The Power of Gaze: Some Remarks on the Orientalizing Perspective in Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine

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Summary/Abstract: 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.
Now, if we look at some areas of spending, we can see that our society has serious problems. It is estimated that every year, Europeans spend $11 billion on ice cream – yes, ice cream! This is nearly enough to bring education to every child on the planet. Twice. Building on this figure, around $50 billion is spent on cigarettes in Europe alone, and around $400 billion is spent on narcotic drugs around the world [2]. If we could reduce our consumption levels by just a fraction of what they are now, we could dramatically change the lives of poverty stricken people around the world. Fierce is my blade, fierce is my hate Born to die in battle I laugh at my fate Now pay in blood When your blood has been spilled You're never forgiven Death is fulfilled. The clash of honour calls To stand when others fall Gods of war, feel The power of my sword. The clash of honour calls The clash of honour calls I will stand when others fall Open magic doors They will know the power of my sword. There is blood on my hands There is blood in my eyes With blood in my voice I scream as you die Thirsting of vengeance And mounds of the slain Shak