

Quest for Self and the Immigrant Experience in Bharti Mukherjee's Fiction

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Bharti Mukherjee's novels and short-stories often reveal contemporary themes and concerns. One of these is the emotional and psychic consequences of search for self-identity. She has paid special attention to the condition of the Indian woman immigrant in North America. In her 1990, *Iowa Review*, interview she emphasises that many of her stories are 'about psychological transformation, especially among women immigrants from Asia' (15). Her novels and short stories express the nomadic impulses of Indians who in their deliberate search for materially better life, migrate to the west and consequently face tensions of adaptation and assimilation. Mukherjee is at her best in the depiction of cross-cultural conflicts and how her heroines take control over their destinies. They endeavour for *self-realisation* as for e.g. in *Wife* (1975). Dimple moves towards liberation by falling in love with a white American but ends up in madness and suicide. In *Jasmine* (1989) the heroine deserts her husband for the sake of freedom and open relationship with another white American man. Mukherjee does not impose ready-made solutions to the problems facing immigrant Asian women. She prefers showing them acquiring the power in order to control their fates. At times they offer role models for several immigrant women. Fakrul Alam feels:

Once literature begins to serve as a forum illuminating female experience, it can assist in humanising and equilibrating the culture, value system, which has served predominantly male interests. A literary work is capable of providing role models, instill a positive sense of feminine identity by portraying women who are self actualising, whose identities are not dependant on men (45).

The point to be made is that, 'the immigrant is by choice, hospitable to the experience of the unknown, not frightened by it' (Malashrilal 153). This paper will focus on three stories 'A Wife Story', 'The Tenant' and 'The Management of Grief' drawn from *The Middleman and Other*

Stories (1988) and a novel *The Holder of The World* (1993). Immigration becomes the major motif and is looked at from different perspectives alongwith some of the related issues, like for one it is a very personal experience, secondly sometimes immigrants are unhappy of having to 'settle down' in the U.S.; which seems more like 'settling for' the US sometimes at the cost of finer sensibilities. Then one is entirely cut off from one's family and has anonymous existence, with total lack of direction. One also experiences cultural shock, constant pressure leading to emotional stress. One also has to follow the social protocol. American system compels an individual to make his own discoveries in order to comprehend its system. In all this one experiences loneliness and friendlessness which is well exploited as themes in 'The Wife Story' and 'The Tenant'. These stories do reveal 'female experience' of women who are self actualising. Quest for the definition of self and search for identity are the main features of these Indian women who are seen caught in the flux of tradition and modernity. Neither can they completely detach themselves from their past and nor do they have any certitude in the future. If on one hand these stories reflect the writer's sense of isolation and emotional vulnerability, on the other there is sudden awakening and definite decision. Their revolt against male domination is both, 'educative and creative' (Alam, 48). They escape dangers of depersonalisation and self-destruction.

Bharti Mukherjee has interceded and reworked the study of feminism in her writings. Central to her vision in *The Holder of the World*, *Wife* and *Jasmine* are issues related to women. Feminism in her works has something of what Caroll Smith Rosenberg argues is, the emotional segregation of women and men, which led to the development of a specifically female world (137). The network of female world comes to us not only in Mukherjee's novels but also in her collections of short stories. She advocates many facets of feminism encompassing agitation for equal opportunity, sexual autonomy and right of self determination. This brings her closer to her contemporary women writers like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Despande, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Githa Hariharan. She feels that limitations placed on women's activities result in profoundly destructive effects.

The Holder of the World can be read on several levels of interpretation. If on the one hand it is a feminist novel, on the other it is a historical one, which negotiates a gap between the seventeenth century and the mid twentieth century: having a cross cultural backdrop it brings together a panoramic view of socio-cultural experiences of characters in India and America. It is also a novel about the quest of the characters

in search of stability. As far as the treatment of history is concerned the novel has scintilla of Khushwant Singh's *Delhi*, Amitav Ghosh's *In an Antique Land*, V.S. Naipaul's *A Way in the World* and Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca*. But as far as handling of feminist point of debate is concerned a parallel can be drawn between *Journey to Ithaca* and *The Holder of the World*. Both Desai and Mukherjee seem to have entered in Ruth Jhabvala's territory, the heat and dust and lust of it all. *Journey to Ithaca* reveals the hypocrisy and humbug of gurus and pedlars of Indian spirituality and culture. *The Holder of the World* is the story of Hannah Easton, an immigrant from America who came to India in the seventeenth century and imbibed herself in its culture. For Desai the journey itself is important and not its destination whereas for Mukherjee both the journey as well as the destination are important. Like Jhabvala they are absorbed in the point of encounter between the naïve outsider in search of self.

Almost all the narratives of *The Middleman and Other Stories* are woven around Asian immigrants and even Mukherjee feels, 'Immigration from the Third World to this country is a metaphor for the process of uprooting and rerooting or what my husband Clark Blaise in his book *Resident Alien* calls 'unhousement' and 'rehouse-ment'" (Alison B. Carb, 649). Their identity is 'fluid identity' despite their best efforts to adapt to the new environment. 'A Wife Story', 'The Tenant' and 'The Management of Grief' have protagonists who escape dangers of de-personalisation and self destruction. They have tremendous potential to discover hidden reserves of energy in them.

'Loose Ends,' the third tale revolves around Jeb Marshall, a Vietnam veteran scarred by his experience of war. 'Orbiting' is a story of Renata de Marcos, a second generation American Woman of Italian Spanish origins, dating an Afghan man. The fifth narrative, 'Fighting for the Rebound', has Griff, an American, who is asked to commit himself to his Phillipino girl friend Blanquita. 'Fathering', the seventh tale (preceded by 'The Tenant') unravels another Vietnam veteran torn between his half Vietnamese daughter and his white American friend. It is followed by 'Jasmine' a story from omniscient perspective, centering on a Trinidadian Indian Teenager who is savouring the United States for the first time. Consequences of the infatuation is the central theme of 'Danny Girls' the ninth story. In 'Buried Lives' Mukherjee traces the pergerinations of Mr. Venkatesan, a Tamil from Sri Lanka hell bent on migrating to Canada. 'The Management of Grief' the last story is about Mrs. Bhave, an Indo Canadian who tries to cope with the loss of her family in a tragical plane crash. Alam points out, 'All the stories seem to be deliberately set all over America to

prove how the entire continent was being transformed by the influence of immigrants of Asian origins' (81).

The protagonist in 'A Wife's Story' has a common denominator with Mukherjee's novel *Wife* (1975) and stories such as 'The Lady from Lucknow' and 'Visitors' in *Darkness* (1985). Like in them Mukherjee focusses on an Indian wife who is willing to adapt to the ways of the world in urban America and at the same time is being pulled back by her Indianness. Panna Bhatt, the protagonist is in flux. She is a Gujarati married woman doing her Ph.D., in New York theatre with Iree, a fellow International graduate with whom she is intimate. The play being staged in the theatre by David Mamet is full of Patel jokes. At first she is annoyed, but later rationalises: 'We've made it' Patels must have made it. Mamet, Spielberg: they're not condescending to us. May be they're a little bit afraid (Middleman, 28). Her husband is in India working as a Vice President in a textile mill in Bombay. *Panna*, knows she is no longer a conservative Indian wife, she feels liberated. There is an instance in the story when she hugs Iree impulsively on Broadway after the play. But then she realises her husband would, 'never dance or hug a woman on Broadway' (Middleman, 27). She is conscious of her physical and emotional distancing from her roots. She has been in America for two years. "She has broadened [her] horizons" (Middleman, 30) but still straddling between two cultures. She shares a one bedroom apartment with a Chinese American, Charity, who is separated from her husband. Panna not only learns to broaden her horizons but also learns to protest effectively. Like her several other immigrants often experience lonely and unfriendly treatment but sometimes when they make friends, immigrants clutch them for emotional sustenance. They fully empathise with their plight, and are always there to utter words of encouragement one so badly needs. Though nowhere in the story Imre or Charity say too many words but for Panna they do act as a psychological support system.

In the concluding section of the story Panna confronts a decision to be made, the question which way she would lean. Her husband comes to New York for a holiday with her. She makes all arrangements for his travels in America. He is the quintessential Indian tourist trying out everything that she now takes for granted. She remains beside him physically but refuses to go back to India. She is no longer an innocent abroad. The story concludes with Panna standing naked before a mirror getting ready to make love to her husband: 'I stand here shameless in ways he has never seen me. I am free, afloat watching somebody else' (40). This gives symbolic dimension to the narrative.

Panna's nakedness and its mirror image reveals her longing for her identity, it is not an attempt to glamorise her physical beauty, on the other hand Mukherjee deglamorises her and several other Asian immigrants and to some extent 'womanhood' in order to decipher the psychic complexity of a woman. Panna's quest for identity is an unending process, which has physical as well as emotional aspects and none of them is accomplished in her relations with men she meets. An interesting parallel can be drawn between Mukherjee's Panna and Jainendra's (a Hindi novelist and short story writer) heroine Sudarshana in his short story 'Ek Raat' (One Night) who appears before the protagonist Jairaj 'without apparel', gives herself physically, and surrenders before him but her quest for identity remains unfulfilled. A striking difference between Panna and Sudarshana is that one deserts her husband in search of selfhood, while Sudarshana suffers hypocritical Indian male society. Unlike Panna, Sudarshana is not an 'immigrant'. Panna takes an independent stand on a firm ground with her own logic. She even concurs with Mukerjee's open hearted explanation for her joyous 'Americanisation': "Psychologically, New York is my home . . . I'm deeply connected to its chaos and energy. Like Calcutta it is a vigorous city of the world" (Mitchel, 46).

If Panna Bhatt is in the process of falling out of the family institution, Maya Sanyal in 'The Tenant' is already a free woman. Maya, a Ph.D in Comparative Literature, on a teaching assignment at the University of Iowa, is one of the best delineated characters of Mukherjee. As Alam puts forth that she has ' . . . history of promiscuous relationships with numerous white Americans' (Alam,85). She is now in search of an Indian man. She gets a chance to visit Dr. Chatterji in Cedar falls. She is invited for tea with his family. The atmosphere around the house has the touch of Indianness about it; they talk about Calcutta, about Maya's illustrious as well as notorious ancestors. They also talk about old Indian film songs. Dr. Chatterji accompanies Maya, to see her off, on the way he even tries to seduce her. Mukherjee with tongue in cheek points out that Indians in America do value family institutions and traditions apparently but as and when they get an opportunity to exploit 'something' extra they try to grab it. Maya, disgusted with Dr. Chatterjee feels shattered. She thinks Indians criticise and condemn Americans and their evil influence on innocent Indians but what do they do to preserve their moral fibre. Somehow she dislikes the man and his tastes, his hatred for Americans. Her desire to be intimate with an Indian man continues.

Next day, she initiates a date in an airport transit lounge with Ashok Mehta an Indian physician working in Hartford, Connecticut, whose

name she picks from India Abroad. The 'immigrant courtship' takes place. She returns to her work place and has to await Dr. Mehta's ring. She gives in her desire to have an affair with her landlord, Fred, who has no arms but proves to be a good lover and companion. Months later Dr. Mehta rings her up, again she is ready to 'unhouse' herself in search for a new house. She is shown constantly in 'emotional transit' who yearns for satisfactory relationship. She is 'a tenant' in all her relationships with men, having no permanence or stability. Her name 'Maya' (illusion) has metaphorical connotation, she is 'Maya' in search of reality.

Distinct points of convergences and divergences can be located in Mukherjee's 'The Tenant' and Rajee Seth's, 'Beyond the Blind Alley'. Both the stories reveal the world of woman sensibilities and fractured truths. Seth's protagonist walks out of her marriage because of her husband's (Surjit) brutal treatment, decides to live with her boss, Mr. Mishra. But unlike Mukherjee's Maya, feels throttled because, 'One man reached for her body with his kind of lust and this one [Mr. Misra] claimed her with another' (14). None of them ever tries to comprehend her emotions. She feels tired and broken, all her expectations like 'bubbles of soap' do not last long, she feels caught in 'blind alleys', an inescapable helplessness. Seth like Mukherjee has sharp insights into the human psyche and is sensitive to human frailty. Seth concludes the story, with her protagonist going to see a doctor to abort the child she had from Mr. Misra and says 'I am raped'. Both Mukherjee and Seth have keen perceptions that reveal the powerful and often unexpected world which lurks menacingly underneath the ordinary and the obtuse. Like Seth's protagonist, Maya too in search of self identity and emotional fulfillment goes on falling 'in' and 'out' of relationships. The striking difference between the two heroines is that Maya does everything without any inhibitions, while Rajee Seth's protagonist belongs to the conservative set up, takes her own time in understanding her quest for identity. Mukherjee through this story [i.e. 'The Tenant'] reveals that America has nothing 'else' to offer to its immigrants except 'vulnerability'.

Mukherjee's protagonists confront a multicultural society and are well aware of their social reality. Their displacement, alienation and search for self constitutes for them a kind of process which cannot be avoided. At times their 'self' is eroded because of dislocation or cultural denigration, but Panna Bhatt and Maya Sanyal emerge from them. Mukherjee describes Maya as, "... a very lost, sad character, who really went out... but at the same time there is desire for a wholeness, nostalgia that India and Indian traditions promised" (Interview 1990,

20). Maya's relationship with Ashoke Mehta is her last ditch effort to achieve a sense of wholeness and stability. To Rustomji Kerns, Mukherjee reiterates; 'I see my 'immigrant' story replicated in a dozen American cities, and instead of seeing my Indianness as a fragile identity to be presented against obliterations (or worse, a visible disfigurement to be hidden), I see it now as a set of fluid identities to be celebrated' (665).

'The Management of Grief' which narrates the Air India disaster deals with the effort by someone affected to get on with her life. It is regarded as a transitional work, bridging the world of *Darkness* and *The Middleman*. The details of the story seem to emerge out of the moral in which *Darkness* and *The Sorrow and the Terror* (1987) were written. The story narrates the pathos of survival and underscores the inadequacy of Canadian officials faced with the relatives of the crash victims. Alam draws parallels between 'The Management of Grief' and 'Isolated Incidents' one of the memorable stories of *Darkness*. The bureaucratic Judith Templeton does have good intentions to help Mrs. Bhave but feels ill equipped to "manage" the grief of Mrs. Bhave. Mukherjee's delineation of Mrs. Bhave is complete; Mrs. Bhave's return to India to find comfort in her family and become once again familiar with Indian socio-religious methods of 'managing grief'. She realises there were many middlemen and feels, "I am trapped between two modes of knowledge". I flutter between worlds (*Middleman*, 185). Unable to get the consolation she came for, she decides to return to Toronto. Here in a vision she hears the voices of her family urging her to 'be brave' (*Middleman*, 194). A parallel can be drawn between Ursula Brangwen's sighting of the rainbow at the end of her quest for fulfillment in Lawrence's *The Rainbow*. The voices she hears give her enough confidence to emerge from emotional trauma and face the world as it comes to her. Similarly, Mrs. Bhave decides to return because 'an escape' from suffering in no way could help her. Like Ursula her quest for fulfillment would only come full circle on her return. Bharti Mukherjee, talking about immigrant experience claimed. "it was not right to describe the American experience as one of the melting pot but a more appropriate word would be 'fusion' because immigrants in America did not melt into or were forged into something like their white counterparts. Immigration was a two way process and both the white and immigrants were growing by this interchange and experience. This is true for Panna, Maya and Mrs. Bhave. They have grown into the 'third thing' which drives them ahead in their quest of identity. Malashri Lal points out that Mukherjee's women protagonists are '. . . confident, sophisticated, poised—who will not melt into an

American mainstream but visibly expand the margins . . . ' (149). Panna, Maya and Mrs. Bhave are not just nostalgic either for the past, present or future, they develop a kind of habit of confronting crisis and emerging out of them and extract maximum out of life. As Malashri Lal reiterates, they ' . . . are neither nostalgic for their personal past nor afraid of the unfamiliar present. The main strategy is adaptation without surrender . . . ' (149). The protagonists shed their external connections with India ' . . . but carry core beliefs in the interior of the self against which all new experience is measured' (Malashri Lal, 150). There are various incidents revealing 'aspects of cultural collisions' (Kerns, 169).

Bharti Mukherjee has paid special attention to the condition of the Indian woman immigrant in North America. Her women characters lead lives of quite desperation but a few of her heroines triumph over the obstacles they confront. They are in control of their destinies. Panna, Maya and Mrs. Bhave opt for freedom from the shackles of their 'traditional' ambience. They overthrow any kind of impositions of ready made solutions to their day to day crisis. In her earlier writings Mukherjee confesses to be 'an extravagant admirer' of V.S. Naipaul. (Alam, 181) but later she dropped Naipaul for one or the other reason and, "committed herself to celebrating the melting pot of America". (Alam, 217).

Mukherjee, in *The Holder of World* shows an immigrant from America who came to India in the seventeenth century and imbibed herself in its culture. The writer moves in Yeats-like inverted gyres of time in order to reconstruct and provide organic unity to the events of Hannah Easton's life. As in *Wife and Jasmine* she no longer experiments with the experiences of Indian immigrants in America. She focuses on the continuum of the immigrant experience moving from the small and the singular in the vastness of the three time zones simultaneously—the past, the present and the future. From America to India, worlds collide with one another. "Moreover the tide is reversed, the so-called American dream lies in the "Orient and American seeks it" (Kak, 24).

Hannah Easton arrives in India from Puritan Massachusetts and "translates herself" into the Salem Bibi, the mistress of Raja Jadav Singh. The novel also gyrates around the tale of the Emperor's Tear, the diamond which Aurangzeb hung in his war tent and which Hannah steals. But history loses the diamond. In the mid twentieth century Beigh Masters and her cybernaut boy friend Venn Iyer of MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) strive to create the greatest "data plasma" in the world. They set on to unearth something useful from layers of history, life and times of the Salem Bibi and the Emperor's

Tear. Beigh Master depends on her intuitive powers of the mind and the heart. She visits the Maritime Museum in Massachusetts to look in to the dusty debris of Mughal miniature paintings, goes to auction houses and several historical records and memoirs. The transmigration of Salem Bibi's soul through time and space becomes an allegory of Beigh Master's personal discovery. Flavour of "historical feminism" is insinuated here and there through the incidents of Hannah's life. Her mother Rebecca leaves an ineradicable imprint on young Hannah's mind when she disappears with a Nipmuc—"the ultimate unnatural crime of Puritan life". She [Hannah] witnessed the Fall, not Adam's Fall, Rebecca's Fall. . . . She is the witness not merely of the occasion of the sin, but the birth of the sin itself. . . . In the scorched sceptic month of August." (Holder, 30). Hannah carries memories of the event throughout her life. She too later profligates the concept of a proper English lady to become the bibi of Jadav Singh, who is fighting the Mughals. She was brought up in an orthodox set up of the Fitch household, gained all the conventional wisdom and housekeeping, developed an obsessive love of needle work, which often depicted her internal conflict after her mother's disappearance. Through her embroidery perhaps she expressed her hidden subdued and suppressed emotions: "her embroidery is vibrant, passionate and wild, so full of the lurking devil." In embroidery Hannah objectively correlates her emotional self. Mukherjee reiterates: "She had always thought of herself as one who watched, who had watched, who had the privilege of remaining outside family or society by virtue of her loss and secret." (Holder, 54)

Hannah neither forgets nor forgives her mother's crime of elopement. She never shares her emotional tumult with anyone. In the Puritan family circle of Fitch she could never imagine talking of her mother. Her husband Gabriel Legge is a colourful raconteur, the swaggering seafarer, he never had time or sensibility to listen to Hannah. He is employed as a factor of the East India Company and sails for the Coromandel Coast. Hannah's fate brings her to India after her marriage to Gabriel. The Company wives have nothing in store for her. She finds a good friend in Bhagmati, her Indian ayah, who brings to her the glimmerings of understanding of an aged civilization. She narrates fragments from The Ramayana. The stories once again ignite Hannah's memories because of the themes of abduction, betrayal and vengeance. However she is attracted to the events of Sita's life because she proves her purity to her husband and to society in a trial by fire. The god of fire, Agni, embraces her and releases her unscorched (Holder, 176). An interesting parallel is that Hannah's life was also a

trial by fire but unlike Sita she never with stands Agnipariksha for the sake of her husband.

Gabriel wanted Hannah to triumph over her Puritan sensibilities and she obliged him, because she loved the finer things of life. Legge being a misfit in the East India Company, joins a group of pirates and during one of the misadventures with Haj pilgrims he is seperated from his wife. Hannah escapes with Bhagmati to Panpur under the protection of Raja Jadav Singh of Devgad. The state of Devgad is 'a deeply embedded thorn in the flesh of the Emperor Aurangzeb.' Bhagmati and Hannah become the guests of the Raja. Hannah delves for new roots, due to her fine quality of adaptability she steps into the New World of Hinduism. She and Jadav Singh wooed each other incognizant of the sword of Democles, the Nawab Haider Beg, Governor of Aurangzeb's state. The Nawab dispatches his most ruthless commander, Murad Farah, to cage Raja, usurp the diamond Emperor's Tear and bring Hannah, the firangi lady. Jadav Singh with no option, bundled Hannah and Bhagmati into one palanquin and a disguised Raja into another. On their way to the Nawab, Raja attacked the Mughal army. Hannah eventually kills Morad Farah, saves Jadav Singh's life and brings him back to Panpur. She decides to offer her life to end the war, goes to negotiate with the Emperor but is taken hostage by him. She disdains the Emperor:

Duty ! Duty, judgement! I have enough of duty. And of judgement. You cloak your lust for vengeance and for gold and diamonds in the noble words of duty and judgement and protection and sacrifice. But it is the weakest and the poorest and the most innocent who suffer, who sacrifice, whose every minute of every day is obedience to duty. (Holder, 269).

Whenever, Aurangzeb comes to see her, she is reminded of Ravana the demon king of Lanka in Muslim disguise. Though she fails in her mission for armistice between the Raja and the Emperor, somehow, she purloins the diamond— the Emperor's Tear from Aurangzeb's war tent and escapes towards the fort of Panpur. She hands over the diamond to Bhagmati. The diamond is ultimately found by Beigh Masters in a cyberspatial finale, Venn Iyer takes her through the miracle, and Bhagmati thrusts the world's most famous diamond into her dying womb. It is in her grave that they find the holder of the world of the seventeenth century.

Bharti Mukherjee holds the reader's attention through her characters and emphasizes, "the survivor is the one who improvises, not one who plays by the rules." She sees herself as a unique human being and gives messages to her fellow females. The success of any

interpersonal relationship depends on the autonomy and strength of each participant. Yet socio-cultural conditioning prevents women from achieving a sense of themselves as persons. Like any other feminist writer Mukherjee's women characters offer "a frontal challenge to patriarchal thought, social organization and control mechanism." (Singh, 65)

In *The Holder of The World*, she suggests two advantages of Women's Liberation: one, it allows them to realize their potential as individuals in the wider society; and two, it is the only way by which they could achieve the personal recognition and identity. Her characters Dimple in *Wife*, Jasmine in *Jasmine* and Rebecca, Hannah and Bhagmati in *The Holder of The World* repeatedly defy the society they live in and in rejecting cultural stereotypes, they develop a life of their own outside the home. The more they learn about themselves the more individualistic they become. Like Hannah all are "self-possessed, intelligent and desirable" irrespective of their time and place. As far as their sense of assimilation is concerned Hannah is dissimilar to all of them. Dimple is perturbed and her migration to USA proves disastrous to her hyper-sensitive nature. She remains unadaptable to her new environment. Jasmine is initially unable to adopt to American culture but soon adjusts herself to the new way of life. It is Hannah alone who proves to be "a pure product of time and place, her marriage and her training, exposed to a range of experience that would be extreme even in today's world, but none of it, consciously had sunk in or affected her outer behaviour." (Holder, 220)

Mukherjee believes that India has ever been a land which allows for plurality of traditions and ways. In narrating this she zooms her camera for Americans. Look how you were in contact with the larger world then. Today yours is this world. Yesterday it was the fabled Orient and as for tomorrow, who knows? (Kak, 25)

The Salem Bibi provokes Master Beigh to unravel the mystery which surrounded her life and the diamond. Mukherjee devotes her attention to female issues in the historical times as well as in the contemporary society. She seems to have concurrence with the view, "people are continually remaking their culture, and in so doing redefining the past, reconstituting the present and reconceptualizing what they desire from the future." (Long, 202). This makes Mukherjee and Masters Beigh involve deeply in the Salem Bibi episode in making sense from the historical evidences because conventional answers no longer satisfy. They feel social and cultural change is a recursive process in which women have to play a steering role.

Reviewing the short stories like 'The Wife's Story', 'The Tenant'

and 'The Management of Grief' and the novel, *The Holder of the World*, it may be suggested that immigrant experience provides thematic coherence in them. If the quest for self is a metaphor for existential alienation, immigration is also a metaphor for the reintegration of the alienated sensibility.

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