

Naming the Self in Diaspora: Cultural Memory and Renaming in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and Ariel Sabar's *My Father's Paradise*

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the thematic and symbolic meaning of naming in two literary works that explore the intricacies of cultural identity, intergenerational conflict, and diaspora: Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and Ariel Sabar's *My Father's Paradise*. In both works, names function not merely as identifiers, but as dynamic sites of conflict, compromise and transformation, reflecting the tensions between the personal identity and cultural memory in diasporic contexts. Sabar's narrative explores the ways in which names represent linguistic legacy and ancestral memory, especially in a Kurdish-Jewish environment, where their Aramaic heritage and linguistic identity face the threat of displacement and assimilation. On the other hand, in Lahiri's novel, the American-born protagonist's discomfort with his pet name, "Gogol", reflects broader tensions surrounding hybridity, belonging and the burden of cultural legacy. This analysis examines how name represents both resistance to and concentration within dominant cultural frameworks, drawing on postcolonial theory and diaspora studies. The paper argues that names in these writings delineate the shattered boundaries between the past and present, the homeland and the host land, and the self and the other. This article explores how linguistic, historical, and familial factors shape diasporic identity by analyzing the emotional and symbolic weight of names, drawing on Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory and Stuart Hall's essays on culture and identity. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that name functions as a powerful metaphor for identity formation in multicultural and migrant narratives.

KEY WORDS: Diaspora, Cultural Memory, Naming, Identity, Intergenerational Conflict.

1. INTRODUCTION¹

Naming serves as a critical mechanism in shaping identity, preserving cultural memory, and negotiating one's relationship with tradition and origin. In Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* and Ariel Sabar's autobiographical work *My Father's Paradise*, the act of naming emerges as a central symbolic and narrative force, illuminating the complex negotiations of cultural identity within diasporic contexts. The protagonists in both texts, as second-generation immigrants raised in the United States, encounter their names not merely as inherited labels, but as contested markers of cultural belonging, personal autonomy, and generational tension. Although names serve as a link between the main characters and their ethnic and familial heritage in both texts, they also cause unease and displacement. Both protagonists are

driven to assimilate by this ambivalence, which leads to attempts to change or reject their names in an effort to gain social acceptance and recreate themselves. By doing this, individuals attempt to disassociate themselves from their cultural roots and family histories, exposing the psychological strain of balancing inherited identity with American standards.

The issue of naming is closely related to each protagonist's relationship with his father. The paternal figure frequently bears the weight of cultural transmission, which is expressed through language, religion, appearance, and most importantly, names. Gogol's humiliation and ultimate rejection of his own name is comparable to Ariel's dissatisfaction with his ancestry, especially his name and physical characteristics. Although both characters first perceive their names as markers of otherness, they both eventually go through a

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conversion, where naming turns into a means of connectedness. Hall (1990) argues that, our identities are the names we use to describe how we are framed by history, and how we reframe ourselves within it. Naming functions as more than just a cultural identifier in diasporic writing; it is a contentious area where identity, memory, and displacement converge.

Both Sabar's memoir and Lahiri's fiction emphasize name as a lens through which to analyze cultural negotiation, assimilation, and intergenerational difference. These pieces transform names into archives of cultural history and emotional complexity, illuminating the conflicting and frequently agonizing processes by which second-generation immigrants balance their position between accepted cultures and inherited customs.

2. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. Conceptual Framework

This article's analysis is based on diasporic and postcolonial theoretical viewpoints. The paper examines naming as a cultural practice that balances the conflict between assimilation and tradition, drawing on Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity and Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence. The investigation of how names function as changing markers of diasporic identity is informed by Hall's emphasis on identity as a "production" that is never finished, but is always in process. The way that name serves as a place of negotiation between inherited and chosen cultural rules is further clarified by Bhabha's theory of the "third space." These methods make it possible to interpret *The Namesake* and *My Father's Paradise* as works in which naming emerges as a key tool for expressing memory, resistance, and selfhood in immigrant tales. (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 2018). The "third space" and Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity offer a fundamental perspective for comprehending how naming functions within cultural in-betweenness. Bhabha (1994, p. 1) asserts that postcolonial identity is never static, but rather arises in the third space, a liminal "in-between" area where many cultural influences converge and change one another. The conflict between ancestry and cultural assimilation is reflected in this situation, when name turns into a performative negotiation. The act of naming and renaming by immigrants in America can be also analyzed under the concept that Bhabha refers to it as 'mimicry' or 'to imitate'. The term 'mimicry' is used by Bhabha (1994) to explain this habit of second-generation immigrants, who imitate the eastern culture blindly, without becoming aware that they are about to lose their own culture in order to be accepted by the native Americans. Mimicry is certainly an indication of inappropriateness, but it also indicates a difference or resistance that

strengthens surveillance, unifies the major strategic purpose of colonial authority, and threatens both disciplinary powers and normalized knowledges. It has a detrimental and unsettling impact on colonial discourse's power. By normalizing the colonial state or subject, the post-Enlightenment civility ideal alienates its own language of liberty and creates a new understanding of its standards.

Analyzing how characters in *My Father's Paradise* and *The Namesake* perceive names as both reinvention tools and connections to buried histories requires this paradigm. This analysis is furthered by Stuart Hall's view of identity as a process of "becoming" as opposed to "being." According to Hall (2018), historical discontinuity, fragmentation, and difference rather than a common cultural ancestry shape diasporic identity. Names are unstable signifiers that are altered by memory, migration, and self-perception rather than being fixed ethnic identifiers. Therefore, naming is a cultural tactic in diasporic writing that can be used to conduct assimilation in a new cultural setting, respond to colonial erasure, or retrieve lost histories. Stuart Hall contends that the idea that cultures are static, unadulterated, and stable is a discursive construct rather than a historical fact, challenging the conventional wisdom. According to him, despite the fact that cultures frequently portray themselves as exclusive and unchanging, they are actually continually being transformed by a variety of factors, including migration, colonization, trade, and invasion. Any idea of cultural purity is undermined by these external and internal factors, which show that all civilizations change throughout time, some more slowly than others. Hall's main point is that culture is dynamic and composite, influenced by history and power, rather than static or original. This point of view stresses that change, mobility, and interaction are crucial to cultural identity, challenging essentialist and nationalist ideologies that seek to preserve authentic culture, he articulates his idea as follows:

I became aware of the fact that, discursively, cultures always represent themselves as fixed, exclusive, originary, and unchanging, but, historically, when you look at them, that cannot be the case. Some change very slowly, some more rapidly: but they all change. They are all interrupted by movement, by conquest, by colonization, by trade, by migration, free and forced. They are disrupted by external influences, as well as evolving internally. (Hall, 2018, p. 572)

Stuart Hall highlights the fundamental flaws in the conventional philosophical and psychological conceptions of identity. The Cartesian tradition, which views the self as a stable, fundamental essence that acts as the very base of activity and existence, has long been the philosophical underpinning for identification. In diasporic and postcolonial literature, where unspoken

histories become spoken names and the act of renaming becomes essential to navigating selfhood across cultural and generational divides, Bhabha and Hall jointly provide a conceptual framework that allows naming to be understood not only as a narrative device, but also as a symbolic act of identity formation.

2.2. Immigrant Naming Practices in the United States: Cultural Identity and Change

According to the research of Sue and Telles (2007) Choosing a child's name is a significant cultural act that represents family expectations and values, and it goes beyond personal taste. Names often serve as indicators of ethnic identity, representing the cultural ties parents wish to instill in their children. These given names have lasting meaning, impacting how kids interact with others, view themselves, and develop their social skills. Although the number of possible names could seem endless, parents' choices are heavily influenced by larger social and cultural factors. This is particularly noticeable in immigrant households, where name turns into a sociologically illuminating sign of identity negotiation and assimilation. The degree to which immigrant parents aim to preserve their cultural ties or conform more closely to the prevailing society is frequently demonstrated by the choice of first names. In this regard, names provide a prism through which to view the conflicts between cultural adaptation and preservation. According to traditional theories of assimilation, such as those put forth by Park and Burgess (1921) and Gordon (1964), immigrants will be less likely to give their children traditional ethnic names as they become more assimilated into the host society. As mentioned by Sue and Telles (2007), Instead, they will choose names that fit the prevailing cultural norms. (e.g., Juan, Kevin, Ryan...etc.) This pattern emphasizes how something as seemingly straightforward, but profoundly symbolic, as a name can define and reflect cultural identity in subtle yet potent ways. The more immigrants stay in the United States, the more they progressively embrace American cultural standards, frequently letting go of their heritage in the process, according to the classical assimilation idea. Assimilation occurs quickly when there is more engagement with the dominant group through marriage, partnerships, and language adoption. The propensity of immigrant parents to name their children in English rather than their native tongue is a crucial sign of this process. The survival of ethnic identity was seen by these authors as a barrier to complete integration rather than as a sign of cultural diversity. They believed that assimilation was a natural and mostly inevitable one-way, linear process to get more involved and feel closer to Americans, in other words, sometimes it is referred to as 'Americanized' when those families decide to adopt American culture and habits rather than keeping their

origin and following their true tradition of their homeland. (Sue & Telles, 2007). According to Ali (2024, p. 294), parents have a big impact on their kids' identity formation and language acquisition. Based on earlier studies, he observes that attitudes on learning a foreign language influence a learner's perception of their mother tongue as well as their sense of cultural identity. Parents are crucial in influencing their children's language skills and general development since they serve as educators, moral mentors, advocates, and emotional support systems. In *The Namesake*, Lahiri illustrates the cultural adaptation of immigrants, particularly through the symbolic act of changing their names:

Plenty of people changed their names: actors, writers, revolutionaries, transvestites. In history class, Gogol has learned that European immigrants had their names changed at Ellis Island, that slaves renamed themselves once they were emancipated. Though Gogol doesn't know it, even Nikolai Gogol renamed himself, simplifying his surname at the age of twenty-two from Gogol-Yanovsky to Gogol upon publication in the *Literary Gazette*. (Lahiri, 2003, p. 97)

While both texts explore diasporic identity and memory, they do so from distinct genre positions: *My Father's Paradise* as a memoir and *The Namesake* as a novel. This distinction can be seen, as *My Father's Paradise* foreground personal, lived experience with a claim to authenticity, whereas *The Namesake* often engage with imaginative reconstruction and fictionalized identity. Looking at *The Namesake* by Lahiri, the story of naming Gogol is narrated as he may be named by an Indian grandmother. The oldest grandmother in his mother's family sends a letter with the name to the US, but it never reaches Gogol's parents. She subsequently goes into a coma and passes away before disclosing the identity. In addition to the fact that the original name from the home country never arrives and identities frequently disappear in diasporic contexts—both within and across countries—the letter is also lost in transit, though it may eventually arrive. Therefore, there is a "real" name for Gogol, which nobody knows and which is still absent, but which still continues to be a looming presence since everyone is aware that it exists somewhere. The name in transit is a signifier that leaves the home country, but never reaches its destination, remaining unknown and unknowable.

As for a name, they have decided to let Ashima's grandmother, who is past eighty now, who has named each of her other six great-grandchildren in the world, do the honors. When her grandmother learned of Ashima's pregnancy, she was particularly thrilled at the prospect of naming the family's first sahib. And so Ashima and Ashoke have agreed to put off the decision of what to name the baby until a letter comes. (Lahiri, 2003, p. 25) His father names him son after his favorite Russian

author, Nikolai Gogol, as he has not received a letter from the great-grandmother of the family, who was supposed to send the name. He cites a personal story in which Gogol's book *The Short Stories of Nickolai Gogol* in saving his life in a train accident years earlier. Since Gogol's Indian name is at least twice removed, it continues to exist in the domain of the imaginary, with an imaginary tie to its future, because of its continuously postponed arrival and an imaginary connection to its homeland owing to its origin. "The letter, forever hovering somewhere between India and America" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 56) It is paradoxical that, at the core of Gogol's problematic name and identity, something is lost during travel, considering the importance of the trip metaphor in postcolonial philosophy. (Heinze, 2007; Lahiri, 2003)

In his review of the *Namesake*, Kipen (2003) makes three significant observations that addresses the novel's central concerns: authorship, cultural belonging and identity. He suggests that Gogol, the son of an Indian immigrants, inhabits a space of unresolved cultural tension, stating that the protagonist's true identity is hung up somewhere between India and United States. This metaphor of 'hung up' evokes a powerful sense of liminality and dislocation, implying that Gogol's identity is suspended between two cultures, never fully grounded in either. Kipen reinforces this idea with the image of letter bearing Gogol's names that never arrives, a symbol of deferred recognition and unfulfilled confirmation of belonging. A deeper cultural and psychological reality is shown by Kipen (2003) second argument, which states that "names have always been contested territory in immigrant families." (Kipen, 2003, p. 2) For immigrants and their descendants, names are not merely labels but also locations of negotiation, struggle, and meaning-making. Particularly in diaspora, when names can be used to label someone as "other", The colonized subject is frequently referred to by postcolonial theorists as the "colonial Other" or just the "Other." Influenced by theorists like Hegel and Sartre, this idea describes what is viewed as alien, foreign, or genuinely different from the dominant self; in essence, it functions as a negative contrast that aids in defining identity and authority. Within this framework, Western superiority was established in opposition to what it perceived to be the perceived flaws of the colonized peoples, including their lack of self-awareness, power, or logic. In a similar vein, psychoanalytic theory, especially Lacan's reinterpretation suggests that the recognition or gaze of another is necessary for the construction of self-identity. (Boehmer, 1995) Lastly, Lahiri, through her main character, Gogol, wants to tell the fact to the readers; when immigrants leave their homeland and live among other nations, no matter how hard they try to be a part of the new country's people and they adopt their lifestyle and culture, they are

still seen as foreigners or they would continuously be asked about their origin. Gogol, who even changes his name to Nikhil and it is even shortened by Americans as Nick, and has a very good English accent who almost speaks as natives, is still recognized as a foreigner because of his appearances.

Research conducted by Beider (2012) provides insights to history of Jewish given names; dating back to the 4th century BCE and continuing through the 7th century CE in the Mediterranean region, Jewish people used to have two names, first as their local Gentile language and later as Latin. Especially for males, men had one name which was Jewish: Hebrew or Aramaic and it was used internally and the other name was non-Jewish: Greek or Latin. Later on, during Middle Ages in Diasporic areas, the naming rituals was a bit changed and Jewish people still used two names, one religious name which was Hebrew or rarely Aramaic and the other name was secular: Greek, Romance, German, Slavic, or other names depending on the geographic area and the nations they lived among them. A greater change started to be seen in Modern times, in Central and Eastern Europe Yiddish language as the extensive use of hypocoristic forms has resulted in a notable expansion of the corpus of kinuim, religious names. Traditional Jews kept naming their children Jewish and religious names even during the 19th century to the start of the 20th century in Central and Eastern Europe. However, acculturated Jews who started to adopt the culture of other nations, non-Jews named their children non-Jewish names; German, Russian, American, or any other foreign name, and a very rare group of Jewish people kept naming their child Jewish names. Furthermore, by the end of 1920s and so on, as Jewish people moved to other countries, the habit of naming changed and they started to name their children by Russian or foreign names in general. (Beider, 2012). However, this case is seen in *My Father's Paradise* in two different ways. On the one hand, Yona is named after the prophet Jonah, which is considered a religious name in the Zakho area by the late 1930s. Rahamim, Yona's father, is regarded as a traditional Jew who was still living among Jews in Zakho—unlike Jews living abroad, who tend to give their children foreign names. On the other hand, Ariel's name is not religious, but its origin is still Hebrew. Yona intended to name his son "Aram" which refers to Aramaic language, but his American mother refused to name her son an Aramaic name, declaring that it is a nonstarter. Just as other Jews who left their homeland and lived among foreigners, they chose to put a foreign name on their son in America, the era is considered as times after the end of 1920's. However, these non-Jewish names frequently made reference to names that were used by departed ancestors or other close relatives (including some names that were deemed "non-Jewish" by previous generations). Similar patterns

also applied to the North and South Americas, South Africa, and Western Europe, which were the destinations of Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe. (Sabar, 2009) According to Khan (2008); Sabar (1993), the Jewish communities of Kurdistan, often referred to as Kurdish Jews or Jews of Northern Iraq and surrounding regions, have preserved a unique set of Neo-Aramaic dialects, distinct from both classical Aramaic and other Jewish languages like Yiddish or Ladino. These dialects are sometimes called Jewish Neo-Aramaic and were spoken in regions like Zakho, Duhok, and Erbil (in Iraq), as well as parts of Iran and Turkey. These dialects reflect ancient Semitic roots, biblical usage, and a layered history of contact with Kurdish, Arabic, Persian, and Turkish influences. These dialects are critically endangered or moribund due to migration especially after the mid-20th-century mass exodus of Jews from Kurdistan to Israel. Modern documentation and linguistic analysis are essential to preserving this cultural-linguistic heritage. With Ariel's Jewish lineage originating from this particular history of relocation and endangered tradition, Ariel's identity is significantly shaped by his cultural background. Questions of memory, loss, and the preservation of a legacy, that is increasingly in danger of being lost are all narrated by Ariel in *My Father's Paradise*.

2.3. Negotiating Identity Through Naming in Lahiri and Sabar's Narratives

Giving someone a name is an aspect of the novel's relevance; it also serves as a metaphor for the difficulties of heredity, belonging, and the pursuit of personal meaning across cultural divides. Ariel and Gogol both have long stories behind their names and the purpose of their naming by their fathers, carry different stories, tendencies, and a kind of love and respect to their culture and origin. Both characters' names in these two narratives become one of major reasons why the conflict aggravates between father and his son, between the first-generation immigrants and the second-generation immigrants living in America who understand life and view their origin differently from each other.

The following passage from *My Father's Paradise* recounts the story behind the naming of Ariel's father, Yona, highlighting its religious significance. The name reflects shared beliefs among Jews and Muslims, particularly, the tradition of visiting the tomb of prophet Jonah. In Iraq and other Muslim-majority countries, it has been common for people to visit the Nabi Younis Mosque to pray to make wishes. Many women had struggled with infertility for years would go there specifically to pray for a child, believing in the prophet's intercession. The same story appears in this book as Maryam and Rahamim, Yona's parents, visit the mosque and they both pray for a child. Maryam, Rahamim's wife in her belief, talks to the

prophet Jonah's tomb and says if he gives her a son, she will name him after him. Then ten months later, Maryam gives birth to a boy and they name him Yona and this shows a shared belief of a collective identity of Iraqi people in general.

"All I ask, dear prophet," Miryam whispered, "is for a healthy baby in my belly. A baby no better or worse than the other strong children of Zakho." She stood to go, then spotted her husband sitting against a far wall of the mosque, his lips moving silently as he read from the small Hebrew prayer book, he always carried in his shirt pocket. She spun around and knelt again before the sepulcher. "If you grant me a boy, dear Yona," she said, "I will name him after you." (Sabar, 2009, pp. 46-47)

Another significant factor that shapes how immigrants relate to their origins, including their beliefs, culture, language, and traditions is intermarriage with someone from a different nationality. In *My Father's Paradise*, Yona marries an American woman, and her influence is subtly reflected in the decision not to name their son Aram, as Yona had originally intended. In contrast, in *The Namesake*, Ashoke and Ashima, both Bengali and living in America, share a common cultural background, which reinforces their agreement to name their son in accordance with their traditions.

Our first clash—really more of a proxy battle—was over my name. My father wanted to call me Aram, after the swath of ancient Syria where the first Aramaic-speaking tribes dwelt in the second millennium B.C. A son named Aram would be a thread through three thousand years of history, uncoiling through Israel and Kurdistan back to a patch of land between the Habur and Euphrates rivers where my father's native language first graced the lips of man. A son named Aram would pass this awesome birthright to his own son, and that son to his, on and on down the line, like princes in a fairy tale.

This may have been my father's reasoning. But it was not my mother's. She seemed to understand me even before I was born, because she didn't much care for Aram. As an American she knew the cruelty of children to kids with weird names. Aram, she told my father, was a nonstarter.

And so even before I drew a breath, I had landed my first blow. (Sabar, 2009, p. 1)

The above text from *My Father's Paradise* shows the disparity between Ariel and his father's thinking and appreciation of their history and origin, Aramaic language is the example of how Yona, Ariel's father appreciates Aramaic language and wants to name his son, Aram which refers to Aramaic language as to keep its origin and appreciate his nation's history, tradition, and language. While Ariel on the other hand, hates his father at his teenage years and thinks his name is also one of the wrong decisions his father has made which also led to the collapse of the relationship between them. It is clear how

he appreciates only his mother and only praises her for understanding him, at a time where he thinks his father can never understand him and he even would belittle him by naming him a weird name that others would make fun of him one day. Despite not naming him Aram, he was named Ariel, but this also turned out to be a way that others made fun of him and laughed on his name.

But I couldn't shake him. He had given me a name that may not have been Aram but that still singled me out for ridicule.

"R-E-O Speedwagon," kids in the public-school yard taunted when I'd show up to skateboard on weekends.

"Oreo cookie."

"Isn't Ariel a girl's name?" (Sabar, 2009, p. 232)

The text shows that Ariel was also a strange name for Americans and it even seemed to sound weird to children. A person's name can be one of the greatest things that defines and symbolizes personality and can be a factor that affects a child's well-being when getting mocked by his surroundings. This text shows that being a foreigner in a country and still trying to avoid being loyal to your nation and culture, and trying to imitate the natives, the possibility of being different is much higher than a person can imagine and usually you will still be departed or viewed differently from others.

As Sue and Telles (2007) note, name alteration among immigrants, whether voluntary or involuntary refers to the changing of family surnames upon moving to a new country. This practice has deep historical roots, particularly in the context of immigration to the United States, where names were often changed to simplify pronunciation, facilitate assimilation, or avoid discrimination. Both *My Father's Paradise* and *The Namesake* reflect this phenomenon: Ariel's family name shifts from Sabagha to Sabar, while Gogol's complex given name is later replaced with Nikhil or Nick. Understanding the motivations behind such name changes offers insight into the challenges faced by immigrant ancestors and reveals how these alterations can complicate familial and cultural continuity for contemporary descendants.

As a young boy Gogol doesn't mind his name. He recognizes pieces of himself in road signs: GO LEFT, GO RIGHT, GO SLOW (...) It all seems perfectly normal. (...) He has been told that he was named after a famous Russian author, born in a previous century. (...) Though substitute teachers at school always pause, looking apologetic when they arrive at his name on the roster, forcing Gogol to call out, before even being summoned, "That's me," teachers in the school system know not to give it a second thought. After a year or two, the students no longer tease and say "Giggle" or "Gargle." (Lahiri, 2003, p. 66)

The evolution of Gogol's personality during his time in America, and as he reaches a sufficient age, readers

realize that the fight and conflict Gogol encounters are internal rather than external. When he reaches a certain age and level, his classmates and friends stop making fun of his name or calling him by other amusing names, but he still feels a deep hatred for it and never stops asking himself why his parents chose a name that is neither American nor Bengali. In reality, his real name is a pet moniker that undermines his self-esteem. Identity and self-acceptance are two separate but related psychological concepts. Identity is a person's view of who they are or how they see themselves. (Lahiri, 2003)

Self-acceptance or self-esteem refers to a person's assessment or general level of like or disliking of themselves. It would seem logical to suppose that a person's level of self-acceptance and their sense of identity would often vary together. In a similar vein, given the notion that a person's name and identity are closely related, it stands to reason that self-acceptance and loving one's own name would be positively correlated, with higher acceptance of oneself being linked to greater liking for one's own name. Thus, focusing on Gogol's manner throughout the novel, it is realized that he feels unconfident because of his identity and he dislikes his name, which is a part that shows his identity to others, and makes him discoverable that he is not American. His name, which is neither American nor Indian, sounds weird to others until he, himself realizes that actually he is named after a Russian author. There is a strong connection, as Gogol integrates his identity with his self-esteem, which all together makes him confused about his personality and acceptance in a way, and accepting his identity in another way. (Dion, 1983; Lahiri, 2003).

Ariel Sabar explores in *My Father's Paradise* how his family's surname changed from Sabagha, an Arabic term that means "dye" and has traditionally been connected to a traditional Jewish-Kurdish craft, to Sabar, a Hebraicized form that was acquired when the family immigrated to Israel. Despite its seeming insignificance, this shift has profound cultural and symbolic ramifications. "The Beh Sabaghas were not nobodies," (Sabar, 2009, p. 29) They were known for their spirituality, if that's what you could call it. Not religious, of course. However, Ephraim's nighttime prayer vigils in the synagogue were the source of spirituality, a self-described mysticism. Sabar (2009) asserts, in the Kurdish-Jewish community, the name Sabagha is much more than just a surname; it is a symbol of ancestry, linguistic legacy (Aramaic), and spiritual standing. Sabar, on the other hand, is representative of a larger pattern among Mizrahi Jews in Israel who, in an environment where Ashkenazi standards predominate, frequently changed or substituted names in order to better fit into the national narrative. The transition from Sabagha to Sabar represents a broader cultural negotiation: the conflict between adhering to the

homogenizing demands of a new national identity and maintaining one's historical and ethnic roots. Reclaiming and exploring the family's history becomes a personal and generational adventure for Ariel Sabar, who is initially cut off from his father's world. The memoir's recurring themes of language erasure, identity fragmentation, and heritage loss are symbolized by the change in surname. It displays an underlying conflict and critical reflection on what was left behind in the process, even if Ariel openly affirms "Sabar" as his name in professional and American contexts. In addition to capturing the historical truth of name changes among Kurdish Jews, Sabar's comprehensive investigation sheds light on the emotional and cultural complexity that these changes elicit for succeeding generations attempting to reconcile constructed and inherited identities. (Beider, 2012; Sabar, 2009)

"Which are you, Sabar or Sabagha?" he repeated, with a dubious glance. He wouldn't let me through the door until I answered. I saw now what he was asking: Are you the great-grandson of Ephraim Beh Sabagha, Ephraim the Dyer of Zakho, or a son of America whose father had seen fit to clean up the family name?

"Sabar," I said.

Levi looked away, and I felt suddenly ashamed. (Sabar, 2009, p. 10)

Moreover, Gogol does not overtly despise his family's last name, Ganguli, in *The Namesake*, Ashoke, Gogol's father always feels proud of their surname even in America, "He had told Gogol that Ganguli is a legacy of the British, an anglicized way of pronouncing his real surname, Gangopadhyay". (Lahiri, 2003, p. 67) However, Gogol feels a certain amount of embarrassment and unease about it, especially when it is mispronounced or made fun of in American settings. For example, when classmates call him "Gang Green" or write "The Gang." These instances show a dislike for the name itself, but rather for what it represents: his otherness, his foreignness, and the cultural dissonance he experiences as a child juggling two identities. His given name, Gogol, is the target of the majority of his outward annoyance, but his surname also plays a role in his internal conflict over identity, assimilation, and belonging. This tension is delicately portrayed by Jhumpa Lahiri, who uses Gogol's reserved humiliation and aloof actions to highlight the deeper emotional struggle that many immigrant children have while navigating their dual identities. (Lahiri, 2003)

Back home on Pemberton Road, he helps his father paste individual golden letters bought from a rack in the hardware store, spelling out ganguli on one side of their mailbox. One morning, the day after Halloween, Gogol discovers, on his way to the bus stop, that it has been shortened to GANG, with the word GREEN scrawled in pencil following it. His ears burn at the sight, and he runs back into the house, sickened, certain of the insult his

father will feel. Though it is his last name, too, something tells Gogol that the desecration is intended for his parents more than Sonia and him. For by now he is aware, in stores, of cashiers smirking at his parents' accents, and of salesmen who prefer to direct their conversation to Gogol, as though his parents were either incompetent or deaf. But his father is unaffected at such moments, just as he is unaffected by the mailbox. "It's only boys having fun," (Lahiri, 2003, pp. 67-68)

The central figures in both narratives can be viewed as the results of such discursive negotiations in light of Bhabha's claim that colonial authority is fundamentally contradictory and its power unstable expressed through the subtle resistances found in imitation and "sly civility." Gogol navigates the conflicts between Bengali ancestry and American modernity by embodying a type of transactional resistance rather than directly challenging cultural or familial authority. His rejection of his given name, "Gogol," and his reconciliation with it demonstrate how identity is created through equivocal gestures rather than outright opposition; these acts of silent rejection and grudging acceptance reflect Bhabha's notion of the internal inconsistencies in colonial language. Similar to this, Ariel Sabar, the son of a Jewish Kurdish scholar, initially tries to integrate by separating himself from his father's language and culture rather than publicly rebelling. His subsequent return to his roots, however, underlines the flexibility and partiality of cultural identity, supporting Bhabha's assertion that colonial or diasporic power relations are characterized by dynamic, mediated exchanges rather than complete dominance or submission. In both stories, identity is formed in the "interstices" between civilizations, where resistance is woven into names, daily life, and self-perception without being apparent. (Parry, 1994)

In order to create a stronger tie with the host homeland, Gogol refuses to live the same life of his father or adopt to Bengali culture and traditions. This can be determined throughout his character development from his teen age until he is mature enough; the music he listens to, the job he does, the girl he befriends and stays with in their house, and the style of clothes he wears can all be results to depart the origins of his culture and his Bengali identity which disappoints his father's expectation. Gogol, like other immigrant children who were born and grown up in America, is very attached to American life and finds solace and comfort in following and living the American lifestyle, unlike following the traditions and culture of his origin, or feeling of intimacy of his parents' homeland in Calcutta. Thus, Peer identification is a typical term used to describe adolescence. The affiliation with an ethnic name shifts and becomes disconnected during adolescence due to situational and cognitive reasons. Gogol goes to considerable measures to start the process of severing his name from his identity in The

Namesake. Instead of going by "Gogol," he adopts his good name, "Nikhil," which is then anglicized to "Nick." Similar discordant and contradictory emotions are shared by many South Asians with regard to their nicknames and the new identity that results from attempting to manage several identities that are heavily influenced by contextual elements. (Bhabha, 1994; Lahiri, 2003; Shariff, 2008).

Furthermore, diving into what has been discussed and raised by Stuart Hall, the terms are encountered, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities'. He discusses that the concept of identity is not stable and usually it is in change according to time and place of a person. Stuart Hall challenges the conventional wisdom that views identity as unchangeable, stable, and the basis for behavior. He looks at two viewpoints: the psychological view, which presents identity as a continuous, self-developing process in which people are constantly becoming but never fully reach a complete self, and the philosophical view, which regards identity as the source of being and the foundation for action. Hall disputes these notions, contending that identity is not a fixed quality but rather is dynamic, changing, and influenced by historical and cultural circumstances. In more details, according to Stuart Hall identity makes people aware that, like subjectivity itself, identities are never completely established and are always changing. Although people have known this to some degree, they have long held the belief that they are becoming more and more like themselves every day. Nonetheless, the idea of moving closer to an identity that has always been there is consistent with a Hegelian viewpoint. The goal is to greatly broaden this process while highlighting the fact that identity creation is a continuous and dynamic process. (Hall, 2018).

Gogol's father, Ashoke, gave him his name as a very private and intimate act of remembering rather than in accordance with custom or cultural meaning. Ashoke credits the Nikolai Gogol short story he was reading at the time of the collision with saving his life after he survived a near-fatal train accident in India. The pages of that book helped rescuers find him in the wreckage's confusion. Ashoke's silent homage to the writer who, in his imagination, saved his life is to name his baby "Gogol" in order to preserve the memory of that momentous occasion. But for a large portion of Gogol's early years, this private past is kept unsaid, and the name, divorced from its significance, causes him to feel ashamed and alone. The meaning of his name demonstrates how naming encodes survival, thankfulness, and personal tragedy, demonstrating that names can have concealed histories that are not immediately apparent, even to individuals who bear them. (Heinze, 2007). After Gogol hears the story from his father, he asks him, "Do I remind you of that night?" and his father answers, "Not at all (...)

You remind me of everything that followed." (Lahiri, 2003, p. 117)

For the majority of his life, Gogol and his father had a tense and culturally misunderstood relationship, but following Ashoke's untimely death, things started to change. Following this tragedy, Gogol is forced to face the consequences of all that was not spoken between them, especially the meaning of his name. Gogol discovers a level of significance he had never understood when he finds out that his father gave him the name "Gogol" in honour of the Russian writer who unwittingly contributed to Ashoke's survival. After this realization, the name becomes a representation of love, remembrance, and survival rather than shame. Gogol starts to embrace not just his father's decisions but also the aspects of his own identity that he had long rejected in this silent, postmortem reconciliation. In gestures that reveal a renewed closeness to his father's past, he comes home, takes part in funeral rites, and even starts reading Nikolai Gogol's works. In the end, this reconciliation is more about Gogol's inward realization of the silent sacrifices and emotional legacies that molded him than it is about a dramatic conclusion. (Lahiri, 2003).

My Father's Paradise centers on Ariel Sabar's emotional and intensely personal journey of reconciliation with his father, Yona. Yona's foreignness his accented English, his outmoded mannerisms, and his deep ties to a heritage Ariel doesn't understand makes Ariel feel alienated and even ashamed for a large portion of his early years. Ariel, who grew up in Los Angeles in the 1980s, distances himself from his father's Kurdish-Jewish heritage and Aramaic studies in an effort to blend in with American society. Afterward, as an adult, and particularly after becoming a father himself, Ariel starts to reconsider what he had previously written off. His trip to Zakho, Iraq, his encounter with Yona's culture, and his realization of the Aramaic culture's vulnerability all turn out to be pivotal moments. Through this process, Ariel discovers that he is regaining a lineage that he had previously denied, in addition to developing a deep appreciation for his father's individuality and tenacity. Instead of a spectacular confrontation, the reconciliation is characterized by a slow awakening the realization that what previously shamed him is now a legacy of survival, wisdom, and calm dignity. Hall describes the sense of accepting and embracing identity in his words as, "the logic of identity... gives us a sense of depth, out there and in here," grounding how we think about "the self and other, the individual and society." (Hall, 2018, pp. 145-146) He notes that this structure, though comforting, is constructed "It helps us... sleep well at night." Ariel bridges the generational divide and reconciles with his father, Yona by sharing his father's story and reclaiming his own. (Sabar, 2009)

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *My Father's Paradise*, as an autobiography, and *The Namesake*, as a novel, share thematic similarities while addressing the motif of naming in distinct ways. Yona, Ariel's father in *My Father's Paradise*, embodies the diasporic experience through his deep commitment to preserving his heritage, language, and history. His choice to name his son "Ariel," of Hebrew origin, reflects his desire to instill in him a lasting connection to these cultural roots. Ariel's journey mirrors that of many second-generation immigrants who, having grown up in their parents' adopted country, initially struggle to understand or appreciate their heritage. However, with maturity, particularly upon becoming a parent himself, Ariel comes to value his cultural and linguistic inheritance, naming his son "Seth," an Aramaic name that continues this lineage. On the other hand, distinct cultural processes are reflected in *The Namesake's* naming narrative. During his early years, Gogol experiences nervousness and unease due to his name, which has its roots in Indian customs of deriving significance from personal experiences. He only makes an effort to shed this burden by changing his name when he is eighteen years old. Even though Ariel and Gogol have different personal reactions to naming and different fathers' intentions, both stories show that names are never neutral or accidental; rather, they carry with them legacies of love, sorrow, resistance, and longing. In particular, renaming represents a rewriting of affiliation rather than just a change in identity. Additionally, both texts provide light on important postcolonial theoretical stances. Because the characters initially embrace American cultural standards without question, they are prime examples of Bhabha's concept of imitation. They also align with Stuart Hall's perspective that identity is a continuous process of becoming rather than a fixed essence. Identity is dynamic—shaped and remade throughout time in response to personal growth, cultural negotiation, and diasporic realities, as demonstrated by Ariel and Gogol's changing experiences.

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تسمية الذات في الشتات: الذاكرة الثقافية وإعادة التسمية في السمي لجهومبا لاهيري،
وجنة والدي لأريل سبار

الملخص

تتناول هذه المقالة المعنى الرمزي والموضوعي لتسمية الأسماء في عملين أدبيين يستكشفان تعقيدات الهوية الثقافية، والصراع بين الأجيال، وتجربة الشتات: رواية السمي لجهومبا لاهيري، وجنة والدي لأريل سبار. في كلا العملين، لا تُستخدم الأسماء كمجرد أدوات تعريف، بل تُعد مواقع ديناميكية للصراع والتسوية والتحول، حيث تعكس التوترات بين الهوية الشخصية والذاكرة الثقافية في سياقات الشتات. تستكشف رواية سبار الطرق التي تمثل بها الأسماء الإرث اللغوي والذاكرة الأجدادية، خاصة في بيئة يهودية-كردية تواجه فيها الهوية الآرامية واللغوية خطر التهجير والاندماج. من ناحية أخرى، تُظهر رواية لاهيري الصراع الداخلي للشخصية الرئيسية المولودة في أمريكا مع اسم التدليل "غوغل"، والذي يعكس توترات أوسع تتعلق بالهجنة والانتماء وعبء الإرث الثقافي. تبحث هذه الدراسة كيف يمكن للاسم أن يمثل كلاً من المقاومة والانخراط داخل الأطر الثقافية السائدة، بالاستناد إلى نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار ودراسات المنفى، وتجادل الورقة بأن الأسماء في هذين العملين الأدبيين ترسم الحدود المتكسرة بين الماضي والحاضر، وبين الوطن الأصلي وبلد الإقامة، وبين الذات والآخر. وتستكشف المقالة كيف تشكل العوامل اللغوية والتاريخية والعائلية الهوية في المنفى، من خلال تحليل الدلالات الرمزية والعاطفية للأسماء، بالاعتماد على نظرية هومي ك. بهايا لما بعد الاستعمار، ومقالات ستيفارت هول حول الثقافة والهوية. وفي الختام، تُظهر الدراسة أن الاسم يعمل كاستعارة قوية لتكوين الهوية في السرديات متعددة الثقافات والهجرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المنفى، الذاكرة الثقافية، التسمية، الهوية، الصراع بين الأجيال.

ناوناني خود له داياسپورا: يادگاری کولتووری و ناوانهوه له (بهناوکردن)
ی جهومبا لاهیری و (بههشتی باوم) ی ئاریل سبار

پوخته

ئهم لیکۆلینهوهیه، واتای بابەتی و هێبایی ناوانان له دوو بهرهممی وێژەیی که به دواى گه‌ران له تیکه‌لبوونی ناسنامه‌ی نه‌ته‌وه‌یی، ناکۆکی نێوان نه‌وه‌کان، و دایاسپۆرا ده‌خاته روو: (به‌ناوکردن) ی جهومبا لاهیری، و (بههشتی باوم) ی ئاریل سبار. له‌م هه‌ردوو به‌رهممه‌یه‌دا، ناوه‌کان ته‌نها به‌ مانای ناساندن نین، به‌لکو فاکته‌ریکن بۆ هینانه‌کایه‌ی کێشه‌، سازشکردن و گۆڕانکاری، که‌ ده‌بنه‌ ناوێنه‌یه‌ک بۆ گرێ ناسنامه‌ی که‌سی و یادگاری کولتووری له‌ دایاسپۆرا دا. به‌رهممی ئاریل سبار ئه‌و دیارده‌یه‌ ده‌خاته روو که‌ ناوه‌کان نوێنه‌رایه‌تی میراتی زمانه‌وانی و یادگاری باوبایران ده‌کهن، به‌ تابه‌تی له‌ ژینگه‌یه‌کی کوردی جوله‌که‌دا، که‌ که‌له‌پوری ئارامی، و ناسنامه‌ی زمانه‌وانی رووبه‌رووی مه‌ترسی له‌ناوچوون و هه‌له‌شانه‌وه‌ ده‌بن. له‌ لایه‌کی تره‌وه‌، رو‌مانی جهومبا لاهیری، شله‌ژای کاره‌که‌ری سه‌ره‌کی به‌ نازناوی (گوگۆل) که‌ له‌دایکبووی ئه‌مهریکایه‌ دیارده‌که‌ت، ئه‌م نازناوه‌یه‌ ده‌بیته‌ ناوێنه‌یه‌ک بۆ تیکه‌لاووبوون، سه‌ره‌خۆبوون، و باریک بۆ میراتی کولتووری. ئه‌م توێژینه‌وه‌یه‌ شیکاری ده‌کات که‌ چۆن ناو ئاماژه‌ به‌ هه‌ردوو؛ به‌رگریکردن و چڕبوونه‌وه‌ ده‌کات له‌ چوارچۆیه‌ی کولتووریه‌ بالاده‌سته‌کاندا، به‌یته‌ی تیۆری دواى کۆلۆنیاڵیزم و توێژینه‌وه‌کانی دایاسپۆرا. ئه‌م توێژینه‌وه‌یه‌ ده‌خاته روو که‌ ناوه‌کان له‌م دوو به‌رهممه‌ ئه‌ده‌بیه‌یه‌دا، سنووره‌ شکاوه‌کان له‌ نێوان رابردوو و ئێستا دا، نیشتمان و خاکی ده‌ره‌وه‌، خود و که‌سانی تر دیاری ده‌کهن. هه‌روه‌ها، هۆکاره‌کانی زمانه‌وانی، میژووپی، و خێزانی دیاری ده‌کات که‌ چۆن ده‌بنه‌ دروستکردنی ناسنامه‌یه‌کی دایاسپۆرا به‌ رینگای شیکاری کردنی سه‌نگی سۆزه‌کی و هێبایی ناوه‌کان، که‌ جه‌خت ده‌ک‌یت له‌ سه‌ر تیۆری دواى کۆلۆنیاڵیزمی هۆمی ک. بابا و توێژینه‌وه‌کانی ستیوارت هۆل ده‌باریه‌ی کولتوور و ناسنامه‌ له‌ کۆتایی دا، ئه‌م توێژینه‌وه‌یه‌ ده‌ریده‌خات که‌ ناو میتافۆریکی به‌هێزه‌ بۆ پیکهاتی ناسنامه‌ له‌ به‌رهممه‌کانی فره‌که‌لتووری وکوچه‌ران دا .

وشه‌ سه‌ره‌که‌کان: دایاسپۆرا، یادگاری کولتووری، ناوانان، ناسنامه، ناکۆکی نێوان نه‌وه‌کان.