikram's adult life.[64] A more sustained and intimately scrutinized performance,

[64] Vassanji, 2004, p. 324; p.329; pp. 332-336; pp. 337-338

deference to Indianness makes high demands of the subject in order to maintain structural order.

Much of Vikram's life is divided. Though he is expected to perform one or another form of Asianness in the African public space as well as the Asian private space, the demands placed on Vikram in each of these spaces are unique. There is little continuity between these spaces, and Vikram's performance of deference is likewise disjointed. The participation ensured by Vikram's sustained performance of deference comes at the cost of the free expression of those aspects of his individual identity that are formed through a relationship to the African. The discontinuity of the spaces Vikram inhabits reflects the fracturing of his in-between identity. The demand for deference to a structure of bounded identities prevents Vikram from attending in kind to the values and wants of in-betweenness.

Competing loyalties in Londonstani

The observation of specific rules of courtesy, propriety, and respect is essential to performance of Desiness. Throughout the narrative we see Jas negotiate these rules, delivering respectful greetings to the mothers of his peers, observing restraint in challenging men of greater age or authority, and making small gestures to indicate respect to others. These acts are necessary to signal Jas's acceptance of the dominance of Desiness and his place within the hierarchical structure of the dominant culture. In scripting such deference, the dominant culture demands an honouring of the structure and content of Desiness itself. When Jas seeks to exercise his own agency by challenging or modifying the form and structure of these rules, this recognition and participation is questioned and withdrawn.

Deference to the Othered culture, is treated somewhat differently in the narrative of *Londonstani*. In the context of the uncommon privilege of the Othered culture in this narrative, deference to essentialized Whiteness takes the form of any act that would pose Whiteness as superior or preferable to Desiness.[65] The deeper demands that Whiteness places on Jas reflect a fear of compromise of the prosperity, rightness, and success associated with being White. Jas is expected to perform well at school, to gain admission to a respected University, and to maintain an image of White respectability and propriety. At first reading, the backgrounding of Jas's Whiteness obscures the influence of White privilege in the demands the Othered culture makes of Jas. This backgrounding is indicative, however, of the false neutralization of Whiteness.

The subversion of traditional power roles in this narrative exposes the conflict that can arise in the structural hierarchy of cultures. The popular myth holds that multicultural arrangements preserve cultural identities and embed them in a structure of peaceful coexistence. The privilege of the dominant culture in such structures, however, engenders competition at sites of intercultural contact. As an in-between subject, Jas embodies conflict and competition. To avoid posing the kind of threat that would jeopardize his belonging and participation, Jas must painstakingly denude himself of signs of deference to Whiteness. Jas's efforts to sustain a performance of deference to each culture have a destructive impact on his in-betweenness, although these efforts ultimately fail.

[65] Malkani, 2006, pp. 3-9; pp. 20-24; pp. 124-133; pp. 201-4; p. 336; p. 340; pp. 228-244; pp. 259-270

Communication

Communication refers to acts through which the subject employs culturally specific meaning. In order to be recognized within a culture, the subject must achieve fluency in the systems of meaning relevant to that culture. Communication is not simply a question of being fluent in the language associated with an identity. Language is one aspect of this building block, but along with it comes accent, familiarity with slang or dialect, and non-verbal communication. Other methods of performing fluency overlap with deference. By participating in certain rites and customs, the subject gains access to deeply held symbols and ideas. This access enables the subject to represent the self in terms that are legible to other members of the cultural group.

Many subjects easily achieve fluency in the basic aspects of communicating through dominant culture systems of meaning. Dominant culture systems of meaning permeate most spaces and most aspects of life within a society. As such, subjects are immersed in and easily adopt verbal and body language, vocabulary and dialect, and so forth. More deeply embedded systems of meaning, particularly those tied to rites and traditions, can be difficult to reach. Inclusion in rites and traditions depends on a significant amount of trust from members of the dominant culture. Subjects attempting to pass must perform the dominant culture identity convincingly, and for some time, before gaining this level of access.

The narratives give less attention to Othered culture systems of meaning. Although language, dialect, rites and traditions do figure into communication amongst members of Othered groups, they are treated differently to dominant culture communication. From the perspective of the dominant culture, Othered

culture communication is unintelligible, and without rationality – effectively not recognized as communication at all. Even within the private spaces where Otherness is supposed to be protected, recognition is moderated through broken language and improvised enactment of customs. Otherness, excluded and apart from society under the gaze of the dominant culture, does not require coherent language and elaborate systems of meaning. The dominant culture does not afford voice to the Othered culture.

For the in-between subject, the process of conforming to normalized communication standards can be seriously detrimental to the capacity for self expression. Notably, all three characters struggle with language throughout their narratives, frequently presented as stuttering, shy, and otherwise unable to master language and make their own voices heard. Though the in-between may be fluent in multiple systems of meaning, they are limited to engaging with only those systems of meaning that have currency in a normalized culture. Doing so requires that the in-between suppress ideas, language, and symbols that may have deep and formative personal meaning. Navigating different standards in different spaces requires frequent switching from one system of meaning to another. When in-between subjects themselves are some of the only points of contact or translation between cultures, they are left without a system of in-between meaning in which to situate themselves. In-between subjects do not share in the privilege of being situated within structures and shared meanings that ensure social cohesion.

Name, voice, and will in The Namesake

In *The Namesake*, recognition and participation are contingent on communication through systems of meaning that meet dominant culture standards

of order and legibility. Negotiating culturally specific naming practices and structures is a common challenge in encounters between dominant and Othered cultures. Gogol's naming is subject to this challenge. On the day of his release from the hospital as an infant, Gogol is initiated into American personhood through bureaucratic procedure. The state's demand that Gogol's parents register a name on his birth certificate supports American cultural order but compromises Gogol's initiation into Bengaliness.[66] As his parents are unable to realize the Bengali naming process, Gogol's naming is haphazard and his name itself is located in-between Americanness and Bengaliness – a source of struggle for Gogol for the duration of the narrative.

The sub-narrative of Gogol's naming provides information about how Gogol's personhood was conceived of by his family before his birth. The initial failure of the Bengali conception of personhood at the moment of Gogol's naming is carried through the narrative. Until his father's death, Gogol is depicted as constantly failing to perform Bengaliness. Gogol and his sister "sound just like Americans"[67] and their knowledge of the Bengali language is rudimentary.[68] Gogol rarely speaks, and never in Bengali. His only engagement with Bengaliness through Bengali systems of meaning comes from exposure to family friends,[69] occasional cultural events,[70] and one trip to India.[71] Gogol's silences are not, however, limited to the Bengali space, and his name is a key mediating factor in his alienation from the American space.

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[66] Lahiri, 2003, pp. 25-29
[67] Lahiri, 2003, p.65
[68] Lahiri, 2003, p. 66
[69] Lahiri, 2003, pp. 72-73
[70] Lahiri, 2003, pp. 65-66
[71] Lahiri, 2003, pp. 79-88

As Gogol grows older, his awareness of his location in relation to the American dominant culture is characterized increasingly by distance. Gogol's sense of a lack of belonging comes to be bound up with his name. The malaise Gogol feels crystallizes in his teenage years: "He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American, but of all things Russian."[72] Foreign to both American and essentialized Indian systems of meaning, the name renders Gogol ambiguous, causing him physical distress and limiting his participation in American social life. Legally adopting the name Nikhil before leaving for college, Gogol reconstructs his identity in terms legible to the dominant culture[73]; in doing so, however, Gogol uproots himself from a personal history bound up in Bengali experience and meaning.

Passing, participation, and social cues in The In-Between World of Vikram Lall

In African public spaces in *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, subjects communicate through a combination of English and Swahili and Kikuyu language and a more generally Kenyan set of practices and customs. Vikram's ability to navigate these meanings gives him access to some African publics. His recognition and access within spaces governed by the dominant culture, however, is partial. Through his connections and experiences, Vikram becomes literate in the customs and signals needed to gain audience amongst the Kenya political elite. Despite this privileged literacy, Vikram is seen as an outsider. Beyond language, bribery, and etiquette, Vikram is excluded from Africanness at its most intimate and private. Though he can learn to perform the African identity enough to pass as a man of

[72] Lahiri, 2003, p. 76
[73] Lahiri, 2003, pp. 93-108

politics and business, Vikram can never fully reproduce Africanness. As such, he cannot achieve full personhood under the dominant culture.

The elements of communication in Vikram's performance of Othered culture identity are comparable. The language of his childhood and adult homes is a mix of English and Punjabi, occasionally peppered with Swahili or Kikuyu as a reminder of the unique circumstances of this experience of Indianness. Vikram learns how to perform Indianness much as he learns to perform in the African public space: through socialization and exposure. Vikram's mother – born in India, brought to Nakuru as a bride, traditional and religiously conservative – is the sole figure whose performance of identity matches the essentialized Asian identity. It is she who instructs Vikram and his sister in Hindu mythology,[74] who makes sure her children adhere to the scripts society expects to see her family perform,[75] and who recognizes and expresses most readily the ambiguity and insecurity of the relationship of Indians to Kenya.[76]

The actions Mrs. Lall takes to enforce Indianness reveal the effort required to sustain performance of an identity across a lifespan. Her policing of Deepa's behaviour, particularly her interventions into Deepa's relationship to Njoroge, demonstrates a deliberate attempt to direct the course of an in-between subject's life to adhere to an essentialized identity. The everyday compromises and refusals imposed on in-between subjects are exacerbated, in this case, by the political desire to maintain a hierarchy of cultures and races. In order to uphold dominant culture expectations, Vikram not only performs a deliberate Asianness, he also must

[74] Vassanji 2004, pp. 19
[75] Vassanji, 2004, p. 37, p. 337; pp. 149-230
[76] Vassanji, 2004, p. 102; p. 106

deliberately avoid incorporating too much of Africanness into his performance of identity.[77] In those cases where he violates this boundary, Vikram's in-betweenness not only becomes highly visible, it is also recognized as a threat to the stability of African dominance.

Stammer, silence, and structure in Londonstani

In *Londonstani*, there is considerable overlap between the elements of communication, deference, and marking. The patchwork Desi language, along with the cultural architecture of customs and traditions, religion, and norms of personal appearance and behaviour help to distinguish Desi cultural spaces from the broader British space. Jas must reproduce these systems of meaning – not only to ensure his recognition, but to contribute to the common project of maintaining the distinctiveness of the Desi dominant culture. The use of Desi forms of communication in Jas's performance contributes to the stability of the Desi space. While the structure of Desiness imposes limits on what Jas can say and do, Jas in turn supports this structure in his adherence to the dramaturgic protocols of the dominant culture identity.

The narrative addresses Jas's communication in spaces of British whiteness primarily in terms of his speech. Reflecting on his performance before initiation into the Desi dominant culture, Jas describes himself as stuttering and largely silent.[78] Jas's recounting of these memories indicates a conflict between his preferences and desires and the dictates of White Britishness. In his criticism of Mr. Ashwood's

[77] Vassanji, 2004, pp. 87-88; pp. 268-276

[78] Note the parallels here to *The Namesake* and *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*. Gogol is unable to speak about himself in his early life, particularly as a teenager, until he locates himself within the boundaries of Americanness by changing his name to Nikhil. Although the narrative gives only a very brief account of Vikram at this age, in the years after the violent disruption of his in-between childhood (crystallized in the murder of the Bruces) Vikram also develops a stutter and becomes distanced from social interaction.

attempts to correct his stammer, Jas demonstrates that fluency in Othered culture communication will not help him realize his voice.[79] In a memory recounted later in the narrative, we see that the systems of meaning of the Othered culture lack a set of ideas that can coherently describe Jas.[80] The graphic depiction of the violence, pain, and anger of Jas's reaction is a startling representation of the destructive impact that structural misdescription may have for the in-between subject.

Enforcement of the limitations imposed on the agency and voice of the in-between subject is much stronger when the subject is in close proximity to gatekeepers or elites. As the narrative progresses, Jas gains increasing control over his voice. His interactions with Sanjay, Samira Ahmed, and Arun, occur in a sort of in-between space. All three of these characters, because of how their bodies and identities are essentialized, are recognized as members of the dominant group. They are, however, peripheral to Desiness; their voluntary markings, their lack of total deference, and in some instances their association to Whiteness set them apart. In his interactions with these characters, Jas has greater freedom to explore his in-between experience of identity and give voice to ideas and an individual identity that is at home under neither essentialized culture.

Alterity, Improvisation, and Safe Spaces

For in-between subjects, negotiating the changes in norms and expectations from private to public spaces and from dominant to Othered culture spaces can involve much struggle. Spaces of alterity provide a safe third way out. My goal in this section is to clear away an in-between space for understanding how alterity might resolve some of the puzzle of the belonging of subjects excluded through

[79] Malkani, 2006, p. 6
[80] Malkani, 2006, pp. 33-36

essentialization in plural societies. This section examines experiences of our three primary characters within spaces of alterity. These interactions indicate that, between Self/dominant culture and Other/Othered culture, there is the possibility of living out an identity that constantly responds to new encounters with difference.

Spaces of alterity can be physical spaces (family homes, secluded cafés, or private hang outs) or they can be interpersonal spaces (close friendships or romantic relationships). The form of the space of alterity, though, is less important than the nature of the space. These spaces allow the in-between subject to act freely, without the burden of having to perform an essentialized identity. They are spaces where the in-between subject doesn't have to self-edit, where they don't have to hide or mitigate aspects of identity, and where they can be more than one thing at once.

If, within the structures of the dominant culture, identity is essentialized, scripted, and policed, in spaces of alterity identity and performance are improvised. The in-between subject departs from fixed points within both the dominant and Othered culture, but transgresses the boundaries that separate and essentialize identities. The unscripted performances that occur in these safe spaces draw on the formative experiences of the individual. Spaces of alterity not only provide havens for freer expression of identity, they also provide room for in-between identities to decompress and heal. It is beyond the scope of this research to provide an extensive positive description of alterity, but this section addresses a few features that respond to the double standards encountered by in-between subjects.

Alterity rests somewhere between Self and Other, occupying a unique position within the structure of plural societies. Alterity describes an experience of identity that is not stable or fixed, and does not seek the stability or rigidity that

characterize dominant and Othered culture identities. The strict and essentializing dichotomies advanced by liberal pluralism make a crisis out of performing identity. Performance under these structural limitations involves a mutilation and repression of individual identity, all to insulate the hierarchy of essentialized identities from threat.

Each character's performances differ notably from dominant culture governed spaces to unregulated spaces of alterity. Gogol, Vikram, and Jas perform essentialized identities in the context of well-developed, structurally embedded archetypes. Spaces of alterity open up in the gaps between groups in plural societies, where structure is not deeply or fully entrenched. Here, roles and identities are not structurally determined. This leaves the in-between subject free to improvise a performance of identity in response to objects encountered within the space of alterity. The freedom to improvise limits the violence the in-between subject enacts upon the self, but depends on particular conditions of safety.

In her discussion of home, Sara Ahmed examines the experience of orientating oneself to a new space. According to Ahmed a body cannot feel "at home" at home until it has familiarized itself with the space it occupies.[81] For the in-between subject, spaces of alterity are safe, free spaces. More than simply a haven where in-between subjects are free to improvise according to their own experiences, however, the space of alterity is familiar. This is not the familiarity of a preserved culture or a bounded identity space. Instead, spaces of alterity are familiar to in-between subjects because they are spaces in which cultural scripts are unfixed and identity and experience are constantly new and changing. The doubleness at the

[81] Ahmed, 2006, pp. 6-14

heart of the in-between experience is not simply reflected in the space of alterity. This doubleness is reproduced, allowing the in-between subject to act fully and freely.

Study, Distance, and Acceptance in the Namesake

In *The Namesake*, spaces of alterity manifest as both academic study and romantic relationships. Gogol's relationships fail to provide space for a more free and complete expression of identity. Other relationships described in the narrative, however, allow in-between subjects to improvise in their performances of identity and difference. The narrative relies on books and literature, travel, and college education to draw out the experiences of coming to terms with alterity and relocation to safe spaces. Sonia and Moushumi's experiences away from home, and their successful relationships, seem relevant to their eventual homecomings. Gogol, by contrast, never strays far from Cambridge, Massachusetts, never seems to find happiness in his relationships, and gives only a faint impression of coming to terms with his alterity.

For Sonia, finding a space of alterity involves a literal homecoming. After moving to California to pursue post-secondary education, Sonia returns to the Ganguli family home upon the death of her father. This type of movement (through both geographic and identity spaces) is repeated in each narrative; in-between subjects seem to find home through processes of displacement that often involve migration or travel. Toward the end of the narrative, Sonia's life seems to stabilize, rooted in her relationship to her Jewish and Chinese fiancé Ben. Ben's own alterity seems to complement Sonia's; both their identities are influenced by multiple

cultures at once. Despite the limited overlap of their identities, they share a similar experience of difference, and occupy a similar in-between space.

Moushumi Mazoomdar, with whom Gogol shares a short-lived marriage, seems always struck by the desire to be elsewhere. Moushumi's identity takes root in a sense of Frenchness and Europeanness, but is distinctly tied to the Bengaliness of her life as well. Moushumi is a scholar of French literature, and spends much of her early adulthood living in Paris. Frenchness becomes her space of alterity; it is both removed from the demand to perform Americanness or Bengaliness, and an identity she chooses to perform freely. Her failed engagement goes too far towards extreme Americanness, and her failed marriage too far towards a purely Bengali life. Her relationship to Dimitri Desjardins, also a scholar of European literature, provides a space in which she is safe to both physically and figuratively travel into Frenchness. In his character and interests, Dimitri provides the structural support Moushumi needs to realize her in-between freedom.

Gogol never quite reaches the same sense of equilibrium. Architecture provides some coherence; his studies allow him to examine both Indianness and Americanness through the same lens. Ultimately, though, Gogol's focus on the essentialized cultures attached to his identity prevents him from understanding in-betweenness. Gogol's desire to escape his identity crisis manifests as an obsession with being normal. Until the death of his father, Gogol enters into relationships only with White women. Only after the loss of Ashoke and experiencing Maxine's insensitivity to Bengali mourning does Gogol seek to reconcile himself to Bengaliness. His relationship with Moushumi, however, reproduces the duality of Bengaliness and Americanness, without resolving its tensions. It is not until Gogol

finds an unread volume of the works of Russian author Nikolai Gogol (given to him by Ashoke) that we see Gogol begin to settle into an identity rooted in difference and change.

Displacement, Return, and the Heart of Rooting in The In-between World of Vikram Lall

As in the narrative of *The Namesake*, in the narrative of *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, coming to terms with alterity involves a distancing from essentialized cultures. This idea holds in the experiences of both Vikram and his sister Deepa, despite the differences of the spaces of alterity in which they seek refuge. Vikram's safe space is a physical structure, geographically removed from his family and the sites of trauma in his life. Deepa finds a safe space in her relationship with Njoroge, removed from the strict demands of her almost exclusively Asian life. For both, entering into the space of alterity in adult life signifies not only a displacement from spaces in which their identities are controlled, but also a return to childhood experiences that shape their in-betweenness.

Vikram's space of alterity is Janice and Mungai's cottage. Vikram finds Janice and Mungai living together in an abandoned railway station early in his career. The cottage is isolated, a long way from his private and public lives in Nairobi, closer and in many ways connected, to his early life in Nakuru. Janice, who directly experiences the violent and traumatic expulsion of Whiteness from Kenya, serves as a reminder of the loss of Annie Bruce. Mungai symbolizes the innate Kenyanness of Vikram's life. He reminds us of what in Vikram's youth had always been a loving and honest but distanced relationship to the Kikuyu members of his community. The presence of Janice and Mungai within Vikram's space of alterity helps to reconcile his severed

relationships to Whiteness and Africanness. This safe space is a haven where Vikram's wounds temporarily heal.

Even after his ouster from the Ministry of Transport, Vikram returns to the cottage and stays with Janice and Mungai more than once. The cottage's location is significant in the context of the historical rooting of Asians in Kenyan territory. The East African Railway links Vikram to his past, but in his adult life it repeatedly turns up dead ends. Though it promises nothing for his future, Vikram returns to the cottage, where he can reexperience the peaceful coexistence of his past without the conflicting demands that essentialized identities impose on his life. Vikram's physical displacement from spaces governed by dominant culture scripts to a space of alterity is accompanied by a return to the experience of in-betweenness. In this space Vikram's identity is not interrupted by the boundaries of essentialized culture.

Physical displacement and return are less pronounced in Deepa's experience of alterity. Deepa's displacement does not involve great distance, but takes her out of the Indian private space. Deepa's meetings with Njoroge occur in a café, where she meets Njoroge regularly as a teenager, and the pharmacy she runs, where Njoroge visits her after her marriage. While these spaces are familiar, quotidian, locations in Nairobi, they are not fully public, and are not dominated by Africanness. In these spaces, far from the control of essentialized scripts and bounded identities, Deepa and Njoroge return to the safety of their relationship. Much as Vikram returns to an in-between space by returning to the railway that roots him to Africanness, Deepa and Njoroge regain this experience by recreating the childhood love that initially binds their difference together.

Transit, Identity Space, and Momentum in Londonstani

In the narrative of *Londonstani*, methods of transportation serve as a device to present the movement of in-between subjects in and out of bounded identity spaces. When traveling into Desi cultural spaces, Jas rides in the backseat of his friends' cars. When he returns to spaces of Whiteness, Jas travels using London's public transit system. In relation to spaces of alterity, by contrast, Jas has control over his own movement. Whether he is driving a car or traveling by foot, when Jas controls his own direction, scripts of essentialized identities bear less influence on his identity performance. The relative autonomy, as well as the safety and freedom to perform in-betweenness that Jas enjoys in his spaces of alterity are perpetuated by the momentum he gains as he moves himself toward his own destination.

Jas directs his own transit amongst spaces out of both desire and necessity. As the narrative progresses, Jas's desire and identity grow increasingly inconsistent with the scripts and expectations of essentialized cultural spaces. Control over the physical location of his own body, however, allows Jas some agency in determining the extent to which structurally embedded identity roles keep him from acting on his own experiences. In the process of learning to drive a standard transmission, Jas gains the distance from Desi governed spaces needed in order to seek relationships with alterity. The time he spends behind the driver's seat provides opportunities for Jas to engage various aspects of his identity at once; taking lessons from Sanjay, and driving himself and Samira on dates, Jas finds safe, if fleeting, spaces to interact with these other marginal or in-between subjects.

Jas's freedom to choose his own routes and destinations makes it easier to improvise in his performance of identity. Admittedly, Jas's first date with Samira is scripted and rehearsed; the restaurant and club are suggested by Sanjay, and Jas visits both the night before to orient himself. Nevertheless, in these interactions Jas chooses to move towards a space of alterity. The momentum he gains from Sanjay's guidance propels him into unrehearsed conversation and an ongoing relationship with Samira. Although spaces of alterity do not completely insulate in-between subjects from structural influences, they do provide clearings for in-between subjects to stage their own performances. While Jas's experiences are temporary, the momentum he gains propels his continued interactions with alterity.

Momentum carries in-between subjects forward as they become more familiar and comfortable with spaces of alterity. This continuous movement is indispensable in the experience of engaging one's own alterity and the alterity of others. Alterity describes a difference that is constant. Unlike the identity groups described by the language of multiculturalism, alterity refers to an uncategorized and unknown difference that is nevertheless part of a shared society. The momentum that Jas builds while in control of his own movement through identity spaces pushes him toward continuing encounters with new forms of difference. The structural barriers created by entrenched essentialized identities impede this momentum, but in spaces of alterity in-between subjects may enjoy the freedom to continue to move towards difference.

Conclusion

The examples taken from each narrative illustrate how spaces of alterity free the individual from identity-based structural barriers to participation. I do not

suggest that any of these examples could be generalized as model spaces of alterity. Instead, the relationships and devices examined above should be understood as shedding light on some of the key characteristics of spaces of alterity. For the in-between subject, freedom is in the reproduction of alterity – something that is connected to the experiences of self, but that also leaves room for difference and change. Autonomy, self-direction, improvisation, and an adaptive, ongoing relationship to difference make the space of alterity safe and freeing for in-between subjects. Insulating the in-between subject from dominant culture expectations and entrenched essentializations, these spaces do not impose the same structural barriers to belonging, recognition, and participation.

In-between subjects are not confronted with the same standards of rooting, marking, deference, and communication in spaces of alterity. Markings give way to physical presence in the evaluation of legitimate belonging. Deference is oriented towards the value of shared community. The act of communication is prioritized over any particular mode of communication. Essentializing, exclusive double standards of rooting are unsustainable. For in-between subjects, rooting is based in the experience of difference; spaces of alterity form where the in-between subject encounters others who share this experience. In occupying spaces where difference is a shared experience, rather than a shared essentialized identity, in-between subjects can root more thoroughly than they can in the dominant or Othered culture. This stability is a necessary foundation for real freedom.

It is precisely this isolation and disengagement that renders the in-between so precarious. Were it the case that all difference is Otherness, and all Otherness, difference, the alter, the racialized, in-between, plurally constructed subject could

conceivably find belonging, recognition, and participation beyond the spaces governed by the dominant culture. Alterity, however, is constructed as much through the misrecognized or unrecognized content of Othered cultures as through the familiar content of the dominant culture. Isolation and disengagement, however, obscure the distinctions between alter and Other. Dominant culture gatekeepers raise alarms over the passage of Otherness into the bounds of normalcy, but fail to recognize that in opening up spaces of alterity, the content of Otherness necessarily changes, adapts, and becomes part of the content of the governed space. The parallel dichotomization of inclusion/exclusion and normal/different ignores both alterity and the in-between space it inhabits.

Summary and Conclusion

In this thesis I have demonstrated the colonizing control of the practices of multiculturalism on in-between subjects. Using evidence from the narratives of *The Namesake*, *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, and *Londonstani*, I have described a set of structurally embedded cultural concepts – rooting, marking, deference, and communication. These concepts contribute to the scripting of the essentialized identity roles that limit the recognition, inclusion, and participation of in-between subjects. Further, these conditions impose a double-bind on in-between subjects; in performing essentialized identities, in-between subjects deny their own free participation and expression, but to not perform an essentialized identity would mean sure exclusion and marginalization. The evidence points to a possible solution, however, in the form of safe spaces and relationships where difference is unscripted and alterity fills the space between Self and Other.

In-between subjects - people whose identities are constituted as much within the dominant culture of a plural society as outside of it - have needs that emerge from a life of experience *within* the plural society. The needs of in-between subjects are produced endogenously, through interaction with the structures of the plural society. Treating in-between subjects as immigrants, as members of minority cultures or special identity groups, or as Others, more generally, distracts attention from this endogeneity. As a consequence of this habit of scholarly and everyday discourse, in-between needs are cast as a 'them' problem, rather than an 'us' problem. Exclusion of in-between subjects from the dominant culture by dint of failed language prevents a critical and continuous reevaluation of our knowledge of *who* comprises society.

Essentialized identities are analyzed in terms of rooting, marking, deference and communication. These concepts describe the everyday experiences of identity and belonging. While each term tells its own story about identity and difference, together they serve as components of a larger story about the articulation of belonging in plural societies. These concepts were drawn from the available literature and refined to reflect evidence provided in each narrative. The narrative evidence demonstrates how each concept operates not only in the construction of normalized identities, but also in the structural discrimination that confronts in-between subjects. Scripted, essentialized identities tend to locate normalcy in traits and behaviours that in-between subjects cannot reproduce. Overlapping expectations of rooting, marking, deference, and communication expose the in-between subject's performance of identity to questioning from many angles; as such, the in-between subject's belonging and participation are constantly at risk.

Spaces of alterity mitigate the risks associated with unscripted performance of identity. These spaces can be physical refuges, interpersonal relationships, or a combination of the two. Within these spaces, in-between subjects encounter difference, or performances of identity that stray from the script, with less of the accompanying negative stigma. A more nuanced conception of difference makes spaces of alterity a viable safe space for in-between subjects. Unlike the predominant essentializing dichotomy of Self and Other, alterity frames difference in terms of both belonging and the unfamiliar. Alterity provides space for community not otherwise available to in-between subjects. Spaces of alterity permit the transgression of identity boundaries in favour of coexistence for individuals who do, in fact, exist in close proximity to one another. Although these individuals will differ

in myriad ways, in spaces of alterity the fear of this difference is overcome through recognition of a common belonging.

Using terms such as immigrant community, ethnic group, or diasporas to so widely describe racial, ethnic, and cultural difference impedes our understanding of the identities and experiences of subjects. Reliance on the language of multiculturalism to describe difference creates barriers to our understanding of contemporary realities. These superimposed concepts obscure inter-generational differences of identity, experience, and need, as well as the high degree of specificity that comes with each term, and with their more specific sub-categories (black people, Asians, Jewish people, South Asians, etc). We assume that in addressing the needs and experiences of immigrants, ethnos, or members of the diaspora as articulated by civil society groups and organizations, we address the needs that arise out of all racial, ethnic, and cultural difference. Without interrogating the limits of these groups or categories, however, our theory and discourse will continue to lag behind the evolving encounters between subject and power in the plural society.

This project emerges out of recognition of the need to bridge certain gaps in theory and discourse. Whether description of identity is the primary objective of theory or discourse, or simply a necessary component of a broader argument, accuracy and currency are important. This thesis has focused on specific gaps – the failure to leave or create room for in-betweenness in categorizations of identity and the misdescription of difference through dichotomy. The descriptions of in-betweenness and alterity and the prescriptions for theory and discourse found in this thesis, however, have their own limits. These preliminary descriptions of in-

betweenness and alterity deserve further theorization and greater nuance. The ideas in this thesis can be advanced through an interrogation of the impact of *intersectionality* on discussions of in-betweenness, and through the development of a queer theory of racialized identity.

Intersectionality has become a critical point of analysis in the canons of feminist theory, gender studies, and queer theory. Emerging out of the political claims and theoretical contributions of third wave feminism, intersectionality analytics have often relied on the figure of the black woman. Third wave feminism brings attention to the hegemony of liberal, often white and middle class modes of femininity. Much of the intersectionality literature is framed in terms of intersecting oppressions; in exposing the in-betweenness of black women and women in the global south, the third wave emphasizes the need to account for the variability within groups. This approach destabilizes universalized identities, adding nuance to research that relies at least in part on identity to advance truth claims. Although intersectionality is not typically used to examine the constitutive influence of the dominant culture, it does allow the researcher to parse privilege and identity at the micro-level. This analytical framing, and the attention to multiple axes of identity – class, gender, ability, etc – at once, would add to the explanatory value of research that seeks to highlight previously unrecognized patterns of oppression.

As part of the greater body of research concerned with oppression, this thesis identifies structural problems that place the in-between subject in a position of inequality. Articulated in the language of structural inequality, the exclusion of in-between subjects is open to a specific set of remedies. Reparations can be made to

mitigate inequality for in-between subjects, but this would leave structure in place, exposing other groups to comparable inequality. Queer theory, however, offers a means of rethinking structure to facilitate the free existence and inclusion of difference. This approach emphasizes queering, or making unconventional, theory, space, and boundaries. Queer theory allows us to think about belonging and normalcy in a way that not only includes difference, but would be incomplete without it. The current treatment of difference in liberal multicultural theory problematizes difference while taking its own assumptions about various identity groups for granted. A queered approach would instead problematize the structural boundaries superimposed on difference, updating the language of multiculturalism to reflect the porous and multifaceted identities of a multicultural society that includes in-betweenness.

In the absence of such work, and more revolutionary change in our thinking and attitudes about difference, this thesis takes a few new steps toward inclusion. First, it updates our thinking by bringing to light the experiences of the children of multicultural arrangements. Examining these experiences, this research exposes the quotidian instances of discrimination and encounters with double standards that constrain in-between subjects. Their encounters with a social structure that privileges the dominant culture identity have detrimental impacts on personal well-being and on their freedom to exercise voice and agency. Articulation of these experiences in academic description and analysis paves the way for recognition in practical life. As this research demonstrates, assumptions about identity and the kinds of behaviour that should accompany an identity inform the barriers facing in-

between subjects; recognition of in-betweenness preempts such assumptions, reducing the resilience of barriers to inclusion.

Second, as a reflection on the influence of theoretical models of multiculturalism on everyday interaction, this thesis reminds us that identity groups are dynamic and changing. As identity is not primordial or fixed, relying on a rigid structure of categories seems methodologically inappropriate. The categories used in models of multiculturalism often serve as means to the end of understanding how members of various groups should interact, primarily with the state, but also with one another. While the separate questions of racism, hierarchy, and privilege in the arrangement of these categories deserve critical attention, we must also be mindful that our choice in means not obstruct us from our end. The categories commonly used to describe multicultural society have become exclusive and inflexible, to the point of failing to comprehensively describe social realities. In examining the boundary-transgressing identities of in-between subjects, this thesis calls on scholars of multiculturalism to interrogate the othering and limiting impacts of academic work, and to renew commitments to reducing marginalization and exclusion in scholarship on multicultural life.

Finally, my work here has been, in part, to remind the dominant culture of commitments made to the children of multicultural arrangements and their immigrant, racialized, or otherwise Othered parents. I have little doubt that many scholars and decision-makers invested in multiculturalism are well-intentioned. There are limits, however, to the control that members of the dominant culture can exercise over structural inequities. Dominant culture generated models of

multiculturalism have been useful in undoing some of these inequities; resistance to the voices and agency of those most disadvantaged by structural inequity, however, simply reinforces the patterns of marginalization and exclusion that have come before. In bringing attention to the experiences of in-between subjects, I have endeavored to push the current discourse towards a new site of inclusion, and to a renewed commitment to social equity and freedom.

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