

**THE OVERSEAS INDIAN OTHER – CAUGHT BETWEEN OUTER SPACE AND
INNER SPACE – AS IMMIGRANT, OR AT HOME, IN JHUMPA LAHIRI’S
UNACCUSTOMED EARTH AND KIRAN DESAI’S HULLABALOO IN THE GUAVA
ORCHARD**

Ileana-Mihaela Popescu

Abstract: *This paper examines the impact of space—as representing both home and homeless—on the Indian integration, adaptation and acceptance in the Indian-American world. This leads to alienation, in most of the cases, and to rejection by the society the Indian lives in, forcing him/her to react either by seclusion or by coming back to nature, in a strange way, which the society disapproves. Analysis focuses on defining and characterising the concepts of time and space, the dichotomy outer space–inner space and, real space–imagined space, the rhetoric of power in the space of otherness, as well as memory triggered by overseas space and created by non-native space. The conjunction between people and space builds different degrees of maladaptation and alienation. The time period is after 1990s, and the main argument draws on stories written in India and in America. The lack of integration, caused by a hostile space, is the binding force acting between Jhumpa Lahiri’s characters from the collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* and Kiran Desai’s protagonist from *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. The estranged Indian hero living in America feels segregated from the foreign society he lives in, as he is an immigrant in a new overseas space. As his adoptive country is across the ocean from the home nation, the sensation of estrangement is increased by the vastness of the dividing water expanse. Nevertheless, this feeling of exclusion is shared, in the same way, by the Indian at home, whose native space does not prove to be friendlier to him; on the contrary, society casts him aside, on the reason of oddness. The repudiated hero finds relief in coming back to nature, as this dumb space is capable of receiving him unconditionally. This paper argues that not only the overseas foreign space is the cause of shaping a broken destiny, in the matrix, but also the native space—under the influence of power and prejudice—typifies estrangement and homelessness. This explains the hero’s choice of a tree as home, for the bewilderment of his family and the entire society. Thus, individual space takes the shape of the overseas adopting home and coming back to nature instead of living in a civilised society.*

Keywords: *real space, imagined space, the space of otherness, space and power, space and memory, overseas space*