

The immigration experience told in interpreter of maladies



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

One of the most unique experiences in life one can have, is immigrating to another country. To leave everything that is known and familiar and start life anew, is an experience unique to its own. In her Pulitzer Prize winning book *Interpreter of Maladies*, Jhumpa Lahiri writes numerous short fictitious stories presented in the light of the immigration, and how it affects the characters within them. Her characters must navigate hardship, questions on self-identity, relating to another, and other experiences as a result immigrating.

Lahiri herself has been clearly effected by the immigration experience; she has expressed concern on self-identity and has even stated that she is Jealous of her own children as they are they can identify as American. Whereas she immigrated and continues to have self identity issues of what nationality she is. Take for example the short story *When Mr. Piranha Came to Dine*: the narrator an adolescent girl is presented with the idea of forced immigration. " It made no sense to me. Mr. Piranha and my parents spoke the same language, laughed at the same jokes, looked more or less the same.

They ate pickled mangoes with their meals, ate rice every night for supper with their hands. Like my parents, Mr. Piranha took off his shoes before entering a room, chewed fennel seeds after meals as a digestive, drank no alcohol, for dessert dipped austere biscuits into suggestive cups of tea. Nevertheless my father insisted that I understand the difference, and led me to a map of the world taped to the wall over his desk. He seemed concerned that Mr. Piranha Might take offense if I accidentally referred to him as an Indian" (27 - 28). India has been divided.

The little girl is exposed to the act that even though Mr.. Piranha shares the same interests and culture as her and her family, there is a separation of nationality. The little girl compares the types of food and the way that they are enjoyed by with her family by of Mr.. Piranha, and she finds herself confused. Lair demonstrates the struggle of identity of the immigration experience, that even though a group of people compared to another may be similar, a difference in nationality can be a barrier to overcome. In this case, the father of the little girl expresses concern of calling Mr..

Piazza Indian and the offense it may bring him. Lair demonstrates the power of remembering a experience no longer to immigrating to another country. In her short story A Temporary Matter Laird's character Shops is able to reconnect with her husband, of which both are in a failing marriage. They lose power to their house for a few nights, and it brings back memories of a time in India where power outages were common and shops and her family used to tell stories to pass the time. " 'I remember during power failures at my grandmother's house, we all had to say something, Shops continued.

He could barely see her face, but from her tone he knew her eyes were narrow, trying to focus on a distant object was a habit of hers. 'I don't know. A little poem. A Joke. A fact about the world" (12-13). Throughout the rest of the story the couple shares something about the other they never told before. Because Shops is no longer in a country where power outages are the norm, the experience of the power outage allows her to connect back to a time of hardship in her life and temporarily reconnect with her husband. Lair shows the power this experience can have.

The characters in the singing of avoid each other, they are not really of interest to each other. But the couple they continue to share stories they continued to deal with this memory of hardship, they reconnect; the thoughts of the characters presented in the story move from dissatisfaction and anxiety to a renewed interest in each other, by exploring renewed feelings of each other and it was because of the hardship experienced before immigrating to another country. In A Real Durban Lair tells the story of older woman who acts as a Durban in a housing complex.

The woman states that she was once very wealthy, and now she serves the people of this mediocre facility. " 'A man came to pick our dates and guavas. Another clip Hibiscus. Yes, there I tasted life. Here I eat my dinner from a rice pot. ' This point in the recital Boor Ma's ears started to burn; a pain shoot through her swollen knee. 'Have I mentioned that I cross the border with just two bracelets on my wrist? Yet there was a day when my feet touched nothing but marble. Believe me, don't believe me, such comforts you cannot even dream" (71).

Lair shows us that this character immigrated after she lost her lath, a realistic part of the immigration experience. Some move for opportunity, others move for sanctuary, some move because they have no other choice and Lair leads us to believe that Boor Ma moved for that third option. " By now Boor Ma could see some light from the roof spilling into the stairwell. And though it was only 8 o'clock, the sun was already strong enough to warm the last of the cement steps under her feet" (72). Lair drives home the point that this woman is now in an insecure financial situation.

This woman who knew of lavish riches, to now taking leisure in the very basic sensation of sun warmed concrete beneath her feet. This woman who considered herself a higher class is now reduced to that of a servant, feeling undeserving of sitting on her host's furniture when invited as a guest. This woman immigrated as a result of the loss of her riches, and is making life anew in another country. This captures a very real and depressing part of the immigration experience. After presenting these three stories it would seem that Lair, as a person, suffers from the immigration experience, it is projected through her works.

In each story, hardship is experienced, not gain; conflict, not resolution; difficulties with self identity and belonging, rather than sense of new beginning and a start of anew. It is as if Lair wrote the works as a warning to those considering immigrating, that the immigration experience is full of challenges and hardships rather than an experience of opportunity. She seems to project her own issues and self identity onto all of her works presented in this book, and in her own way expresses that she has regrets or reservations for immigrating.