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THE POWER OF GAZE: SOME REMARKS ON THE ORIENTALIZING PERSPECTIVE IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S *JASMINE*

A b s t r a c t. Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* has been frequently criticized for the Orientalizing representations of Indian women and India, which can perpetuate the stereotypical dichotomy between the East and West (violence and barbarism vs. peace and modernity). However, the analysis of the bidirectionality of gaze in the narrative, that is, the Westerners' Orientalizing gaze cast on the protagonist (female immigrant from India) and, more importantly, the protagonist's gaze back on Americans, can lead to a conclusion that reading the novel in terms of binary oppositions is not valid. In the very act of looking critically at American reality the protagonist denies the stereotypical image of an Oriental female (passive, silent, obedient). Moreover, a variety of representations of India and America are brought to the fore with a particular focus on how the image of America as the Promised Land is challenged.

Key words: South Asian American fiction; Orientalism; immigrant narrative.

Bharati Mukherjee describes herself as an American of Indian origin, not Indian American, or Asian American. Relocated twice (from India to Canada, then to the United States) she consciously chose her citizenship—she became a naturalized American citizen and she emphasizes the voluntariness of her decision.[1] With all her personal declarations about the feelings of inclusion in the US, according to David Cowart, she "reaffirm[s] the American immigrant myth" (71), the myth of blending in, assimilating into the dominant culture.

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[1] In her article of 1996 Mukherjee wrote: "I take my American citizenship very seriously. I am not an economic refugee, nor am I a seeker of political asylum. I am a voluntary immigrant. I became a citizen by choice, not by simple accident of birth" ("Beyond Multiculturalism" 31). See also Mukherjee "American Dreamer" and "Two Ways to Belong in America."

Mukherjee's probably most well-known novel *Jasmine* presents a character who is also willing to become an American and overcomes many obstacles to achieve this goal. The novel has inspired a lot of controversy. What the critics underline and often criticize is the novel's engagement in the celebration of assimilationist patterns, praise of Americanness, or even "neo-nationalism" (Brewster), Orientalizing representations of Indian women and India, and negative portrayal of transnational connectivities and community networks (Grewal, *Transnational America* 68). In this essay I would like to counter some of the statements made about the novel, that is, refute the reading of the novel in terms of binary oppositions (civilized West vs. uncivilized East), and the opinion that the text does not participate in creating a discourse against racism. In order to do so I analyse the power of gaze cast by the Westerners on the protagonist, and the protagonist's gaze returned on Americans and their reality. This reading originates from the need to give justice to the critical outlook the novel demonstrates, which neither presents America as an ideal place nor shows India as an entirely primitive or barbaric country. The gaze of a stranger in the new land reveals many unsettling aspects of American life and is far from an all-embracing affirmation of the country. Thus, it can be pointed out that Mukherjee's celebratory attitude to American ideals should not automatically presuppose that her novels will be uncritical about the United States.

Many critics believe that very conspicuous oppositions constitute the structure for the interpretation of the novel and on this basis they accuse Mukherjee of the Orientalist position. Inderpal Grewal makes such claims in her book *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms*, for example: "the narrative frame of the novel remains the journey from oppression and misery and conflict … in India to a closure of 'hope' as the protagonist becomes an American in the United States" (*Transnational America* 66), "in America safety, security, and 'ordinary' life are possible" in opposition to the protagonist's native Punjab, characterised by "inherent violence attributed to its populations" (*Transnational America* 67). In the opinion of the scholar Mukherjee presents the "third world as a combat zone", which is opposed to the "peace of 'ordinary' life in middle-class white Manhattan" (*Transnational America* 67); furthermore, India is associated with tradition while the US with speed and modernity (*Transnational America* 70). Additionally, Grewal views the novel as worthless in the process of creating an opposition against a racist discourse in America: "this text does not participate in any formation of Asian American communities struggling against

racism, sexism and stereotypes of Asians as backward and barbaric" ("South Asian Diaspora" 231) and in another place she states that "Mukherjee's novel seems written for Euro-American audiences with the gaze of a Euro-American tourist […]"("South Asian Diaspora" 235).

Contrary to the above mentioned critical stance, a careful examination reveals that the novel participates in a discourse challenging the stereotypical envisioning of race and sex, while reading the novel only in terms of binary oppositions does not give justice to the variety of representations of both India and America. The picture of America as the Promised Land is often challenged (it does not appear as the province of safety and happiness), whereas India is not depicted as a completely uncivilized country. Indeed, Mukherjee employs the Orientalist gaze, and so "throughout her new life in America, the narrator is constantly perceived as 'the Other,' as the incarnation of the colonial stereotype of the female native" (Dascalu 67), but she does not do it with the purpose of pleasing the Euro-American audience by trying to confirm their stereotypical thinking of the East. She uses the Orientalizing discourse in order to criticize the hegemonic position of the US, to highlight the inferior position of the ethnic subject, who perceives the great dividing line between "us" and "them." In order to see these issues it is important to scrutinize the narrator's reactions, thoughts and emotions, revealed through the first person narration. In addition, it is necessary to notice that the narrator-protagonist is above all a stranger in the new land, a newcomer with a keener gaze and with a sharper focus, a gaze that can see more than citizens of the country. It seems that in *Jasmine*, which was published eleven years after Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Mukherjee attempts to raise the awareness of the Orientalizing discourse adopted by the West. Her novel may be taken as her statement about immigrants from the East coming to the US, who have to face the Orientalist gaze, fight against its devaluing force and eventually find their own position within it.

Michel Foucault explains how "gaze" becomes a technique to utilize the power of observing. In *Discipline and Punish* he depicts the panoptical prison where the controller is able to see all the prisoners in their cells. The gaze is thus a vehicle of power, its function is to control "Others," at the same time giving power to the gazer. Orientalism is metaphorically cast white gaze at the nonwhite object, which is subject to categorization, definition, taking control over him/her or subordination. It expresses Westerners' hegemony, their dominance over the racialized subject. The stereotypical Oriental is obedient and silent, always in the position of an inferior. This can

be associated with Foucault's concept of "unequal gaze," that is, the constant possibility of observation exercised in the Panopticon, which reveals the dissymmetry of power. What is interesting in *Jasmine* is the bidirectionality of gaze. Westerners Orientalize the protagonist—their gaze objectifies and subordinates her but also she exercises her power to look at Americans, though to a lesser extent. In this way she appears as an empowered subject, able to intervene in the dissymmetry of power.

Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that a short summary of the novel might indeed give an impression of a very simple juxtaposition of the West and East. The positive aspect of immigrant experience understood as a successful escape from a Third World country and a possibility of transformation offered by a wealthy Western country is conspicuous. The protagonist is a young Indian girl, who loses her husband in a violent attack of Sikhs. To honor his wish, which was to migrate and study in America, she travels to the US, where she plans to commit *sati* but later drops this idea and decides to settle down. Her journey through America begins, locations change (Florida, New York, Iowa) as well as the identities of the protagonist, reflected by the change of her name (Jyoti, Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase, Jane). The girl takes advantage of the many possibilities America offers, she easily undergoes transformations and adopts American culture.[2]

Jasmine's success in the American society is rather unrealistic, the plot line composed of her transformations, each followed by a new relationship, seems like a romance or a fable, yet, the observations the narrative makes about American society and the immigrant's troubled position are accurate and truthful: "Even if Jasmine fails to be a plausible character, she nevertheless enables the reader to enter the world of immigrants that is presented in a realistic fashion" (Kimak "Realism in Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices*"). A closer look at the protagonist's experience of migration, enhanced by the analysis of her gaze, destabilizes the perception of the conspicuous oppositions which are said to constitute the structure of the novel and locates the novel in the anti-racial discourse.

[2] Taking into consideration her will, strength, desire to live and move on she can be compared to the American figures of the cowboy or pioneer (Hoppe 138).

WESTERNERS' ORIENTALIZING GAZE

Jasmine attempts to give a sense of the imperialist gaze that may be cast at non-white subjects in a Western country. It reveals the Westerners' position of power and control, at the same time emphasizing inferiority of the alien-looking newcomers and indicating their status as subordinate subjects. Mukherjee delineates dangers of this objectifying, humiliating gaze which originates from the Orientalizing discourse; the subsequent incidents in the protagonist's life show how it can lead to abuse and violence, moreover, how it hinders dialogue and formation of serious relationships.

When Grewal explains her thesis about Mukherjee's Orientalist attitude she is highly selective. As an illustration of her argument the scholar juxtaposes barbarism and violence of India with the peace of Manhattan. The choice of only one American location ignores other locations depicted in the novel which, in fact, give a picture of quite a violent country. Although the protagonist's life was miserable in her homeland, India, where she came close to her own death twice (when her mother tried to strangle her at her birth, and when the terrorist bomb aimed at her killed her husband), the arrival in the Promised Land is ultimately dramatic. Jasmine reveals: "For the first time in my life I understood what evil was about" (*Jasmine*, 116). The girl is raped by a carrier of illegal immigrants, Half-Face, and her life is threatened; to protect herself she kills the perpetrator. Instantly upon landing in America she is pushed to the limits of her humanity, she is victimized and then she becomes a perpetrator, a murderess. The man's violent attack on her is a consequence of the Orientalist frame in which he has located her: because of her Oriental features she is seen as a seductress, a silent and obedient female. She is reduced to her sexuality: she is a body marked by vitality and open to domination. For Half-Face she embodies all the stereotypes he has long harbored about Asians and the continent itself, which show them as primitive and non-modern: "I been to Asia and it's the armpit of the universe" (*Jasmine*, 112). There is no way in which the girl could appear at least vaguely equal to the man, he does not listen to her memories about her late husband's job, which was fixing various technical appliances: "Don't tell me you ever *seen* a television set" (*Jasmine*, 112). Jasmine is designated as an uncivilized creature which can be assaulted, conquered and exploited (in a similar fashion to a colonized country). The objectifying gaze (Orientalism) leads to a rape, in which the young woman is sexually objectified.

The protagonist's journey across America only confirms the dangers of the Westerners' Orientalist gaze. No further encounter with Americans is as violent and dangerous as that with Half-Face, yet it always affirms the power structure between the Westerners and the female marked as exotic or Oriental. It is never a meeting of two equals; it is exercising power over the Other. Apart from physical violence, Americans' reaction to Jasmine's otherness takes also the form of verbal assaults. An importunate beggar in a New York street becomes aggressive when it turns out Jasmine is not going to give him any money. He throws insults at her and emphasizes her foreignness: "You fucking bitch. Suck my fucking asshole, you fucking *foreign* bitch!" (*Jasmine*, 139, my emphasis). In another confrontation, in the heartland US, Iowa, two men in a bar insult her and her partner Bud implying she might be a foreign prostitute. They throw some "foreign" words at her which sound like Asian, only confirming their condescending treatment and readiness to humiliate her. The protagonist finds herself in a position in which she can observe American reality, and so she mourns America's loss of innocence: "I wish I'd known America before it got perverted" (*Jasmine*, 201).

Jasmine's relationships with most men are also meant to show the prevalence of the Orientalist gaze among Westerners. Again, she is not an equal partner, an individual with idiosyncratic needs but an image, an Oriental female, attractive for her exoticism, mystery, sexuality.[3] What Western men see in her is silence and obedience, she is a figure supposed to cater to their needs. There is a danger in such envisioning of a woman—there is no ground for mutual understanding, appreciation and a serious relationship. Bud, a banker from Iowa, who wants to marry Jasmine, sees her in this way: "Bud courts me because I am alien. I am darkness, mystery, inscrutability. The East plugs me into instant vitality and wisdom" (*Jasmine*, 200). They go together through harsh times which could strengthen their relationship: Bud's divorce, struggle with lack of acceptance for Jasmine in the town, adoption of a Vietnamese boy, Bud's shooting, which leaves him an invalid in a wheelchair and turns Jasmine from a lover into a nurse. However, although pregnant with his child, she decides to leave Bud. She does not fall for another inhabitant of Baden who tries to court her, a 23-year-old farmer who has a dream to run away with her, to flee his farm and run to a better future, his more instant wish being, as Jasmine senses, "to make love to an

[3] The exoticization of the female body in *Jasmine* and short stories "The Lady from Lucknow," "Nostalgia," is analyzed in detail in Izabella Kimak, *Bicultural Bodies: A Study of South Asian American Women's Literature*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013. 40–53.

Indian princess" (217). The Orientalist attitude of both Bud and Darrel is what repels the protagonist, this is exactly what she wants to escape from. Eventually she sets off with an American for whom she used to work in New York. Taylor gives her most comfort and security because he accepts her otherness without even acknowledging her difference: "Taylor didn't want to change me. He didn't want to scour and sanitize the foreignness. My being different from Wylie and Kate didn't scare him" (*Jasmine*, 185). Jasmine's choice expresses her aversion towards being located in Orientalizing paradigm. She would like to begin her life anew but as an equal subject, free from the burden of stereotypical representation.

It is not only men who Orientalize Jasmine and see her through the prism of her sexuality. The author aims to show a variety of situations which indicate the difficult position of the protagonist and the controlling gaze which evaluates, objectifies and subordinates. When Jasmine goes to the hospital pregnant with Bud's child, in the waiting room she has a short conversation with a woman waiting for a doctor's consultation in the Infertility ward. The woman says to Jasmine: "You have nice hips" (*Jasmine*, 34), which the narrator takes as an insult: "But she gave the 'you' a generic sweep. You teeming millions with wide hips breeding like roaches on wide-hipped continents" (*Jasmine*, 34). She reads the woman's gaze as superior and disrespectful, locating her in an inferior category of people who "breed like roaches," whose major purpose is this most natural activity of procreation. The "generic you" she discovers in the comment echoes Edward Said's major concern of the representation of the "Oriental" as a single, totalizing image. The overgeneralization does not recognize national or cultural differences, it does not respect idiosyncracies and is therefore inaccurate, in Said's words: "My fears are distortion and inaccuracy, or rather the kind of inaccuracy produced by too dogmatic a generality and too positivistic a localized focus" (Said 8). And indeed, the narrative tries to make a breach in the totalizing image and so it reveals the unique situation of Jasmine and her partner. Since Bud is paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair, sexual activity poses difficulty for him and the lovers have to resort to the aid of artificial insemination. As a result, the naturalness and easiness of procreation are actually lost in their case: "It wasn't hard to get pregnant, but it wasn't very natural, either" (*Jasmine*, 35).

Another incident which reveals American imperialist gaze, this time cast at an Oriental male, is Jasmine's confrontation with her adopted son's history teacher. When Mr. Skola tells her he tried to speak Vietnamese with Du,

Jasmine is appalled: "I suppressed my shock, my disgust. This country has so many ways of humiliating, of disappointing. … His history teacher in Baden, Iowa, just happens to know a little street Vietnamese? Now where would he have picked it up?" (*Jasmine*, 29). She chooses not to confront the teacher directly, nor does she decide to instruct him about a more thoughtful and respectful way of dealing with immigrants. This particular profession may stand as a symbol of a wider discourse expressing the Orientalist attitude. As a history teacher Mr. Skola is a person educated towards a more insightful understanding of historical processes as well as diverse cultures, therefore his insensitivity might be seen as a symbol of an inattentiveness to immigrants' plight on the level of the nation.

What Mukherjee uncovers through the strategy of the Orientalization of her protagonist is the great divide between Americans and the alien-looking protagonist. The hegemonic position of Americans is clearly felt and expressed through their prejudice towards her racial otherness. Her response, though not verbalized but revealed in the first person narration, which records her internal life, such as thoughts and emotions, discloses her awareness of being treated as an inferior, and consequently, her protest against unequal treatment. This is also reflected in her actions, for example, when she leaves Bud, does not fall for Darrel, but chooses Taylor as a better, because unbiased, life partner. Both the inner life and the actions of the protagonist seem to be of the highest value for the discourse against racism; in confronting the reader with the perspective of the "Other," demonstrating her dissent and deep feeling of injustice, they can make the reader empathize with the protagonist.

THE PROTAGONIST – THE POWER TO LOOK

The protagonist is subject to the power of the Americans' Orientalist gaze yet she is also endowed with the power to look. It can be seen as a vehicle of power; her gaze is controlling in the sense that it is critical. It confirms the protagonist's status of an empowered subject. She is not, as the stereotype of the Oriental proclaims, a silent, passive and obedient Other but, as it could be seen in the previous section, a female who demonstrates an internal disagreement with the American racist discourse and who makes choices about her future. Furthermore, Jasmine's power to gaze back introduces a breach in the hegemonic discourse as it discloses deficiencies of the American empire,

as a result of which the image of America as a safe haven and Promised Land is undermined.

The narrative makes it clear that the act of looking and seeing is important and that it constitutes a point of difference between the protagonist and most Americans. The divide between American citizens and an immigrant is conspicuous, the protagonist perceives it acutely. She is aware that her gaze may be different from that of Americans: "I wonder if Bud ever sees the America I do" (*Jasmine*, 109). As a stranger, a newcomer, who is additionally illegal and alien-looking, she is burdened with much experience and has "survived hideous times" (214). This is why she envies Bud, her white partner, whose ancestors were born on the American soil, "the straight lines and smooth planes of his history" (214). Jasmine, the first generation immigrant, has her own, unique perspective when she looks at the mysteries of the streets and buildings in her new homeland:

> We pass half-built, half-deserted cinder-block structures at the edge of town, with mud-spattered deserted cars parked in an uncleared lot, and I wonder, Who's inside? What are they doing? Who's hiding? Empty swimming pools and plywood panels in the window frames grip my guts. (*Jasmine*, 109)

Her vision is contrasted with the narrowness of Bud's look, an American living a secure life without a history of dislocation or uprooting. As a banker, he is interested in concrete things which are supposed to offer security, such as money, insurance, and material possessions. He reacts to the same landscape with a very down-to-earth attitude: "Wonder who handled their financing" (*Jasmine*, 109). Contrary to Bud's remark, which investigates the practical side of life and is not really open to the speculations about the variety of human experiences, Jane's reaction offers empathy and shows that the woman is attentive to human stories, which encompass misfortunes or misery.

The protagonist's gaze can be seen as a vehicle to disrupt the hegemonic discourse of America. What Jasmine sees is far from the idyllic image of the country often envisioned by immigrants as the Promised Land. She sees poverty, exploitation, violence and misery, rather than success, fortune and happiness. The idealized vision of America has to crumble in confrontation with reality. The reality is constituted by both internal American problems, as illustrated by the poverty and beggars seen in New York: "Beggars in New York! I felt I'd come to America too late" (*Jasmine*, 139), and transnational, revealing the imperial status of the United States, whose power con-

tinues to rest mainly on the economic influence it exerts over the rest of the world (Loomba 6–7). For instance, Jasmine is appalled by the cases of economic exploitation and treatment of immigrant workers. She identifies with Mexican workers shown on TV, brutally detained in Texas for rebelling against their working conditions. Jasmine understands they must have worked for "insane wages" and she is full of compassion, showing her support with a simple statement "been there too" (*Jasmine*, 23). Indeed, because she arrived to the US illegally and tried hard to start her life from scratch she suffered much hostility, exploitation and humiliation herself. As an illegal she could expect no protection – the feeling of lurking danger has accompanied her since she first set foot on the American land, when she was brutally raped by Half-Face.

Finally, the novel is far from idealizing the life of ordinary Americans. In the account of her life in the Midwest the narrator-protagonist registers the vicissitudes of life of common farmers, who struggle with their everyday work, financial difficulties, and despair. Life in the heartland of the United States is neither calm nor secure, on the contrary, it appears violent and unstable. Jasmine's prospects for a comfortable future are destroyed when Bud becomes an invalid as a consequence of shooting. The man who attempts the murder is a desperate farmer who cannot keep up with his bank payments. Shooting Bud, the local banker, is how he gives vent to his rage. Afterwards, he commits suicide, not the first one in the region (*Jasmine*, 191), as the narrator observes. Bud remains an invalid for the rest of his life; confined to a wheelchair, he is completely dependent on others. The story of Darrel, a young man who cannot cope with the modernization of his farm because the bank refuses him a loan, is a story of helplessness and depression that ends with the man's suicide. One of the most terrifying images, which intensifies the perception of self-inflicted violence, is that of Darrel's body hanging in a barn full of hungry hogs which are trying to reach the corpse.

The inclusion of the violent episodes in the narrative aims to break the image of America as an ideal place. Even though the novel acknowledges the fact that America is a land of various opportunities, it is nevertheless far from its naïve celebration. The function of the protagonist's gaze is to uncover America's shortcomings, to expose and criticize its position of a hegemon, to dismantle its status of the Promised Land. Moreover, it reveals the position of the gazer, an active, critical observer who resists the Orientalizing gaze of the Westerners through her actions, leaving those who want

to fix her in the Orientalist frame, searching for freedom and a possibility of fulfillment.

Although the ultimate sense of the novel is Jasmine's striving towards a better future, always searching for a better place, the protagonist's success is an effect not only of the circumstances, that is, living in a Western country, but mainly of individual characteristics of the heroine. Not only India but also America, and in fact any other place, can be exploitative and violent. Thus, what the novel highlights through Jasmine's success and, for example, Midwestern farmers' failure, is the value of individual resistance and strength.

Christina Dascalu in her reading of Jasmine takes a slightly different stance. She also states that the narrative criticizes the American dominant position but, in her opinion, at the same time it strengthens the discourse of celebration of America. The celebratory discourse is visible through emphasizing assimilation as choice. The critic asserts that the difficulties the protagonist encounters and struggles with only emphasize her determination and willingness to become American. Indeed, Jasmine wants to assimilate, her Americanization is voluntary and seems to be a psychological mechanism allowing survival in the new circumstances: "I changed because I wanted to. To bunker oneself inside nostalgia, to sheathe the heart in a bulletproof vest, was to be a coward" (*Jasmine*, 185). Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that looking, behaving and acting like an American is stressed as a necessity at the beginning of her journey as an illegal newcomer. Lilian Gordon's lessons teach Jasmine that to avoid deportation she needs to create a new image of herself which will not raise any suspicions. In other words, she needs to talk, walk and behave like Americans.

To undermine even further the opposition between America and India depicted by Grewal, it is necessary to mention the nuances in Mukherjee's portrayal of India. The author tries to move away from the totalizing, stereotypical picture of her homeland as an oppressive and uncivilized country and shows the cases of Indian openness and modernity. Jasmine is encouraged by her teacher (and supported by her mother) to continue her education, which goes against the tendency for Indian girls to drop school at an early age and become wives. What is more, her young husband Prakash seems to be an embodiment of modernity: studying and working hard, dreaming of going abroad, with his own initiative to set up a business, which will be his and his wife's property. The young man is sensitive and full of respect towards women. He rejects the traditional patriarchal system of India: his mar-

riage is not an arranged one, he does not care about dowry, nor does he want to have children immediately; on the contrary, he encourages his young wife to study and to develop. These examples indicate that Mukherjee does not show India in one totalizing image of a barbaric society. Certainly, she knows the limitations of the country but is also aware that an entirely negative portrayal is unfair, because India is full of diversity and paradoxes.

CONCLUSION

In *Jasmine* Mukherjee portrays the complexity of immigrant experience and of the two worlds: India and America. Reading the novel in binary terms, as the East/West dichotomy, does not do justice to the density of the text. Mukherjee's strategy of Orientalization of her protagonist functions as a tool to show the imperial attitude of the West towards the alien-looking newcomer. The insulting Orientalizing gaze of the Westerners implies control and superiority, however, the notion of absolute dominance is undermined because the protagonist is endowed with the power to gaze back. Thus, the East cannot be subsumed; in the very act of looking Jasmine shows her strength and importance and proves that the "dissymmetry of power" is no longer valid. Furthermore, the narrative avoids uncritical praise of America, in this way shattering the Orientalist notion of the idealized West and the uncivilized East. The US discovered in the course of the protagonist's journey is often violent and unwelcoming not only towards the immigrating subject but also as an imperfect reality of native-born Americans.

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SIŁA SPOJRZENIA — KILKA UWAG O ORIENTALIZMIE W POWIEŚCI BHARATI MUKHERJEE *JASMINE*

Streszczenie

Powieść Bharati Mukherjee *Jasmine* krytykowano wielokrotnie za orientalistyczne przedstawienie Hindusek i Indii, które może utrwalać stereotypowy podział na Wschód i Zachód i utwierdzać w postrzeganiu ich za pomocą opozycji — przemoc i prymitywność kontra ład i nowoczesność. Analiza dwukierunkowości spojrzenia w powieści, czyli orientalistycznego spojrzenia Amerykanów skierowanego na główną bohaterkę (imigrantkę z Indii) i, co ważniejsze, jej spojrzenia zwróconego na Amerykanów, może prowadzić do konkluzji, że odczytywanie powieści przez pryzmat binarnych opozycji nie jest trafne. Sam akt krytycznego spojrzenia na amerykańską rzeczywistość podważa status bohaterki jako kobiety Orientu (biernej, posłusznej). Ponadto w powieści kwestionowane jest wyobrażenie Ameryki jako Ziemi Obiecanej.

Streściła Iwona Filipczak

Słowa kluczowe: literatura Amerykanów pochodzenia południowo-azjatyckiego; orientalizm; powieść imigracyjna.