

2013-06-20

# London Seen Through the Eyes of the Female Other

Al-Azawi, Basma

---

Al-Azawi, B. (2013). London Seen Through the Eyes of the Female Other (Doctoral thesis, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada). Retrieved from <https://prism.ucalgary.ca>. doi:10.11575/PRISM/26781  
<http://hdl.handle.net/11023/760>

*Downloaded from PRISM Repository, University of Calgary*

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

London Seen Through the Eyes of the Female Other

by

Basma Harbi Mahdi Al-Azawi

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

CALGARY, ALBERTA

JUNE, 2013

© Basma Harbi Mahdi Al-Azawi 2013

## Abstract

This study aims at examining the portrayal of London by different generations of women writers, who see place and nation with an eye of otherness. The study demonstrates how leaving their homelands and immigrating to London enables these women writers, specifically the first-generation writers, to portray London through the lens of a new level of racial, class, and gender understanding and awareness. The women writers whose works I discuss here - Jean Rhys (*Voyage in the Dark*), Doris Lessing (*In Pursuit of the English*), Buchi Emecheta (*Second Class Citizen*), Joan Riley (*Waiting in the Twilight*), Monica Ali (*Brick Lane*), and Zadie Smith (*White Teeth*) demonstrate that there is a break between the London most contemporary people imagine and the London that really is. Their real experiences of the city reveal an antithesis and an image contradictory to that of their imagination. Moreover, London is represented as a place over-determined by imperial history and power hierarchies. London becomes socially and economically an oppressive place.

I argue that discussing cultural changes across different generations and in different historical moments helps map the shifting situations in different eras, and give a better understanding of how concepts like otherness, cultural difference, and hybridity have been experienced and conceptualized at those historical moments.

The discussion of the novels raises questions about the position of non-western immigrants, and specifically women, in the metropolitan city; whether their position there is really one of empowerment, and whether academic theories adequately take into consideration economic conditions and historically imposed forms of oppression; racial, colonial, and sexual.

Examined in the light of Edward Said's concept of "otherness" and Homi Bhabha's concept of "hybridity," the novels reveal that the experience of immigrants in London is still characterized by binarism and inequity. The repetition of the same ending for the characters discussed across generations leads me to conclude that non-western people have been conditioned by their difference and otherness, a status that eternally relegates them to a position of marginality. Discrimination and racial prejudice are still practiced, and they have been carried on unchallenged across generations. In this way, I argue that these novels represent a challenge to Bhabha's assumption that immigration is an enabling state. The "Third Space" is a reduced space: a space of ambivalence and disorientation. Demonstration of hybridity does not help create new identities. The hybrid individuals become indecisive about their identity. None of the major characters in the novels, even the second-generation characters, succeeds in negotiating between opposite poles.

It is concluded that within the world portrayed in these novels, it is impossible for the Other, hybrid or not, to fully integrate into Western society, as displayed by the constant struggles and attempts made by the second generation. They remain the Other, marginalized, never the centre, as the British culture is unable to embrace other values as the new British identity.

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I thank God who inspired and guided me to complete this goal.

I am really indebted to many people who have helped me finished my dissertation. First, I am sincerely and truly grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Harry Vandervlist, for his constant guidance, significant time, and care he has invested in me throughout my dissertation writing. This dissertation would not have been possible without his prompt feedback and thoughtful comments. I would like to express my sincerest thanks to my dissertation committee members: Dr. Pamela McCallum and Dr. Shaobo Xie. Dr. McCallum, many thanks for your invaluable comments on the initial proposal drafts. Dr. Xie, many thanks for discussing and explaining to me issues and complexities related to postcolonial theory.

If there is one person without whose inspiration and help this dissertation would not have begun, it is Dr. Ann McWhir. Her help and inspiration have been absolutely invaluable to me.

I thank my husband, Haitham, for his support, encouragement, and patience. I dedicate this dissertation to my son, Mohammed, who has been a blessing, brightening my life with joy and love.

I would like to show my deepest appreciation to my brother and sisters, especially, Raghad, who have supported me in many ways and encouraged me to persevere.

Finally, special thanks to my close friends, Mahdieh Salmasi, Rua Salih, and Hind Naji, for their words of encouragement and support.

## **Dedication**

For my wonderful parents  
Who instilled within me  
a zeal for reading and learning

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Dedication .....	v
Table of Contents .....	vi
Introduction .....	1
Chapter One: “In Pursuit of the “Grail”” .....	25
Chapter Two: “Sorry no coloureds” .....	70
Chapter Three: “England, My England” .....	114
Conclusion .....	168
Works Cited .....	179



## Introduction

The dissertation provides an examination of the concept of “Otherness” in texts by six British women writers from colonized cultures. Each of these writers sees her place and nation with an eye of otherness, and each represents a different generation. My focus on different generations helps map the shifting situations in different eras, which in turn helps understand the changing conditions that have shaped representations of British culture over the twentieth century, moving from the epoch of empire towards a multicultural country.

The women writers discussed and analyzed here --Jean Rhys, Doris Lessing, Buchi Emecheta, Joan Riley, Monica Ali, and Zadie Smith--are either immigrants or exiles, except Zadie Smith who was born in Britain. She is, nonetheless, the product of past migrations. These women writers are treated as the Other in their new socio-cultural context, London. They are in a way hybridized Others. They articulate, to use W. E. B. Du Bois’s concept, a “double consciousness.” They are simultaneously inside Western culture and outside of it. In providing literary analysis of each writer’s work, I examine the means by which these writers attempt to negotiate a space between two cultures, dominant and marginalized, to find a place from which to write. Thus, these women writers are linked by the metropolitan city, London, and by the shared negotiation to claim their place within the metropolitan city. Being writers from non-western countries, these women writers are “caught between the problems of race and gender and the practice of literature” (Minh-ha 6).

The women writers’ reception in and responses to the metropolitan city, which in turn affect their portrayal of London, are the focus of this work. Living in London helps them to

rewrite meanings and experiences of the metropolitan city as imagined and lived. How do these women writers, especially the older generation, see London which was once a “mythologized object of dream and desire” (Ball 6) and which has become, as de Certeau asserts, “liberated [space] which can be occupied and redefined” (qtd. in Ball 9)? In their works, these writers demonstrate that there is a break between the London most contemporary people imagine and the London that really is.

These writers have chosen to uncover a struggle, which their protagonists face as they negotiate their identities between two worlds, two cultures, and two values. Still, choosing to write about these selected women writers as a group does not mean that I have overlooked the individual differences in their experiences. However, in spite of their diverse backgrounds and cultures, I find that they share a unique perspective; they live and write on boundaries. They share the “interstitial passage between fixed identifications,” where “the temporal movement and passage ... prevents identities .... from settling into primordial polarities” (*The Location of Culture* 1994 5). These women writers’ commonalities are reflected in the themes they discuss in their novels.

For the immigrants, London has become a place of struggle against many “overwhelming obstacles”; political, economic, and cultural. John Clement Ball points out in his book *Imagining London: Postcolonial Fiction and the Transnational Metropolis* how London “is too much a place” for the “new arrival”(33). London is “layered with received values, meaning, and images that have accumulated ... over centuries of imperial, cultural, and literary history” (Ball 33). What I am suggesting is that the metropolitan city is experienced differently by different people, and women experience the city differently from men. Thus, this work explores how the woman

immigrant negotiates the strangeness of the streets, with her need to see herself as belonging, as part of the city. Moreover, other factors can determine women immigrants' adjustment and assimilation: her position within her family; her status within the immigrant community specifically; and more generally, within the white dominant white society. Clifford mentions that "diasporic women" are "caught between patriarchies, ambiguous pasts, and futures. They connect and disconnect, forget and remember, in complex, strategic ways. The lived experiences of diasporic women thus involve painful difficulty in mediating discrepant worlds" (253).

In the novels discussed here, women are shown to be doubly othered and victimized. They engage in a struggle against patriarchal and traditional restrictions within their communities as well as in a struggle for recognition in their new environment. They suffer violence at the hands of their men, who feel incompetent and paralysed in England. As a kind of compensation for their wounded pride and masculinity, these male immigrants resort to violence in an attempt to control their women. Helene Cixous argues that for any kind of oppression, there must be an "other":

The reproduction of a 'person' to a 'nobody' to the position of 'other' - the inexorable plot of racism. There has to be some 'other', no master without a slave, no economico-political power without exploitation, no dominant class without cattle under the yoke ... no property without exclusion that has its limits and is part of dialectic. If there were no other, one would invent it. (qtd. in Saurez 294)

According to Cixous, the construction of an "other" is a necessity in any kind of oppression. In other words, to reduce a person to "nobody," to an "other," is an essential tool of oppression.

This attitude provides an insight into several sets of power-relation dynamics, involving those between oppressed groups, and between the marginalized and dominant groups. This is clearly seen in the novels discussed here, represented by the racial and patriarchal oppressions. Louise O'Brien expresses the same view. She writes that

Women as doubly colonized, firstly by white colonialism, and secondly by black masculinity, are placed at the bottom of a hierarchy of value through the gendered response by the black man to his own racial oppression. Those two oppressions are thus irrevocably intertwined; the more feminized the black man is by white men, the more he is made inferior, and the more he needs to assert his masculinity, by which I mean his superiority, over the black woman. (100)

According to O'Brien, women are treated as the Other by their men and the Other's other by the white British society.

As a response to the treatment of women as the Other's other, I examine these women writers within the cultural context of London, considering the changing cultural conditions in Britain during the twentieth century which have affected the writers' representations of the metropolitan city. Each of them writes about Otherness, hybridity, immigration, and marginality, which are at the centre of their own experience, and which they bring to their novels. Their experience in London is conceptualized to describe the construction of identity and culture in relation to the colonial context which is characterized by binarism and inequity. These writers question problems of identity, cultural and ethnical differences, or what is discussed later by Homi Bhabha as "hybridity" in their new context. These problems are shown not only affecting the first-generation immigrants but their children as well, who are born or raised in

Britain. Chris Weedon argues that “generational differences are intensified for the second generation ... by the experience of growing up in the British society where the norms and expectations are not only different, but also in conflict with parental values” (230). According to Weedon, these conflicts have affected the identity, ambitions, and lifestyles of British-born generation.

The demography of the metropolitan city started to change with the decolonization of the ex-colonies. With the decolonization of the former colonies, London became the destination of the immigrants from these colonies. This mass migration results in a transformation of the metropolitan city into a multicultural place. During the late nineteenth century, London was the centre of the world; it projected itself to the world as the absolute power. Ball argues that “the ideologies of Empire demanded that colonized people be put and kept in their place” (8). As ex-colonies come to inhabit the city, their presence becomes disturbing and threatening. The metropolitan space is inscribed by an unresolved tension between the Self and its Other. Accordingly, racial and cultural clashes became acute, which bring about issues of identity crisis.

This identity crisis stems from a conflict between the Self, represented by the white British society, and its Other, represented by the immigrants from non-western countries. It is one of the key issues I examine in my work. Accordingly, the concept of “Otherness” is examined with connection to immigrants and the challenges that they face in London such as the agonizing reality of migration and the damage resulting from it; in other words, the cultural shock of arrival and the problems involved in the transition from one place to another, including the individual’s struggle for identity and acceptance in an unfamiliar environment.

Failure of integration in a new environment like London leads many immigrants to fall into depression. They are overwhelmed by the hardship they encounter in England. Devon Campbell-Hall says that “the realization that one is not welcomed but othered by the new community violently dislocates any fragile sense the immigrant might have cherished about belonging” (174). I bring to the fore these women writers’ exploration of this sense of (un)belonging and resettlement in a new environment. Their texts deal with the continuous struggles of those considered as outsiders and defined by their otherness.

Madelaine Hron asserts that “it is repeatedly forgotten that difference, hybridity and mobility often originate from painful events – such as discrimination, interracial conflict, or destitution – and reflexively refer back to them, revealing the difficulties of always being “singularly othered or securely belonging somewhere in the world”” (23). According to Horn,

At the heart of the experience of immigration is anguish that many immigrants feel at being suspended in “in-between” in a vital existence between two worlds. This in-between, where time and space become chaotic, often becomes a locus of impotence for immigrant subjects, where little agency, voice, or movement is possible. (26)

The women writers discussed here are aware of this fact and of the cultural complexities the immigrants confront as they move from one place to another. Between the processes of integration and exclusion, these novels reveal that the immigrants and even their children are oscillating between complete imitation and extreme resistance to assimilation. Moreover, the concept of “race” is dominant in their works, especially in the works of Emecheta and Riley. For

them, the experience and the subject position of black people in Britain are defined by their race. Their race denies them a British identity. Black people are denied this identity on the ground of their difference, which leads eventually to their exclusion.<sup>1</sup>

Racism as an ideological concept is understood in terms of difference and otherness. Etienne Balibar writes that racism is difference pushed to otherness, which in turn, leads to exclusion. According to Balibar, racism has “to be understood as a way of *constructing and instituting* communities, social formations, normative patterns of behaviour, and as a *mode of thought* ... a projection of ideas originated in certain situations and experiences upon others and a reduction of them all to an abstract stereotype” (Italics in the original text 24). This echoes Said’s critical argument in his book *Orientalism* about how non-Western people are constructed. Said writes that Western “representation of other societies and people involved an act of power by which images of them were in a sense created by the Western observer who constructed them as people and societies to be ruled and dominated” (12). According to this premise, racial differences lead to fixation of identities in “the framework of historical structures of domination” (Balibar 25).

In fact, the relationship between the imperial centre and the peripheries goes back to the time of colonialism, when the colonized people were led to believe in the superiority of white people and their values. The authors of *The Heart of the race: Black Women’s Lives in Britain* states that “the Black community did not arrive in Britain through some accident of history. Our links with this country, like the links of many other non-white peoples living here, stretch back over many hundreds of years” (3).

Moreover, expectations about London and the belief in the superiority of the white people are in part the results of the colonial education, which was employed as an instrument of occupation during the colonization period as well as a form of cultural engagement on the part of the colonized people with the colonizers. Bill Ashcroft describes the significance of education to the British imperialist design in a powerful way, saying that “education was a massive cannon in artillery of empire” (2006 425). Colonial education played a great role in enhancing the sense of Western superiority. The colonized subjects look to England as the source of culture, enlightenment, and prosperity. They believe that only by leaving their homeland, can they achieve economic success. Weedon writes: “Coloured by the legacy of colonialism in which Britain was portrayed as the Mother of Empire, emigration is imagined as the move to a better life” (229).

The novels discussed here reveal a different reality. Contact between the previously colonized people and the metropolitan centre reveals to them a different fact, which has ultimately led to an uncertainty and has created “ambivalence” in them. Bhabha thinks this “ambivalence” results from the contradictory feelings of attraction and revulsion characterizing the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The colonized fluctuates between refusal and imitation of the colonizer’s values and cultural authority. Bhabha argues that this imitation or mimicry on the part of the colonized is “at once resemblance and menace” (*The Location of Culture* 123). According to Bhabha, “mimicry is constructed around ambivalence” (*The Location of Culture* 122). However, he implies that this imitation is not a real mimicry: it may be seen as a kind of mockery, for the colonized can never be able to transform her/himself totally into the colonizer (“almost the same, *but not quite*”), and the result is an empty copy or image of the colonizer.

This ambivalence or confusion about one's position within the metropolitan space sometimes results in a challenge about how to achieve a balance between two cultures and values without erasing and wiping out one for the sake of the other. And even if the immigrant succeeds in achieving that balance, the question raised here is whether white society is ready to admit the immigrant's hybridization, and accepts to share the same space with its Other. If this is the case, then, this can result in conflicting attitudes towards the Other. Colonizing white identity defines itself in opposition to and through its difference from the Other, and race and ethnicity, as Catherine Hall states, are the crucial makers of that difference (29). So, if the white people were to acknowledge the hybridity of the Other, then, no justification would be left for their racial discrimination and their sense of superiority. They would have shown they are ready to negotiate the existing cultural differences among different races. Thus, the binary opposition between the Self and the Other would disappear, and, instead, a unifying identity might emerge. However, the works discussed here reveal a different reality. The Other is still regarded as stigmatizing the fabric of the white British society. Discrimination and racial prejudice are still practiced, and they have been carried on unchallenged across generations. The contemporary intellectual Michael Ignatieff asserted in 1998- fifty years after coming from Jamaica in 1948 – that “multicultural discourse implies that we now live together. In fact, notwithstanding the rise in intermarriage, most of us continue to live apart” (qtd in Alibhai-Brown 4). Even after decades of immigrants' living in Britain, there are still attempts to keep the division between races.

In the face of the mass migration from the commonwealth countries after WWII, the British tried, as a kind of self-reassurance, to assert their homogeneous white identity against the threat of the Other. Robert Young states, “Fixity of identity is only sought in situations of

instability and disruption, of conflict and change,” (4) which was caused by confrontation between the self and its other within the confinements of London’s context. Even though the homogeneity of British society is fictional, and “heterogeneity, cultural interchange and diversity have now become the self-conscious identity of modern society” (Young 4), nevertheless, there is an anxiety reflected in the “desire to keep races separate.”

Before the Second World War, a time when the colonized were controlled and oppressed by the Europeans, concerns about the non-white races were applied to spaces outside the metropolitan city. Even after getting the independence, the colonial influence in the ex-colonies continues to be felt. To be colonized, Said argues,

was a fate with lasting, indeed grotesquely unfair results, especially after national independence had been achieved. Poverty, dependency, underdevelopment, various pathologies of power and corruption, plus of course notable achievements in war, literacy, economic development: this mixture of characteristics designated the colonized people who had freed themselves on one level but remained victims of their past on another. (1989 207)

According to Said, the status of the colonized is “fixed in zones of dependency and marginality,” ruled by a superior developed colonizer, “who was theoretically posited as a categorically antithetical overlord” (1989 207). Based on this assumption, the colonized people, or non-western races, have been conditioned by their difference and otherness, a status that eternally relegates them to a position of marginality. This attitude of Western superiority and Eastern inferiority remains deeply rooted and fixed within the borders of the metropolitan city’s socio-cultural context. Certain white British people still condemn the presence of non-white

racism on the ground of these assumptions. They consider non-white races' presence in England troubling and threatening. These ideological assumptions with their ugly influence remain visible and reflected in all aspects of the immigrants' life such as low job status and poor housing.

Drawing upon the theoretical discourses of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha among others, this work explores the concepts of Otherness and hybridity in the selected novels, and probes deeply to examine the work of these concepts. There are ongoing debates regarding the concept of "Otherness" in postcolonial theory. I examine the way in which these concepts are conceptualized in the theoretical writings. These theoretical discourses are "systematic" aims at exploring, deconstructing, and analyzing "structure of knowledge, ideologies, power relations and social identities that have been authored and authorized by the imperial west in ruling and representing the non-west over the past 500 years" (Xie 980). Said's and Bhabha's theories give an insight into how they understand and comprehend the working of the concept of "Otherness." I would explore the concept of "hybridity" as well to better understand the position of those in liminal spaces.

The epistemic violence of colonialism constructs all other non-western people as objects of "Otherness." In *White Mythologies: Writing, History and the West*, Robert Young argues, "Every time a literary critic claims a universal ethical, moral, or emotional instance in a piece of English literature, he or she colludes in the violence of the colonial legacy in which the European value or truth is defined as the universal one" (124). Colonialism could be defined as a cultural and economic exploitation by European expansion during the post-Renaissance era. In this definition, there is a binary opposition between the colonizer and the colonized, which is

based on the concept of fixity in its ideological formation. The colonial systems establish the West as the world's intellectual, cultural, geographical and economical centre, reducing the underdeveloped countries into the margins.

Through the notion of Empire, the Europeans as colonizers create a discourse and ideology that project the colonized as the Other. Otherness is the product of discursive process by which the West constructs the Other by emphasizing a difference between Western people and non-Western people depending on a hierarchal categories that lead eventually to racial discrimination. Said's *Orientalism* is important in providing an initial definition of "Otherness." According to Said, Orientalism is an "enormously systematic discipline by which European power was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period" (3). Thus, Orientalism is the tool that stresses the difference between the East and the West, relegating the East to a position of inferiority, which is heavily felt by those who are forced to experience its effect. Said emphasizes the totality of the discourse of Orientalism. He argues, "there is no discipline, no structure of knowledge, no institution or epistemology that can or has ever stood free of the various sociocultural, historical, and political formations that give epochs their peculiar individuality" (1989 211).

In fact, Otherness reflects a western attitude and position towards the Other. Kwaku Larbi Korang states that "In Metropolitan space is to be found the Western Self, while the periphery is occupied by those that this Self, through its compelling institutional and discursive power, has determined, and relates to, as its Others" (39). The Other serves as a means of defining the Self. Western values and culture have been asserted and articulated against the defects of the Other's

values and culture. The “Other” is constructed according to a totally different set of human values from that of the dominant civilization, to assure the Self of its position of superiority. Moreover, what helps intensify and maintain this division is the long history of the Western knowledge, particularly regarding Orientalist discourse. (42)

Said claims that the relationship between Europe and its other is presented discursively to maintain its power. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said further argues,

What are striking in these discourses are the rhetorical figures one keeps encountering in their descriptions of “the mysterious East,” as well as the stereotypes about “the African {or Indian or Irish or Jamaican or Chinese} mind,” the notions about bringing civilization to primitive or barbaric peoples, the disturbingly familiar ideas about flogging or death or extended punishment being required when “they” misbehaved or became rebellious, because “they” mainly understood force or violence best; “they” were not like “us,” and for that reason deserved to be ruled. (xi)

The imbalance in power relationships is central to the construction of the Other. Accordingly, this “Other” provides grounds for stereotyping and misunderstanding. Knowledge about the Other is always the production of power. Therefore, the representation of that knowledge is distorted. In Said’s words, that those who are in positions of power always produce knowledge in a way that misrepresents non-western people and their cultures for their aims. The complicated nature of the power relations has continued to afflict political and cultural life today, especially in the West. Even though Arif Dirlik emphasizes the urgent need to eradicate all the distinctions between “centre” and “periphery” as well as all other kinds of “binarism” which are the legacy of the colonizer’s way of thinking (329), Said insists that one cannot avoid dealing

with such divisions as Western/ non-Western, White/ Coloured, North/ South, and pretend that they do not exist.

Said's theory is employed in the discussion of the selected novels to examine how racist assumptions about non-western people deep penetrate the mentality of the British society, and how these assumptions are important in asserting Western sense of the Self. The novels discussed in this work expose the ideology that divides the world into groups divided by colour, race and ethnicity. It intensifies false racial images, which have become fixed in the Western thought, and reflected in the cultural, political, economic, and social practices. Based on this concept or ideology, people of colour, and specifically the immigrants from ex-colonies, are othered, racialized and excluded.

The polarities in identifying the exercise of power, which are asserted by Said's argument in *Orientalism*, are challenged and disrupted by Bhabha's theory of hybridity. Bhabha, in his essay, "Difference, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism," attacks Said's focus on fixed binary opposition between the East and the West, referring to it as "historical and theoretical simplification" that considers "that power is possessed entirely by the colonizer" (200). In *Orientalism*, Said distinguishes between a "Latent" Orientalism, an "unconscious (and certainly an untouchable) positivity," and the "Manifest" Orientalism, the conscious "various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth." These two separate levels of meaning have become fused in Bhabha's argument. Young argues that "Bhabha emphasizes the extent to which the two levels fused and were, in operation, inseparable. He has shown how colonial discourse of whatever kind operated not only as an instrumental construction of knowledge but also according to the ambivalent protocols of fantasy

and desire” (161). By revealing ambivalence within the colonial discourse, Bhabha, Young argues, “has in effect performed a political reversal at a conceptual level in which the periphery . . . has become the equivocal, indefinite, indeterminate ambivalence that characterizes the centre” (161).

In an interview with Jonathan Rutherford, Bhabha demonstrates how “the postcolonial perspective forces us to rethink the profound limitations of a consensual and collusive “liberal” sense of community. It insists – through the migrant metaphor – that cultural and political identity is constructed through a process of othering” (219). Bhabha argues that what is actually designated by the concept of otherness is a hybridized subjectivity. The Other, which is displaced culturally and even geographically is caught between two cultures and worlds, and thus lives on boundaries. The boundaries are where new beginnings are originated. Bhabha describes the boundary as “culture in-between.” Bhabha conceptualizes the “culture in-between” as the “Third Space.” The “Third Space” is an “in-between” space which allows for the emergence of newness. For Bhabha, the location in which cultural difference is best articulated is in the concept of the “Third Space” (*The Location of Culture* 56). The “Third Space” is where differences are negotiated. This negotiation of differences results in new identities (*The Location of Culture* 2). Therefore, this “in-between” or “interstitial” space displaces differences, and requires thinking “beyond the narratives of originary and initial subjectivities” (*The Location of Culture* 2), and moving away from singularities of “class,” “race,” and “gender.” In his essay “Culture’s in-between,” Bhabha brings out the immigrant’s partial nature of culture. He argues,

The migrations of modern times . . . have transplanted themselves according to some social, religious, economic or political determination, or some peculiar mixture of these.

The people have taken with them only a part of the total culture. . . . The culture which develops on the new soil must therefore be bafflingly alike and different from the parent culture. (“Culture’s in Between” 30)

This passage suggests that no one can be representative of a whole culture or an entire ethnicity. On the contrary, the individual has become a blend of different histories, cultures and drives. The culture of the immigrants is “partial.” It is “contaminated yet connective tissue between cultures” (“Culture’s in Between” 30). In the same vein, Elazar Balkan writes, “Transplanted, the individual is transformed; the “I” is no longer a speaking subject with a clear history and a distinct voice but rather becomes a composite product of historical antimonies and contradictory impulses” (qtd. in Lau 241).

Bhabha argues against any essentialist views of culture and identity as pure or fixed; everything is open to negotiation. In Bhabha’s view, “negotiation is what politics is all about.” He states, “[W]e are always negotiating in any situation of political opposition or antagonism. Subversion is negotiation; transgression is negotiation; negotiation is not just some kind of compromise or “selling out” which people too easily understand it to be” (“The Third Space” 216). Accordingly, the cultural meaning is negotiated in those in-between spaces. Bhabha contends that new hybrid identities arise from the merging of elements of different cultures. He writes that “all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity” (“The Third Space” 211). According to Bhabha, “the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge” (“The Third Space” 211). Therefore, cultural hybridity gives rise to new positions and new situations, “to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a

new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (“The Third Space” 211). The liminal space or the “Third Space” could “[open] up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (*Location of Culture* 5). Bhabha argues that “by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves” (*Location of Culture* 56). Thus, Bhabha’s “Third Space” is conceptualized as going beyond the colonial binary thinking, and beyond the boundaries of the ideological and material practices of colonialism and neo-colonialism. In other words, this space can be used as a space for negotiation between two polarities such as “Black/White, Self/Other,” allowing for empowerment and resistance.

Christine Wick Sizemore argues that the new hybrid identities, which the late twentieth century has produced, need a “new kind of global literature that will better describe [them]” (2002 1). According to Bhabha, global literature emerges from “the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – [where] ... the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural values are negotiated” (1994 2). Bhabha asserts “Where the transmission of “national” traditions was once the major theme of a world literature, perhaps we can now suggest that transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees – these border and frontier conditions – may be the terrains of world literature” (qtd. in Sizemore 1).

Even though hybridity is a useful tool that best illustrates the position of those in “in-between,” or liminal position, however, there are certain concerns regarding this concept. Young associates the term hybridity with a biological meaning and significance. According to Young, Hybridity could invoke the racist “vocabulary of the Victorian extreme right” (10). From

a different perspective, critics such as Benita Parry criticize Bhabha's concept of hybridity that disrupts any simplistic polarities in identifying the exercise of power. Parry points out that Bhabha ignores "the material conditions of division and exploitation" (58) in his analysis of culture. According to Parry, Bhabha replaces materialism with the discursive abstraction. Parry finds that "re-writing a historical project of invasion, expropriation and exploitation in indeterminate and always deferred terms" (56) is troubling. According to Parry, Bhabha's analysis disregards the facts of conflict and the hostile struggle between the oppressed and oppressors. Thus, as Parry argues, Bhabha tries "to shift the position of the colonized from victim to participant" (67). In fact, Parry asserts that the economic and material, and I would add racial as well as gender, factors play an important role in undermining Bhabha's concept of the "Third Space" as a space of empowerment.

On the other hand, Bart Moore-Gilbert argues that the concept of hybridity could be inclined to generalize, and it could "mask a new system of hierarchies." Accordingly, hybridity could be "an oppressive concept itself" (194-95). Rasheed Araeen also argues that the concept of in-between space or hybridity bears that "two cultures or two things ... come into contact with each other and there is a [third] space in-between and you are suspended in space" (41).

I employ Bhabha's concept of cultural hybridity to analyze how postcolonial subjects are constructed. What I seek to discuss in my work is the problems and conditions of displacement encountered by the protagonists, living in the boundaries. These characters experience spatial and temporal displacement in ways, which are perhaps suited to Bhabha's conception of liminality as an "in-between" space. All the characters are similar when viewed as postcolonial sites for clash of differences. In providing literary analysis of each literary work, I attempt to

reveal the means, if any, by which these characters try to create a “Third Space,” outside the national and political constructs wherein they are able to create new subjectivities. In fact, going beyond the boundaries produces new awareness about one’s position related to two cultures. For instance, for each of the writers discussed here, the Other’s perspective reveals aspects of London otherwise unperceivable. The perspective of Otherness produces new knowledge; it sees what the centre/metropolitan self is unable to see. Going beyond the boundaries enables Rhys and Lessing to portray London through the lens of a new level of racial and class understanding and awareness.

My work includes writers that reflect both spatial and temporal hybridity as they all the product of the colonial project. Susan Stanford Friedman states that the definition of hybridity could mean both hybridity that is “spatial and geographical” as in the texts of migration, and hybridity that is “temporal and historical” as in the texts of colonialism and postcolonialism (quoted in Sizemore 6). The women writers discussed here bear the condition of hybridity. They are living on the boundaries, in the liminal position. Nevertheless, they encounter a difficulty in creating a new subjectivity in their new environment, which is complicated by their colonial backgrounds. I seek to explore the conditions of displacement encountered by these writers living and writing in London. The novels discussed here reveal how the demonstration of hybridity does not help create new identities, for hybridity is not the mixture of two homogeneous entities. Young asserts that “[w]hichever model of hybridity may be employed ... hybridity as a cultural description will always carry with it an implicit politics of heterosexuality” (25). On the other hand, Paul Gilroy emphasizes, “... the idea of hybridity, of intermixture, presupposes two anterior purities ... I think there isn’t any purity; there isn’t any

anterior purity ... that's why I try not to use the word hybrid ... Cultural production is not like mixing cocktails" (qtd. in John Hutnyk 82), and this is the fact that hybridity has neglected or failed to notice.

The novels examined here reveal that even with the transformation of the metropolitan city towards a more multicultural society, ethnicity and cultural differences are still persistent issues in the works of even the younger generation of writers like Smith and Ali. There is an implicit racism which lies powerfully hidden but repeatedly propagated within Western notions of culture. Even the use of hyphenated names of the diasporic double bears to the disavowal of any crossing between White and Black (Young 174). This reflects that there is a constant emphasis on the separation of races. The novels reveal that hybridity results in the individual's marginalization because both the individual's community and the Whites refuse his or her belonging to their groups.

What follows is a summarized description of the steps by which each chapter pursues this analysis. The chapters concentrate on discussing chronologically the works of the selected women writers, two in each chapter, to delineate the shifts in the British cultural situation during the twentieth century and the turn of the twenty-first century. In chapter one of the dissertation, I examine the representation of the metropolitan city in the works of less visible minority writers, namely Jean Rhys and Doris Lessing. Their works span the first half of the twentieth century prior to the mass migration from the commonwealth countries.

Rhys and Lessing come to England as exiles, in search or pursuit of the grail, London, just to find, to their disappointment, that the promise of London is a fallacy and an illusion. The place of the present never lives up to the place of their imagination. What they find is just a

city of “ugliness, smallness, and meanness.” For Rhys, Britain provides the antithesis to “home.” Her living in England helps form her antipathy towards Britain and British people, and this is reflected in her novel, *Voyage in the Dark* (1934). Her novel portrays the physical and spiritual dislocation of the female character. Writing across the boundaries of the colonial world, both Lessing and Rhys re-examine the notion of national identities. In her semi-biographical work, *In Pursuit of the English* (1961), Lessing brings her experience in Rhodesia into her perception of the new setting; she portrays London from a diasporic African perspective, which is a kind of hybrid view. Lessing’s novel challenges and negotiates ideologies of Englishness within the metropolitan city. Bhabha asserts that those who occupy “in-between” space are in advantageous position; the “third space” provides them with a new perspective from which they can re-examine reality (6). Going beyond the boundaries enables Rhys and Lessing to portray London through the lens of a new level of racial and class understanding and awareness.

Chapter two focuses on the novels of Buchi Emecheta and Joan Riley. Both *Second Class Citizen* and *Waiting in the Twilight* deal with the hardships of black women, seeking the hope and possibility of a better life in London. Emecheta and Riley’s novels reveal the effects of English racism and poverty on England black community in general, and on black women in particular, during the 1970s and 1980s. These novels disclose that there is a persistence of binaries, challenging Bhabha’s notion of “Third Space,” which is thought to go beyond the boundaries of the ideological and material practices of colonialism and new-colonialism. In *Second-Class Citizen* (1974), Emecheta portrays the female other within her new diasporic space through her social relations inside and outside the home. She questions the legacies of slavery and colonialism and their effects on the African Immigrants in general, and on women

specifically. The same applies to Riley, whose novel, *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987), focuses on the journey of a black woman from her place of origin, Jamaica, to London, her hard experience within her familial space, and her marginalization within white British society.

The focus of chapter three is the new multicultural generation of women writers, who were either born in Britain, like Zadie Smith, or arrived there while they were still children and spent almost all their life there, like Monica Ali. What distinguishes the writing of these writers from the writing of the previous generations is their ability to deal with the metropolitan city as a setting with more confidence and less ambivalence. These writers do not consider themselves outsiders; they feel part of the city. Their novels do offer a hybrid cultural perspective on the city. Both writers are aware of cultural hybridity within their own experience and write out of that position. Ali's novel, *Brick Lane* (2003), examines the position of Bangladeshi women in British society, and the effects transition has on women's lives. Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) gives us an analysis of the multiethnic stage of Britain. She captures the social and cultural changes taking place in new Britain at the turn of the twentieth century.

What Smith's and Ali's novels reveal is that integrating in a new society, specifically in England, is not an easy task; it is charged with difficulties. The process of integration and adaptation to different cultural values could result in an uncertainty and ambiguity. According to Bhabha, with the presence of a "Third Space," and with the passage of time, this uncertainty could be given a shape. In other words, a balance between the opposing poles would be achieved, which puts an end to those conflicting situations. Nevertheless, these novels demonstrate that hybridity fails in creating new subjectivities, and achieving a balance between the opposing values.

I conclude my study by suggesting that although Bhabha's theory is productive in conceptualizing the "Third Space," hybridity is eventually shown to fail on one level or another for each of the characters discussed in my work.

## Notes

1. During the 1960s and 1970s, many Asian writers and activists adopted the single collective term “black” as a political identity. The term is borrowed from the Civil Rights Movements in the USA. By their engagement in these struggles against racism, older first generation Caribbean and Asian activists also embraced the term “black,” which for them represented a new identity. Accordingly, the term “black British” receive currency in the mid- 1970s, “primarily as a political signifier” (Ranasinha 50).

## Chapter One: “In Pursuit of the “Grail””

This chapter is about two white women writers, Jean Rhys and Doris Lessing, who were either born or grew up in a British colony. Both of them moved to live in England. Being white from former colonies puts them in in-between space, where they try to negotiate their identity between the colonial periphery and the metropolitan centre. They question their position as white women in a society which excludes from the space of belonging all those considered as foreigners or others. They come to England with the belief that they are coming to a true and familiar home. Nevertheless, their experience of the city reveals to them a different reality, which reverses their expectations of the city. It is difficult for them to feel at home in England, for their presence and position in the metropolitan city is complicated by their colonial background.

Jean Rhys was born in Dominica in 1890, the daughter of a Welsh doctor and a third-generation white Creole mother. Her family had a well-known past of slave-ownership. Rhys’s mixed background plays a crucial role in her life, and adds to her sense of alienation and unbelonging both in the West Indies and England. Her status as a Welsh-Caribbean woman places her in an ambivalent position. Being a white woman from a privileged class affiliates her with the Whites, but being a colonial from a British colony places her in a position of an outsider in England and Europe. Or, as stated by Margaret Paul Joseph, “Rhys was considered Other in Dominica, where she was born, and she felt Other in England where she went to live” (22). Rhys’s novels convey a sense of “otherness,” which is also an expression of the paradox of her “dual existence.”

In her *Black Exercise Book*, Rhys writes about her relationship to and experience with the English when she was a child, which betrays her sense of “otherness,” and indicates her liminal position as well:

My relations with ‘real’ little English boys and girls (real ones) were peculiar. ...  
I nearly always disliked them. I soon discovered the peculiarly smug attitude which made them quite sure that I was in some way inferior. My accent! Did I have a bath every morning or did I have it in the evening. Very important. I’m glad to remember that I slapped one little English girl good and hard once. I also soon realized another thing. If I said I was *English* they at once contradicted me – or implied a contradiction – No a colonial – you’re not English – inferior being. My mother says colonials aren’t ladies and gentlemen, etc., etc.

If on the other hand I’d say exasperated, ‘All right then I’m not English as a matter of fact I’m not a bit. I’d much rather be French or Spanish. They’d get even more amazed at that. I was [a] traitor. You’re British they’d say. ... Neither one thing nor the other. Heads you win tails I lose – And I never liked their voices any better than they liked mine. (qtd. in O’Connor 19)

This passage reveals Rhys’s dislike of the English, which is “intertwined,” as Teresa F. O’Connor asserts, “with feelings of colonial inferiority reinforced by the assaults of the British children” (19). This passage also displays Rhys’s liminal position, which enhances her sense of displacement, and characterizes her in-betweenness and uncertainty about her belonging. In her autobiography, *Smile Please*, Rhys talks about this point; her failing to belong to any place: “I would never be part of anything. I would never really belong anywhere, and I knew it, and all my

life would be the same, trying to belong, and failing” (100). Rhys is unable to create a new subjectivity, or to use Homi Bhabha’s term, a “third space,” outside of her liminality. This failure results in a rupture in her identity, which prevents her from negotiating her position between the two identities as Caribbean and English.

Rhys came to England when she was sixteen; her life there was a series of “demimonde jobs.” What underscores her sense of unbelonging in England is the exploitation she encounters in the metropolitan city. Rhys’s experience of dislocation and marginalization are also reflected in her female protagonists. Rhys’s characters are drifting aimlessly in the streets of the metropolitan city without the protection of a husband or a father, finding themselves “living in between the gendered urban spaces of early twentieth-century England” (Emery 11).

Rhys’s novel, *Voyage in the Dark*, is an expression of this dislocation as well as the state of in-betweenness. This in-betweenness places the protagonist, Anna Morgan, between two spaces, the metropolitan centre and the colonial periphery, between cultures, and present and past. The novel was published in 1934; it was written during the waning years of Empire. According to Mary Lou Emery, the novel is “highly fragmentary,” which conveys “a critique of Empire and the protagonist’s identity crisis and split subjectivity” (2). Rhys’s aim at writing *Voyage in the Dark* is expressed in a letter she writes to Evelyn Scott:

The big idea ... [has] [s]omething to do with time being an illusion I think. I mean that the past exists – side by side with the present not behind it; that what was – is.

I tried to do it by making the past (the West Indies) very vivid – the present dreamlike (downward career of girl) – starting of course piano and ending fortissimo.

Perhaps I was simply trying to describe a girl going potty. (*Letters* 24)

*Voyage in the Dark* is the story of Anna Morgan, a young white Creole<sup>1</sup> from the West Indies, who is displaced and uprooted from her island and taken to England by her stepmother, Hester. Following the death of her father, she works as a chorus-girl, and falls in love with a wealthy Englishman, considerably older than her. After being deserted by her lover, Anna turns to prostitution for economic survival. She becomes pregnant, has an illegal abortion, and nearly dies. In fact, Anna's decline in London is due to her inability to negotiate her identity there. Being rejected by both communities, Black and White, Anna (Susheila Nasta writes) "really has no identity except as alien" (261). In the Caribbean, Anna is considered as British due to her British lineage although she is "the fifth generation born out there" (45). Moreover, her "indeterminate history" makes her as much as a victim, "for victimization," as Joseph asserts, "implies a state of dependence that is part and parcel of colonialism" (24). Aparjita Sagar remarks that Anna is a character whose story lays "bare the epistemic violence by which the colonized other is produced" (qtd. in Dell'Amico 64).

*Voyage in the Dark*, then, has to be discussed within the history of colonialism, which is characterized by power/dependence relationships. The nature of colonial relationships permeates Rhys's personal life and the lives of her heroines as well, for, as Joseph demonstrates, "there is power on one side and dependence on the other" (24). Dennis Porter remarks that the kind of colonialism portrayed by Rhys indicates alienation and division. He says:

[Life] in the novels ... is shown to have its origin in a life begun in colonial society. ... [The] women carry within them a sense of homelessness and of worthlessness that is socioeconomic, racial and even political. ... As well as daughters of absent fathers and unloving mothers, Jean Rhys's women are also "white niggers" without a homeland.

They have learned to believe they deserve little and they get no more than they believe they deserve. (552)

According to Porter, Rhys's women find themselves caught in a "double-bind" of gender and race, and this is true of Anna's situation. Anna's duality and otherness are explored in the novel through Rhys's use of the mirror. Joseph points out, "the mirror thus becomes a kind of semiotic image combining the paradox of two different countries, races, natural surroundings, and life styles" (23). Every time Anna turns to the mirror, a question comes to her mind, "Is it me?" By turning to the mirror, Anna is searching for her self, as a kind of assurance, which she, as Joseph underscore, has never found. (28) This search for the self is emphasized while she is in England, and especially through her relationship with Walter Jeffries. While she is once with Walter, she looks into the mirror "as if I were looking at somebody else" (23). In another occasion, she looks into the mirror and contemplates how the "reflection in the looking-glass is different from the real thing" (29). After Anna's intimate meeting with Walter, she says to him, "I don't like your looking-glasses" ... "Have you ever noticed how different some looking glasses make you look?" (38). In fact, it is not the looking-glass that makes her looks different; it is Anna herself who is changing and looking different. By dismissing Walter's mirror, Anna is rejecting her new self. Helen Tiffin, in her article "Mirrors and Masks: Colonial Motifs in the Novels of Jean Rhys," refers to Rhys's method of using mirrors:

As the distorted reflection of two images, neither of which is really her but which beckon and taunt her with their normality, the Rhys's heroine relies on mirrors and mirror images, and they central to Rhys's depiction of her dilemma. Unable to judge

their own worth, Rhys's heroines are obsessed with mirrors and the need for outside opinion. (328-9)

Nevertheless, Anna's dilemma lies not in her need "for outside opinion," but in her need to understand, as Joseph points out, "the reality of one's own identity in an alien world" (29). In England, Anna finds herself alienated and isolated without any financial support and position. She lives in a series of rented rooms, which symbolize, according to Thomas Staley, "the isolated, unprotected life of their inhabitants" (57).

The focus of the novel is Anna's life in England; nevertheless, Anna's life there is continually interrupted by her memories of the West Indies. Anna states her conflict from the very beginning; "a conflict signified by place and the language used to evoke the lost place" (O'Connor 83). The differences between the two worlds, London and the Caribbean, are expressed in the opening passage of the novel:

The colours were different, the smells different, the feeling things gave you right down inside yourself was different. Not just the difference between heat, cold; light, darkness; purple, grey. But a difference in the way I was frightened and the way I was happy. I didn't like England at first. I couldn't get used to the cold. (7)

Anna's fluctuating feeling towards London is due to her ambivalent position as a white Creole, regarding her relationship to the "motherland." For Anna, England is the emblem of power and all she yearns for and fears of. She longs for security and acceptance, nevertheless, her experience of real England reveals to her only rejection and exclusion. Veronica Marie Gregg remarks, "Europeans born or living in the West Indies, educated to conceive of England as "home," they were also culturally marked and excluded as inferior colonials" (43). O'Connor also states that

the idea of England as home is expressed in Rhys's novels, "both in her heroines' attitudes toward England and the English attitude toward her heroines (21). This attitude, which suggests the relation of the white Creole to the mother country, is revealed while Anna sees England for the first time through a "train-window,"

... This is England Hester said and I watched it through the train-window divided into squares like pocket-handkerchief; a small tidy look it had everywhere fenced off from everywhere else – what are those things – those are haystacks – oh are those haystacks – I had read about England ever since I could read – smaller meaner everything is never mind – this is London. (15)

This passage suggests that reading about England makes Anna feel that England is a true and familiar home. Yet, Anna's first view of the landscape reveals to her another antithetical fact, and a contradictory image to that of her imagination. For Anna, England comes to mean the "antithesis" to home. Then, the real England, Anna experiences as a "peripheral Other," clashes with the "textual" one that she has read about. O'Connor remarks, "the disappointment represented by England led to a perpetuation of the myth of home, and an overwhelming sense of loss" (49). Anna's journey is supposed to be a journey to the land of her ancestors, nevertheless, her reverse journey ends in a sense of estrangement and alienation. England proves to be a hostile and unwelcoming motherland.

The cruelty, coldness, and sterility Anna encounters in England make her long for the Caribbean. However, Anna has never felt that the West Indies is her real home either because of her position as a white Creole woman. Elizabeth Nunez-Harell describes the status of the white Creole as "an outcast, a sort of freak rejected by both Europe and England, whose blood she

shares, and by the black West Indian people, whose culture and home have been hers for two generations or more” (qtd. in Emery 12).

For Anna, London comes to mean monotony, sameness, and dullness. She asserts to Maudie, another chorus girl, “I don’t like London. It’s an awful place; it looks horrible sometimes” (40). The houses “outside were the same – all alike, all hideously stuck together – and the streets going north, east, south, west, all exactly the same” (89). Her first impression and response remain unchanged throughout the novel. She remarks on another occasion, “Everything was always exactly alike – that was what I could never get used to it. And the cold; and the houses all exactly alike, and the streets going north, south, east, west, all exactly alike” (152). John Clement Ball remarks that Anna’s “perception of identical houses, streets, and even directions ... conveys a strong sense of disorientation that speaks to the city’s impact on her emotions and on the direction her life is taking” (121). Anna finds herself lost in the geography of the Metropolitan city, which also reflects her state of mind, psyche, and orientation. Kevin Lynch describes this situation; “The very word “lost” in our language means much more than simple geographical uncertainty; it carries overtones of utter disaster” (qtd. in Ball 121). The confined space of London is contrasted markedly with the expansive space of the West Indies. Her journey in the streets of London remarks her disorientation and uncertainty. Ball states that “These contrasts – between a confining, disorienting, alienation urban British world and a spacious, rural West Indian one to which Anna is oriented and emotionally connected – are part of a larger pattern of binaries built into the novel” (122). By drawing those contrasting images between England and the West Indies, Rhys, according to Ball, “reverses the hierarchal binaries of imperialist discourses that elevate metropolitan over colonial spaces” (122).

Throughout the novel, Anna tries to cope with the division inside her. Anna's duality is due to the awareness of two worlds; the world of oppressors and the world of victims. Her inability to resolve that division within her; to "fit" the two worlds "together;" London and the West Indies, leads her to confuse the reality of the two worlds as well; she remarks, "sometimes it was as if I were back there and as if England were a dream. At other times England was the real thing and out there was the dream, but I could never fit the two together" (8). This passage reflects Anna's uncertainty and the division within herself, which Rhys expressed in a letter to Selma Vaz Dias. In that letter, Rhys writes, "[Anna] is divided, two people really. Or at any rate one foot on sea and one on land girl" (*Letters* 241)<sup>2</sup>. Anna's confusion about the two worlds, of dream and reality, indicates that she is suspended in a "dream-like state." And because she is unable to fit her past and present, Nasta suggests, then, "there is no future for her" (269).

For Rhys, as one of the white minority, "Otherness," Joseph states, is something she knows well in islands full of coloured races. According to Joseph, "to be white was to feel not superior, but rejected" (26). Thus, Anna longs to be Black. Her sense of dislocation creates inside her a desire for the racial other. Staley remarks that

Anna's sense of displacement and cultural rift created a curious racial identity with blacks. ... Her own attitude towards black as revealed in her work is complex and not easily categorized, and is further complicated by her own Creole background; but her close relationship with blacks as a child and her own experiences in England enabled her to understand and identify with the plight of the black immigrant who enters the alien world of white England. (5)

What draws Anna toward the Black is what she apprehends as the warmth and gaiety of their life and culture. In fact, Anna's childhood's relationship with Francine, the cook, stresses the desire inside her to be different; to be black. While she is lying sick in her cold room in London, Anna's memory shifts to the Caribbean, which brings the thought of her desire to be black: "I wanted to be black. I always wanted to be black. I was happy because Francine was there ... Being black is warm and gay, being white is cold and sad" (27). Anna envies the black because they have more freedom, unlike the white, who "must conform to the constraints of the colonist" (Bruner 247).

Anna is trapped by the love-hatred relationship with the Blacks. Though she is identified with the Blacks, she is rejected by them as well. Anna identifies herself with Francine; nevertheless, this identification is false, for Anna knows well that there are racial barriers between them that prevent any real connection between the two. Moreover, such a real relationship would never occur, because of the ways in which the "white/European subjectivity in the West Indies," as Gregg suggests, "has been historically constructed over and against that of the black Other/African" (36). According to Gregg, Rhys's writing reveals that the Creole's identity has been made of "the sociocultural, discursive fabric of the colonial West Indies." Accordingly, the "Creole subjectivity" has been "articulated within the historical specificity of racialized slavery in the Caribbean" (38). Being White, Anna "knew that of course [Francine] disliked [her] ... because [she] was white; and that [she] would never be able to explain to her that [she] hated being white" (62). Though they have a good relationship, yet, Francine cannot trust Anna, for Anna is the inheritor of the history of slavery.

The identification with the Blacks is further explored by Rhys in the end of the novel. In her delirium following a botched abortion, Anna imagines her return to her home island watching a carnival, where black people in masks wildly “dancing along dressed in red and blue and yellow.” At the beginning, there were barriers between white and black people, represented by the windows and the colonial history:

A pretty useful mask that white one watch it and the slobbering tongue of an idiot will stick out – a mask father said with an idiot behind it I believe the whole damned business is like that – Hester said Gerald the child’s listening – oh no she isn’t Father sad she’s looking out of the window and quite right too – it ought to be stopped somebody said it’s not a decent and respectable way to go on it ought to be stopped ...

... you can’t expect niggers to behave like white people all the time Uncle Bo said it’s asking too much of human nature – look at that fat old woman Hester said just look at her – oh yes she’s having a go too uncle Bo said they all have a go they don’t mind – their voices were going up and down – I was looking out of the window and I knew why the masks were laughing and I heard the concertina-music going. (156-7)

The Blacks are not only imitating the Whites, but these Carnivals meant to ridicule the Whites. It is in this process that mimicry becomes mockery (*The Location of Culture* 123). The black slaves tried to mask their hatred of their white masters with satire, which emerged in post-emancipation days as the Masquerade, which is depicted in this novel (Tiffin 334). According to Tiffin, instead of apprehending the reality of the Masquerade, the white people “reject the “wild” behaviour of the blacks as typically animalistic and thus avoid confronting the message of the

mask” (335). In the white people’s opinion, the scene is frightening and lacks any kind of respect or decency.

At the beginning, Anna watches the Blacks with the other members of her family “from between the slats of jalousies.” Then, the watching “I” becomes the “we;” Anna joins the dancing: “... we went on dancing forwards and backwards backwards and forwards whirling round and round” (157). Her participation at the end, Emery remarks, “represents a significant cultural choice” (66). Anna finds a place where she might belong even though it is momentarily and illusory. Anna’s realization of the message behind the mask transforms her from an observer to a participant. The white mask represents for Anna the “tricks that played upon her ... by England and the white culture” (Emery 76).

Unlike Anna, whose closeness to the Blacks is one of the characteristics that contribute to her “unfortunate propensities,” Hester, Anna’s stepmother, represents the “parodies of the construction of English gentlewoman in the West Indies” (Gregg 123). Hester had married Anna’s father after the death of his first wife, and had come with him to the West Indies. According to Hester, Anna, with her hybrid language, or in other words, contaminated nature, represents a threat to the construction of the proper Englishwoman. Hester considers Anna a vulgar and degraded colonial, and she has decided that it is her “mission” to “civilize” Anna by transforming her into a “ladylike;” a role Anna has rejected. In this way, Hester represents the White British people’s racial prejudice and their sense of superiority above other coloured people. Hester

had clear brown eyes which stuck out of her head if you looked at her sideways, and an English lady’s voice with a sharp, cutting edge to it. Now that I’ve spoken you can hear

that I'm a lady. I have spoken and I suppose you now realize that I'm an English gentlewoman. I have my doubts about you. Speak up and I will place you at once. Speak up, for I fear the worst. That sort of voice. (50)

According to Hester, Anna is not a pure white; she is contaminated by growing up in the West Indies. Hester rejects her because of this fact; not only Anna, but her mother and family as well. For Hester, anyone brought up in the West Indies is coloured. Gregg points out that "Anna's location as a "blackened" Creole gives added resonance to the term "purity," which bases the notion of purity and "true womanhood" on racial, gender, and class differences" (125). Anna's Creole condition and financial situation are responsible for her exclusion and degradation. The novel gives an analysis of class divisions, which is at the centre of the "imperializing project's construction of the English domestic subject over the peripheral Other" (Gregg 128). Based on Michel Foucault, Edward Said states in *Orientalism* that the Western discursive constructions are systems of power that affect the way people perceive and judge things. According to Said, these Western discursive formations are hegemonic and have political agendas, for they are passed on and enforced upon non-Western regions as facts. Anna's tries to defend her mother against Hester's alluding to Anna's mother as coloured, "You are trying to make out that my mother was coloured. And she wasn't" (56). All Anna's attempts to defend herself and her mother against Hester's assumptions and accusation prove to be ineffective in the face of Hester's well established authority, which is derived from her social and political position within the imperial system.

In their last communication, Hester exposes the hypocrisy of her supposed civilizing mission by telling Anna, "I tried to teach you to talk like a lady and behave like a lady and not

like a nigger and of course I couldn't do it. Impossible to get you away from the servants. That awful sing-song voice you had! Exactly like a nigger you talked – and still do" (56). Failing to teach Anna to be English and "lady-like," Hester directs her criticism towards Anna's accent and "drawly voice" (30). Anna's accent denies her any access to Englishness and the English society. Nevertheless, Anna herself refuses to embrace Whiteness and Englishness, for she associates both Whiteness and Englishness with Hester.

Hester's criticism is not only directed towards Anna and her mother but toward Anna's father and uncle as well. In Hester's opinion, Anna's father, an Englishman, has become irrational after being in the West Indies for over thirty years, for he refused to hide or avoid getting "mixed- up" with the West Indians. Anna's father refuses as well to hide his dislike of England, claiming that "it stinks of hypocrites" (53). According to Hester, the thought that an Englishman doesn't like England is "unthinkable." The other person whom Hester resents and despises is Anna's uncle, Bo. What annoys Hester most about this uncle is his open acknowledgment of his illegitimate children. In a letter to Hester, Uncle Bo writes that he has three coloured children to support. According to Hester his acknowledgment represents a transgression of the codes of behavior:

With illegitimate children wandering about all over the place called by his name – called by his name if you please. Sholto Costerus, Mildred Costerus, Dagmar. The Costeruses seem to have populated half the island in their time. ... And you being told they were your cousins and giving them presents every Christmas. ... But I gave Ramsay a piece of my mind. ... I said, "My idea of a gentleman as English gentleman doesn't flaunt them."

“No I bet he doesn’t,” he said, laughing in that greasy way – exactly the laugh of a negro he had – “I should think being flaunted is the last thing that happens to the poor little devils. Not much flaunting of that sort done in England.” (55-6)

According to Hester, a true English gentleman is supposed not to acknowledge his illegitimate mixed-race children. Gregg remarks Hester’s criticism of Uncle Bo illustrates that his behavior does not condemn the “sexual segregation of the races but the legal and social prohibitions for breaching the cultural codes” (126). By acknowledging his illegitimate children, Uncle Bo has confused the cultural and civic code of conduct. He has violated one of the foundational grounds of the British Empire, which should be maintained and promoted in societies like the Caribbean as part of the Empire’s domination.

On the other hand, Uncle Bo has a different attitude towards the English people such as Hester. According to Uncle Bo, a representative of the Caribbean “planter class,” Hester has cheated Anna out of her inheritance; Hester is supposed to support Anna financially. This is expressed in a letter sent by Bo to Hester. He writes to Hester, telling her that

If you feel that you don’t wish her to live with you in England, of course her aunt and I will have her here with us. But in that case I insist – we both insist – that she should have her proper share of the money you got from the sale of her father’s estate. Anything else would be iniquitous (52).

Hester feels it is the English people who “are cheated into buying estates that aren’t worth a halfpenny” (53). Anna’s uncle’s accusation and Hester’s reaction to the letter reflect the antithetical attitudes of the West Indians versus the English.

Abdul R. Jan Mohammed says that the colonist justifies his exploitation by creating a notion of the White man's burden. So, Hester, as the representative of the British Empire, wants to take up that burden and try to civilize Anna. Nevertheless, this notion of the White man's burden carries a contradiction: "if [the Whiteman] genuinely pursues his manifest destiny and 'civilizes' the native, then he undermines his own position of social privileges . . . then the colonizer can no longer retain his superior status" (5). According to Abdul R. Jan Mohammed, the western project of civilizing the colonized is a sham, as the natives would never be recognized by the colonizer; the whole project is only meant for exploitation. In a passage where Hester is telling Anna that she is going to give the "rector's daughter . . . a present of two jumbie-beads set in gold," (50) Hester ironically says: "The niggers say that jumbie-beads are lucky, don't they?" (50). This passage reveals two points; first, it emphasizes the stereotypical conceptions about the Other; second, it underscores Hester's link to the Empire. Gregg points out that Hester, by setting the jumbie-beads in gold, and giving them to the daughter of one of the representative of British institutions, the Church, is appropriating the "superstitious cultural artifact of the Other," and, thus, increasing its materialistic value. According to Gregg, this "short exchange becomes a synecdoche for imperialist exploitation tied to religion, capital, race, and gender" (124).

Hester's attitude regarding the Other echoes Said's concept of "Otherness," which arises from the imperial West's feeling of superiority reinforced by the binary world view of "us" versus "them" or "self" versus "other." All non-white people are relegated to the margins, to a peripheral position. This belief in the irrationality and inferiority of the Other is a fixed assumption in the mentality of the white people, and it is created for the sake of exploitation of

the non-white people. Hestre's hypocrisy is revealed when she leaves Anna in London without any support, justifying her behavior by accusing Anna of whoring, "but I did think when I brought you to England that I was giving you a real chance. And now that you're beginning to turn out badly I must be made responsible for it and I must go on supporting you" (56).

It is the state of displacement, marginalization, and the lack of strong familial bonds that eventually lead to Anna's sense of distress and pain. Emery states that "If all women by virtue of their sexual positioning as Other are marginalized," then Rhys's female protagonists "experience a doubled marginality in their exile from homes of men who could grant them lives of feminine domesticity and sexual respectability" (10). Anna's journey represents a downward mobility from upper to working class. She is single, without family support; her father dies, her uncle refuses to take responsibility for her, her stepmother denies her share of the inheritance, and finally Anna turns to prostitution to support herself financially. Emery points out that prior to the First World War, job opportunities were very limited especially for women. And even those who managed to find respectable jobs were paid less than half the wages paid for men. Women "like the chorus girls of the time, were vulnerable to sexual advances and exploitation." Under such hard financial conditions, "prostitution became a possibility, though not a clearly defined one, since the operating distinctions blur between terms such as "kept women," or mistress, "tart and prostitute" (92). Debora L. Parsons also asserts that in the early twentieth century, women in public were associated with the fallen woman (125). Single dwelling and occupations were tolerated for young women, but just for a while before marriage; they should eventually conform to the norms (Parsons 127). Accordingly, Anna's position as a chorus girl as well as her prostitution further complicate her situation in England.

Uprooted from her home, Anna finds herself alienated and sexually vulnerable as she explores the streets of London in 1914. Even before her turning to prostitution, Anna's position, as a working woman without a family, is questionable and considered as low among the English society. Anna's status is questioned, as Emery suggests, for she has entered "a space in between what the Victorians perceived as the feminine domestic sphere and the masculine public realm" (3). For instance, one of the landladies refuses at the beginning to rent Anna a room, for she doesn't rent rooms for "professionals" (8). Later on, she asks Anna to leave and find another room; "I don't hold with the way you go on, if you want to know ... [c]rawling up the stairs at three o'clock in the morning. And then today dressed up to the nines. I've got eyes in my head," she asserts to her that she "don't want tarts in [her] house" (26).

In fact, it is not only Anna's lifestyle that arouses the landlady's agitation and antagonism; there is something haunting about Anna drawn from her Creole condition and her relation to the colonial history. For instance, another landlady, Ethel, loses her control in the presence of Anna. For being a colonial, Anna is despised by the British woman, Ethel. Her otherness is derived from her Caribbean birth and colonial status. Ethel tells Anna: "And as a matter of fact you're enough to drive anybody crazy with the potty look of yours." She asserts to Anna that "The thing about you ... is that you're half potty. You're not all there; you're a half-potty bastard. ... Anybody only got to look at you to see that" (124). Ethel's "hysterical outburst" and her accusation that Anna is being "half potty bastard" embody white prejudices, which rely on racist assumptions. Anna is the victim of imperial systems that construct her as the Other. In fact, Anna is the victim of the colonial legacy and the cultural Western discourses, which define the rationality of the Western "personhood" against the

irrationality of the non-Western societies. Bhabha mentions in his interview with Jonathan Rutherford that “the time in which these things were happening was the same time at which the West was producing another history of itself through its colonial possessions and relations.” According to Bhabha, “The material legacy of this repressed history is inscribed in the return of post-colonial peoples to the metropolis” (218). Thus, Anna’s presence in the imperial city, irritates and disturbs “the bed of imperio-metropolitan repression,” which means that the colonial history is coming home (Dell’Amico 46).

In the novel, the disruptive shift between the present and the past expresses a resistance, an effort to keep both separate. Moreover, this disruptive shift expresses a state of stagnation, and “suspension between two different signifying systems” (Dell’Amico 74). It also conveys, as Staley suggests, “a sense of movement and evoke the novel’s central image of a voyage, both inward and outward” (59). Although Rhys asserts in her letters that “the past exists – side by side with the present, not behind it” (*Letters* 24), there is a persistent separation of past from present, represented by the image of a falling curtain. Upon arriving in England, Anna says, expressing her first impression and feelings, “It was as if a curtain had fallen, hiding everything I had ever known. It was almost like being born again” (7). The falling curtain could refer to Anna’s permanent separation from her island. Anna has lost all connection with her home; her journey is irreversible. Being “born again” might indicate a new beginning. Yet, the curtain might suggest an end rather than a beginning as well. Nasta points out that the curtain might indicate the end of a theatrical show, like the one Anna is currently engaged in. According to Nasta, “coming to England does not indicate the opening of the curtains but their closing, the end of something”. And this is suggested by Anna’s life, which it does not “progress, but stagnates in its own

despair” (267). This state of stagnation is represented by the confined spaces Anna finds herself in and the images of death prevailed in the novel. Anna is stuck between “the walls of a room getting smaller and smaller until they crush you to death” (26).

In an intimate moment with Walter, the past breaks into the present; instead of thinking of the present moment, Anna’s thought takes her to the past, bringing the memory of a Caribbean slave woman, “Maillotte Boyd, aged 18,”

“I saw an old slave-list at Constance once,” I said. ‘It was hand-written on that paper that rolls up. Parchment, d’you call it? It was in columns – the names and the ages and what they did and then General Remarks.’”

... Maillote Boyd, aged 18, mulatto, house servant. The sins of the fathers Hester said are visited upon the children unto the third and forth generations – don’t talk such nonsense to the child Father said – a myth don’t get tangled up in myth he said to me .... (46-5 Rhys’s ellipses)

This passage reveals that the past is erupting into the present through the figure of the nineteenth-century enslaved woman. Anna has been identified with the slave girl, for the girl’s condition reflects Anna’s state of slavery and dependence. According to Gregg,

the physical connection between Walter and Anna is placed under erasure, allowing the repressed Other, the body of the nineteenth-century mulatto slave woman, to return via and between ... the apparent binary opposition of the individual white West Indian woman and the English gentleman (119).

This marks the parallel between the destinies of twentieth century free, yet poor, white woman with the nineteenth-century enslaved colored woman, which is “the effect of interlocking ideologies of “race” and sexuality, empire and colony, gender and class” (Gregg 119). In fact,

this is the burden of the history of slavery. The repressed past is coming back to haunt the granddaughter, Anna, who should pay for the guilt of her slave-owning fathers.

Anna's life in London is also bound with power relationships. London is perceived as a place over-determined by imperial history and power hierarchies, represented by Walter. The class distinction between Anna and Walter shapes their relationship, which is based on Rhys experience. Rhys writes in her autobiography that "It still annoys me when my first object of worship is supposed to be a villain. Or perhaps the idea at the back of this is that his class was oppressing mine. He had money, I had none. ... He was like all the men in all the books I had ever read about London" (114). So, the formation of Anna in the presence of Walter as "blackened" and "sexualized object," explains "the male/female, white/ black, master / slave dialectic of their relationship" (Gregg 118).

Anna's complicated position as a white Creole with all its political, social, and historical implications is further revealed when she gets Vincent's, Walter's cousin, letter in which he is terminating her relationship with Walter:

Love is not everything – especially that sort of love – and the more people, especially girls, put it right out of their heads and do without it the better. That's my opinion. Life is shock-full of other things, my dear girl, friends and just good times and being jolly together and so on and games and books. Do you remember when talked about books? I was sorry when told me that you never read because, believe me, a good book like that book I was talking about can make a lot of difference to your point of view. It makes you see what is real and what is just imaginary. My dear Infant, I am writing this in the country, and I can assure you that when you get into a garden and smell the flowers and all that all this rather beastly sort of love simply doesn't matter. (80)

This letter brings to Anna the thought of another incident. Her memory takes her back to another scene in the West Indies. In that scene, Anna remembers her uncle Bo, who

Was lying on the sofa his mouth was a bit open – I thought he was asleep and I started to walk on tiptoe ... I got up to the table where the magazine was and Uncle Bo moved and sighed and long yellow tusks like fangs came out of his mouth and protruded down to his chin – you don't scream when you are frightened because you can't and you don't move either because you can't ... I had never seen false teeth before not to notice them. (79)

In her free association, Anna reflects, “what’s the matter with me? ... What’s this letter got to do with false teeth?” (79). In fact, what at the centre of both incidents is the horror that both the letter and the false teeth arouse in Anna. The connection between the two incidents is women’s exploitation and victimization. Anna’s uncle at the colony is exploiting black women, and in England, she is the victim of Walter’s exploitation. Moreover, the link between the two images expresses the rejection she has suffered both by her lover and her uncle. The analogy between damaging male/female relationships and between “imperial nation and colonial underdog” is clear. Tiffin states, “The pattern of [Anna’s] life mirrors her own Caribbean history of European conquest, flirtation, and desertion, and the resultant dependence of the colonial on the colonizer” (334).

In another scene, she recalls the Caribs, the indigenous people of her island. They “were a warlike tribe,” known for their fierce resistance to the “British rule,” but they almost exterminated by the British. Kenneth Ramchand remarks that the indigenous people of the Caribbean “were virtually eliminated” and they are considered today as “marginal to society”

(164). By referring to the Caribs, Anna seems to be identifying her fate with that of the Caribs. Her condition of victimization and exploitation by British men is parallel to the history of the Caribs.

Walter's rejection of Anna identifies her with those black victims. Dell'Amico argues that "Jeffries's actions are underwritten by the same intersecting ideologies of gender, class, and race that guarantee Walter's eventual eschewal of [Anna]" (54). Their relationship is defined from the very beginning. As an under-class and Creole woman, Anna has no choice but to be Walter's mistress. On her second visit, Walter puts money in her bag:

My handbag was on the table. He took it up and put some money into it. Before he did it he looked toward me but he thought I couldn't see him. I got up. I meant to say, "what are you doing?" But when I went up to him, instead of sayng, "Don't do that, I said, 'All right, if you like – anything you like, any way you like.' And I kissed his hand. (38)

As an Englishman, Walter's position is assured and well-established in a world characterized by "dark streets, actively hostile lookalike houses, and grim cheerless interiors where reluctantly kindled fires shed no warmth" (Tiffin 329). Anna's relationship with Walter is doomed to fail, for it is articulated in Western discourse that any relation between a West Indian woman and an Englishman is prohibited or impossible. In a paragraph quoted by Gregg, Mary Louise Pratt gives an excellent analysis of this situation. Although it is related to another context, nevertheless it is worth mentioning here:

As an ideology, romantic love, like capitalist commerce, understands itself as reciprocal. Reciprocity, love requited between individuals worthy of each other, is its ideal state.

The failure of reciprocity, or of equivalence between parties, is its central tragedy and scandal. ... Such is the lesson to be learned from the colonial love stories, in whose denouements the “cultural harmony through romance” always breaks down whether love turns out to be requited or not ... outcomes seem to be roughly the same: the lovers are separated, the European is reabsorbed by Europe and the non-European dies an early death. (*Imperial Eyes* 97)

Although Anna doesn't die, nevertheless, at the end, she nearly dies due to the abortion, which is an expression of her failed relationship with Walter, specifically, and more generally of her abortive attempt to fit in and adjust herself to life in England. Sukhdev Sandhu remarks that Anna's abortion “serves her last remaining link to her lover Walter Jeffries and snuffs out any hope of regeneration and futurity” (131). This premature death of her fetus contrasts to the promising beginning in which Anna asserts her rebirth by coming to England, and it has become a symbol of Anna's failure. The promises of England have been undermined by the reality of Anna's inability to fit the two worlds together, and by the historical prejudices of the English people against her Creoleness. The difference between England and the West Indies is not cold versus warm, as Gregg points out; “It suggests the ways in which the peripheral Other is trapped within and between the “houses and streets” of the imperial space” (Gregg 133).

The unreality of England and Anna's alienation there is expressed in Anna's dream of a ship when Anna finds out about her pregnancy; everything “was heaving up and down” (140). Anna dreams that she is in a ship sailing in “a dolls' sea, transparent as glass,”

Somebody said in my ear, "That's your island that you talk such a lot about."

And the ship was sailing very close to an island, which was home except that the trees were all wrong. These were English trees, their leaves trailing in the water. I tried to catch hold of a branch and step ashore, but the deck of the ship expanded. Somebody had fallen overboard. (140)

This passage reveals Anna's division and her in-betweenness, as she is caught between sea and land. Anna is caught in a space of ambiguity and uncertainty as the boundaries between spaces are confused. The dream also reflects her position of powerlessness in England, which is characterized by being unstable. Thus, the dream becomes a metaphor for Anna's voyage in the dark.

The ending<sup>3</sup> of the novel is ambiguous as Anna's future is left undecided. Anna remains uncertain about the kind of life waiting for her. In her delirium, the doctor, who attends her, tells cynically Anna's friend, Laurie, that Anna will "be all right ... Ready to start all over again in no time, I've no doubt" (159). In fact, it is the doctor's phrase "start all over again," which is really ambiguous as whether Anna is going to continue her previous life, going with men, or she is going to start a new way of living. Ball asserts that Anna, at the end of the novel is able to regain some control over her body and her future. He suggests that the ending is "about being new and fresh" and "about starting all over again" (124). However, I would argue that Anna's situation remains unchanged; she doesn't make much headway. Moreover, she is still lacking any source that might empower her in a society bedevilled with racial, class, and gender hierarchies. Elgin W. Mellown describes Anna's life as a "never-ceasing descent on the scale of personal and social values" (109). And what the novel shows is that Anna's journey ends in darkness and displacement, towards no place.

*In Pursuit of the English*, subtitled “A Documentary,” is another novel which deals with a white woman from a former colony. Doris Lessing’s position puts her in an in-between space like Rhys, where she tries to negotiate her identity between the colonial periphery and the metropolitan centre. Lessing was born in Persia, grew up in Rhodesia, Southern Africa, and in 1949, she immigrated to England. Alice Ridout and Susan Watkins remark that Lessing’s parents’ arrival in Rhodesia placed Lessing in the “role of colonial settler-invader” (4). Ridout and Watkins find a difficulty in categorizing Lessing, and this difficulty is expressed by Motoko’s and Layall’s hyphenated phrase: “Persian-born, Rhodesian-raised, and London-residing” (3). As a white woman, Lessing is caught between the advantage of a position of privilege and “a rejection of that privilege” (Ridout and Watkins 4). This tension, which is related to her complicated position, creates a third space, which embraces a revisionary time in which Lessing, as an exile, would “address the present from the position of a new time frame, a new narrative” (Xie 155).

Being white ought to grant Lessing a less othered position in England. Nevertheless, she feels the boundaries between herself and the urban space where she dwells in England. Lorna Sage states that Lessing “was an exile in Africa, but she was equally an outsider in England” (14). In fact, “Lessing’s self-fashioning as an English writer ... is complicated ... by her colonial beginning” (Yelin 57). However, Yelin remarks that the otherness of white colonials is different from that of the New Commonwealth immigrants, who are perceived as truly the Other (62). As a white colonial from a British colony, Lessing is both outsider and insider. So, her perception is expressed from this double perspective. Said states in *Reflection on Exile*, “Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this

plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that ... is contrapuntal” (186). According to Said, this contrapuntal experience of exile, like that of Lessing, suggests that the exile has simultaneous awarenesses, which would affect her/his perspectives and outlooks.

*In Pursuit of the English* is a semi-autobiographical work in which Lessing documents her arrival in London from Rhodesia in 1949. Lessing wrote her novel in a time of transition, instability, and change. The novel documents the changing conditions in a period which witnessed the beginning of the arrival of black immigrants into the metropolitan city. Most of the immigrants prefer coming to the metropolitan city, for its association with glory and power. They soon settle into certain areas, constituting their ethnic and cultural neighborhoods.

*In Pursuit of the English* was published in 1960, a time when “immigration by blacks from Britain’s colonies and former colonies was being restricted and the claims of these immigrants to British citizenship increasingly limited” (Yelin 4). Between the arrival of the narrator of *In Pursuit of the English* in London in 1949 and the publication of the novel in 1960 many changes took place in the situation of immigrants from ex-colonies. The mass migration of people of colour in 1948 from the West Indian nations in the Caribbean, and other ex-colonies to the metropolitan city was regarded as a temporary solution to fill the demand for skilled labour after WWII. Nevertheless, those workers faced racism and discrimination in housing and employment. Their otherness was used as a justification, as Louise Yelin asserts, for “increasing restrictions on immigration” (60). (I will touch on this point further in chapter two).

In *In Pursuit of the English*, Lessing explores the binary opposition between Englishness and otherness. Lessing's novel challenges the notion of Englishness, and reveals how the construction of that concept excludes from the arena of belonging all those whom are considered as the Other. The racial other has been constructed within the systems of representation of the metropolitan centre. In "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity," Stuart Hall reveals how Englishness as a kind of "ethnicity" is constructed in relation to its other:

To be English is to know yourself in relation to the French, to the hot blooded Mediterraneans, and to the passionate, traumatized Russian soul. You know that you are what everybody else on the globe is not. It has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can construct itself. It produces a very Manichaeian set of opposites. (174)

According to Hall, Englishness is a structured representation; however, it is a cultural one as well that is always binary. Nevertheless, Bhabha argues that national identity embraces difference; as he writes in *Nation and Narration*, "The "other" is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we think we speak most intimately and indigenously "between ourselves"" (4). This construction of Englishness against its other is explored in *In pursuit of the English*. The novel shows the ways in which the English think about themselves and about others.

Lessing tries to document the reaction towards the black newcomers in London, which would, McLeod asserts, "ultimately influence the violence of the late 1950s as in the Notting Hill riots" (78). For instance, one of the landladies in *In Pursuit of the English* informs the narrator

that “We’re not having blacks” (37). In fact, black people are assigned a position of otherness, which “suggests the ways in which definitions of the English are being pursued after the war through the vocabulary of race that has shifted its primary focus to new comers from New Commonwealth countries” (McLeod 79).

Shirley Budhos remarks that Lessing’s works demonstrate the division between colonizer and colonized. However, Budhos adds, “Lessing rarely explicitly incorporates the two worlds unless they collide in confrontations, in which the white settler must face or re-evaluate his behavior, slogans, or attitudes” (49). This can be illustrated by the following incident from *In pursuit of the English*; the narrator’s father writes, as a way of distinguishing themselves as white from the natives, about the “the influence of correctly washed and cooked vegetables on the character (civilized) of a white minority as against the character (uncivilized) of a black, indigenous, non-vegetable – washing majority” (20). So, the narrator’s father, as a white, identifies himself as civilized against the majority of the uncivilized black. This bring us back to Hall’s quotation that “Identity is always ... a structured representation that achieves its positive only through the narrow eye of the negative” (174).

Race and racism are not explicitly discussed in *In pursuit of the English*. According to Yelin, *In pursuit of the English* ignores “a history of race and immigration,” that is responsible for turning London into unsafe place for the New Commonwealth immigrants in 1948 (60). In fact, the events of the novel takes place in 1949-1950, a time when the violence and discrimination against the black people were not yet prominent and recognized. I would agree with McLeod, who states that the novel centrally focuses upon “issues of national identity and belonging, and offers reserved yet firm disapproval of the increasingly racialized rhetoric of postwar years” (75).

According to McLeod, Lessing, in writing about the transitory conditions of London in 1949-50, “charts the early stages of a chilling racializing maneuver in postwar narratives of national belongings” (79).

Martin Green writes that the most important features of English history after 1945 are the decline of English power, and the arrival of immigrants from ex-colonies (168) into England. This new immigration threatens the construction of Englishness, for the blacks in the metropolitan city are not “troops sent from the colonies to show their loyalty, but new citizens of England, or English ghettos, who represent a threat or a reproach. These are images which fill the English mind not with pride and a sense of power, but with unease and a sense of decline” (Green 5). As has been mentioned before, in the period that followed the WWII, the metropolitan space was changing due to the mass migration from ex-colonies. In *In pursuit of the English*, Lessing reveals how the marginalized groups, like immigrants, re-inhabit spaces, and, thus, transform the metropolitan space. Bhabha mentions that the presence of postcolonial peoples, who have been recipients of a colonial cultural experience, in England “changes the politics the metropolis, its cultural ideologies and its intellectual traditions...” (“The Third Space” 218). Thus, the new immigrants indirectly transform London by shifting the emphasis from the centre to the marginal and peripheral spaces. Lessing writes in *In pursuit of the English*: “These days, a reverse immigration is in progress. The horizon conquerors now set sail or take wing for England, which in this sense means London, determined to conquer it, but on their own terms” (9).

As has been mentioned before, the novel explores the binary opposition between Englishness and otherness through the narrator’s search for the real English. When the narrator,

Doris, arrives in England, her search for the real English begins. Nevertheless, at the beginning, her major concern was to find a place for her and her son to live in. The first place Doris stayed in was Bayswater Road. In a description of that place, Lessing writes that the building is:

Decaying, unpainted, enormous, ponderous, graceless. ... the sheer weight of the building oppressed me. The door looks as if it could never be opened. The hall is painted a dead uniform cream, that looks damp. ... Everything smells damp. The stairs are wide, deep, oppressive. The carpets are thick and shabby. Walking on them is frightening – no sound at all. ... heavy house ... silent, dead, dark cream colour. I feel suffocated. Out of the back windows ... The sky is pale and cold and unfriendly. (28)

The building is described in terms of dampness, suffocation, and enclosure. This building and other domestic spaces reflect the waning influence of the Empire. The bleakness of the city continues as Doris is searching for another place to dwell in. Doris encounters a city in a state of deterioration and decay; she demonstrates her distress with the city and its housing in the following paragraph, which in turn reflects the deteriorating economic situation after the WWII:

I went in searching ... with a grim and barbed gaiety. My by now highly developed instinct told me it would be useless. Besides, the interminable streets of tall, grey narrow houses that became half-affected with fog at a distance of a hundred yards, the pale faces peering up from basements past rubbish cans, the innumerable dim flights of stairs, rooms crowded with cushioned and buttoned furniture, railing too grimy to touch, dirty flights of steps – above all, an atmosphere of stale weariness; had worked on me in a way I did not understand myself. (34)

Everything is in a decaying and damp state, the houses are decaying, the streets are “narrow ... of short, low, damp houses, a uniform dull yellow in colour, each with a single grey step” (68). The narrator’s first impression of the city is just like that of Anna Morgan. The “real London” disappoints her; it turns out to be “an anticlimax” (McLeod75); a damaged city. When she arrives in England, she describes the city:

I arrived in England exhausted. The white cliffs of Dover depressed me. They were too small. The Isle of Dogs discouraged me. The Thames looked dirty. I had better confess at once that for the whole of the first year, London seemed to me a city of such appalling ugliness that I wanted to leave it. (28)

This scene articulates a vision of London as ugly and decaying, which has become a metaphor of post-imperial England. The physical environment is figurative, and as McLeod suggests, stands for the “possibility of confusion and transience” (79). Moreover, London emerges as a labyrinth; Doris says: “To my right and left stretched that street which seemed exactly like all the main streets in London, the same patterns of brick and plaster. It seemed to me impossible that the people walking past the decent little shops that were so alike ... could ever know one part of London from another” (41). For Doris, as an outsider and a foreigner, London appears as undistinguishable “maze,” which she must continuously predict. While she is searching for a flat, Doris finds that the flat is in a street which is not in her guidebook. Passers-by cause her more confusion; their directions seem to lead Doris to nowhere; they are directing her back and forth:

... each one saying helpfully, ‘It’s just around the corner,’ and looking impatient when I said: ‘Which corner?’ This business of the next corner is confusing to aliens, who will interpret it as the next intersection of the street. But to the Londoner, with his highly

subjective attitude to geography, the ‘corner’ will mean, perhaps, a famous pub, or an old street whose importance dwarfs all the intervening streets out of existence, or perhaps the turning he takes every morning on his way to work. (34)

London with its landscape and buildings creates in Doris a feeling of isolation, frustration, and threat. For Doris, the narrator, England had been “a grail” (9). Before coming to the city, Doris dreamt of England as a way of consoling herself against the boredom she was suffering; she asserts: “I was bored to death, consoled myself by dreaming about England which I knew by now would not actually begin until the moment I set foot on its golden soil” (20). Yet, her experience reverses the conventional expectation of the city. The contrast between what she hoped for and the reality she is facing is really hard. Doris says, “We could not face seeing our fantasies about what we hoped to find diminished to what we knew we would have to take” (34). The “golden soil” proved to be a “mirage;” it is just a decaying landscape. London is a “terrible, frightening city” (94), and the distress of London, McLeod remarks, “renders its reassuring solidarity as precarious, fragile, dangerous” (76). McLeod suggests that the narrator’s “disconcerted state of mind is expressed ... as a vertiginous sense of weightlessness” (76).

Lessing writes in *In pursuit of the English*:

Sometimes I put my ear to the wall and heard how, as the trains went past and the buses rocked their weight along the street, shock after shock came up through brick and plaster, so that the solid wall had the fluidity of dancing atoms, and I felt the house, the street, the pavement, and all the miles and miles of houses and streets as a pattern of magical balances, a weightless structure, as if this city hung on water, or on sound. (78)

In fact, what McLeod tries to assert in this passage is that Doris's shocked reaction to the city restates its reassuring solidarity as fragile and precarious (76). In her article "*In Pursuit of the English: Hybridity and the Local in Doris Lessing's First Urban Text*," Christine W. Sizemore writes that Lessing comes to England in pursuit of two grails; "England" and "the working class." It is not my purpose to explore the second "grail;" however, I have touched briefly upon this topic. My emphasis is on the first grail, "England." I aim to examine how Lessing tries to reinterpret the metropolitan city and her position in it through colonial lenses.

Rather than the centre of the metropolitan city, the local district of Notting Hill has become the centre of the narrator's, or Lessing's, search. While moving through Notting Hill, Lessing, Sizemore points out, "brings her experience of Africa into her observations of her new space and uses that hybrid ... vision to map the neighbourhood and create a snapshot of a culture of London in the 1940s and 1950s" (133). Sizemore quotes James Clifford, who underscores that in order to understand the overlapping of the local and postcolonial, one should refer to the experience of "migration, immigration and diaspora" (134).

As has been mentioned before, the novel is a semi-autobiography in which Lessing documents her arrival in London from Rhodesia in 1949. Accordingly, Lessing, through her narrator, tries to reflect on the local through her postcolonial lens. Bhabha argues that "those who have suffered the sentence of history – subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement ... social marginality" can conceive a "strategy of empowerment and articulation" (56). According to Sizemore, who bases her argument on Bhabha's, the narrator, or Lessing herself, while looking at London with her diasporic African eyes as she associates details of the setting of London to that of the African Landscape, "learns new strategies of empowerment from the socially

marginalized women of her neighborhood. She thus can map a hybrid ... vision of the city by immersing herself in the local, but retaining her postcolonial standpoint” (134).

Doris finds a place in “a multilevel boarding house” owned by a married eccentric couple, Flo and Dan. The narrator rents a room in their house, which is “crammed to the roof with people who worked with their hands” (7). For Doris, the boarding house has become central for her search for the English and the working-class. Nevertheless, these workers don’t represent “the real working-class. They are the lumpen proletariat, tainted by petty bourgeois ideology” (7). In fact, “The entire working-class of Britain has become tainted by capitalism ...” (8). For instance, Dan is buying bomb-damaged houses, renovating them, and renting them out. He is exploiting the situation and employing capitalism to achieve profit. The economic situation after the WWII led people to compete with each other. The economic situation and the struggle to cope with it lead people to be “mostly hostile” (*In Pursuit of the English* 94). This struggle results in a sense of isolation and alienation expressed by the tenants of the boarding-house, where Doris lives. Raymond Williams relates the sense of isolation to “the kinds of social competition and alienation” that the capitalist system promotes (295).

The house is described by Yelin as “a microcosm of the nation” (63). According to Yelin, the macro scene of a nation is reflected on a micro level represented by this boarding house.

Budhos remarks:

...the narrator employs the metaphor of the rooming house containing people from all parts of the world as the English nation. In this lower class rooming house, each person or family is separate, inviolate, determined to maintain privacy though members are linked by proximity, class, work, and poverty. The narrator ... is constantly reminded by the cast

of characters that she is an “outsider” because she is a “foreigner” and a writer and that she must be treated with suspicion, deference, and respect since she is not a “worker” in their sense of the word. (54)

According to Budhos, Lessing’s use of “the metaphor of the rooming house” could be considered as a “symbol of fragmentation,” where the tenants are unable to make real emotional contact with each other (56). According to Budhos, Doris is treated with suspicion by the inhabitants of the house due to her status as a foreigner and a writer, and “is not a “worker” in their sense of the word.” As the Other, Doris “is given the smallest, most uncomfortable room at the top of the house, a metaphor for the threatened minority she represents in English society” (Budhos 54). Nevertheless, being a writer enables her to have a writer’s critical judgment of the people around her in the boarding house, who have become the major focus of her search.

After almost a year living in the boarding house, Doris comes to realize that she is still considered an outsider to the place and people around her; she feels “alien” to other Londoners. While walking home with Rose, who lives in a room next to Doris’s room and becomes her friend, Doris is aware of the deprivation and misery around her. She contemplates:

... miles and miles of such streets, marked only . . . by the degree to which bricks and stones had been stained and weathered – square miles full of deprived people. I felt alien to Rose, and as if it were dishonest to be here at all. I understood that I was dishonest because I had brought the colonial attitude to class with me. That it does not exist. I had not thought of Rose as working-class but as foreign to me. (67)

It has been difficult for Doris to feel part of the place; till the end of the novel, a year after her arrival in London, she “still had not learned to like London” (218). Doris’s situation is expressed

by David Seamon, who suggests, “to become an insider means to reduce one’s isolation from place by developing a constellation of experiential ties: a knowledge of how to orient, a feeling for the hidden dimensions of particular places, an understanding of people and events” (89) Rose accuses Doris of ignorance and being naïve and unaware of everything: “It wasn’t that you fancied yourself, it wasn’t that, but you were just plain ignorant about everything. You didn’t know nothing about anything, and you didn’t even know you were ignorant” (67). Doris confesses that she has been judging things from her colonial perspective, and that she needs to readjust her understanding of class. Race and class have collided in this novel. In colonial Africa, it is said that among the white colonials there is “no class difference.” Now, as Sizemore asserts, “Doris has to observe and adapt her hybrid gaze to analyze ethnicity, class and nationality in a new setting” (137).

In *In Pursuit of the English*, the London setting and African images overlap. McLeod argues that the comparison the narrator adopts between the two settings endorses “the inseparability of the imperial centre and its periphery. What is “foreign” can manifest itself at the heart of the Empire, in London” (80-81). For instance, Doris compares the room in the boardinghouse to an anthill: “Under the roof it was like sitting on the top of an anthill, a tall sharp peak of baked earth, that seems abandoned, but which sounds, when one puts one’s ear to it, with a continuous vibrant humming” (77). While walking with Rose through an area of depressing “debris,” suddenly, in the middle of this waste and “desolation,” Lessing “heard a sound which reminded me of a cricket chirping with quiet persistence from sun-warmed grasses in the veld” (47). Ironically, the sound that brings an image of home to her mind is just a sound coming from a typewriter:

It was a typewriter; and peering over a bricky gulf I saw a man in his shirt-sleeves, which were held neatly above the elbow by expanding bands, sitting on a tidy pile of rubble, the typewriter on a broken girder, clean white paper fluttering from the rim of the machine (47).

McLeod contends that despite “the ruins . . . creativity might be possible: something as yet indefinable remains to be written” (80). According to McLeod, “The debris which contributed to Lessing’s . . . initial disappointment with postwar London as dismal and ugly is transfigured in this passage into an optimistic symbol of creativity and opportunity” (80). However, it is unclear whether this scene symbolizes a better opportunity for the writer herself or the other majority of the newcomers, whose life later would be characterized by racism, violence, and rejection.

Lessing exposes the false myth of Englishness, questioning the limitations of this concept. Peter J. Kalliney remarks that by commenting on the idea of Englishness, Lessing is trying to “demystify British hegemony” (146). In fact, the concept of Englishness is hard to identify. Doris ironically comments on the confusion associated with this concept:

In the colonies, people . . . are English when they are sorry they ever emigrated in the first place; when they are glad they emigrated but consider their roots are in England; when they are thoroughly assimilated into the local scene and would hate ever to set foot in England again; and even when they are born colonial but have an English grandparent. This definition is sentimental and touching. When used by people not English, it is accusatory. (8)

This ambivalence regarding the term “English” is also expressed in Doris’s parents’ attitude towards their Englishness; they

were English because they yearned for England again, but knew they could never live in it again because of its conservatism, narrowness and tradition. They hated Rhodesia because of its newness, lack of tradition, of culture. They were English, also, because they were middle-class in a community mostly working-class. (8)

Ann Blake remarks, “Southern Rhodesian settlers introduced Lessing to a version of Englishness, and her experience about England is shaped by this experience” (118). In *In Pursuit of the English*, Lessing comments, “... while the word English is tricky and elusive enough in England, this is nothing to the variety of meanings it might bear in a Colony, self-governing or otherwise” (2).

Although the emphasis in the rhetoric of the politicians is that England should remain a white nation, nevertheless, white immigrant or settlers from ex-colonies are considered as the Other as well. In Lessing's novel, Englishness is not only identified by whiteness, but by certain places like the countryside. For instance, Rose refers to herself as Londoner to distinguish herself from the English: “I wouldn’t say I was English as much as a Londoner, see? It’s different” (64). Rose explains: “I’m from London ... That’s what I mean when I say I’m not English. Not really. When I talk of English, what I mean is, my granddad and my grandma. That’s English. The country” (106). This passage reveals that Rose advocates the legend that real English people live in the country. According to McLeod, Rose is a “central figure in Lessing’s attempt to interrogate exclusionary definitions of the English” (77).

For Rose, Flo, the landlady, is not English, for her Italian blood complicates her claim to Englishness; she has an Italian grandmother. Rose justifies Flo’s eccentricity by saying that

she doesn't know the English standards of behavior: "It's because she's a foreigner" (56). Flo's husband is not English, for he doesn't speak English probably; he is from Newcastle. In a conversation with Doris, Rose gives an account of each other's claim to Englishness. She explains:

... 'And not everyone's like Flo – I don't want you to be thinking that.' She added guiltily – 'It's because she's foreigners, it's not her fault.'

'What kind of a foreigner?'

'I'm not saying anything against her; don't think it. She's English really. She was born here. But her grandmother was Italian, see? She comes from a restaurant family. So she behaves different. And then the trouble is, Dan, isn't a good influence – not that I'm saying a word against him.'

'Isn't he English?'

'Not really, he's from Newcastle. They're different from us, up in places like that. Oh no, he's not English, not properly speaking.' (56)

Ironically, Doris's comment that "[she] still had not met the English," (30) reflects her inability to identify the English amongst the diversity of London. So, in coming to London in pursuit of the English, the narrator expects to meet the "English," but it seems that she has come to the "wrong place," as McLeod mentions.

*In Pursuit of the English* reflects a sense of loss and change. Part of that sense is due to the influx of immigrants from the West Indies to London, which changes the metropolitan space. According to McLeod, in the metropolitan space, "differences are tolerated to a degree, but not eradicated" (78). The new immigrants take over different jobs. They threaten the security of the white workers like Wally James. Wally James is a white foreman, who has come with his

workers to repair Doris's war-damaged room. He announces his dissatisfaction with and resentment against "these blacks coming in, taking the bread out of our mouths" (212).

Another character who is disappointed by the current state of England, is the ex-colonial Colonel Bartowers. He is struggling to create a sense of himself and his country. For him, England is no longer the old country. Colonel Bartowers was in Southern Rhodesia for ten years. He mourns nostalgically the loss of old England and Englishness, which he relates as "part of the history of the Empire" (72). In fact, Englishness is the product of an imperial history. With the fading of the Empire, the notion of Englishness also becomes ambiguous and identifiable. Colonel Bartowers was thinking of renting his house, and Doris was a potential tenant, but then, he changed his mind, explaining: "It's an idea that came into my head last week. But I suppose I'll have to end my days here. In the old country. The trouble is, it isn't the old country any longer. I used to be proud to call myself English. I'm damned if I am these days" (74). Colonel Bartowers laments the changes happen to his old country, and the loss of his identity. With fading glory of the British Empire, the colonel's identity is lost. The Colonel's identity is the production of imperial and colonial history in Africa that is based on exploitation of the black natives, in his reference to as "taking potshots at the nigs as they came to the river for water" (73).

With the sense of loss and alienation expressed in *In Pursuit of the English*, women try to negotiate their situation and the strangeness of the streets to cope with their everyday needs. Budhos argues that Lessing shows the "self-protective social apparatus city dwellers employ" as "survival tactics which are foreign and shocking but nevertheless necessary" (55). Although Rose has lived all her life in London, nevertheless, her London forms just "the half-mile of streets where she had been born and brought up, populated by people she trusted; the house

where she now lived, surrounded by *them* – mostly hostile people; and the West End” (94). And “Inside this terrible, frightening city, Rose had created for herself a sort of tunnel, shored against danger by habit, known buildings, and trusted people” (94). As Doris and Rose walk through an area, where Rose was born and grew up, Doris becomes disoriented and confused, but Rose is “moving along the street without seeing it, her feet quick and practiced on the pavement” (47). Seaman remarks that Rose, as insider, moves “easily and fluidly in her place” (91). As insider, Rose maintains a familiar and delightful relationship with her place. Nevertheless, Rose might be an outsider to other parts of the city. For instance, Rose has never been on the other side of the river Thames, and when Doris asks her to go with her there in a bus trip, she refuses, explaining: “I don’t think I’d like those parts, not really. ... But you go and tell me about it after” (94). The Thames is one of the iconic places in the metropolitan city; however, what is central has become peripheral to Rose. While for Flo, the landlady, “London did not even include the West End, since she had left the restaurant in Holborn. It was the basement she lived in; the shops she was registered at; and the cinema five minutes’ walk away. She had never been inside a picture gallery, a theatre or a concert hall” (94). Both Rose and Flo try to avoid the “frightening city” by remaining in their area of Noting Hill, navigating to the other parts of London through using certain routes and passages. Rose educates Doris about her strategy of sticking herself in one place, and then, going outside that place to other parts using specific pathways. Sizemore remarks that once Doris learns the area and pathways of Rose and Flo, she is ready to go further into other areas of the city that she had once thought ugly and frightening. Now she is able to travel into the metropolitan centre without feeling overwhelmed by it. (2008 139) Miss Privet, a prostitute from the Midland, who comes to live in the same boarding-house Doris lives in, introduces Doris to a different view of the city, which she does not see as ugly and grey. Miss

Privet, Seamon argues, “provides an introduction to place founded not in immersion and invisibility but rather in empathy and a growing appreciation of place” (96). Miss Privet tells Doris that she has “to learn to look” (218) to have an “appreciation of place.” Miss Privet takes Doris to one of the iconic places in the city, Trafalgar Square:

It was a wet evening, with a soft glistening light falling through a low golden sky. Dusk was gathering along walls, behind pillars and balustrades. The starlings squealed overhead. The buildings along Pall Mall seemed to float, reflecting soft blues and greens on to a wet and shining pavement. The fat buses, their scarlet softened, their hardness dissolved in mist, came rolling gently along beneath us. . . . It was a city of light I stood in, a city of bright phantoms. (218)

Though the vision is momentary, Doris, for the first time, experiences the city differently; a city of bright lights and attractions. Sizemore suggests that the transitory vision counteracts Doris’s first impression of London’s ugliness and her dislike of London. For a brief moment Doris learns here to see the beauty of the central city and to lose any fear of it. I would agree with Seaman, who argues that however intimate Doris, an outsider and an other, becomes with the place, she can never become a complete insider because her “past permeates and colours the present place” (97). Moreover, Lessing asserts in *In Pursuit of the English* that “all foreigners” are subject to the feeling “that we shall ever be aliens in an alien land” (6).

By the end of the novel, Doris leaves the boarding house, finding another place. In her last conversation with Doris, Rose asserts, ““We should all be kind to each other. If we was all kind to each other all over the world it would be different,” she adds, ‘A likely story’” (228). Nevertheless, this “likely story” remains a fictitious story, for the real story or the reality is characterized by the scripts of racism, especially in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, in which race had

become prominent. *In Pursuit of the English* represents a shift from the notion of Englishness as a cultural category towards a political one. In fact, *In Pursuit of English* could be seen as the dividing line between two eras; a period, when racism had not been yet recognized, and a new era, dated by the arrival of the new comers from the ex-colonies. Racism, which is indirectly discussed here, will reach a violent stage in the coming decades, as seen in outrageous and racist riots. The next chapter will take the discussion about racism and the concept of otherness a step further to reflect upon the conditions that have surrounded the Black people as represented by Buchi Emechta's and Joan Riley's novels.

## Notes

1. Veronica Marie Gregg defines the Creole as “a descendant of European settlers born or living for an extended period in the West Indies or Central or South America” (ix). In her article “Mirrors and Masks: Colonial Motifs in the Novels of Jean Rhys,” Helen Tiffin refers to the white Creole “as a double outsider, condemned to self-consciousness, homelessness, a sense of inescapable difference and even deformity in the two societies by whose judgments she always condemns herself. "White nigger" to the Europeans and "white cockroach" to the Blacks, she sees herself as a gauche, immature distortion of the Europeans on the one hand, and a pale and terrified "deformed" reflection of her Black compatriots on the other” (328).
2. In a 1957 letter to Selma Vaz Dias, Rhys wrote that the novel’s “original title was ‘two tunes.’ That’s what I meant. Past and Present” (Letters 149).
3. The ending of the original version shows Anna dying from the abortion she has endured. When Rhys submitted the novel to the publishers, they did not approve of ending the novel with Anna’s death. They asked Rhys to change and rewrite the ending.

## Chapter Two: “Sorry No Coloured”

This chapter focuses on the novels of Buchi Emecheta and Joan Riley, who depict young black women seeking the promise of a better life in London. They are caught in a confusion of conflicting realities. Though Emecheta and Riley are from two different regions, Africa and the West Indies, they share the same experiences of oppression, exploitation, racism, and sexism. Their novels reflect the hostility of British society towards new black immigrants in the years that followed the world war. In their narratives, Emecheta and Riley try to accommodate the continuous struggles of those considered as outsiders facing displacement and resettlement in a new environment. They open a space for black women outside confining and restrictive social and cultural structures, unveiling the oppressive power dynamics within specific communities. They expose the effects of English racism and poverty on the Black community during the 60s, 70s, and 80s of the twentieth century. Homi Bhabha argues that immigrant writers occupy a “Third Space” that “displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom” (“The Third Space” 211). Bhabha’s “Third Space” is described as going beyond the boundaries of the ideological and material practices of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Nevertheless, what these novels show is the persistence of binaries and oppositions.

The post WWII era witnessed an influx of people from ex-colonies to the metropolitan city. This mass immigration could be conceived as a kind of colonization in reverse, which resulted in racial and cultural conflicts. The imperial centre was occupied by the Other; a troubling presence. As I argue in this chapter, the space or position of the other is occupied by

the Blacks, with all the violent and savage visions associated with that position, and the fear of contamination by disruptive cultural otherness. Michelle M. Wright writes that Western mainstream depictions of the Blacks “cling to their fantasies of a primitive, homogeneous people who are “undeveloped” ... For the West, the image of the Black Other is as vibrant as ever” (28).

In 1948, 492 Jamaicans came ashore aboard the *Empire Windrush*, full of hope. The 1948 Nationality Act allowed the citizens of British colonies and former colonies to get United Kingdom citizenship (Fryer 374). To their disappointment, the newcomers were confronted with the racial discrimination and prejudice of the white British population, who disapproved of the blacks. Most of the Blacks found themselves settling for a lower job status than those they had enjoyed back home, unsuitable for their qualifications and experiences (Fryer 374). They found their own aspirations and ambitions had been crippled by their race. In 1967, E.R. Braithwaite described his status and presence in Britain as that of a second-class citizen:

In spite of my years of Residence in Britain, any service I might render the community in times of war or peace, any contribution I make or wish to make, or any feeling of identity I might entertain towards Britain and the British, I – like all other colored persons in Britain – am considered an ‘immigrant’. Although this term indicates that we have secured entry into Britain, it describes a continuing condition in which we have no real hope of ever enjoying the desired transition to full responsible citizenship. (qtd. in Fryer 382)

According to Braithwaite, the blacks, being immigrants, have never been allowed a full and real British citizenship; they have been relegated permanently to the status of second-class citizens.

Gilroy, from another perspective, merges the term “immigrant” with ‘black,’ asserting the

exclusion of Blacks from white British society: “[R]ace’ is bounded on all sides of the sea. The effect of this ideological operation is visible in the way that the word ‘immigrant’ became synonymous with the word ‘black’ during the 1970s” (46).

As a matter of fact, most of the problems facing the immigrants, especially the Blacks, come from the fact that their race has been othered and described as savage, inferior to the white people. According to Edward Said, the western discourses of colonialism have historically and ideologically stereotyped and constructed non-western people as other, relegating them to a position of displacement and marginalization. Elaborating on Said’s theory, Stuart Hall also asserts that not only have western discourses constructed the subject position of the blacks as a position of marginalization and inferiority, but have also led the Blacks also to internalize that positioning:

Not only, in Said’s Orientalist sense, were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as ‘other’. Every regime of representation is a regime of power formed as Foucault reminds us, by the fatal couplet, ‘power/knowledge’. But this kind of knowledge is internal, not external. It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that ‘knowledge’, not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, by the power of inner compulsion and con-formation to the norm. (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 226)

This discursive construction of the non- white people, especially the Blacks, as the Other leads eventually to racial exclusion. In *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*, Ania Loomba points out that “colour was the most important signifier of cultural and racial difference.” (95) Henry Louis

Gate, Jr., also emphasizes the biological groundings of racist discrimination, analyzing the forms and structures of racism in terms of biological differences; he argues that “[r]ace has become a trope of ultimate, irreducible difference between cultures” (5). The colour of skin and other physical features have become the basis on which such racial discrimination has been justified. Accordingly, the inferiority or superiority of people has been determined by inherited and biological differences (Lauren 44). By the virtue of their white skin, the British claim a dominant position. The concept of race refers not only to biological differences but also to cultural differences between Black and White British. The subject position of the Blacks has culturally been defined by their “race.” In 1981, Thatcher’s Nationality act asserted that British identity meant being white. On television, Margret Thatcher explained; “[White] [p]eople are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture” (qtd. in Fryer 397). What Thatcher really meant by “different culture” was different race, or even different colour. Thatcher regarded the presence of the Black in Britain as an invasion and a threat to the integrity, homogeneity, and purity of the British culture.

Emecheta’s and Riley’s novels are narratives about the experiences of Black subjects, especially women, who have launched a journey into a world pervaded with social and economic inequalities. They believe that by coming to London, they will be empowered and liberated from the stifling conditions of their own societies. The questions I will explore in this chapter are whether the position of black women as immigrants in the metropolitan city is really one of empowerment, and whether academic theories are really adequate, and take into consideration economic conditions and the historically imposed forms of oppression; racial, colonial, and sexual.

By placing their female characters in a Western context, Emecheta and Riley explore the clash of cultures from the outlook of black female immigrants. *Second-Class Citizen* and *Waiting in the Twilight* are cross-cultural comments about black women's experiences in two worlds; Africa or the West Indies and England. Both novels reveal female subjects who have engaged in a struggle to achieve their integrity in a hostile environment. These female characters struggle against different currents of oppression, which inflict their and their families' lives. In her article "White women listen," Hazel Carby reminds us of the triple forms of black women's oppression, she comments; "... black women are subject to the simultaneous oppression of patriarchy, class, and 'race' ... that render their position and experiences not only marginal but invisible" (390). Both Emecheta and Riley discuss the position of women in relation to these three forms of oppression.

Buchi Emecheta was born in Lagos; she immigrated to Britain in 1962 to join her husband, Sylvester Onwardi, who was a student in London, and from whom she later separated. In an interview with Marie Arlene Umeh, Emecheta points out that crossing the borders provides her with a double vision and a new perspective. Being in Britain sharpens her awareness, and opens her eyes to the forms of social injustices the Nigerian women exposed to. Emecheta states that: "It is when you're out of your country that you can see the faults in your society. It has been my being in Europe that has made me see the disadvantages some Nigerian women are subjected to" (1981 178). Emecheta comments as well that "Some Nigerian women are enslaved and don't realize it. When I was growing up in Nigeria and betrothed at age fourteen, I didn't see anything wrong with it until I got to Europe. ... One has to be outside the country to realize their suffering" (178). Christina W. Sizemore also stresses the "liminal situation" of Emecheta,

“because from the perspective of England she sees problems of women within patriarchal Nigerian society but from the perspective of her homeland she sees the problems for Blacks within racist British culture” (1996 368). *Second Class Citizen* reflects that “liminal position,” for the novel portrays two worlds; the Nigerian society, where Adah spends her childhood, and part of her adulthood, and the British society, where she lives with her husband and children as immigrants.

*Second Class Citizen* exposes the intersection of many factors that black women faced; gender, racial, and class. The novel tells the story and experience of Adah, who is caught between two cultures. Being in that “liminal” position provides Adah with a space from which to contemplate and challenge the values of both societies in Nigeria and London. Even though the novel seems to be a personal comment on Adah’s struggle against the oppression of patriarchy, represented by the Ibo society and her husband, nevertheless, the novel gives an account of the conditions and difficulties encountered the Nigerian immigrants in Britain during the 60s of the twentieth century.

The first part of *Second-Class Citizen* concentrates on Adah’s childhood and part of her adulthood, and the conditions and difficulties surrounded her during that period -- the death of her father, her move to her uncle’s household, where she was treated as a slave, and her struggle to get an access to education. This early stage reflects Adah’s early struggle against marginalization, represented by the overdetermined roles assigned to girls in her society. Then, the novel moves from Nigeria to England, to where Adah travels to join her husband, who is studying accounting there. Coming to England has been the dream of Adah’s life; “Going to the United Kingdom must surely be like paying God a visit. The United Kingdom, then, must be like

heaven” (2). This impression that the UK is as “heaven” has been deeply rooted in her mind since her childhood. Her father speaks about the United Kingdom “as if he were speaking of God’s Holiest of Holies” (2).

Adah marries Francis, partly because she is a woman of ambition. She realizes early that in a society like hers, she has a limited choice. There is little to accomplish as a single person outside the institution of marriage. Adah’s marriage is a means to achieve her dream, for without Francis, she confesses that “she had never really had anything of her own before” (37). Later, she encourages her husband to immigrate to London, to escape from the oppression of patriarchy of her Nigerian society, and the grip of her husband’s parents. Adah thinks that by liberating her husband from society and family traditions, his views about woman and her position in society will be changed.

When she is on the deck of “*Oriel*,” Adah is caught up for a moment in the “sorrow at the thought of leaving the land of her birth,” (30) but her mood changes quickly. Her sorrow is replaced with a vision about what the future will be. She knows that her life now is taking a new turn. “Being there, in the first-class section,” among the “wives of diplomats and top white civil servants going home on leave,” gives “her a taste of what was to come” (31). Nevertheless, the move to Britain has disoriented Adah. She feels that constructing a new home in the West is not just about adjusting to the life in the metropolis, but also about acquiring agency and how to negotiate between values which are highly incompatible. Her first experience of the city of London is disappointing. From the first moments her feet land in Liverpool, Adah comes to realize that the real England is different from the “land of her dream” (23). The realities of the life in England have quickly diminished the image of a perfect heaven. The white people she

sees “looked remote, happy in an aloof way, but determined to keep their distance” (34). In the chapter entitled “A Cold Welcome,” the cold and unpleasant physical reality of the city reflects the kind of welcome that the city gives to Adah; “Liverpool was grey, smoky and looked uninhabited by humans. ... In fact, the architectural designs were the same. But if, as people said, there was plenty of money in England, why then did the natives give their visitors this poor, cold welcome? ...” (33). However, her aspirations about the future overcomes her disappointment, comforting herself by asserting that

[h]er children must have an English education and, for that reason, she was prepared to bear the coldest welcome, even if it came from the land of her dreams. She was a little disappointed, but she told herself not to worry. If people like lawyer Nweze and others could survive it, so could she. (33)

Then, Adah is reassured by the sight of the snow during her journey from Liverpool to London; “For the first time Adah saw real snow. It all looked so beautiful after the greyness of Liverpool. It was as if there were beautiful white clouds on the ground. She saw the factory where ovaltine was red against the snowy background, lightened her spirit. She was in England at last” (34). Lawrence Philips points out that Adah is comforted by that sight because of “its familiar imperial association” (126). Yet the beauty of the snow only conceals the underlying animosity of London itself.

When Francis comes to meet Adah and his children, Adah senses that “[t]here was something very, very different about him” (33). It is not that kind of difference that Adah is longing for; she says to herself that Francis “was free at last from his parents, he was free to do what he liked, and not even hundreds of Adahs were going to curtail that freedom” (36-7).

While in London, Adah finds out that her husband is unaltered. He is “not one of those men who would adapt to new demands with ease ... his ideas about women were still the same. To him, a woman was a second class human” (175). On the contrary, he has become worse than before; he beats her regularly and keeps her crippled by a succession of pregnancies, dragging her down towards the bottom of the social order. What Adah could not perceive at this early stage is that Francis’s degeneration is due to the sudden alienation and break from his home community, and the absence of social restrictions. Being in unfamiliar city away from his parents and the social restrictions, Francis has developed a sense of disorder and self-disintegration. Philips argues that it is Francis’s parents who bring about his despotism, sexism, violence, and “low self-esteem” (126). As a matter of fact, Francis’s deterioration is simply the consequence of not being able to “cope with the over demanding society he found himself in” (*SCC* 104), or as Omar Sougou states, Francis “typifies the kind of people who find themselves suspended between two cultures without being able to adopt a suitable stance” (43).

Nevertheless, what shocks Adah most is the kind of accommodation Francis has prepared for them. When the other Nigerian people come to welcome her that evening, Adah rejects the idea of living and sharing “the house with such Nigerians who called her madam at home; some of them were of the same educational background as her paid servants. She knew she had a terrible childhood, but still in Nigeria, class distinctions were beginning to be established” (36). Her reaction discloses, as Sougou suggests, her own prejudices and middle class assumptions.

However much Adah insists upon class mobility, Francis reminds her ironically that “the day you land in England, you are a second-class citizen. So you can’t discriminate against your own people, because we are all second-class” (37). The description “second-class” has a great

psychological effect on Adah; “Francis had become so conditioned by this phrase that he was not only up to it but enjoying it, too” (38). In fact, Adah’s presence in London shakes her sense of security, and distorts her judgment of her people and culture, which could be the reason behind her rejection of both her people and own culture. What she dislikes about her people is their blind acceptance of the status of second-class citizen, to which they want Francis to drag his wife, forcing her to accept work in a t-shirt factory, and to have their children fostered out. Sougou discusses the oppressed position of the Nigerian woman in London, and how they “become so manipulated by their racist environment” (47). The oppression of women is complete when they cannot negotiate for their position. In this context, Emecheta writes in *Second-Class Citizen*:

As soon as a Nigerian housewife in England realized that she was expecting a child [...] she would advertise for a foster-mother. No one cared whether a woman was suitable or not, no one wanted to know whether the house was clean or not; all they wanted to be sure of was that the foster mother was white. The concept of whiteness could cover a multitude of sins. (44)

It is this “concept of whiteness,” which is emphasized in the novel, especially in relation to black men. As an example of those black men, who are associated with that concept of “whiteness,” is Mr. Noble. Mr. Noble is a prototype of those Nigerian men who came to England in the late forties of the twentieth century “in search of education, in search of eligibility” to go back and rule their country. England was “the only place to secure such eligibility” (81). In search of their great expectations, they failed and ended up being stranded in London; “The dream of becoming an aristocrat became a reality of being a black, a nobody, a second-class citizen” (83). We are

told by the narrator that most of these Nigerians, who left wives, many children jobs, and status, married white women to come to term with their marginalization; “may be it was the only way of boosting their egos, or was it a way of getting even with their colonial master? Any woman would do, as long as she was white” (83). This brings to mind Frantz Fanon’s psychological analysis of the desire of the black man to sleep with a white woman. In his book *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon explains that part of this desire is the wish to be white, and the other part is their “thirst for revenge” (xvii).

That desire to be white and other inferiority complexes, which the black people show, are the results of their encounter with white British racial prejudice. For instance, Francis has internalized the fact that a black person cannot be a first-class citizen. Accordingly, the title of the novel becomes a literal description for the position bestowed on the blacks as immigrants. The low opinion of the black people has created a sense of inferiority within them, which excludes them to the margin. In the same above-mentioned book, Fanon examines how the black man has internalized the negative attitude and inferior status, which have been inflicted upon him by the White. The lack of compelling self-esteem usually leads to an extremely obsessional and painful feeling of exclusion (57). Francis’s response to his wife reflects his sense of inadequacy: “We are all blacks, all coloureds, and the only houses we can get are horrors like these” (35). Philips points out how Francis easily embraces the downward mobility and “anonymity” offered to him by the city (129). The inferiority complex can also be ascribed to socio-cultural and economic realities. To come to terms with his inferior status, Francis convinces himself that good accommodation and jobs are not accessible to the Blacks. He asserts to Adah that “in England the middle-class black is the one that is luckily enough to get the post of bus conductor” (37).

Francis's sense of inadequacy in Britain is also revealed in his lack of motivation to complete his studies, which results in his repeated failure at his exams. He

had come to such a situation that he had told himself subconsciously that he would never pass his examinations. He had as it were told himself that his ever becoming a Cost and Works accountant in this world was a dream. She did not know that for this reason he would do everything to make Adah a failure like himself. (158)

Moreover, Francis's condition reflects not only his low self-esteem, but also what is called the deformity of thought;

Even if Francis did qualify, he would never have the courage to bring [his wife] to a restaurant to eat, not in London anyway, because he firmly believed that such places were not for blacks. Adah knew that his blackness, his feeling of blackness, was firmly established in his mind. She knew that there was discrimination all over the place, but Francis's mind was a fertile ground in which such attitudes could grow and thrive. (57-8)

Francis's failure takes its toll on his relationship with Adah. Marie Umeh asserts that the pressures and strains, emerging from the Africans' contact with the Europeans put much stress on familial relationships (1981 63). Thus, the social and economic realities have contributed to the instability in their husband-wife relationship. Francis's failure makes him bitter; he abuses Adah and his children. Sue Thomas asserts that "The family becomes for Francis the final site on which he may redeem that masculinity, and on which his failures to do so become most intimately and destructively demeaning" (148). In fact, Francis fails to adjust himself to the new culture; as a compensation for his sense of social emasculation and his "low self-esteem," he

draws on Ibo patriarchal cultural practices to empower himself. He feels that his wife is changing, becoming less and less subjugated to his control; he thinks that it has been his mistake bringing his wife to London, remembering that “someone had warned him that the greatest mistake an African could make was to bring an educated girl to London and let her mix with middle-class Englishwomen. They soon know their rights” (64).

While sleeping with other women, Francis denies his wife access to birth control. Adah wants to use birth control, for she knows that they cannot afford having another baby. Moreover, her work is also interrupted by her pregnancies. Nevertheless, Francis insists that his wife should not use birth control. On the contrary, Francis selfishly shames Adah in front of all the neighbours and the landlord for getting a birth control device. This incident inspires Adah to think seriously about leaving her husband. She

told herself that she could not live with such a man. Now everybody knew that she was being knocked about ... Everybody now knew that the man she was working for and supporting was not only a fool, but that he was too much of a fool to know that he was acting foolishly. (155).

Adah’s desire to assert her will and personality widens the gap between her and Francis. Her insistence on getting a first-class job, and her refusal to succumb to the norms generally accepted by her people destabilizes the hierarchies of gender, and “stands in conflict with her husband’s male pride,” which is erased as the head of the family (Sougou 43). Francis finds nothing wrong in his behavior; on the contrary, his behavior is consistent with his culture, which Adah finds uncivilized. Adah reduces Francis to a stereotype by asserting his bestial and uncivilized nature. According to Philips, instead of suggesting that Francis’s deteriorating behavior is “the legacy of

colonialism, it is Nigerian culture that has made him so” (128). It is this attitude which disrupts the portrayal of racial prejudice in the novel, and leads some critics to accuse Emecheta of introducing racial stereotypes of Blacks. Lloyd Brown confirms that Emecheta’s portrayal of the African men “are often marred by generalizations that are too shrill and transparently over stated to be altogether convincing.” (qtd. in Umeh 1996 179). The African critic Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi criticizes Emecheta for feminizing African males, and endorsing racial stereotypes about them by suggesting through her protagonist: “if Francis were an Englishman, he would know how to treat his wife with love and respect” (SCC 179) (qtd. in Sizemore 1996 369).

Adah accepts blindly everything English as a whole; nevertheless, Phillips finds an ambivalence in Adah’s inclination to the lifestyle and culture of the West. He points out that “Adah desperately aspires to British upper-middle-class society and resents it when her racial difference becomes visible through loss of status” (129). This is stressed when Adah has been in the maternity ward. Adah, as Sougou suggests, while in “the cognitive process . . . , she visualizes the code of conduct in the foreign land and acquires insight into the way the system functions” (44). Adah believes that class status could curtail the inequalities of races, but her experience in Maternity ward leads Adah to believe that she will never be part of the English society. She feels as a stranger and a marginalized person, not only mentally but physically as well; “She was on a bed at the extreme end of the ward, next to the door” (114). There, Adah has fallen under a different effect; she judges her situation racially; “*Look at that nigger woman with no flowers, no cards, no visitors, except her husband who usually comes five minutes before the closing time, looking as if he hates it all. Look at her, she doesn’t have a nightdress of her own*” (124; italics original). In the chapter “Learning the Rules,” (114) contemplating her situation, Adah overwhelmed with a feeling of self-pity:

Why was it she could never be loved as an individual, the way the sleek woman was being loved, for what she was and not just because she could work and hand over her money like a docile child? [...] The whole world seemed so unequal, so unfair. Some people were created with all the good things ready-made for them, others were just created like mistakes. (120)

In fact, the realities of life in England open up new ways of seeing and judging things for Adah, not only her life with Francis, but also the realities of some white British people, who might be exploitative and deceitful as well. This is clear in her reaction towards her babysitter, Turdy, a white British woman, who carries a doubtful personal life. When she finds out that Turdy has been neglecting her children and sleeping with her husband:

Adah spat, foaming in the mouth just like the people of her tribe would have done.

Among her people, she could have killed Trudy, and other mothers would have stood solidly behind her. Now, she was not even given the joy of knocking senseless this fat, loose-fleshed woman with dyed hair and pussy-cat eyes. She belonged to the nation of people who had introduced 'law and order' ...

In England, she couldn't go to her neighbour and babble out troubles as she would have done in Lagos; she had learned not to talk about her unhappiness to those with whom she worked, for this was a society where nobody was interested in the problems of others. (72)

This passage shows that although Adah has rejected her culture as crippling and inappropriate, nevertheless, she draws on her cultural norms for empowerment and resistance, which means that some of her cultural conventions are still dominant and active.

Another shocking reality Adah confronts in Britain is racial discrimination, which could also explain her refusal to express affinity with her community. Although Adah believes that she elevates herself to the level of European culture, she is unable to escape her race. She wants to cross the boundaries between the Whites and Blacks, to be the same as any other White person, but she knows that her situation is false. Her encounter with the Whites brings to the surface the reality of her position; she is the Other. For instance, in her attempts to find a better house, the notices say; “Sorry no coloureds.” Accordingly, in London she begins to learn

that her colour was something she was supposed to be ashamed of. She was never aware of this at home in Nigeria, even when in the midst of whites. Those whites must have had a few lessons about colour before coming out to the tropics, because they never let drop from their mouths the fact that, in their countries, black was inferior. But now Adah was beginning to find out, so did not waste her time looking for accommodation in a clean, desirable neighborhood. She, who only a few months previously would have accepted nothing but the best, had by now been conditioned to expect inferior things. (57)

The scene, where a racist landlady in Hawley Street refuses to rent Adah and Francis the rooms she has advertised once she learns that they are Blacks, reflects a society which is not completely removed from the experiences of slavery and oppression, and where race is still a powerful force with which Adah and her husband have to deal. Adah and her husband are racially and culturally rejected and feared on the basis of those stereotypical images produced and circulated about the racial other. Their presence among the white British represents a threat to the western order and rationality.

From the beginning, the “gloomy clouds” of “disappointment and loneliness ... [were] fast descending upon [Adah and Francis]” (37). In England, they, as Blacks, come under the strain of dealing with the many aspects of racism, which eventually affect their marriage. However, it is clear that Adah is more capable than Francis of managing matters by being able to adjust to and immerse in the new culture. This is clear when she complains; “why was it that men took such a long time to change, to adapt, to reconcile themselves to new situations?” (SCC 125). This suggests that by adapting to the “new situations,” and embracing new cultural values, the Nigerian men would lose that powerful patriarchal status. Emecheta’s negative portrayal of the Nigerian community leads Ogunyemi to dismiss Emecheta’s novel to be a comment on the question of racism, stating that Emecheta is preoccupied by the question of the black women as a victim of black patriarchy (qtd. in Sizemore 369). Of this context, Emecheta comments that the main idea of her novel is the “conflict of culture.” Emecheta comments:

The man could wander off because he had been unmanned by the society. He did not have to work because he could drift along on the dole. Even when he wanted to work, he could not find any. Yet this was a man whose mother had brought up telling him that he was important and should never stop being a man. The book was written through a woman’s eyes, because it was heavily autobiographical. ... But what caused the problems of the couple in my book was not sexism but racism. ... it was this that exposed them to all kinds of humiliation, during which the spirit of the man died. The woman carried on. (qtd. In Sougou 53)

This passage reveals that what Emecheta wants to expose in her novel is the impact of racism on the life of Adah and her husband.<sup>1</sup> Adah tries to negotiate her own position and the possibilities of repositioning herself in a hostile environment. She feels confused about being part of the people around her. She is aware of her own incongruity with the British society. She loses the sense of community there in England as

England is a silent country; people are taught to bottle up their feelings and screw them tight, like the illicit gin her parents drank at home. If you made a mistake and uncorked the bottle, the gin would bubble out she had seen English men and women behave like humans once or twice, but why was it that they only behaved like humans when they were straggling out of the pubs on Saturday nights? (100)

Adah's alienation is intensified while in London; the Nigerian community restricts her by re-imposing the patriarchal values of the mother country, while the English society treats her as a second-class citizen because she is Black. Adah is caught between her Ibo culture and her social positioning in Britain, in neither of which she can feel at home. Her attempt to resituate herself in her new environment leads to a sense of disorientation, displacement, and confusion of directions, which in turn leads to a sense of insecurity and uncertainty about her position. Adah even questions whether she has done the right thing by coming to England. She

started to lose faith in herself. Had her dream of coming to the United Kingdom been the right after all, or was she simply an empty dreamer? ... Where had she gone wrong? She wished the Presence was still with her to give her a clue but it seemed to have deserted her when she landed in England. (54)

While reflecting on Christmas Eve, Adah draws a contrast between her country and England. She finds that “In England it was silent night, holy night. In Nigeria it was noisy night, holy may be, but fireworks night, the night of loud rejoicing, the night of palm-wine drinking in the streets, the night of bell-ringing” (141). Moreover, English society doesn’t provide her with the solace she needs, for “this was a society where nobody was interested in the problems of others” (66). In fact, Adah’s sense of alienation springs from the fact that in rejecting her own cultures and traditions, turning inside, she finds nothing to empower her. When Adah works at Finchley Library, Adah always feels an outsider, and the people there

made Adah out of place, so, she never really became too familiar with them. They made her feel inferior somehow, always talking of boyfriends and clothes. Adah would have liked to join in, for she was the same age, but she knew that if she opened her mouth she would sound bitter. She would have told them that marriage was not a bed of roses but a tunnel of thorns, fire and hot nails. Oh, yes, she would have told them all sorts of things. But why, she asked herself, must she spoil other people’s dream? So she preferred to listen and smile noncommittally. (42)

In spite of her feeling like an outsider, Adah likes “being a first-class citizen” (43). John McLeod argues that the portrayal of London in Emecheta’s novel is a combination of both concrete and imaginative projections in which “the communal affiliations glimpsed at Pussy Cat Mansions are imagined to facilitate a resistant subaltern space discovered beyond the exclusionary realms of class, race, and gender” (101). Nevertheless, that space is occupied by people who are a minority themselves in Britain. McLeod finds in the Chalk Farm Library an alternative to those spaces in which Adah’s second class position is constructed, specifically, her family home and shabby

neighborhood (101). That space is also described by Philips as the “epitome of positive middle-class liberalism within a supportive, multi-ethnic, multinational environment” (129).

It is there, Finchley Library, that Adah gains a sense of self-esteem through her friendship with Bill, a white Canadian, who introduces her to James Baldwin, an American black writer. Bill encourages her to be a writer herself. Through reading Baldwin she learns that “black was beautiful ... and she even started reading Marx” (161). Philips finds an irony in Adah’s being introduced to her heritage by a “white man from a former British colony” (129). However, both Adah and Bill are bound by their relationship towards the imperial city; both are children of the mother land, England.

For Adah, writing has become a way of articulating her oppression, providing her with a sense of control over her life. In a moment of hope and potential success, Adah begins to experience the city of London in a different way; evoking Africa:

But Adah was deep in thought as they crossed Haverstock Hill into Prince of Wales Road, pushing the pram with Vicky trotting by her side, the sun shining in the sky, the day hot and merry like any day in Africa. People were passing her this way and that, all in colourful, sleeveless summer dresses, one or two old people sitting on the benches by the side of the Crescent in front of the pub smiling, showing their stiff dentures, their crooked hats pulled down to shade their tired heads from the unusual sun. She walked into the Crescent where the smell of ripe tomatoes mingled with the odour from the butcher’s shop. But she saw none of this, her mind was turning over so fast. Could Peggy and Bill be right? Could she be a writer, a real one? Did she not feel totally fulfilled when she had completed the manuscript, just as if it was another baby she had had? (176)

This passage is important for understanding Adah's expectations about succeeding as a writer. Philips points out that Adah's evocation of Nigeria in the midst of her whole British surroundings might suggest that she is yearning for that success, which she enjoyed when she was in Nigeria (130). Writing has become for her an act of self-fulfillment. Writing a book is likened to the process of creating another baby. For Adah, writing "The Bride Price" has been "cathartic," providing a counter discourse to the self-annihilating of Francis as it is reflected in the following passage:

The story was over-romanticized. Adah had put everything that was lacking in her marriage into it. [...] In her happiness she had forgotten that Francis came from another culture, that he was not one of those men who would adapt to new demands with ease, that his ideas about women were the same. To him a woman was a second-class human being, to be slept at any time., even during the day, and, if she refused, to have sense beaten into her until she gave in; [...] to make sure she washed his clothes and got his meals ready at the right time. There was no need to have an intelligent conversation with his wife because, you see, she might start getting ideas. Adah knew she was a thorn in his flesh. [...] But all the time she kept hoping that his long stay in England would change him. Did they not come to England for further studies? Surely he would change somehow. Adah knew she was changing herself. What mattered was that she should not be bothered with unhappiness, because she wanted to radiate happiness to all around her. (175)

But unfortunately, like all her other attempts, this one is thwarted by Francis as well. At the beginning, he underestimates her ability at writing, calling her story “rubbish.” He asserts to her: “You keep forgetting that you are a woman and that you are black. The white man can barely tolerate us men, to say nothing of brainless females like you who could think of nothing except how to breast-feed her baby” (SCC 178). This passage exposes Francis’s prejudiced and sexist attitude towards women, especially “intelligent” women, whom he has reduced into “brainless” creatures. Then, in ultimate act of selfishness, and in an outrageous attempt of imposing his manhood, Francis burns the manuscript of Adah’s story; “The story that she was basing her dream of her becoming a writer upon” (181). To Adah, Francis’s act “was the last straw,” (181) which ultimately destroys any feelings she might have towards him, and leaves no choice for her but to depart from him.

Although Adah succeeds at the end of the novel in liberating herself from the strong hold of her husband, her future remains blurred and ambiguous. She has left Francis full of misery, leading “to freedom,” with nothing but a “box of rags,” four babies,” (SCC 182) meanwhile she is pregnant with the fifth. Adah has not achieved much headway. Instead, she has been left alone without any support. She has moved to “a two-room flat which she had to share with rats and cockroaches” (SCC 181). Abioseh M. Porter celebrates Adah’s independence, pointing out that Adah, at the end of the novel, “asserts that she is now ready to be in complete control of her own and her children’s lives” (271). It might be true that at the end of the novel, we are left with the feeling that Adah has overcome her victimization and exploitation, nevertheless, Adah is still not “in complete control” of her future, as it is seen through Adah’s old friend who suddenly appears as “fate” in the last scene of the novel, when Adah has left the court; “It was like fate intervening. It was like a story one might read in a true story magazine.

This old friend of Adah's paid for the taxi that took her home from Camden Town because he thought she was still with her husband" (*SCC* 186). This shows that Adah has not really succeeded in breaking away from her patriarchal social structure, which means that freedom is difficult to gain. Moreover, Adah has still to face the racism of British society.

Like Emecheta, Joan Riley is also concerned with issues of racism and patriarchy. Although her novel, *Waiting in the Twilight*, was written two decades after Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen*, it suggests similarities in the experiences of black women immigrants. Riley's novel focuses on the journey of a black woman from her place of origin, Jamaica, to London, and her marginalization there. Like Emecheta, Riley illustrates the economic hardship, racism, and the social pressures the immigrant faces as a Caribbean in London. But unlike Emecheta, Riley doesn't express the same challenge or make the same transformative resources available to her central character. I would agree with McLeod's suggestion that Riley's novel expresses a stronger sense of filiative relations than *The Second-Class Citizens* does, and this is represented by the protagonist's, Adella Johnson, friend, Lisa, who has supported Adella during the time of calamity. McLeod writes that "Riley is slightly but significantly more hopeful about the resourcefulness of filiative relationships in sustaining the fortunes of black women in London" (112). In her reading of McLeod's book, Nadia Ellis writes that McLeod's readings of the texts of postcolonial London "suggest harmony before dissonance, reveal the utopia in the wilderness, and search out affiliations in the midst of solitariness" (337). Nevertheless, I have found that McLeod's reading of Riley's novel doesn't suggest any kind of utopia or affiliation, on the contrary, he asserts that Riley's novel "offers a sobering account of postcolonial London in

which the hopes of the first postwar migrants to the city – of well-paid employment, jobs with prospects, decent accommodation – are taken away piece by piece” (112).

Riley was born in Jamaica in 1958, and migrated to England as a young woman, where she completed her undergraduate and graduate studies in Sussex and London universities, respectively. Her binary life opened her eyes to the reality of England and the English society she confronted. Her life there was in great contrast with the impressions and images she created in her mind, which she got from her colonial education. In her discussion with Ammer Hussein, Riley talks about how her being in London, and writing across that space, have affected her perception and experience. She says that “The variety which I find in London in particular is something which I think must of necessity colour my perception and I think it actually gives me a lot more depth in terms of my own writing” (19).

*Waiting in the Twilight* was published in 1987, and it exposes the falsity of the legend of multicultural England. The novel was written in a time of political events such as the riots of 1976, 1981, and 1985, and the election of Margret Thatcher’s Conservative Party (McLeod112). It was a time charged with an increasing fear and caution of the growing black presence in England, which was considered a threat to the white British society; a point of contrast with the previous chapter, where concerns about non-white races were applied to spaces outside the metropolitan city.

*Waiting in the Twilight* is a bleak story which deals with the harsh reality of black people in Britain. Because of their skin-colour, black people in Riley’s novel are destined to a life of racial discrimination and poor economic and social conditions, especially poor housing, and job positions. In her article; “Writing Reality in a Hostile Environment,” Riley, echoing Said’s

attitude, points out that “race” is not just a matter of biological meaning. It goes deep into the structure of society; it is a “manipulative form.” She writes in the same article that “Manipulation of public opinion, however politically and socially shaded, depersonalizes non-white peoples and creates acceptance of a set of truths which has nothing to do with race” (213). According to Riley, racial prejudices against recent non-white immigrants to Britain have been integrated into the existing social and cultural system. Black immigrants are marked not only by their skin-colour, but also by the disgrace of slavery and inferior colonial position. Afro-Caribbean immigrants are inherently locked into that position of being underclass (213).

If the Afro-Caribbean are defined according to the white expectations, then, and within that limited definition, women have “come out of nowhere.”<sup>1</sup> In the same above-mentioned article, Riley writes about the difficulty of writing about black women, for writing about the lives of those women who are considered as “losers,” has provoked the hostility of both sides; her black community and the white society. The pressure imposed by her black community restricts her “creative process” of writing. (214-15) McLeod compares Riley’s criticism of her community’s paralyzing effect on her creativity to the same tension expressed by Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen*, exemplified by the burning of Adah’s manuscript by her husband on the basis of “familial disapproval” (111).

On the other hand, hostility from white society towards writing about black women is twofold. It comes from white feminists, who see that issues of racism have been privileged over those of sexism. And also from the white people in general, “because the content of literature strikes too close to home. It not only points a finger at their unacknowledged and systematic discrimination; it also challenges their comfortable world-view” (215). This unacknowledged

issue of racism in London is discussed in depth by Riley in *Waiting in the Twilight*.

*Waiting in the Twilight* is about the painful experience of immigration as seen through the eyes of Adella. The narrative is structured around the life and death of Adella; her experience in both Jamaica and Britain. Nevertheless, her life in Jamaica is given through flashbacks. Adella's life is charged with different migrations and journeys. The first one was from her childhood town in Beaumont in Jamaica to Kingston, where she worked as a seamstress, then, from Kingston to London. Although my focus is Adella's life in London, her life in her town in Jamaica is important as well. Adella's predicament starts early in her home town, where she is deceived and gets pregnant in her first sexual encounter with Beresford, a local policeman who has already been married. She is socially disgraced and condemned by her misdeed. She loses all opportunities of earning a living when she becomes pregnant. She is a successful seamstress, but due to her bad reputation, she loses most of her customers, middle-class ladies, and she is thrown out of her cousin's home. She is forced to live in a poor area with other women "who had started out like her. Many of them had come up from the country full of dreams, had fallen to a man and every year another child would burden them. (WT 117) Adella is forced into the state of being a mistress; she is supported financially by Beresford as long as she continues to accommodate his sexual demands. This represents one of the turning points that plague Adella's life. Adella feels bitter at her people's hypocrisy, furious at Beresford who has still been living with his mother, still enjoying respect while she loses everything. (WT 114) She contemplates her life; how she has fallen to a man like Beresford, and how she has ended up in that kind of life. To escape from the trap she finds herself in, she has been dreaming about leaving to England, where she can find prosperity and a safer place:

She had heard of people going off to England, to the Motherland. Heard that country was so rich you could pick money off the street. But first she had to get there, had to find enough money to get away from Beresford and the desperate poverty of the women in her yard. (118)

Although Adella manages to escape her situation by marrying Stanton, and joining him in London after eighteenth months, leaving some children in Jamaica, her life in London is permeated with suffering, aggravated by race and gender. She finds out that London is not the land of her dreams.

The novel opens in London, where Adella, now 58 years old, is disabled by a stroke, and is working as a cleaner for the council. Her life in England becomes a series of traumas; her life there is marked by racial as well as sexual and economic oppression. Adella's difficulties in London are related to her marginal position as an immigrant in an alien environment, where she has lost that sense of belonging in her new world. In fact, this sense of alienation and isolation is inherent in her status as the Other. She comes to London in pursuit of a better life, but she finds herself in the margins of a hostile society, which is governed by racial discrimination. Adella shares the same sense of many migrants "of being misfits, of having no personal history within the host country" (*Leave to stay* 2). She is unable to "blend into the landscape," to claim London as "home," to have that sense of belonging to a society prevailed with "the fundamental belief that Britain should be white" (Grewal *et.al.* 10). This sense of un-belonging is symbolized by the failure of Adella's attempts to have and maintain a home in London.

The authors of *Charting the Journey: Writing by Black and Third World Women* point out that the word "home" bears its own contradiction, especially for black women. The authors

pose many questions in their discussion of the concept of home:

Where is “home” for starters? Can you call a country which has systematically colonized your countries of origin, one which refuses through a thorough racism in its institution, media and culture to even recognize your existence and your rights to that existence [...] can you call this country “home” without having your tongue inside your cheek?

(10)

In other words, can you call a country which has rejected you because of your skin colour a home? According to these writers, the word “home” remains ironic, and ambiguous, for it is related to the concepts of visibility and belonging. As long as the Blacks’ position is that of marginality and inferiority, then, their sense of belonging is thwarted by that position.

Carole Boyce Davies points out that black people’s, especially the Caribbean’s, experience in England has its origin in “British Colonialism [...] and the disruptions which followed their earlier involvement in the forced migration, indenturing and enslavement of African and Asian peoples” (97-8). According to Davis, the later migrations to Britain for political, economic and other reasons are all the consequences of those earlier displacements” (98). Accordingly, the Blacks are led by the Western superiority to believe in the legend of the motherland.

It is this legend about the motherland, “where the streets were paved with gold” (*WT* 2) that has disillusioned Adella and her husband about the kind of life in London. They have been inspired by that legend, hoping of making money and returning to Jamaica after two years (*WT* 153). All their dreams turn to ashes, when they come to see the real face of the motherland. This is the price they have paid for the exchange of their country for London. Isabel Carrera Saurez

writes that “the irony is the exchange of a homeland for a supposed ‘motherland’ in the hope of improving a life made difficult in great part by the exploitation of that ‘motherland’ itself, only to find the utter rejection and ill-will of the newly adopted country” (300). Adella unfortunately finds out at the end of her journey that her land is the real motherland; her life in Beaumont, as Susan Alice Fischer writes, “had been the one place filled with safety and light, as contrasted with the gloom of London” (109).

Like Emecheta, Riley also reveals the damaging and corrupting effect of the metropolitan city on the marital relationships. Both Adella and Stanton fall into the same gender power relations equation, which leads eventually to Adella’s being deserted by her husband. At the beginning, Stanton had been caring and supportive, had rescued Adella from the poor area and the miserable conditions under which she was living, but in London, their relationship suffers; “England did not agree with him” (*WT* 22). In fact, Stanton’s degeneration has many causes; “Stanton was bright, he had been a carpenter in Jamaica and it was only because there was no jobs like that for black men in England that he had to work on the buses” (*WT* 23). Stanton’s work for London Transport takes away his pride. He blames Adella for giving him only daughters though it is not her fault; she has managed to have two boys before meeting him (*WT* 29). The worst thing that affects their relations is Adella’s insisting on having a house of her own, and moving her family into a better place. This matter marks the beginning of the fights between Adella and her husband. It is difficult for a man coming from a highly patriarchal society like Stanton’s to allow his wife to have or acquire any kind of agency, even if that man is unqualified to fulfill his role as breadwinner. For years and months, Adella has worked overtime to save money to buy a house of her own. Although Stanton “earned much more than she, yet

what he gave her didn't even cover the food he ate" (14). Adella finds herself in a situation, where she is forced to be responsible for managing their financial matters, for her husband appears to be abusive and irresponsible:

There was Stanton giving her no money with the big house and new baby coming, not caring how the bank loan was paid back. He still spent his money on clothes and blues parties every weekend. He still went down to the drinking house with his friends in the evenings. Yet always he was there to criticize, blame her for things going wrong, demand that she produces a son. And always this thing about his name. 'Who cares what his name is anyway,' she thought sullenly. 'In dis country, we doan have no name to dem, we is all de same, de people dem doan like and didn't want to need.' (30)

Riley points out to the irony in this situation; "There was little doubt cast on the impartiality of men coming from rigidly patriarchal systems, full of macho stereotypes, yet having to cope with women forced to strength through economic and social necessity" (214). Like Francis in *The Second Class Citizen*, Stanton wants to enforce his control over Adella as a compensation for his wounded masculinity. He begins to "hit and pound her as if she was to blame for all the things gone wrong with him since he had come to England" (90). Riley writes that "Men faced oppression, and it was a woman's duty to be understanding" (214). Thus, Stanton's use of violence is part of his feeling of incompetence. Suarez points out that "blacks are constructed as the necessary "other" by white society, black women are left as the only available "other" to black men" (294). Being "the necessary "other,"" Adella has to comply with Stanton's frustration and violence.

*Waiting in The Twilight* offers only fragments of hope, especially for the black immigrant women. Adella's life is laden with suffering, anguish and loss. Suarez points out, "Riley's fiction ... concentrates on the representation of that fragmented self and the disruption of lives and hopes that the racist, post-colonial setting is responsible for" (298). Adella's life in London is marked by loneliness and stagnation. She tries to negotiate her identity in London, to gain access to the city's different spaces, but she is rejected on the basis of her racial difference. Adella's wish to have a house of her own in order to achieve self-integrity, to give meaning to her life, and to secure her children's future. Against Stanton's wishes, she insists on achieving that dream, for "[o]ne thing she had learnt since coming over was that the English looked down on foreigners. It was because of that, that she was determined to get on, to become a success. She was determined to build a better life for the children" (14). Although Adella succeeds in moving into a house of her own, the house proves to be a big failure. At the moment of fulfillment, defeat erupts; the house falls into such a state of destruction that it reflects the impossibility of achieving the integrity of the self, and thus the meaninglessness of Adella's life. The house is decaying, and is ultimately condemned by the local council, and Adella is moved by them to live in a council house.

Adella's hope and dream has been destroyed by finding out that the only house she can buy is a kind of "broken-down, half-dead place in the middle of a rotting street" (16). The house is located in Eldridge road in "that decaying part of Brixton" (14). There are too many houses for sale, which are "nice [...] well painted with neat gardens and pretty gates" (14), and cheaper than the one the real estate agent shows, but for black people, who are "sharply-polarized," and racially defined, the only houses available are those run-down houses. Their skin colour becomes

a barrier to buying a decent house. Seeing this house, Adella lapses into her memories about her father's house in Jamaica, which "was so light, so nice and cool inside. The lacy patterned brick that enclosed the red polished veranda was always white" (20).

Riley uses images of darkness and light to emphasize the contrast between Adella's life both in Jamaica and London. England is a grim place; Adella's life in London is marked by gloomy images, and this is clear in the description of the house, which is dark and uninviting. Adella's experience in England is coloured with memories of happier times in Jamaica; "Sometimes she would think bitterly of warm Caribbean sun, bus rides to the beach and the money she had earned in Kingston. To think she had left all that, for this. All her young life spent struggling to raise her children, all her old without respect" (2).

Part of Adella's suffering in London is due to her obligations of "filial duty" to both her family and community. She is caught between filial obligation that cannot provide her with love and protection, and the outside system, which turns against her in a cruel way. Women are cast in certain roles, as wives and mothers, defined for them by their society. Adella lets herself to be defined by her society to the extent that it affects her perception of herself, and this is reflected in her "consciousness of respect." All her life, she has yearned for the respect her elders enjoyed back in Jamaica. She compares her life in Britain with that of Mada Beck, who died with dignity, and "All dat respect" (8). Adella's feelings of shame afflict her life; she is the victim of a society which allows men to do whatever they want, and blames women for any deviation from the norms. Instead of blaming her husband for leaving her with five children, Adella knows that "it was her they would talk about in the market" (11). Her feelings of shame at being condemned by her society when she became pregnant, her shame later at her two

daughters, who become pregnant, repeating their mother's history, and her shame at Stanton's abandoning her for her cousin, have great influence on her consciousness. She regards herself as a failure; even when Stanton deserts her, she cannot blame him, and she tries to justify his behavior; "But five children and a crippled woman and him still young and sharp" (11).

Unlike Adah, Adella is forced to leave her country; run away from her past, but according to Riley that one "can't really run away from past; your past, you carry who you are within you" (qtd. in Hussein 17). Adella wants to "come to England where the white people lived. Now she was here, had found out too late that it was only in the islands that respect for the old existed" (3). Adella's suffering in London is due to past trauma as well, whose psychological damage is still real to her. The feeling of shame will never allow her to return to her village. Adella's problem is that she knows that she cannot return to the Caribbean; her home in Jamaica becomes a "place of mind." Migration has taken its toll on Adella's life, and has reduced her life so much that at the end, she is confined to her council house:

She was always lonely now, cut off from the life outside. The sights and smells, the milling people and the market. it didn't matter how many people came to visit her, how long they stayed and how much gossip they passed on; she was still locked in her room, her tiny world ... Now she had nothing, and her bones were too old, her back too painful to enjoy her life again. (142)

Adella's experience in London is rooted in a sense of disillusionment and un-belonging. Since she has become sick, all she has been doing is just filling the hours with past memories. And all these memories leave her bitter, "weighed down with the feeling that she had wasted her life" (WT 140). She finds herself caught between two worlds; one she left behind, and a new

one, in which she has become culturally and racially the Other. Adella lives between cultures and worlds, trying to adjust to a life of “in-between.”

Riley, in her introduction to *Leave to Stay: Stories of Exile and Belonging* (1996), writes that “the experience of being a migrant was not an easy one. It was an isolation, being cut off from the most basic aspects of cultural norms” (2). Adella is excluded from the economic and social systems of the city, finding herself stuck in a trap from which there is no escape. All her life, Adella struggles to survive in that hostile environment, and “public spaces become the site of this conflict, and her “difference” determines her access to them” (Fischer 110). Even her home, which is supposed to be a safe and secured place, proves to be a threatening space, an extension of that hostile environment, where Adella suffers humiliation and abuse. The outside world doesn’t support her as she negotiates between the inside and outside. McLeod points out to the difference that both Adella and her husband have experienced in their relationships with the space in “postcolonial London.” Stanton’s enjoying his time outside the house is contrasted with Adella’s semi-paralyzed status:

It was bad enough with him out all the time, working late or out with his friends. All those hours after the children were asleep. All that time, just sitting in the half-dark, waiting for him to come back. It seemed to her that all she had done since coming to England was have his children, work, and in the evenings sit in a chair or lie in her bed, waiting for the furtive sounds that told her he was back. (30)

As this passage shows, Adella’s life in London proves to be just a duplication of her unhappy life with Beresford. McLeod argues that in Riley’s novel, “the possibility of change is almost thwarted by the representation of London as a place of repetition rather than a space of

transformation” (111). Instead of being a site of agency and change, the house becomes a confining place for Adella, and this is symbolized by Adella’s stroke and its disabling effects. In fact, Riley’s novel is charged with images of paralysis and death, which symbolize that any attempt at succeeding or adjusting in the new environment is doomed by failure.

Tragedy strikes for Adella when she has a stroke at the age of 34. This stroke leaves her partially paralyzed, and it is described “in terms that have particular resonance in Riley’s writing” (McLeod 114):

[Adella] came awake slowly, a muffling, suffocating weight choking down on her. It was everywhere. In her throat, pressing on her lids, crushing her. Her chest hurt from the effort to breathe, lungs laboring loud and gasping in her ears. Adella forced her hands to move, tearing her throat. Her mind screamed, clouding with fear and panic. . . . Feelings seemed to be leaving her body, leaking rapidly from the left-hand side. Her legs were like lead weights, resisting every attempt, every command to move, and the panic increased, causing the blood to pump loudly in her ears. She tried to calm her rapid breathing. (49)

Adella’s stroke, as McLeod states as well, is suggestive of Adella’s general experience of living in London (114). It causes her to lose her job as embroider. Fischer writes that Adella’s disability “underscores her displacement and her difficulty in negotiating London” (12). Because of Adella’s crippled state, and against her will, she is forced to work as a cleaner in one of the offices in the city:

The company was a big one in the heart of the City of London, a place into which she had never ventured before. It had such big buildings all towering above her, and she had wandered about for what seemed like hours before finding the place. All the streets looked the same, the buildings so impressive - Adella could not believe she could

possibly get a job in one of them. She knew from experience what these people thought of West Indians. Better to work for the clothes-makers who needed your skills for their profits. (85)

It is clear from this passage that Adella is trapped in an economic system that is beyond her control. Fischer comments on this scene, stating that Adella's reaction to that place in the centre of the financial district is an emphasis of her exclusion from the economic power at all levels (110). Adella works there for years, but she has never got the respect or attention of white society. On the contrary, she suffers humiliation, and she is dismissed the first time she is late. Although Adella succeeds in finding another job with the local council, she has never found respect. Adella's anger and frustration grow inside her; nevertheless, she manages to hide this "hard anger ... with the ease of long practice" (3), and bears humiliation and abuse in silence. But this doesn't prevent her from grumbling her thoughts about white people's impoliteness and rudeness.

The worst thing to happen to Adella is Stanton's reaction towards her disability. Instead of supporting her, Stanton leaves her and the five children for her cousin, Gladys. Through the character of Stanton, Riley shows how Jamaican society both in Jamaica and Britain is exploitative and patriarchal. Exploitative actions of black men make married life difficult, which are intensified by other factors like the effects of racism on black personhood. Chris Weedon writes that Adella's suffering is the result of being "exposed to forms of patriarchal oppression that are magnified by the isolation of the nuclear family, the irresponsible behavior of Black men, and their inability to cope with strong women" (25). Stanton's abandonment of Adella has devastated her life; a fact that she couldn't cope with, or even get over the shame of. Adella's life

after that becomes a series of traumas. After Stanton's departure, she suffers financial difficulties that lead her to depend financially on other men in return for their sexual demands. This recalls her financial dependence on Beresford back in Kingston, and offers another proof that her life in London is a repetition of her life in Jamaica.

Another blow to Adella, which worsens her financial situation, is that her house is taken away from her by the city council. The house, which was her hope in building a better life for her and her family in England, is now in such a declining state that it drives away most of her tenants, and is eventually condemned by the city council. Adella is left with nothing; she feels that taking the house from her is like pulling her heart out of her (13):

They came to move her things early. The big council van backed up beside the house. Adella watched silently, ignoring the cheerful greetings that the men threw her [...] all she knew was that they were taking her house. Even the fear of homelessness and the relief when they told her they would give her a house could not dim her bitterness. She wondered what she could tell her parents, knew she could let them know. She would have to find one more lie, to pile on the other lies that were her life in England. (127)

Adella feels that her failure is complete now; she couldn't take away "the shame of living in a government house" (127). She remembers how there

had been so much pride after she left Jamaica when she had written to say that she was carrying on her trade. Granny Dee's letters had been full of excitement. And when the old lady heard that Adella had taken lodgers, she had written to say how she told the whole village about her success. (59)

All she has done gone for nothing. She has put so much into her house, and worked so hard to possess a place of her own; she feels bitter that life wasn't fair to her.

Adella's suffering in Britain is heightened by the effects of other factors like race, class, and gender oppressions. Adella's conflict is not only revealed in her attempts to find better housing and job positions, but includes the legal system as well. She encounters racial discrimination through her discussion with a white policeman after having been attacked by two white boys in Mostyn Road. This area is desolate, described as a "wasteland that had been landscaped and turned into a children's play area until someone had set fire to the wooden structures" (p. 76). Fischer mentions that "In this space of urban decay, [Adella] is vulnerable as the imperial city constructs racial difference in such a way as to consign her to a "wasteland" located between the poles of criminality and entitlement" (110).

The conversation between Adella and the policeman reveals the hidden and unacknowledged prejudices and injustices of white society against black people. Although Adella depends on her daughter, who knows how to speak the white people's language (*WT 77*), the policeman cannot step outside his prejudices. Even when Adella asserts that her attackers are white, the policeman refuses to listen, and insists that her attackers are black. In fact, from the very beginning, Adella's refuses that her daughter should call the police, for "[s]he had been wary of them since the riot when they had broken down her friend's door and beaten up her disabled husband just because he was black" (77). Adella knows how the police treat black people. Black people are judged through their inferior class and race, which in turn justifies their being othered, racialized and criminalized. In fact, those prejudices are based on certain

ideologies that divide the world into superior and inferior groups. The Manichean barrier between the two is revealed in the following dialogue:

‘I suppose these blocks who attacked you were black,’ [the young policeman] continued, writing rapidly in his small notebook.

‘Dem was white bwoys, man,’ she said firmly. ‘De black bowye dem doan do things like dat – an dem know sey people roun ya doan have no money.’

‘How do you know they were white? The younger man asked coldly. ‘You said they threw a coat over your head.’

‘A did see dem come for dat. Nuting no wrang wid me eyesight.’ He was looking unfriendly now, leaning forward in the settee, making no attempt to hide his dislike.

‘If you saw them coming why didn’t you run? He asked nastily.

‘Can’t you see mum’s crippled?’ Carol said in disgust. ‘How do you suppose she was going to outrun two strong men with a crippled foot and hand, eh?’ ...

‘We weren’t trying to dispute what your mother said,’ the older man said hastily. ‘It’s just unusual to hear of whites youths engaged in mugging activity.’

Carol smiled nastily. ‘Not that unusual,’ she said. ‘Except that when black people round here get mugged by whites, nobody does anything about it. ...’ (78-9)

This dialogue reveals the white people’s inability, represented by the policeman, to transcend the cultural barriers that divide their worlds. The negative association of the black people with criminal actions is part of political ideologies that tend to identify the black people as irrational and criminal. The policeman’s attitude towards Adella’s account about the robbery incident suggests racism is inherent in western thought, which bases this racism on pseudo-racial

assumptions about the Other to satisfy and assure the desires of white society about their superior position.

The end of the novel emphasizes Adella's dislocation; she ends her life in London with no place to live. Fischer argues that Adella "has lived in various London spaces, all confined in one way or another because of the racism, classism, and sexism she encounters" (111). Adella tries to escape from her harsh reality through dreaming about Stanton's return. Her dreams are expressions of her inability to change her loss in real life. Adella dies in the corridor of the hospital, waiting for a bed, when she has another stroke. All her life, Adella has been deceived by her idealized notions about life perspectives, and she dies deceived by a vision. In her vision, she imagines that Stanton has returned, and his return has brought the respect of her family:

Stanton had come back, just like she knew he would. He had come back and she had kept faith; and now he knew she had waited. The images flickered, faded slowly as her eyes dimmed. But it didn't matter now, nothing mattered. She had fulfilled her promise to herself and she knew in her bones that they would keep a Binkie for her like Mada Beck and Granny Dee.

'All dat respect,' she murmured to herself, and this time her eyes smiled as they closed. (165)

Adella's death is tragic as her life in the sense that her last vision is just an illusion. Suarez points out that "Adella's dream represents a legitimate desire of fulfillment, and the mistakes of the dreamer lies not in her wishes, but in her inability to distinguish between dream and reality" (306). It is this inability that is the source of Adella's tragedy, which disrupts and confuses

her life. As it is clear, Riley is careful not to romanticize the black experience in Britain, and *Waiting in the Twilight* is a harsh portrayal of that experience. McLeod describes Riley's novel as a "pessimistic" one, in which any attempt of "subaltern resistance, empowerment, and transformation in postcolonial London" (McLeod 118) has been crushed and destroyed. Its setting provides a space, where "Families are coercive, the streets are unsafe, the neighbourhood is a ferment of hypocrisy and scandal, the police are racist, and men and women seem perpetually locked in unhappy marriages or adulterous affairs" (118).

I would agree with Gina Wisker, who argues that Riley's insistence on the permanent isolation and alienation of Adella points to the persistence of racism and sexism and their effect on the individual. (24) Riley herself points out that she has intentionally avoided any possibility of a happy ending for her characters, for it leads the readers away from confronting the main issues in contemporary society. She writes:

I feel that happy endings in much of my work would be a betrayal of the community of women who give unstintingly of their lives to flesh out my creative world. ... To allow the readers to retreat into their comfortable world and not accept their collective part in resolving the issues that did not go away with the final full stop – this would be to have failed in achieving the purpose of the work. ("Writing Reality in a Hostile Environment" 217)

According to Riley, to close a book on conflicts resolved is like closing out "the world of endless struggle, disappointments, bad housing, raw deals, which continues to make up the daily lives of many millions of people" (217). And this attitude is explored clearly in her novel, which reveals the daily misery of these black people.

In fact, *Waiting in The Twilight* provides no solution for Adella, as has been revealed through her tragic journey of life and death. The novel underscores the absurdity of all Adella's attempts to secure a decent and respectable life in London with her husband and children. Nevertheless, hope and change are reserved for the next generation, represented by Adella's two younger daughters: "her England-born children would be different. They were going to be just like white people. They were going to be accepted" (15). Adella's daughters have succeeded in having a good education, a better mobility and access to the British system. They might have the chance to break away from a life of victimization, exploitation, and oppression, towards a brighter future.

In conclusion, in examining both Emecheta and Riley, I have found that their novels stand as a testimony to the oppression and hardship of black people, especially women. Their sense of otherness is definitely more critical than that of black men, due to a collaboration of different factors; racial, gender, and class. Both Adah and Adella face difficulties and violence perpetuated on them by society and economic system. Unlike Adah, part of Adella's tragedy is that she is unable to resist her exploitation as she drifts between the city's different spaces. Nevertheless, both Adah and Adella share the same feelings of isolation, fear, and frustration. In other words, they share what is described by Madelaine Hron as the "pain of immigration." They are doomed to a life of loss and dislocation, condemned to live in that ambiguous space; unable to achieve a successful integration into the new country. *Second-Class Citizen* and *Waiting in the Twilight* expose the falsity of the myth of a multicultural London, or the "myth of success," for racism still pervades and plagues the lives of racial minorities. In this way, I would say that these two novels represent a challenge to Bhabha's assumption that immigration is an enabling state,

and to his concept of multiple centres. Bhabha asserts that in these “in-between” spaces cultural differences are recognized, and which come to replace any centre - periphery division. However, this in-betweenness always becomes, as Madelaine Hron emphasizes, “the locus of impotence for immigrant subjects, where little agency, voice, or movement is possible,” (26) for at the core of the experience of immigration is pain that many immigrants feel at being suspended “in-between” spaces.

## Notes

1. In another occasion, Emecheta comments that “There are many who think I exaggerated in *Second-Class Citizen*, that I distorted reality. But the cruelty with which I was treated both by my husband and by the English society is truthfully rendered in the book. Reality appears unbelievable the moment other people see it on paper. (qtd. in Davis 109).
2. More information related to black women’s condition in Britain during the 1950s can be found in *The Heart of the Race: Black Women’s Lives in Britain*. The book gives detailed accounts given by many women about the kind of hardships shown in the novels of Emecheta and Riley, and issues related to jobs, housing, Welfare, Health and Education systems, the women’s relationships to these state systems. And above all the women’s struggle to build a new social order in Britain.

### Chapter Three: “England, My England”

Both Zadie Smith and Monica Ali engage in dealing with the cultural complexities of contemporary British society. In their novels, discussed in this chapter, we have individuals struggling to position themselves in an alien environment, where notions of discrimination, exclusion, assimilation, and hybridity have become key issues. Even though both writers have a noted place in British literature in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (in 2003 they were named in *Granta*'s 20 best young British writers), they are sometimes addressed by their biracial identity. Smith and Ali are conscious of the mixture of cultures within their own experience, and they write out of that outlook, which they bring to their novels. Much criticism implies that both writers depart from earlier migrant fiction; nevertheless, I would agree with Sara Upstone that both Smith and Ali, especially in their novels, *White Teeth* and *Brick Lane*, largely repeat the tone of earlier migrant narratives, engaging with a migrant past. Their novels show that concepts like racism and otherness are still rampant in England, not only regarding the immigrants' generation but their children's as well. In the same vein, Madelaine Hron states that the new narratives about immigration, especially those written by second or third generation writers “reflect contemporary socio-cultural discourse about otherness, ethnicity, multiculturalism” (16). Both Ali and Smith present London from a hybrid cultural perspective, though differently. They offer an analysis of multi-ethnic stage of Britain at the end of the twentieth century.

Smith discusses the life of immigrants and their children through a multiplicity of hybrid characters, offering a hybrid culture, which is at the centre of British culture and experience nowadays. Smith was born in north London in 1975. She is the daughter of a British father (Harvey Smith) a British war veteran and a Jamaican mother, Yvonne Baily-Smith, a

psychiatrist. Smith has received many prestigious literary awards such as the Commonwealth Writer's prize, the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Fiction, and the Whitbread (Walters 1). Smith has been recognized by critics for her portrayal of the multicultural society of England. Her ability to portray some of the issues presented in *White Teeth* is due to her hybrid experience; being a biracial person born in London. Such issues as hybridity, questions of origins and roots of identities, cultural clash between immigrants and the main stream society on one hand, and between immigrants and their children on the second hand have become key questions. Therefore, Smith is concerned with what it means to live in a multicultural society, for "[t]his has been the century of strangers, brown, yellow and white. This has been the century of the great immigrant experiment" (*White Teeth* 281).

*White Teeth* was published in 2000, and it deals with a multicultural society through discussing the lives of three families live in London; the Iqbals and their British-born twin sons, a Bangladeshi family; the Joneses, consisting of a British father and a Jamaican mother with their only daughter, Irie. The third family is the Chalfens with their four children, an Irish-Jewish family. My focus is going to be on the Iqbal family by way of comparison with the other novel discussed in this chapter, *Brick Lane*, since both novels deal with families from Bangladesh. Z. Esra Mirze argues that *White Teeth* reveals how some of the Asian community find it difficult to assimilate and fully integrate into the British society. In fact, it is not only the Asian community which finds it overwhelmingly difficult to settle; most of the characters express a resistance to assimilation and cultural hybridity. Each character in the novel reveals a different level of assimilation, integration, and resistance, as she or he negotiates her/his identity in multicultural London. Moreover, what is noticed in the novel is that not all the characters seek

cultural assimilation or have a British identity. Matthew Paproth argues that Smith's characters are caught between two values and cultures: religious and secular, Eastern and Western, past and present, international and external history (9), and none of the characters in the novel prove able to deal with the uncertainties of their situation. Raphael Dalleo states that:

The novel explores the ramifications and outcomes of cultural mixing, aware of the dangers and possibilities of a globalized world in which purity is impossible. The future for London immigrant subcultures cannot be reduced to either assimilation or marginalization; instead, Smith shows us the emergence of something else entirely, a London that is British and Caribbean and South Asian ... all at the same time. (93)

According to Dalleo, what Smith tries to do in *White Teeth* is to undermine the bordered construction of identity, whether English, Asian, or Caribbean. The novel portrays the metropolitan city in the process of being colonized and literally darkened by the influx of immigrants (Dalleo 93):

The 52 bus goes two ways. From the Willesden Kaleidoscope, one can catch it west like the children; through Kensal Rise, to Portobello, to Knightsbridge, and watch the many colours shade off into the bright white lights of town; or you can get it east, as Samad did; Willesden, Dollis Hill, Harlesden, and watch with dread (if you are fearful like Samad, if all you have learnt from the city is to cross the road at the sight of dark-skinned men) as white fades to yellow fades to brown, and then Harlesden clock comes into view, standing like Queen Victoria's statue in Kingston – a tall stone surrounded by black. (164)

This passage reflects the cultural transformation of the landscape of the metropolitan city, which is dominated by mixed cultures and traditions. In fact, *White Teeth* represents a society created by the cultural interaction of different cultures from all over the world, and shows how that interaction problematizes ethnic and national categories, and leads to cultural transformation. Kris Knauer asserts that *White Teeth* provides an optimistic portrayal of contemporary multicultural London by showing how the effects of immigrants on British culture helps give a different meaning to the notion of Britishness. In my discussion, I will examine Knauer's viewpoint to see to what extent Smith's novel is really an optimistic representation of multicultural London. From a different perspective, Molly Thompson argues that this cultural interaction, instead of leading to a positive outcome, disrupts the feeling of belonging and causes segregation. Unlike Knauer, who emphasizes the optimistic portrayal of contemporary multicultural London in *White Teeth*, Thompson states a different view; she intends to show the darker side of London's situation. She asserts that the novel is far from presenting an optimistic view, but rather it conveys a sense of "fragmentation and uncertainties" (123). Thompson argues that the novel suggests that "as a result of belonging to different generations and holding a diversity of cultural beliefs, the possibility of feeling at "home" in this multicultural world is unlikely" (123). According to Thompson, this multicultural atmosphere complicates the concept of belonging.

The novel opens with Archibald Jones's failed attempt to commit suicide, after the failure of his first marriage. Jones, a white British man, then, marries his second wife, Clara, a Jamaican girl, who is 28 years younger than him. Archie knew Samad Iqbal during WWII, where both

fought for the British Empire. After the war, Samad immigrated to England from Bangladesh with his wife, Alsana, in search of a better life. In fact, *White Teeth* mainly addresses the dilemma of the immigrants as they are settling in their new environment. Samad, like any other immigrant, finds himself divided between settling in London and a sense of unbelonging. Although he is an educated person, he has difficulty finding a decent job; he works in an Indian restaurant as a “curry-shifter.” He also finds himself vulnerable and defenseless in the face of western values. He meditates on the price he paid in order to come to England only to later feel marginalized in that society, which in turn emphasizes his suspension in an in-between state, which has become the state of most of the immigrants: “These days it feels to me like you make a devil’s pact when you walk into this country ... it drags you in and suddenly you are unsuitable to return, your children are unrecognizable, you belong nowhere” (336). Fearing the danger of assimilation, signs of which he finds in his British-born twins, Magid and Millat, Samad decides accordingly to send one of them back to Bangladesh, an act which his wife could not forgive. According to Samad “tradition was culture, and culture led to roots, and these were good, these were untainted principles” (193). Assimilation is thus a threat to their cultural identity and roots.

Samad and the first-generation immigrants consider their children’s assimilation and embracing of western values destructive to their children’s identities. Samad comments: “They won’t go to mosque, they don’t pray, they speak strangely, they eat all kinds of rubbish, they have intercourse with God knows who. No respect for tradition” (190). Moreover, he asserts, “I have been corrupted by England, I see that now—my children, my wife, they too have been corrupted” (144). His attempts at protecting his culture arouse the frustration of his wife, who

wants to challenge his belief in the purity of cultures with a definition she finds in the “*Reader’s Digest Encyclopedia*,” about the Bengali:

The vast majority of Bangladesh’s inhabitants are Bengalis, who are largely descended from Indo-Aryans who began to immigrate into the country from the west thousands of years ago and who mixed within Bengal with indigenous groups of various racial stocks. (236)

In this scene, Alsana, reflecting Smith’s attitude, wants to deconstruct the concept of pure culture or identity by showing that the Bengalis are descendants of the Westerns. Any attempt at proving one’s pure identity is an absurd act; “it’s a fairy-tale” (236). Moreover, Alsana appears more realistic about their situation than her husband. This means, that she is able to negotiate her situation rather than choose between poles as her husband tries to do. My focus is on analyzing the character of Samad rather than a female character, for there is no major female protagonist in this novel. Although Clara is an important character, she remains one among several. Moreover, Samad’s character, as a first-generation immigrant, is important to my discussion of the Other.

Part of Samad’s frustration is that he feels emasculated in England, and the paralysis of one of his hands could metaphorically represent his sense of paralysis and impotence in this country. He senses that he is losing control over his sons, who start distancing themselves from their family. Suffering a religious and identity crisis, he finds himself caught between two sets of values; a situation that reflects the confusion of his position in London. The confusion and disturbance Samad faces is the direct result of his failure to negotiate between different cultural values. While he wants to show his sons the straight road, he has lost his own (*White Teeth* 188-

89). Even though Samad laments the lack or weakening of faith in the Muslims, he finds himself vulnerable to the temptation of the West. Later, he cannot resist having an adulterous relationship with his children's music teacher, Poppy Burt-Jones, who is fascinated by Samad's exoticism. For Poppy Burt-Jones, Samad is an exotic brown man from a foreign place. Even the stories he tells her about his culture and religion she finds alluring, exotic, and funny. Poppy Burt-Jones reveals the West's vacillation between "contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in ... novelty" (*Orientalism* 59). Poppy Burt-Jones's attitude reflects an orientalist view that is fixed and based on the stereotypical portrayal of the Orientals. Edward Said asserts in *Orientalism* that the "Orientalist vision" is "fixed", and the realities of the Orient have remained the same for the West as it had been in the earlier times, in spite of the "several revolutions, two world wars, and innumerable economic, political, and social changes" (105).

Failing to represent a good model for his sons, Samad's vulnerability leads him to decide to send one of his sons back to Bangladesh, and if he had had enough money, he would have sent both of them. He believes that "the sins of the Eastern father shall be visited upon the Western sons." What Samad fears is the curse of repetition:

[I]mmigrants have always been particularly prone to repetition – it's something to do with that experience of moving from West to East or East to West or from Island to Island. Even when you arrive, you're still going back and forth; your children are going round and round. There's no proper term for it – Original sin seems too harsh; maybe original trauma would be better. A trauma is something one repeats and repeats, after all, and this is the tragedy of the Iqbals. (161)

In spite of Samad's fears of assimilation, there is a conflict or a contradicted desire within Samad; he wants to be considered as an Englishman but at the same time he considers this assimilation as a betrayal and a rejection of cultural his roots. So, between the processes of integration and exclusion, Samad has been deeply caught between the West and the East. He expresses a frustration in the face of his limitations; his being marginalized and othered, which reduces him to nobody. This confusion and loss of identity pushes him to defend his individuality by forcing the customers of the restaurant, where he works, to recognize him. He even wants desperately to wear a large sign declaring:

I AM A WAITER. I HAVE BEEN A STUDENT, A SCIENTIST, A SOLDIER, MY WIFE IS CALLED ALSANA, WE LIVE IN EAST LONDON BUT WE WOULD LIKE TO MOVE NORTH. I AM A MUSLIM BUT ALLAH HAS FORSAKEN ME OR I HAVE FORSAKEN ALLAH, I'M NOT SURE. I HAVE A FRIEND – ARCHIE – AND OTHERS. I AM FORTY-NINE BUT WOMEN STILL TURN IN THE STREET. SOMETIMES. (58)

Samad wants to force British society to recognize his humanity, instead of his otherness; to be perceived as any other human being, not as the Other. Even when he was serving in the British Army during the WWII, he longed for recognition and acceptance. He wanted to prove to the Whites that he could fight like any other white soldier. Samad wanted to leave his imprints on the destiny of Great Britain; he “was fighting passionately to escape his skin. He wished to defend a country that wasn't his and revenge the killing of men who would not have acknowledged him in a civilian street” (95). Samad was caught between his racial difference and his identifying with the British Empire. There was an ambivalence regarding his affiliations; he

desired to be identified with the greatness of the Empire but also wanted to retain his identity as Bengali Muslim. He objected to Archie calling him “Sam”: “Don’t call me Sam. ... I am not one of your English matey-boys. My name is Samad Miah Iqbal. Not Sam. Not Sammy. And not – God forbid – Samuel. It is *Samad*” (112). Mirze argues that Samad “takes the Anglicization of his name as a verbal assault on his identity. His outburst suggests that while he can negotiate the coexistence of national and racial affiliations as interdependent categories, he refuses the erasure of one for the sake of other” (191). Samad negotiates his situation and acknowledges this diversity “as the condition of colonial subjectivity” (Mirze 189).

Samad believes that he has a presence in the British Army because of his merits; he is determined to “show the English army that the Muslim men of Bengal can Fight” (88). After the war, Samad contemplates the ambivalence of his situation: “what am I going to do ...? Go back to Bengal? Or to Delhi? Who would have such an Englishman there? To England? Who would have such an Indian?” (112). Then, he decides to move to England, unsure of the kind of life he is going to have there; he is not totally unaware of the fact that his life as a civilian is different from his life as a soldier, a colonial, fighting in the name of Empire. Although Samad decides to move to England, this choice is not made with full confidence, as he still feels wary about the hardships he and his family would face in this foreign but thought to be familiar country. His early question, “*What kind of a world do you want your children grow up in?*” (118) raises one of the key issues in the novel. Life in England is changing as England is transitioning from great Empire toward a postcolonial nation, to use McLeod’s term. With such transition “from a colonial metropole to a postcolonial cosmopolitan ... Samad [has] to refashion his identity from colonial to postcolonial subjectivity” (Mirze 192). Nevertheless, Samad resists assimilation and

change, turning to religion as a defense against what he calls “cultural corruption,” asserting “I do not wish to be a modern man” (145). Samad’s assertiveness of his religion and culture and his rejection of assimilation is expressed in Tariq Modood’s critique of the novel. Modood states that Samad’s attitude, or Smith’s, is compelled by “ethnic assertiveness, arising out of the feelings of not respected or of lacking access to public space, consisting of counterposing “positive” images against traditional or dominant stereotypes.” According to Modood, this assertiveness “is a politics of projecting identities in order to challenge existing power relations; of seeking not just toleration for ethnic difference but also public acknowledgement, resources, and representation” (67).

Samad is a stereotypical type of immigrant, whose ambitions are thwarted by the underestimation of his qualities, which are depreciated by the British society. Even after a few years of being in London, Samad describes it as a place “where you are never welcomed, only tolerated. Just tolerated . . . it drags you in and suddenly you are unsuitable to return, your children are unrecognizable, you belong nowhere” (407). No matter how long you stay there, or whatever you do, you will remain an outsider, an other. Tracey L. Walters comments that Smith uses stereotypes in *White Teeth* as a satirical device to expose racism, sexism, and other biases. The West imposes a stereotypical notion of the Other with an underlying Orientalist judgment. Those stereotypes help create preconceptions about individuals, groups, or even societies that lead to generalization. Walters asserts that those stereotypes “can be used to create a power dynamic that legitimizes racist and sexist beliefs” (126). For instance, Samad’s frustration with Archie’s stereotypical comments against the Indians and India, which he hears all the time, reflect the “epistemological violence” that the West tries to force

upon the Orientals and their culture. Samad warns Archie against the misconceptions of stereotypes:

*Please ... if ever you hear anyone speak of the East ... [i]f you are told “they are all this” or “they do this” or “their opinions are these,” withhold your judgment until all the facts are upon you. Because that land the call “India” goes by a thousand names and is populated by millions, and if you think you have found two men the same among that multitude, then you are mistaken. It is merely a trick of the moonlight. (100)*

These stereotypical conceptions are also expressed in the attitudes of other white characters in the novel, represented by Mr. J. P. Hamilton, Miss Poppy Burt-Jones, and the Chalfens. These characters' attitudes toward the immigrants and other non-white people reveal that they are bound by white essentialist views about the Other. For instance, the Harvest Festival, a school tradition, demonstrates the non-white children's exclusion from the white British people, and reveals the connection of the concept of Englishness to whiteness. Because of their skin colour, the children are forced into the position of the Other. In that tradition, the students visit seniors with donations prepared by their parents. When Irie, Jones's daughter, Millat, and Magid, Samad's sons, go to Mr. J. P. Hamilton's house, they face racism first from some of the passengers on the bus on their way to Mr. Hamilton's house; “one disgruntled OAP [said] to another,” that the non-white people “*should all go back to their own ...*” (*White Teeth* 163). The passengers' comment expresses a non-tolerance towards the racial Other, and a resistance to the Other's undesired hybridity.

The other character who cannot hide his racism is Mr. Hamilton, an old colonial man “from a different class, a different era” (169). He asks the children to “remove [them]selves

from [his] doorstep,” declaring “I have no money whatsoever; so be your intention robbing or selling I’m afraid you will be disappointed” (169). Mr. Hamilton’s immediate assumption of their otherness erodes the children’s connection to England and Englishness; the children have been othered and suspected as thieves intending to steal from his house. Knauer argues, even though “mainstream Britain has been required to become fluent in the anthropological idiom of official multiculturalism;” nevertheless, we should not assume that everybody in Britain wants to be fluent in it (182) as made evident by the behavior of Mr. Hamilton and the passengers on the bus.

After the children explain the reason behind their visit, Mr. Hamilton allows them to enter. In defense of his British identity, Millat recounts how his father served in the British Army during the WWII and suffered injury for the British. Millat’s attempt to reinforce his British identity in this manner is rejected and denied by Mr. Hamilton, who accuses the children of lying and altering the truth of history. Mr. Hamilton denies the contribution of the colonial subjects to the greatness of the British Empire, asserting “there were certainly no wogs as I remember – though you’re probably not allowed to say that these days, are you? But no ... no Pakistanis... The Pakistanis would have been in the Pakistani army” (172). Using derogatory British slang such as “wogs” to refer to Millat’s father and his ethnic group reflects Mr. Hamilton’s racism and sense of superiority. Moreover, by denying the military service of Samad in the British forces, Mr. Hamilton either ironically wants to rewrite history or to justify his racist viewpoints by not acknowledging that fact. Mr. Hamilton is an old colonial, who locks himself in the glorious past of the British Empire, unaware, consciously or unconsciously, of the political changes that have taken place. On the contrary, as Knauer asserts, Mr. Hamilton takes the

children into the past on a “Conradian journey into the Congo, into darkness and “grinning teeth,” into the horrid times of dead black ... bodies lying at his feet” (182). Mr. Hamilton adds:

the only way I could identify the nigger was by whiteness of his teeth ... and they died because of it, you see? ... See a flash of white and bang! As it were ... Dark as buggery. Beautiful men ... black as the ace of spades; poor fools didn't even know why they were there, what people they were fighting for, who they were shooting at. (*White Teeth* 171-72)

These “beautiful men,” these “poor fools” and their “white teeth” are somehow always somewhere fresh and at hand in British memory. According to Knauer, “the root canals of Irie Jones, Magid, and Millat Iqbal are inextricably rooted in and routed through the history of the British Empire” (182). By emphasizing the otherness of Millat, Magid, and Irie, who represent different ethnic backgrounds, Smith reduces the differences among the immigrants, or the non-white people. Instead Smith asserts their marginal status, which connects and identifies all of them as one group.

A further example of such othering occurs when Joyce Chalfen asks Millat about from where he is originally, he tells her, “Whitechapel ... [v]ia the Royal London Hospital and the 207 bus” (319). For Millat, who was born and raised in London, his country of origin is England; nevertheless, he is always identified as Indian or Pakistani due to his skin colour. Even his school music teacher, Poppy Burt-Jones, who tries “to pursue the idea of respect being due to different cultural belonging” (154), feels confused when she faced the hybridity of Millat; “*English but not quite English.*” She wants “to try to experiment with some *Indian* music;”

she asks Millat

‘... what music do you like Millat?’

Millat thought for a moment, swung his saxophone to his side and began fingering it like a guitar. ‘Bo-orn to ruun! Da da da da daaa! Bruce Springsteen, Miss!...’

‘Umm, nothing – nothing else? Something you listen to *at home*, maybe?’

At this point Millat, troubled that his answer seemed somehow wrong, looked at his father, who started gesticulating wildly to convey head and hand movement of bharata natyam, a dance from the subcontinent. Elated Millat shouted:

‘Thriiii-ller!’ .... Believing he had caught his father’s gist. Thriii-ller night! Michael Jackson, Miss! MICHAEL Jackson!’

Samad put his head in his hands. (154-56)

This passage reveals that although Poppy Burt-Jones acknowledges diversity, she could not rid herself of the essentialist categories that she seeks to undo. On the contrary, to her disappointment, she could not prove “her point for tolerance and cultural diversity among her pupils” (Knauer 179). In fact, Samad, Joyce Chalfen, and Poppy Burt-Jones belong to a generation who is familiar with terms, like “difference” and “Otherness,” which the second generation cannot comprehend, or as stated by Knauer, “Samad and Poppy Burt-Jones seem to share a certain “code” or knowledge that Millat does not seem to have access to” (178).

By concentrating on the lives of the Iqbal and Jones families, Mirze argues, “Smith investigates how the domestic sphere projected to the national level, impacting the definition of Britishness. ... [R]acial differences are no longer insurmountable obstacle within the cosmopolitan, postcolonial setting” (187-8). Nevertheless, I would argue that living in that

multicultural society could sometimes result in a feeling of exclusion, especially for those of mixed races, from the British society. For instance, Irie, a representative of racial and cultural hybridity, has been denied her British identity by her teacher.

During an English lesson on one of Shakespeare's sonnets, Irie asks her teacher a question whether the dark lady mentioned in "Sonnet 127" looks like her; whether the dark lady is black. The teacher insists, "No, dear, she's *dark*. She's not black in the modern sense. There weren't any ... well, Afro-Carri-bee-yans in England at that time dear!" (271). In fact, Irie is driven to assume such a comparison by Shakespeare's saying, "*Then will I swear, beauty herself is black*" (272). But her teacher warns her against reading "what is old with a modern ear" (272). So, Irie's place in the British society is shattered by her teacher, representative of that society, whose stereotypical assumption about beauty is related to whiteness. Even the way Irie's teacher pronounces the Caribbean reflects her lack of real knowledge about those regions; her viewpoints are based on essentialist and stereotypical assumptions about the Other. What Irie needs is the teacher's assurance of her identity. Although she was born and raised in England, Irie realizes that she is different from the other "typical" white girls. Her experience of exclusion is exacerbated by her Afro-Caribbean appearance, a race signifier, which denies her recognition by the British society. Moreover, her exclusion is sealed by a note written by Annalese Hersh, a classmate, and passed to her at the end of class "AN ODE TO LETITIA AND ALL MY KINKY HAired BIG-ASS BITCHES" (272). Although Hersh's note and Irie's teacher's assumption about beauty, which denies the Other's connection to the concept of beauty, emphasizes Irie's Otherness, Irie tries to negate her otherness through her attempts to hide those things that denote that otherness; "she tries to "diminish that swollen enormity, the Jamaican posterior" with "belly-

reducing knickers and breast-reducing bra, with ... meticulous lycra corseting” (265). She becomes obsessed by her appearance and her incompatibility with the English girls, “[a]nd this belief in her ugliness, in her *wrongness*, had subdued her; ... she was all *wrong*” (268).

Ironically, Irie’s name is a patois word, which means “*OK, cool, peaceful;*” (75) when in reality, she is far from being okay and at peace with herself. Even when her mother wants to assure her that she is fine, Irie is convinced that she is not, “There was England, a gigantic mirror, and there was Irie, without reflection, A stranger in a stranger land” (266). Irie measures her image and acceptance against the standards of the white society. She is a mimic person, who chooses the West as a reflection of her image and identity.

Irie is of mixed race, a daughter of a white father and black mother. Furthermore, she has a history of mixed races, which goes back to 1906, when her great grandmother Ambrosia Bowden was impregnated by Captain Charlie Durham, a British official, and gave birth to Hortense Bowden, Irie’s grandmother. The racial history of Irie brings the mixing of biological and historical origins to the surface. Dalleo states, *White Teeth* “focuses on the colonial origins of migration and the ominous side of hybridity as social project, taking Irie ... back to the turn of the century to the great experiments of ... Captain Charlie Durham” (98). Therefore, Irie’s character is a portrayal of the longstanding existence of racial hybridity. In fact, Robert Young asserts that the concepts of hybrid and hybridity themselves go back to the nineteenth century, when the “word “hybrid”<sup>1</sup> [was] developed from biological and botanical origins,” and it “was used to refer to physiological phenomenon” more than a cultural one, as it was “reactivated” during the twentieth century, to become a key issue for cultural controversy (6).

Hortense, Irie's grandmother, connects racial mixing with contamination and degeneration. Although half-white herself, Hortense opposes to her daughter's marriage to Archie "on grounds of colour rather than of age" (46). Archie is a white person, and "Hortense hadn't put all that effort into marrying black, into dragging her genes back from the brink, just so her daughter could bring yet more high-coloured children into the world" (327). She rationalizes her objection to Clara's marriage, asserting that "Blacks and Whites" are not meant for one another: "[Archie] was never my objection *as such* ... But it more de principle of de ting, you know? Black and White never come to no good. De Lord Jesus never meant us to mix it up" (384-85). Racial mixing, which produces hybrids, is considered as "unforgotten trace of bad blood in the Bodies" (356). It is not only white people who reject the idea of racial mixing, but black people as well. Hortense's attitude echoes that of Edward Long, a Jamaican slave-owner, who argued in 1774 in his *History of Jamaica* that White and Black are of different species, and even though unions between them produced fertile hybrids, nevertheless, this fertility diminished and declined through the generations (quoted in Young 8). Accordingly, the use of the term "hybrid" in that period carried racist connotations, as hybrids were not considered as "crosses between distinct races" but as "crosses between distinct species" (Huxley quoted in Young 10), a characteristic that is seen as dangerous and to be avoided.

From another perspective, racial mixing is also related to colonization, where colonized people, the object of colonial aggression, suffered subordination, oppression, and exploitation at the hands of the colonizers who robbed the colonized of their humanity: "English are the only people ... who want to teach you and steal from you at the same time" (*White Teeth* 356). The colonizers were driven by a "racial ideology;" their racism was based on racial superiority,

which legitimizes their suppression of other “races.” The conviction that the colonized people are usually inferior to their colonizers is deeply rooted in the mentality of the colonialist mind. Accordingly, Edward Said’s theory, in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, suggests that European colonizers often look at their colonial subjects as in need of cultivation and civilization (223). The white race, by virtue of its advanced civilization, is deemed superior. Captain Charlie Durham pretended that he wanted to teach and civilize Ambrosia; “He was not satisfied with simply taking [Ambrosia’s] maidenhood. He had to *teach* her something as well” (356). Abdul R. Jan Mohammed says that the colonist justifies his exploitation by creating a notion of the White man’s burden, but this notion carries a contradiction: “if [the Whiteman] genuinely pursues his manifest destiny and ‘civilizes’ the native, then he undermines his own position of social privileges . . . then the colonizer can no longer retain his superior status” (5). So, Abdul R. Jan Mohammed asserts that the western project of civilizing the colonized is a sham, as the natives would never be recognized by the colonizer; the whole project is only meant for exploitation. The Europeans give themselves the right to exploit, dehumanize, and depersonalize those who are different in “coloration and facial features.” Centuries of dehumanization and humiliation eventually lead the colonized people to internalize this inferiority, and pass this feeling onto future generations.

This project of civilizing the disadvantaged is repeated again at the turn of the twentieth century when the principal of the school send both Irie and Millat to the Chalfens, a middle-class family, to give them a chance to improve themselves and benefit from that family. The Principal says to Irie and Millat, “And you know, the exciting thing is, this could be a kind of guinea-pig project for a whole range of programmes. . . . Bringing children of disadvantaged or minority

backgrounds into contact with kids who might have something to offer them” (308). This attitude reflects the belief of the West, which identifies itself with rationality, reason, and progress, and associates the East with backwardness, ignorance, and irrationality. In fact, Irie and Millat are the products of that long history of dehumanization and othering. Both of them understand the barriers their otherness creates for them. Identification with otherness is not only, as Modood asserts, “a product of colour-racism, it is also produced by the experience of being made-conscious about being” (69) the other.

Although born and raised in Britain, Irie and Millat are often reminded of their racial identities and otherness. Nevertheless there is a difference in their reaction toward their otherness. As has been mentioned before, even though Irie internalizes her inferiority and her sense of otherness, she tries to negate her otherness. She is attracted to the Chalfen family, as part of her desire to integrate into the English society. For Irie, the Chalfens represent the real and perfect English; “more English than the English” with whom she wants to “merge;” she wants “[t]heir Englishness. Their Chalfishness. The purity of it.” Ironically, it does not occur to Irie that the Chalfens are themselves Jewish immigrants; “third generation by way of Germany and Poland,” (*White Teeth* 328) who decide to hide their real ethnicity by securing “their Englishness through emphasizing Irie and Millat’s otherness” (Dalleo 100), or that they “might be as needy of [Irie] as she was of them” (*White Teeth* 328). Eventually, Irie finds that the Chalfens do not give her a real sense of identity; they fail to reflect a real image of Englishness. She turns to her family for assurance of her identity, but the discovery of her mother’s false teeth shatters any attempt at reuniting with her family. The discovery of the false teeth was “another item in a long list of hypocrisies and untruths, this was another example of the Jones/ Bowen gift

for secret histories, stories you never got told, history you never entirely uncovered, rumour you never unravelled ...” (379). Irie constantly wants to prune away her roots, and escape from her past and her family, and this incident, the shame of the false teeth, becomes the motivation to continue to do so. The novel, however, suggests the impossibility of escaping one’s past and history.

Irie’s confusion and search for true identity drives her to sleep with both Millat and Magid on the same day, and become impregnated by one of them. So, she mixes it up more than her grandmother imagines, as Irie cannot ascertain the father of her child. Irie contemplates the complicated identity of her unborn child, and realizes the impossibility of escaping one’s past:

After weeping and pacing and rolling it over and over in her mind, she thought: *whatever*, you know? *Whatever*. It was always going to turn out like this, not precisely like this, but *involved* like this. This was Iqbals we were talking about, here. This was the Joneses.

How could she ever have expected anything less? (427)

Paproth argues, “Like Samad, Irie ultimately realizes the messiness of the relationship between the past and present that, although we might wish to, we can never control the way that our roots reach into our lives” (17-18).

Smith belongs to a group of writers who try to defy rootedness and fixity. In other words, they try to defy Thatcher’s motto that England is meant to be white, by negotiating a hybrid culture that goes beyond the binary opposition of racial identities. This hybrid culture, which is the consequence of the “hybrid cosmopolitanism of contemporary metropolitan life” (Bhabha “Manifesto” 38), is represented mostly by the second generation, who was born and

bred in Britain. For this generation, England is the only home they know and experience, unlike the first generation of immigrants, who have homes other than Britain. Despite this difference, the novel shows that the second generation is never at ease in any setting, as they seem still trapped in an uncertainty about their situation.

In *White Teeth*, the second generation is represented by Magid, Millat, and Irie. They belong to a generation caught between cultures, struggling to locate itself, to define its sense of the self on its own terms, and in accordance with its own choices. Nevertheless, there is still tension between the confidence of the British-born ethnic generation and immigrant past, which still holds sway over the voices of this recent generation (Upstone 337). They feel that they are English; nevertheless, they are not recognized by the English society as such. They are perceived by the mainstream society as the Other, and constantly they are reminded that they are from somewhere else but England, and that their hybridity is not desired or welcomed by a society that seeks homogeneity. Dalleo argues that this unrepentant cultural hybridity of youth culture happens “in contrast to the attitudes, liberal or conservative, of the older generation toward this impure youth culture,” (95) as we have seen with Mr. Hamilton and Poppy Burt-Jones.

Like their parents, although in their individual diverse ways, Magid, Millat, and Irie share the status of being the Other. In fact, the second generation’s struggle is different. Unlike their parents, their struggle is not a matter of adaptation to the British culture, but a matter of finding a place in that culture. They consider themselves totally British; they have even rejected their hyphenated identity as Asian-British. However, they still face racism at times. The attempt to cast away the other identity to gain acceptance results in an identity crisis, and each character wants to assert his identity and finds his/her place in that society in a different way. For

instance, Millat's search for his identity between the influences of two cultures, Bengali and English, leads him first to be the leader of the Raggastani crowd. Millat is caught in a liminal space, and his restlessness at being in-between forces him to seek to re-position himself in a society, part of it still governed by racist attitudes and hegemonic codes towards coloured people. Millat is considered as the "social chameleon," "To the cockney wide-boys in the white jeans and the coloured shirts, he was the joker, the risk-taker respected lady-killer. To the black kids he was fellow weed-smoker and valued customer. To the Asian kids, hero and spokesman" (269). Nevertheless, we find that "underneath it all, there remained an ever present anger and hurt, the feeling of belonging nowhere that comes to people who belong everywhere," (269) which reinforce Millat's situation. This passage expresses a sense of unbelonging and alienation as well. Looking for more solid ground, Millat eventually decides to join "KEVIN, *Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation*," an Islamic Organization. Part of his association with KEVIN is his realization that "he [has] no face in this country, no voice in this country," (234) and his affiliation with KEVIN grows out of his desire to belong, to be recognized. He understands that he has been misidentified and othered in the British society:

[Millat] knew that he ... was a Paki no matter where he came from; that he smelled of curry; had no sexual identity; took other people's jobs; or had no job and bummed off the state; or gave all the jobs to his relatives; that he could be a dentist or a shop-owner or a curry shifter, but not a footballer or a film-maker; that he should go back to his own country; or stay here and earn his bloody keep ... (233-34)

This passage reflects that Millat has internalized his difference and otherness, and understood what kind of boundaries that identity draws for him. Unlike Irie, who rejects her otherness, Millat decides to embrace his identity by rejecting his western identity and connecting with his ethnic and religious origin. Nevertheless, this doesn't unite him with his father. Millat's affiliation with KEVIN is as disappointing to his father as his indulgence in all the corrupting influences of the West before that: sex, violence, and drugs. Moreover, because of his relation with his father, Millat decides to go in a different direction from his family and its past as well. All he feels toward his father is contempt, "A faulty, broken, stupid one-handed waiter of a man who had spent eighteen years in a strange land and made no mark ..." (506). Millat asserts that he is going to write his own history; he thinks he has "a different attitude, a second generation attitude." "If Marcus Chalfen was going to write his name all over the world, Millat was going to write his BIGGER" (419). He refers to his great-great-grand-father, Mangal Panda, who started a mutiny against the British, instead of being glorified, Panda was considered traitorous. Moreover, his executioner, Harry Havelock, "sat on a chaise longue in Delhi. Panda was no one and Havelock was someone. No need for library books and debates and reconstructions. ... *That's it. That's the long, long history of us and them. That's how it was.*" (507). This passage echoes Said's argument that this concept of "us" and "them" is instrumental and always operates successfully when put into practice.

While Millat's confusion about his identity leads him to religion, to his ethnic origin, Magid chooses a different route to assert his identity, rejecting his roots and ethnic background. From the early years of his life, Magid wants to be someone else, to claim a different identity. As a young boy, Magid wishes to have another family different from his own, a more English family; he even wants to be called Mark Smith by his colleagues:

Magid really wanted to be in some other family. He wanted to own cats, not cockroaches, he wanted his mother to make the music of the cello, not the sound of the sewing machine, he wanted to have a trellis of flowers growing up on one side of the house instead of the ever-growing pile of other people's rubbish; he wanted a piano in the hallway in place of the broken door off cousin Kurshed's car; he wanted to go on biking holidays to France, not day trips to Blackpool to visit aunties; he wanted the floor of his room to be shiny wood, not the orange – and- green swirled carpet left over from the restaurant; he wanted his father to be a doctor, a one-handed waiter. ... (126)

This passage shows Magid's attempt to have social mobility and his yearning to be westernized. His feeling of inferiority leads him to negate his identity and to claim another one. This is partly because of his assimilation and desire to be English and merge into the white British society, and partly because of his aversion to being othered by British people due to his racial difference. Samad complains about this, asserting that Magid is "always trying to be somebody [he is] not" (150). Magid's transfer to Bangladesh at the age of nine does not correct the damage and the loss of family and cultural ties that the West is responsible for, as his father assumes. Ironically, Samad's plan to save his son from the "cultural corruption" of the West, and to nurture in him respect for his own culture, works the opposite way. Instead of reuniting with his roots and culture, Magid rejects his Bengali culture and embraces Western values; his blind assimilation runs into extremity. To Samad's disappointment, Magid returns to England more English than before. Mirze argues that "through this irony, Smith seems to suggest that geographical estrangement is secondary ... to establish a strong sense of identity in a multicultural society" (188). Thus, Smith problematizes the concepts of roots and origins as

the determinants of one's identity. Magid's admiration for Saraswati, an Indian writer who defends colonialism, arouses the agitation of his father, who calls Saraswati a "colonial throwback." Saraswati believes, "*We must be more like the English*" (288). In this way, Saraswati and Magid reflect Bhabha's colonial subject, who is "*a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (*Location of Culture* 122 italics in original). What Magid fails to understand is that no matter how English he is, he will not be seen as English; he can only be Anglicized.

The duality in identity, which is represented by both Magid and Millat, who are "driven to different ends of the world" (*White Teeth* 442) suggests that Smith uses the concept of twins purposely to express that duality; a split within a character. This state of twin identities and binary thinking reflects confusion, identity crisis, and a challenge facing the immigrants; which identity to embrace to survive in a society laden with racial discrimination? In spite of all Samad's efforts to save his sons, they end up embracing opposite ends of the spectrum: Millat finds in religion a solution for his confusion, and Magid severs his cultural ties, embracing science and all that is Western. Both attitudes are more confusing and problematic. In the novel, Smith expresses this attitude:

Because if you can divide reality inexhaustibly into parts, as the brothers did ... the result is unsupportable paradox. You are always still, you move nowhere, there is no progress. ...the brothers will race towards the future only to find they more and more eloquently express their past ... Because this is other thing about immigrants ... they cannot escape their history. (466)

This passage shows that the immigrants and their children are caught up and trapped in their situation. Although both brothers bear the condition of hybridity, they cannot bridge the two cultures through negotiation. Upstone asserts that there “is a sense that Smith is reflecting the increased trauma which comes from ... having no clear geography of belonging, no certain sense of location of a “home” to return to” (344).

Smith shows that for these characters, no route leads to a simple identity or to any kind of settlement. After coming back from Bangladesh, Magid finds himself attracted to Marcus’s FutureMouse© Project, which aims at controlling and modifying the genes of a mouse in order to determine its fate. Magid’s decision to help Marcus with his project might appeal to Magid personally, who yearns to be transformed to a different race. For Magid, science helps achieve what you want to be, while for Millat, religion helps reinforce your identity. With this duality in the identity of his sons, Samad questions “what was wrong with all the children, what had gone wrong with these first descendants of the great-crossing experiment?” (182). According to Upstone, the second generation characters are caught in their marginality. She asserts that “*White Teeth* is not only a reflection of problem of marginality but, on another level, is itself a contributor to this marginality as it refuses to grant the British-born ethnic citizens inside status” (345). And this attitude is also highlighted by Thompson’s comments on the novel “As Irie “fights her genes” by minimizing her Black – physical attributes, and Magid and Millat rebel against their Bengali past, *White Teeth* could be read as an attempt to expose the fact that, both in terms of beauty as well as cultural values and practices, “white” ideals are still dominant” (130). I agree with both Upstone and Thompson in that it is impossible for the Other, hybrid or not, to fully integrate into Western society, as displayed by the constant struggles and attempts made

by the second generation. They remain the Other, marginalized, never the centre, as the British culture is unable to embrace other values as the new British identity. Throughout the novel, racism continues to be a constant urge. It may be changed and takes different forms, yet, it remains a plague, afflicting the life of the immigrants and their children. Nevertheless, what Smith wants to emphasize is not racism, or to show which values are dominant, but rather to displace a racially homogeneous British culture by offering a hybrid culture, which is at the centre of British culture and experience nowadays, and to do so through the multiplicity of hybrid characters.

Near the end of the novel when the protesters against Marcus's project are gathering and demonstrating outside the conference hall, where Marcus is giving a talk about his project, Samad is sent outside to quiet the protesters, specifically Hortense and followers of Jehovah. Rather than stopping them, Samad

finds himself, to his surprise, unwilling to silence [them]. Partly because he is tired.

Partly because he is old. But mostly because he would do the same, though in a different name. He knows what it is to seek. He knows the dryness. He has felt the thirst you get in a strange land – horrible, persistent – the thirst that lasts your whole life. (530)

Samad realizes that all his attempts at succeeding in England have come to a fruitless end. He concludes that he will remain “the foreign man in a foreign land caught between borders” (178).

Unlike Smith's novel, which portrays a multi-ethnic society, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) depicts an isolated environment. The events revolve around England's Bangladeshi community, and the positioning of women within that community in specific, and within British society in general, as the novel explores women's relationships inside their familial domain and

outside home. Ali focuses on a community that is totally Bangladeshi and Muslim.<sup>2</sup> A distance is kept between the Bangladeshis and British white people as well as the other ethnic groups dwelling in the same area. England is presented as racist; nevertheless, racism is not the focus of the novel, but, as Yasmin Hussain asserts, “becomes interspersed as part of everyday reality” (95).

*Brick Lane* is one of the most controversial novels on these issues. It is hailed by some critics as it provides a detailed portrait of the Bangladeshi community in Britain, unveiling some of the injustices and suffering of its people. However, the novel’s publication provoked the anger and dissatisfaction of many Bangladeshi people in Britain, who have found Ali’s representation of the Bangladeshi community in both London and Bangladesh offensive. They consider the novel a “gross misrepresentation” of their culture. Ali is accused of presenting the Bangladeshi people in a stereotypical way, where the community is shown to be backward and ignorant. Moreover, Hussain adds, the Bangladeshi community appears in Ali’s novel as “unable to organize itself even in the face of racist mobilizations” (93). So, according to the reaction of the Bangladeshi community and Hussain’s criticism, Ali’s novel reinforces stereotypes of otherness. Jane Hiddleston argues that the responses from the two sides of the argument suggest that both seem to “rely on some notion of literature as realist documentation ... The novel at times draws attention to its own artifice, rather than purporting to provide straightforward knowledge about a community unfamiliar to many readers” (57). However, to a Western reader, Ali, as a writer, is, to use Gayatri Spivak’s term, a “native informant.” Ali who belongs to a minority group would be considered as a representative or spokesperson for that group. Thus, even though Ali’s novel is a fictional construction, it is taken as documentation of the experiences of that minority group.

In one of her articles, which first appeared in the *Guardian* newspaper, Ali discusses this dilemma, whether to be a spokesperson for her people or to be considered as an outsider, asserting her marginal position:

Of course, any literary endeavour must be judged on the work alone. It stands or falls on its own merits regardless of the colour, gender and so on of the author. A male author does not need "permission" to write about a female character, a white author does not transgress in taking a black protagonist. But the "two camp" split in my case brings me back to the idea of the periphery. How can I write about a community to which I do not truly belong? Perhaps, the answer is I can write about it because I do not truly belong. Growing up with an English mother and a Bengali father means never being an insider. Standing neither behind a closed door, nor in the thick of things, but rather in the shadow of the doorway, is a good place from which to observe. (*The Guardian*)

What Ali wants to convey in this passage is that she is writing neither from within the Bangladeshi community nor as a "distant observer," but from a peripheral position, which is unfixed and indeterminate. Ali was born in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in 1967, and came with her parents to England when she was a child, three years old. Being the daughter of a white English woman from a privileged family positions her as an outsider, which affects her representation of the Bangladeshi community both in England and Bangladesh.

*Brick Lane* portrays a community, which is more localized, segregated, and cut off from the mainstream society. Within this community women are overwhelmed with a sense of isolation and alienation. The novel presents a conservative Bangladeshi community, who attempts to maintain and perpetuate its traditions and culture within its new context in England.

The events take place in the East End, in Tower Hamlets, presented as a secluded and confined area, which is separated and excluded from the rest of London city and the majority of the white British society. Hiddleston remarks that “Although this segregation, this sense of separation from the rest of society, means that it is increasingly perceived as a tourist attraction, the area is still associated with stereotypes and myths of backwardness, delinquency and social nonconformity” (58).

According to Hiddleston, Ali’s novel is an invitation to “discover the occluded lives of the disenfranchised while also, paradoxically, showing the pervasive influence of myth in our apprehension of “Eastern” culture” (60). By writing about this area, Ali tries to penetrate this interior territory, unveiling some of the mysteries surrounding that area or the eastern culture in general. The portrayal of Tower Hamlets in this way attests to an orientalist’s form of romanticism that opens up much space for imagination. In her article, Hiddleston refers to Said, who tracks the history of this mythologization in his book *Orientalism*, locating across different forms of cultural production the Western desire to know and appropriate the “oriental” other (60). Said shows how the West conceptualizes and restructures the Orient as a way of knowing the Other, and the faults of this epistemological process (*Orientalism* 331).

Ali depicts and exposes the suffering of people in Brick Lane, a real area in London, which might seem to make Ali’s text a realist treatment. Nevertheless, Hiddleston remarks, a different view might assert the narrative’s “use of rhetoric,” which in turn induces the “impossibility of ridding one’s narrative of any mythologizing tendencies” (60). By trying to deal with and portray some of Bangladeshi cultural practices and beliefs, Ali could not rid herself of the mythical concept of Bangladesh. However, in the same abovementioned article, Ali confesses this mythical apprehension of Bangladeshi society in Bangladesh. She remarks that she

left Bangladesh years ago when she was only three years old. Accordingly, the construction of her Bangladeshi characters is partly the production of her “Imagination.”

*Brick Lane* is read by certain critics not as an extension of post-colonial fiction but as an example of what is called by Alfred J. López “the new post-global literature” written after the events of 9/11. López asserts that “*Brick Lane*’s defining postglobal characteristics are its sense of subaltern agency, and the quiet way in which its protagonist and those around her doggedly carry on in the face of their reluctant host nation’s hostility or, at best, malignant neglect” (516). I would argue that the novel cannot be read without the postcolonial framework and understanding, for it deals with the same issues postcolonial writers discuss in their works, such as racial prejudice, discrimination, displacement, and issues of exclusion and (un)belonging. *Brick Lane* examines the emotional effect of the experience of immigration in terms of the shock of arrival and the cultural consequences and problems resulting from moving from one place to another, all of which are important to the construction of one’s identity. In the face of racial prejudice and the failure to merge and integrate into the new society, the immigrant will definitely question her/his position in that society and her/his sense of belonging. As a result of leaving home, a rupture in the immigrants’ identity might happen, which leads them to search for a solid foundation and meaning to reassure themselves. Accordingly, they will try to redefine identity through attaching to and preserving their traditions. For the immigrant, the question of home is linked with the sense of (un)belonging, which is in turn affected by the processes of inclusion and exclusion. When people feel unwelcomed or othered, they will definitely develop a sense of unbelonging that results in identity crisis. This situation could be more difficult for women, as they try to negotiate their position within the different spaces they occupy; physical, social, and gendered.

*Brick Lane* explores these effects of immigration on Bangladeshi women, and the ways in which women try to adapt themselves to a new different environment as they are coming, as Naila Kabeer remarks, “from a rural peasant society to a hostile urban culture” (282). While Ali explores “the dynamics involved in the social constructions of identity, she also sheds light on the disadvantages inherent within the women’s lives” (Hussain 91). What Ali tries to show in her novel is the disadvantaged position of women within their community in terms of their restricted social mobility with more domestic responsibilities associated with their gender. Kabeer argues that

[t]he gender inequalities inscribed in Bangladeshi culture have been reproduced within the British context, partly because of gender asymmetries in the migration process itself, but also because of the nature of the wider environment in which the community found itself. (282)

The question which may be raised here, is whether immigration empowers and liberates women from their traditional gender roles, or whether their experience in the host country is just a replication of those roles. Ali’s novel explores this question through examining the lives of different Bangladeshi women in Britain, especially the life of its protagonist, Nazneen.

The focus of the novel is the experience of Nazneen, an 18 year old girl, who was born in Bangladesh, and comes to England after her arranged marriage to Chanu, an ugly and overweight middle-aged Bangladeshi man. From the very beginning of the novel, we learn that a sense of fatalism has ruled Nazneen’s life, and she grows to accept that “Fate will decide everything in the end, whatever route you follow” (*Brick Lane* 3). She learns from her mother

about the story of her birth, and how she was left to her fate. Although born as a premature baby, to her mother's surprise, Nazneen survived. The mother refuses to take her daughter to a hospital in the city; she argues the logic behind her refusal, saying: "we must not stand in the way of Fate. Whatever happens, I accept it. And my child must not waste any energy fighting against Fate. That way, she will be stronger" (3). With the same principle, Nazneen accepts her arranged marriage at the age of eighteen and immigrates to London, where the novel is mostly set. Alistair Cormack states that Nazneen "is the object of a transaction between men – her father and her husband – and does not allow herself even to wish for a different life" (701).

Nazneen lives with her husband in his small council flat in Tower Hamlet, in East London, where "[m]ost of the flats, which enclosed three sides of a square, had net curtains, and the life behind was all shapes and shadows" (6). Subsequently, Nazneen gives birth to their first child, Raqib, who dies in infancy. Then she has two daughters, Shahana and Bibi. Meanwhile, Nazneen has been corresponding with her sister, Hasina, who lives back in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has been presented in the novel indirectly, mostly through Hasina's letters that she sends to Nazneen, writing about her negative experience in Bangladesh, and through Nazneen's memories. Unlike her sister Nazneen, Hasina, who defies the customs of her culture and society, elopes to marry the man she loves against the wishes of her parents. After coming to England, Hasina maintains her relationship with her sister through letters.<sup>3</sup> Written in broken English, Hasina's letters become an expression of her suffering in Bangladesh; the marriage to her lover, who turns abusive and violent, the failure of her marriage, working in a factory, as she is forced to work in to support herself financially, abuse by different men, turning to prostitution, and finally working as a maid. Even though Hasina wants to take control of her fate and to seek a

life she chooses for herself, nevertheless, her position in her society is a subordinate one; she seems more vulnerable than her sister. Her misery, as Michael Perfect asserts, has become “a symbol of subjugation” (111). And her depiction in the novel emphasizes rather than challenges stereotypical conceptions of the oppression of women in societies like the Bangladeshi (Perfect 112). In the same vein, Hiddleston asserts, “The stock images of Hasina’s letters are themselves testimony to the pervasiveness of such stereotypes in Bangladesh as well as in Britain” (63). However, Hiddleston comments, the inclusion of these letters in a novel such as *Brick Lane* forces the reader “to consider the difficulty of attempting to free any representation of cultural identity from their influence” (63). According to Hiddleston, what Ali wants to do, whether intentionally or not, is to direct the reader’s attention to the consistency of the misconceptions, and to “the role of prejudice in reinforcing patterns of inequality and oppression” (63).

Through Nazneen, Ali explores the double bind that the woman immigrant confronts, as a woman and as the other. Shortly after arriving in England, Nazneen finds herself entrapped in a marriage to a man towards whom she doesn’t have any feelings, in a life in which she doesn’t have any agency. Her life is limited to her flat, which is crammed with furniture, cut off from the world with no freedom. Ali examines the effects of this confinement on Nazneen:

She looked at the man in the yellow-flowered pajama top, with his bald knees splayed on the pink bedspread. She looked up at the massive black shiny the gold zigzag design that you could pick off with a fingernail. She looked at the brown carpet, at the patch worn through to the webbed plastic that held it together. She looked at the ceiling light that lit up the dust on the shade and bent shadows across the walls. She looked at her stomach

that hid her feet and forced her to lean back to counter its weight. She looked and she saw that she was trapped inside this body, inside this room, inside this flat, inside this concrete slab of entombed humanity. (56)

This passage reveals that Nazneen is not only imprisoned in her suffocating physical space, which is described as “concrete slab of entombed humanity,” but in her marriage and in her body. Nazneen’s confined world and life are given in elaborated minute detail to convey the complexity of her life. Nazneen’s interior physical space with its material contents are described in detail in the following passage:

There were three rugs: red and orange, green and purple, brown and blue. The carpet was yellow with a green leaf design. One hundred per cent nylon and, Chanu said, very hard-wearing. The sofa and chairs were the colour of dried cow dung, which was a practical colour. They had little sheaths of plastic on the headrests to protect them from Chanu’s hair oil. There was a lot of furniture, more than Nazneen had seen in one room before. Even if you took all the furniture in the compound, from every auntie and uncle’s ghar, it would not match up to this one room. There was a low table with a glass centre and orange plastic legs, three little wooden tables that stacked together, the big table they used for the evening meal, a bookcase, a corner cupboard, a rack for newspapers, a trolley filled with files and folders, the sofa and armchairs, two footstools, six dining chairs and a showcase. The walls were papered in yellow with brown squares and circles lining neatly up and down. (9)

This scene reflects Ali's desire to unveil the hidden interior space of Nazneen's existence; the scene "behind the curtain." Hiddleston states that Ali's attempt to examine Nazneen's everyday life "sets out the traverse boundaries between public and private, and to provide the reader with knowledge about detailed customs of those ordinarily enclosed in their ghettos" (64). Though these two passages evoke a sense of isolation and entrapment, however, what is noticed in the characterization of Nazneen, unlike that of the other characters discussed in the previous chapters, is her lack of "aspirations and ambitions." Hussein comments on the same point as well, asserting that "What is unusual in the characterization of Nazneen is the lack of excitement, expectation and new desires that she has as an immigrant. ... She fulfills her role as a wife as though she were in Bangladesh and becomes the dutiful wife and mother." (95). In fact, Nazneen's life "made its pattern around and beneath and through her." Her life revolves around such daily activities; cleaning, cooking and washing (*Brick Lane* 26), interrupted sometimes by fantasies about the ice-skating that she watches on the television:

A man in a very tight suit ... and a woman in a skirt that did not even cover her bottom gripped each other as an invisible force hurtled them across an oval arena. The people in the audience clapped their hands together and then stopped. By some magic they all stopped at exactly the same time. The couple broke apart. They fled from each other and no sooner had they fled than they sought each other out. Every move they made was urgent, intense, a declaration. The woman raised one leg and rested her boot ... on the thigh ... She did not slow down. She stopped dead and flung her arms above her head with a look so triumphant that you knew she had conquered everything: her body, the laws of nature, and the heart of the tight-suited man who slid over on his knees, vowing to lay down his life for her. (22-3)

What this passage reveals is Nazneen's attraction to ice-skating, which she feels partly because it introduces her to a different world of freedom and flying; she feels "[t]he old Nazneen was sublimated and the new Nazneen was filled with white light, glory" (27). The woman in this scene represents everything that Nazneen misses in her life. The woman is dominating all those around her; "her body, the laws of nature," and the man, who dancing with her, while Nazneen lacks mobility, self-empowerment, and agency. Her husband, Chanu, though he has been in London for many years, he still carries traditional viewpoints. His concept about a good wife is that she should remain in her house, take care of her husband and his household, and bear children. Although Chanu prides himself on being "westernized," the following passage reveals the opposite. He thinks it is inappropriate for women to go outside by themselves, arguing:

If you go out, ten people will say, 'I saw her walking on the street.' And I will look like a fool. Personally, I don't mind if you go out, but these people are so ignorant. What can you do? ... I don't stop you from doing anything. I am westernized now. It is lucky for you that you married an educated man. (30)

In fact, this scene exposes two things; a community which is hypocritical, and disrupted by gossip, especially about women; and that Chanu's claim to be "westernized" is nothing but hypocrisy as well. He is very conservative, and deeply rooted in his patriarchal cultural norms. All he cares about is his reputation and what people may say if they see his wife by herself.

Another big problem in the Tower Hamlets neighbourhood, which is discussed in the novel, is overcrowding,<sup>4</sup> which reflects the depleted economic situation of the Bangladeshis. Young boys are obliged to stay out of their flats, "roaming around ... [l]ike goats" (325). The

area of Brick Lane is presented as “a place of poverty,” where “streets were stacked with rubbish” (*Brick Lane* 38). Its portrayal, as Hussein remarks, is laden with “various images of tatty, dirty, broken people ... and noxious smells of rubbish and waste” (93). So, the overall image of the novel offers, as Hussein asserts, “a picture of deprivation and hardship for Bangladeshis in Britain” (92).

Chanu is like Samad, or any other immigrant who comes to England with the strong belief in the myth of immigrant success. Having a degree in English Literature from the University of Dhaka, Chanu believes that “there would be a carpet laid out for [him],” and he is going to “join the civil service.” When he first came to England he “made two promises to [him]self. [He] will be a success, come what may. That’s promise number one. Number two, [he] will go back home. When I am a success” (21). This leads him to think highly of himself, and to dissociate himself from his Sylheti people, whom he considers as “peasants” and “uneducated. Illiterate. Close-minded. Without ambition” (15-6). Most of those people “come to Tower Hamlets and they think they are back in the village. These people “don’t ever really leave home. Their bodies are here but their hearts are back there. And anyway, look how they live: just recreating the village here” (19). Chanu’s comments in the novel lead the Greater Sylhet Development and Welfare council to send a letter to Ali, condemning her for the way she depicts the Bangladeshis, and describing her book as “shameful” (Hiddleston and Hussein 57, 92). Moreover, Chanu’s comments on his community appear to be those of an outsider and a snob. Hussein remarks, “the novel is as much about class and its petty snobberies within the Bangladeshi community as it is about ethnicity” (103). This is clear from Chanu’s reaction towards his community, and his attempts to draw a line between himself and his

people, to be integrated with the British society and the Bangladeshi elite, represented by his forced friendship with Dr. Azad. Nevertheless, the reality of Chanu's lived experience reveals a different fact; unfortunately, to western people, all Asians are othered and judged with the same racial lenses. Like Samad, Chanu denounces this Western homogenized concept about all Asians; he laments that the British people "didn't know the difference between [him], who stepped off aeroplane with a degree certificate, and the peasants who jumped off the boat possessing only the lice on their heads" (21).

Even after sixteen years living in England, Chanu cannot rationalize his failure. Instead he repeatedly expresses a desire to return to his home country, a desire described by Dr. Azad, Chanu's friend, as the "Going Home Syndrome," a "disease that afflicts us" (18). Cormack asserts that Chanu's failure to confront the realities of his current situation is due to his refusal to acknowledge the failure "in favour of a fantasy built on pedagogic notion of both Bangladesh and England" (703). According to Cormack, Chanu's consistent desire to go home is because of his refusal "to admit the discrepancy between his fantasies, built on an institutionalized version of Bangladeshi identity, and what the Western reader takes to be the realities of contemporary Bangladesh revealed in the letters from Nazneen's sister Hasina" (702). All the time, Chanu is talking about the golden past and history of Bangladesh, but not the reality of its present situation:

If you have a history, you see you have a pride. The whole world was going to Bengal to do trade. Sixteenth century and seventeenth century. Dhaka was the home of textiles. Who invented all muslin and damask and every damn thing? It was us. All the Dutch and Portuguese and French and British queuing up to buy. (148)

Chanu experiences nostalgia as a defense against the isolation he feels in England. The disillusionment he faces after his arrival in London causes him to retreat into another imaginary space; he returns metaphorically to a fixed belonging. Hasina's letters destroy and dismiss the myth about Bangladesh; in her letters, she presents the reality of Bangladesh; it is urban, violent, "an ugly place, full of dangers" (358). In fact, much of Chanu's failure, like Samad's, results from his inability to mediate between two contradictory sets of values, and to make a compromise between the conflicting expectations of the two cultures. He remains suspended in a space where the old norms and traditions are no longer applicable. This ambivalence and contradiction about one's position living in a new environment is expressed in a conversation between Chanu and Dr. Azad's wife. Chanu articulates his opinion about the immigrant "tragedy," arguing, "behind every story of immigrant success there lies a deeper tragedy;" and explains:

I'm talking about the clash between Western values and our own. I'm talking about the struggle to assimilate and the need to preserve one's identity and heritage. I'm talking about children who don't know what their identity is. I'm talking about the feelings of alienation engendered by a society where racism is prevalent. I'm talking about the terrific struggle to preserve one's sanity while striving to achieve the best for one's family. (88)

Mrs. Azad dismisses Chanu's argument as "crap" and unrealistic in a society which is perceived as racist and alien, insisting on the fact of the necessity of assimilation; she says "we live in a Western society. ... our children will act more and more like westerners. ... that's not bad thing. My daughter is free to come and go" (89). She adds:

... Listen, when I'm in Bangladesh I put on a sari and cover my head and all that. But here I go out to work. I work with white girls and I'm just one of them. If I want to come home and eat curry, that's my business. Some women spend ten, twenty years here and they sit in the kitchen grinding spices all day and learn only two words of English. ... The society is racist. The society is all wrong. Everything should change for them. (89)

Mrs. Azad's attitude toward living in a Western society totally contradicts that of Chanu. Nevertheless, Mrs. Azad, in her discussion, polarizes both cultures as distinctive; the life she leads in Bangladesh is totally different from that in London. In fact, both Chanu and Mrs. Azad have oriented themselves, as Cormack remarks, "by cultures perceived as static and monolithic, they maintain what Bhabha would describe as a notion of cultural "diversity" ... that is, a metaphysical belief in conflicting and competing cultural essences to which one may remain loyal or, alternatively, to which one may assimilate" (704). Bhabha argues against essentializing cultures as homogenous and totalized. He opposes the concept of cultural diversity, which means the acknowledgement and awareness of pre-given cultural contents to that of "cultural difference," in which a process of negotiation is continuous. Cormack comments that in "cultural difference" the "signs of affiliation are constructed differently, with no underlying truth that can put an end to their infinite semiosis" (704).

Hybridity is the product of cultural difference; it is, as Bhabha calls, "culture's in between." Hybridity is described as something productive; hybrid opens up a space of negotiation, which rejects the "negative polarities" of social antagonism (*Location of Culture* 37). Nevertheless, hybrid space in *Brick Lane* is problematic, because it is characterized by ambivalence. Moreover, hybridity is undermined as a solution for empowering the immigrants,

who have been othered. Chanu, who wants to be “a reformed, recognizable other” (*Location of Culture* 122) is caught in an in-betweenness and ambivalence, which turn him to an impotent person. In fact, Chanu’s claim to knowledge proves to be meaningless. He prides himself on being an educated man, and to have that hybrid perspective to perceive things in both cultures. Nevertheless, he appears to be more a mimic man; he verses in high English literature even better than many of the English people themselves. Besides, he mimics the English, drinking alcohol, for “it’s part of the culture here. It’s so ingrained in the fabric of society. Back home if you drink you risk being an outcast. In London, if you don’t drink you risk the same thing” (85-6). I would agree with Angelia Poon who argues that Chanu, as an immigrant displaced culturally and emotionally in contemporary London, has no impact, and is unable to resist the “racist structures,” unlike Bhabha’s mimic whose hybridity disrupts the colonial authority (430). Chanu’s knowledge about the colonial history, “immigrant tragedy,” and “clash of cultures” based on books reduces him to a “failed hybrid-immigrant,” unable to negotiate the real economic and social realities of immigrants.

Chanu’s discussion about the “clash of cultures,” leads to another problem, which Ali tries to explore in her novel. This is the clash of or the relationship between generations. Another point discussed and explored in the novel regarding the second generation, as Hussein comments, is the “construction of new ethnic hybrid identity” (99). The new generation, represented in this novel by Nazneen’s daughter, Shahana, finds it hard to believe in her parents’ traditions, which are not in tune with her new life. Shahana and her generation lack a strong bond with their home country and culture; England is the only country they know. Sukhdev Sandhu argues that such disconnection was accentuated by mainstream news and current affairs

coverage, which tended to be negligible” (228). According to Sandhu the new generation has no cultural or role models and they lack inherent cultural ties and values (228). He asserts that they can derive only limited pleasure from reminiscing about mother countries they scarcely know. (284). And this is clear when Chanu wants his daughters to memorize and recite Tagore’s poem “My Golden Bengal.” Chanu thinks that by forcing his children to know the culture of their ancestors, he will maintain and transmit that culture to his daughters, who are forced to live according to two different sets of values. Shahana is a British-born daughter; her identity is reflected in this sentence: “‘We go on the Internet at school,’ said Shahana, in English” (165). Shahana’s sentence, as Upstone argues, confirms her “global culture, her British identity in language, and her commitment to the future” (2). Shahana’s new identity makes her assimilation easier than that of her parents:

Shahana did not want to listen to Bengali classical music. Her written Bengali was shocking. She wanted to wear jeans. She hated her kameez and spoiled her entire wardrobe by pouring paint on them. If she could choose between baked beans and dal it was no contest. When Bangladesh was mentioned she pulled a face. She did not know and would not learn that Tagore was more than poet and Nobel laureate, and no less than the true father of her nation. Shahana did not care. Shahana did not want to go back home. (147)

This passage reveals that there is a clear difference between Chanu’s narrative of going back home and his daughter’s rejection of home; their relation to the same place is different. So, within the same location, we have different degrees of belonging and settling. Avtar Brah in his book, *Cartographies of diaspora*, discusses this relationship to a place in regard to different generations, arguing:

Clearly, the relationship of the first generation to the place of migration is different from that of subsequent generations, mediated as it is by memories of what was recently left behind, and by the experiences of disruption and displacement as one tries to re-orientate, to form new social networks, and learns to negotiate new economic, political and cultural realities. (194)

Shahana belongs to a generation which tends to defy and resist being excluded and othered. A legacy of passive suffering, as Nadia Valman asserts, has been rejected by this generation (7). Chanu says in this respect: “We always kept quiet ... The young ones don’t want to keep quiet anymore” (213). Although the new generation represents an opportunity for cross-cultural communication, this has been undermined in the novel by negatively presenting the social mixing and involvement in London’s diverse society negatively. The new generation appears to copy just the bad habits of the western society- drug abuse, represented by Razia’s son drug addiction, and “going to the pubs to nightclubs,” (23) represented by Dr. Azad’s daughter. The new generation is portrayed as a generation of confusion. Moreover, its cross-cultural communication is undermined by the discrimination and prejudice against the immigrants, especially the Muslim immigrants. Hussain argues Ali examines “racism in the light of contemporary debates by looking at Islamic phobia in the wake of September 11” (101). In fact, racial prejudice has been accentuated after the events of 9/11, stimulated by the western “Media’s Islam-phobia.”

The second part of *Brick Lane* explores some of consequences of 9/11 for these relationships, and the subsequent unrest and tension. This tension has inspired racial conflicts between the white British and the Muslims as well as disputes within the Muslim community

itself. The characters discuss the reactions they experienced after the events of September 11. For example, one of the neighbor's daughter "had her hijab pulled off. Razia wore her union jack sweatshirt and it was spat on" (328). These events affect in particular the second-generation characters such as Karim, Nazneen's later lover and other members of the group Bengal Tigers. Although these characters are born in London, they are considered outsiders.

Unlike her husband, whose struggle is presented with irony and pathos, Nazneen begins to negotiate her identity in her new alien environment, through what is called by Michel De Certeau as the tactics of "making do" (29). According to De Certeau, the immigrant, who is in a position of powerlessness, tries to create "a space in which he can find *ways* of using the constraining order of the place or of the language. Without leaving the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down its law for him, he establishes within it a degree of ... creativity" (30 *Italic is original*). De Certeau's description could be applied to Nazneen's situation as well. Despite her confinement and lack of English, Nazneen tries to make sense of the possibilities available to her within her patriarchal community and structures of power. At the beginning, Nazneen accepts her life with just apparent silence and obedience, hiding her anger and frustration within herself. She is troubled by her inner thoughts, which reveals the effect of "denying herself any gratification" (*Brick Lane* 103), and her confinement:

There was this shapeless, nameless thing that crawled across her shoulders and nested in her hair and poisoned her lungs, that made her both restless and listless. What do you want with me? she asked it. What do *you* want? it hissed back. She asked it to leave her alone but it would not. She pretended not to hear, but it got louder. She made bargains with it. No more eating in the middle of the night. No more dreaming of ice, and blades,

and spangles. No more missed prayers. No more gossip. No more disrespect to my husband. She offered all these things for it to leave her. It listened quietly, and then burrowed deeper into her internal organs. (79)

This “shapeless” burden might be the effect of inner dissatisfaction with a life in which she does not have any agency. It is also an expression of her repressed desires. Later, Nazneen begins to question her positioning, and she comes to realize that her coming to England is not an experience of empowerment, but rather of confinement. She even questions why she submitted to her father’s will and accepted to marry her husband. She thinks that her father just wanted to get rid of her; “*He wanted [her] to go far away, so that [she] would not be any trouble to him. He did not care who took [her] off his hands. If [she had known what this marriage would be, what this man would be ... !*” (78). Hussein argues that this realization brings about changes in her personality as she begins to assert her own identity (95). Her first sign of challenge is when she leaves the immediate area of Tower Hamlets; until this stage of the novel, London for Nazneen is limited to her council estate. After being almost confined in her flat, Nazneen launches her first journey, outside the boundaries of her area to find herself alone in an unfamiliar and “unreadable” landscape, where she feels disoriented:

Nazneen walked. She walked to the end of brick Lane and turned right. ... She turned down the first right, and then went left. From there she took every second right and every second left until she realized she was leaving herself a trail. Then she turned off at random, began to run, limped for a while to save her ankle, and though she had come in a circle. ... Every person who brushed past her on the pavement, every back she saw, was

on a private, urgent mission to execute a precise and demanding plan. ... Nazneen hobbling and halting, began to be aware of herself. Without a coat, without a suit, without a white face, without a destination. ... she was cold, she was tired, she was in pain, she was hungry, and she was lost. (39-41)

In her reading of this scene, Valman remarks that Nazneen in her wandering “refashions the street of East London as an affective analogue for the experience of her sister, whose letters have told of her flight from a violent marriage to an uncertain future in Dhaka”: “She had gotten herself lost because Hasina was lost” (*Brick Lane* 41). According to Valman, “the hostile landscape appears as the quintessential modern metropolis, lacking the social and emotional anchors of the village” (6), Nazneen reflects that both she and her sister are “lost in cities that would not pause even to shrug,” if misfortune were to befall them in the city streets (*Brick Lane*).

Hussain asserts that race and gender become two of the concerns that construct the debate in the novel, and these racial and gender differences are conceptualized through social relations (95). Nazneen’s later relationship with Karim, a young Islamic activist, represents a turning point in her life. Valman states that Nazneen is “shaken out of her passivity” by her affair with Karim (6). At the beginning, Nazneen is attracted to Karim, because he represents everything that she misses in her life, and also what Chanu lacks, the “seductive energy” and confidence to enchant her. For her, Karim represents “possibilities” and hope, “the thing that he had and inhabited so easily. A place in the world” (216). Through Nazneen’s relationship with Karim, as Hiddleston asserts, Ali shows that Karim, by joining the Islamic cause, is one of the characters “who desperately need to reclaim a sense of self, and the text subtly juxtaposes depictions of hope with

scattered comments on racism, prejudice, deprivation and social inequality” (61). Nazneen’s growing interest in the activist group, the Bengal Tigers, is part of her attraction to Karim. Islamic religion has been mistakenly associated with terrorism and ignorance, oppression and inequality. According to Hiddleston, Ali confronts these stereotypical and fixed misconceptions by revealing that the characters’ frustration is not “mythical, incomprehensible hatred of the West” but as a despairing reaction to their unequal and marginalized status in the society (66).

At the beginning, when Karim and Nazneen first meet, Karim, like Millat, is more British than Bangladeshi; wearing western clothing; “his jeans tight and his shirtsleeves rolled up to the elbow,” stammering when he speaks in Bangladeshi, preferring to speak in English, and affirming that England is his country. (170) Later, Karim changes from being a westernized character to embracing a fundamentalist Islam. Nazneen becomes confused by him. Finally, Nazneen revises her understanding of Karim and his affections; she rejects him, for she comprehends that she and Karim “[make] each other up”; to Karim, she is “the real thing” because she represents “an idea of home. An idea of himself that he found in her” (380). Nazneen realizes that “Karim did not have his place in the world. That was why he defended it.” At first, she saw “only his possibilities,” but when she looked again, she “saw that the disappointment of his life, which would shape him, had yet to happen” (377). Karim’s confidence in his status in the world proves fragile. The novel shows that even those who are shown to be confident in their place appear to be ambivalent.

Just as for the characters in *White Teeth*, both Chanu’s and Karim’s ambivalence results from a condition of “double belonging.” Both characters try to seek a more solid ground to give

them a sense of security; Chanu with his attempt at mythologizing his home country, and Karim with his embracing of fundamentalist Islam. Valman mentions that it is men in the novel who suffer what Chanu calls the immigrant tragedy. Valman asserts that Ali proposes that “women are less invested than men in myths of success, sentimental nostalgia or displays of power and, figured in this way; they are consequently more adaptable and resourceful” (7). However, the novel could also ironically be read as a novel of immigrant success, regarding Nazneen, as she develops from a village girl to an independent woman, taking control of her destiny and life, and becoming financially independent. While the women in *Brick Lane* appear to be depressed, displaced, and unhappy victims of immigration, it is their desperation and displacement that allow them to negotiate their situation and their identity in their new environment. Moreover, the passivity of their males forces them to create a space of action and transformation.

Nazneen ultimately rejects Chanu and Karim, both of whom want in different ways to define and cast her in certain roles. As such she rejects the men’s stereotypical ideas about her. She concludes “*I will decide what to do. I will say what happens to me. I will be the one*” (339 *Italics original*). She decides to break through the boundaries both men set for her, to remain in London and raise her daughters. She starts a business with a small group of “self-employed women,” making “a living with [their] hands” (López 525). Valman argues that Nazneen’s final discovery of her own agency is “closely tied to place; indeed, it is symbolically measured by her changing relationship to the streets” (6). The scene where Shahana escapes from home in the night before the day of their scheduled trip to Bangladesh, exemplifies Valman’s argument:

Out of the estate and onto Commercial Road, past the clothes wholesalers, up Adler Street and left onto the brief green respite of Altab Ali Park where the neat, pale-faced block of flats had picture windows and a gated entrance, from which the City boys could stroll to work. Nazneen ran down the slope and caught the green man at the crossing on Whitechapel. (394)

Nazneen, in search of her daughter amidst the riot between the Bengal Tigers and the Police, displays more control as she navigates the streets she is passing through. This passage reflects her growing confidence in handling the city on her own. I would argue that although Nazneen succeeds in taking control of her life and starts a business of her own, she remains dependent on her community for support. Nazneen remains “one of the millions of marginalized urban workers who function outside the global economy” (López 526). So, in this sense, Nazneen fails to achieve a full sense of empowerment as she remains outside the domain of the larger capital society. López writes in his article that *Brick Lane* is a “narrative of agency,” nevertheless, he asserts later in the same article the “impossibility of Nazneen’s complete reconciliation with the racist ... society” (517). Even Razia’s last statement, “”This is England. ... You can do whatever you like,”” (415) does not necessarily mean that their position within the British white society has been empowered. It is true that London offers Nazneen a space to question her positioning and forge a new identity for herself; however, the hierarchal conditions and structures of class, culture and gender are still present in England, and are not resolved or eradicated to embrace Nazneen’s otherness. Perfect contends that *Brick Lane* celebrates the “adaptability both of its immigrant protagonist as well as that of multicultural metropole.” According to Perfect, what is interesting about the novel is “the degree to which it prioritize the celebration of

multiculturalism over the destabilization of the stereotypical” (119). What Perfect overlooks in his argument is that even though Nazneen succeeds in adapting to her new environment, and gaining a kind of self-control, she remains an outsider and an Other, and is still not part of the British urban metropolitan space. She is not quite there in British society; nevertheless, she is not part of her past life anymore as well. She is trapped in that liminal position. Moreover, the novel does not reflect a multicultural society as much as a community which is totally Bangladeshi. I would agree with Hussain who mentions that it is difficult to see the novel, especially its ending, as a contemporary depiction of Britain in the early twenty first century; rather it seems more reflective of Britain in the 1970s. In fact, the ending remains ambiguous in regard to the relationships among races in England. Ali offers no solution for the future of the Bangladeshis in relation with the wider society, for she closes the novel on Nazneen’s life as still functioning within her community.

Both novels, *White Teeth* and *Brick Lane*, present the characters, immigrants and their children, as caught in an in-between status, which still plagues their lives, and draws boundaries for their integration into British society. Upstone argues that even though both novels expand over a few decades, from the 1970s until the present day, leading one to expect a kind of progress, regarding the big picture of a community; nevertheless, both novels are largely static in this respect as both represent immigrants as “incapable of stimulating change” (337). Both novels reveal that there is still a racial prejudice against the immigrants and their children; sometimes it is direct, and sometimes it is lurking underneath white people’s tolerance toward the racial other. Nevertheless, that racial prejudice comes to surface at various stages in both novels. Across generations, there is still a constant attempt to reject the Other as part of British

society, which results in identity crisis. Both novels reveal that immigrants' struggles to gain acknowledgment and respect will be futile because Western society is inherently prejudiced by stereotypical assumptions and preconceptions about the Other.

## Notes

1. In 1828, a hybrid is defined by Webster as “a mongrel or mule; an animal or plant, produced from the mixture of two species.” In the OED, the hybrid’s first recorded use is given, which dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century “to denote the crossing of people of different races”. Its first philological use dates from 1862 “to denote a composite word formed of elements belonging to different languages” (quoted in Young 6).
2. Tower Hamlets has a long history of immigration. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the first wave of refugees dwelled in that area. They were Huguenot refugees fleeing from persecution in France, followed by, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Jewish refugees escaping from the pogroms and expulsion in Eastern Europe. More recently, immigrants from Malta, Cyprus, Somalia and Bangladesh have also flooded in. The Bangladeshis started migration to Britain in the second half of the twentieth century, and they represent the highest proportion among others.
3. Hasina’s letters are the focus of some of the critics who analyze these letters thoroughly. Jane Hiddleston relates “the broken sentences and grammatical confusion” to the state of “impossible helplessness.” She asserts, “The clumsiness and incoherence of [Hasina’s] letters signify her situation outside the dominant paradigms of Englishness” (63). Alistair Cormack examines the uncertainty of meaning that the letters convey: “Without any account by the narrator, it is hard to know exactly what we are reading—whether the letters represent inept attempts at English or are a free translation from illiterate Bengali” (715). Canepari Labib suggests that the idiom of the letters “could be understood as an

attempt to dislocate, both syntactically and lexically, the language of the former [colonial] master, exploiting the potential of local idioms and “Other” cultural referents” (quoted in Michael Perfect 114). Perfect comments on Labib that she “takes the language and idiom of the letters as a problem of verisimilitude rather than as an indication of their having been translated by the narrative from Bengali” (111).

4. Tower Hamlets is one of the most crowded of London’s boroughs. Many British Bangladeshis live in their traditional extended family households, despite the overcrowding caused. The Bangladeshis usually live in British public housing in Tower Hamlets, and they lament the restricted size of most British housing stock. Due to the economic situation and the level of access to private housing, the Bangladeshis are forced and restricted to live in the housing provided by the estate. (Dench *et.al* 74).

## Conclusion

As the title suggests, this study examines the portrayal of London by different generations of women writers, who are considered the Other. The study demonstrates how immigration to London enables these women writers, specifically the first-generation writers, to portray London through the lens of a new level of racial, class, and gender understanding and awareness. The study examines the effects of immigration and living in a new, hostile environment on the identity formation, the struggles that ensue from that, and how these struggles are portrayed by the women writers discussed here - Jean Rhys, Doris Lessing, Buchi Emecheta, Joan Riley, Monica Ali, and Zadie Smith.

As I argue in the introduction, London is the context in which the cross-cultural experience has been examined. The discussion of these women writers' novels demonstrates that there is a continuous struggle of those considered outsiders, defined by their Otherness. At the core of these novels lies a consciousness that collides with and articulates otherness. The cultural complexities of British society lead to individuals struggling to position themselves in an alien environment. The discussion of these novels leads to related questions about clash of cultures, discrimination, exclusion, adaptation, assimilation, and resistance to the values of the host country.

In their works, these writers demonstrate that there is a break between the promising picture of a hybrid society painted by theorists, and the London represented in fiction by women spanning over five decades. Based on their own observations as women living in London, the experiences they depict in their novels reveal that the promise of London is a fallacy and illusion. Their experiences reverse the conventional expectations of the city; the real England they

experience as a “peripheral other” clashes with the one that they read about. The cruelty, coldness, dullness, and sterility they encounter result in a state of confusion and a sense of alienation and unbelonging. London is portrayed as a place of mess and disorder. For instance, in Lessing’s *In pursuit of the English* and Rhys’s *Voyage in the Dark*, London is “reduced to the sum of its faceless crowds, alienating streets, drab buildings, closed doors, and cold rooms” (Ball 7). Moreover, London is perceived as a place over-determined by imperial history and power hierarchies. London becomes socially and economically an oppressive place.

A study of Rhys’s and Lessing’s novels has revealed that even with the less visible minorities, exclusion from the mainstream is still practiced. Being White ought to grant Rhys and Lessing the position of not being so much the Other in England. Nevertheless, they feel the boundaries between themselves and the urban space in which they dwell in England. Lessing’s novel, while it deals with the concepts of “Englishness,” makes clear how this concept changed from a cultural category to a political one.

For the new immigrants, London “is too much a place.” Ball argues that London is experienced as a space and a place (32). Yi-Fu Tuan points out that the difference between these two terms is that “Space” is more abstract than “Place” (qtd. in Ball 32). According to Tuan, space becomes place as people “get to know it better and endow it with value” and thus it “acquires definition and meaning” (qtd. in Ball 32). So, the immigrant arriving in London for the first time encounters London as space and place. Ball writes that London “will be a space insofar as it is unfamiliar and not yet marked by personal experience of its streets and buildings. Over time, the city ... will gradually come into focus as a time-laden ... place” (33). So, the living reality of London as a place which the writers and their characters experience and face has become difficult and oppressive as it clashes with their idea about London as a space.

In the novels discussed here, women's alienation is intensified while in London. Their position in London is complicated by the intersecting ideologies of gender, class, and race. Moreover, their position is further complicated by their colonial backgrounds. Women are shown to be doubly othered and victimized. They engage in a struggle against patriarchal and traditional restrictions within their communities as well as in a struggle for recognition in their new environment. Their communities restrict them by re-imposing the patriarchal values of their mother countries, while British society treats them as second-class citizens because of their race. It is the state of displacement, marginalization and the lack of strong familial bond that eventually lead to their sense of distress and pain. These women are the victims of imperial systems and cultural western discourses that construct them as the other. Chandra Mohanty points out in her essay "Under the Western Gaze" how the western gaze, and specifically the western feminist gaze, stereotypes the Third World women, constructs them as passive victims of patriarchy, and associates them with underdevelopment (65).

The discussion of the novels raises questions about the position of non-western women as immigrants in the metropolitan city; whether their position there is really one of empowerment, and whether academic theories are really adequate, and take into consideration economic conditions and the historically imposed forms of oppression; racial, colonial, and sexual. The female protagonists reveal an assertiveness in pursuing change, unlike the men, who are shown surrendering to the experience of "repressive classification and the subsequent feelings of fragmentation and disorientation" (Neumier 10). In spite of these women's otherness and victimization, they have the ability to survive in London. While women appear to be depressed, displaced, and unhappy victims of immigration, it is their desperation and displacement that

compel them to negotiate their situation and their identity in their new environment. Moreover, the passivity of their males forces them to create a space of action and transformation. Unlike their men who want to choose between poles, women try to live a life of negotiation. However, their hybridity is far from empowering and liberating, because of hierarchical power relations. Assertive forms of British culture construct the people of colour as the Other in ways that “fails to do justice to the reality of their lives” (Weedon 233).

Even though the women are shown to be more capable of managing their lives, their position remains marginal in a society where racial, class and gender hierarchies prevail. For instance, Adah in *Second-Class citizen* succeeds in liberating herself from the grip of her husband and gains her independence; nevertheless, her future remains tenuous as a single mother with five children and no job. Moreover, she still has to face the racism of British society. Nazneen, in *Brick Lane*, succeeds in adapting to her new environment, and gaining a kind of self-control. However, she remains an outsider and an Other, outside British urban metropolitan space. She is not quite there in British society. Adah’s or Nazneen’s attempt at breaking away from patriarchy’s grip does not necessarily mean that their position within British society has been empowered. It is true that London offers them a space to question their positioning and forge a new identity for themselves; however, the hierarchal conditions and structures of class, culture and gender are still present in England, and are not resolved or eradicated to embrace their otherness.

In fact, the novels are open ended regarding the future of the characters. All the novels end in ambiguity. They have not arrived at a final solution. Moreover, the novels offer no solution for the future of the non-western people in relation with the wider society. The endings remain ambiguous in regard to the relationships among races in England.

Examining different generations of women writers and their works offers a better understanding of some of the cultural and historical conditions that have shaped representations of British culture over the twentieth century. Ruvani Ranasinha argues that “the studies of diasporic identities of cultural communities tend to privilege space over time, compress distinct eras and produce more abstracted ideas” (4). Accordingly, discussing cultural changes across different generations and in different historical moments helps map the shifting situations in different eras, and give a better understanding of how concepts like otherness, cultural difference, and hybridity have been experienced and conceptualized at those historical moments. Exploring the conditions of “production and reception” offers a better understanding of the changing conceptions of racial other and cultural difference” (Ranasinha 4).

The first-generation immigrants find it hard to adjust and integrate into the host country; they remain suspended in in-between spaces, between two cultures and two worlds. Some of them like Samad reject assimilation, which they consider as destructive to their children’s identities. The first-generation immigrants try to cope with their division and duality which are due to their awareness of multiple worlds. Their expectations of a better life and economic prosperity are thwarted by the reality of being in a prejudice society, where they are forced to come face to face with their otherness. Not only are the positions of the immigrants affected by the social and cultural changes, their definition and treatment as the Other is an important factor in their experiences. Their settlement is affected by the discrimination they experience in all aspects of life such as, employment and housing. For the first-generation immigrants, affiliation, engagement, and participation with the mainstream society are limited “due to both the external constraints such as prejudice and discrimination and the internal cultural norms and

values” (Anwar ix). Moreover, the first- generation immigrants always express a feeling of nostalgia for a home they left behind, which complicates and problematizes the process of adjustment and leads to their sense of dislocation. Muhammad Anwar argues that the notion of going back home contributes to the immigrants’ exclusion. This mythology that they come to London to make money, save, and then return to their home countries has a great influence on their settlement as well (ix).

These above-mentioned circumstances that surrounded the immigrants are reflected in the novels discussed in this study, especially those which are written after the mass migration from the ex-colonies. The novels of Emecheta and Riley, and even the novels of the younger generation of writers like Smith and Ali are good expressions of these conditions. In fact, and to different extents, all the novels express and articulate binaries. Racism ranges from mild to severe across generations. Men in all these novels are consumed and invested with the feelings of inferiority and of being “misfits.” Francis, Stanton, Samad, and Chanu are all examples of immigrants who come to London in search of a better life and great expectations, but unfortunately, they end up being stranded in London. Their confrontation with white British people results in a sense of inadequacy and lacking of self-esteem, which eventually lead them to internalize the negative attitudes and inferior status. The quality of social relations and interaction have conditioned by the history of imperialism and colonialism. These oppressive conditions put much stress on their familial relationships. As a compensation for their emasculation and wounded pride, they draw on patriarchal cultural practices to empower themselves.

A study of Emecheta's and Riley's novels, which discuss the conditions surrounded black people during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, reveals that the experience and the subject position of black people in Britain are defined by their race. Physical features have become the basis on which such racial discrimination has been justified. Michelle M. Wright finds that racial discrimination against the black which is based on biological differences is nonsensical. He argues that "there is no biological basis for racial categories (there is no such thing as a "black," "white," or "Asian" gene, and the amount of genetic disparity between persons of different races is the same as that between persons in the same racial category)" (1). *Second-Class Citizen* and *Waiting in the Twilight* have exposed the falsity of the myth of a multicultural London, or the "myth of success," for racism still pervades and plagues the lives of racial minority.

Even with the transformation of the metropolitan city towards a more multicultural society, ethnicity and cultural differences are still persistent issues in the works of even the younger generation of writers like Smith and Ali. *White Teeth* reveals that an implicit racism lies powerfully hidden but repeatedly propagated within Western notions of culture. Racism is still lurking underneath white people's tolerance toward the racial other.

As I argue, the first-generation immigrant writers record their immigration experience, and the challenges they face in moving from one country to another. The second-generation writers are conscious of the mixture of cultures within their own experience, and they write out of that outlook, which they bring to their novels. Their novels reflect a feeling of frustration and a struggle for acceptance in a multicultural society.

The second-generation characters prove to be more capable of adjusting to and indulging in the society they live in, trying to break away from their parents' culture and traditions. They tend to adopt British way of living. For this generation, England is the only home they know and experience, unlike the first generation of immigrants, who have homes other than Britain. Despite this difference, the novels show that the second generation is never at ease in any setting, as they seem still trapped in an uncertainty about their situation. Their status in the world they live in proves fragile. They feel that they are English; nevertheless, they are not recognized by the English society as such. Although born and raised in Britain, they are perceived by the mainstream society as the Other, and constantly they are reminded that they are from somewhere else but England, and that their hybridity is not desired or welcomed by a society that seeks homogeneity. In fact, the second generation's struggle is different; unlike their parents, their struggle is not a matter of adaptation to the British culture, but a matter of finding a place in that culture.

Although they bear the condition of hybridity, the second-generation characters cannot bridge the two cultures through negotiation. They realize that they are different from the other "typical" white girls and boys. Their experience of exclusion is exacerbated by their racial appearance, a race signifier, which denied them recognition by British society. They understand the barriers their otherness creates for them. Nevertheless there is a difference in their reaction toward their otherness. Some internalize their otherness and try to negate it like Irie and Magid, and others like Millat and Karim embrace their otherness. And both cases fail to provide the characters any solution or an assurance about their identity.

When analyzed by way of Said's concept of "otherness" and Bhabha's concept of "hybridity," the novels reveal that the experience of immigrants in London is still characterized

by binarism and inequity. The repetition of the same ending for the characters discussed across generations leads me to conclude that the colonized people, or non-western races, have been conditioned by their difference and otherness, a status that eternally relegates them to a position of marginality. Their inferiority remains deeply rooted and fixed within the borders of the metropolitan city's socio-cultural context. White society is not ready to admit the immigrant's hybridization, or to accept sharing the same space with its Other. The Other is still regarded as a threat and degradation, stigmatizing the fabric of the white British society. Discrimination and racial prejudice are still practiced, and they have been carried on unchallenged across generations. Certain white British people still condemn the presence of non-white races on the ground of these assumptions.

One of the major findings of this dissertation is that the "in-between" positioning of the characters may be described in an optimistic way as hybrid and inclusive that overcomes "politics of polarity" (Bhabha 1994), and acknowledges differences. It may be described as an enabling positioning that engenders new possibilities of collaboration and affinity. Yet, the novels show that being in-between is not empowering but destabilizing. Demonstration of hybridity does not help create new identities. The hybrid individuals become indecisive about their identity. None of the major characters in the novels, even the second-generation characters, succeeds in negotiating between opposite poles. These novels reveal that there is a break and significant differences between the world portrayed in them and the theoretical formulations. In this way, I would say that these novels represent a challenge to Bhabha's assumption that immigration is an enabling state, and to his concept of multiple centres.

It is concluded that it is impossible for the Other, hybrid or not, to fully integrate into Western society, as displayed by the constant struggles and attempts made by the second generation. They remain the Other, marginalized, never the centre, as the British culture is unable to embrace other values as the new British identity. The discussion of the novels reveals that integrity in a new society, specifically in England, is not an easy task; it is charged with difficulties. Even though multiculturalism and cultural difference have become “fully acknowledged as a constituent part of the societies within which we live today” (Pitcher 2), the processes of integration and adaptation to different cultural values could result in an uncertainty and ambiguity. Across generations, there is still a constant attempt to reject the Other as a part of British society, which results in identity crisis.

My study examines two novels written at the end of twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty first century. I suggest that, in further studies, the concept of otherness can be explored further by focusing on examining more texts written during the twenty first century and within the context of London, to examine the ongoing validity of the concept of “otherness.” Emmanuel Levinas emphasizes the ethical relation to the other. He stresses the importance of treating the Other as the other. He argues that “Man’s relationship with the other is *better* as difference than as unity: sociality is better than fusion. The very value of love is the impossibility of reducing the other to myself.” (22). How can this ethical relationship towards the Other be achieved? And how can the Other gain respect and love in a society inherently prejudiced due to stereotypical assumptions and preconceptions about the Other? Typically, the answer is that the West should “open itself to the dimension of otherness” (Levinas 28). Accordingly, the concept of “otherness” can be examined in relation to Levinas’s concept about the Other.

Moreover, another question can be explored further is how a person can integrate into a society where issues of racism, difference, and exclusion are still recognized. Does integration mean assimilation, or to use Roy Jenkin's definition, does it mean cultural diversity, coupled with equal opportunity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance" (qtd. in Ranasinha 54)? By the same token, Moddood suggests that in order "to reach out for a multicultural Britishness that is sensitive to ethnic difference," there must be "respect for persons as individuals and for the collectivities that people have a sense of belonging to. That means a multiculturalism that is happy with hybridity but has space for religious identities" as well (76). What Moddood suggests is the need for a more critical and political perspective that goes beyond the cultural and identity assumptions of us/them, toward a more mutual sense of citizenship.

## Works Cited

Ali, Monica. *Brick Lane*. London: Doubleday, 2003. Print.

----- . "Where I'm coming from." *The Guardian* Tuesday 17 (June 2003).

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2003/jun/17/artsfeatures.fiction>>. Web.

Alibhai-Brown, Yasmin. *Imagining the New Britain*. New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.

Anwar, Muhammad. *The Myth of Return: Pakistanis in Britain*. London: Heinemann, 1979.  
Print.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. Ed. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*.  
London: Routledge, 2006. Print.

----- . *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 2007. Print.

----- . *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London:  
Routledge, 2002. Print.

Balibar, Etienne. "Difference, Otherness, Exclusion." *Parallax* 11.1 (2005): 19-34. Web.

Ball, John Clement. *Imagining London: Postcolonial Fiction and the Transnational Metropolis*.  
Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2006. Print.

Beate Neumeier, Beate, ed. *Engendering Realism and Postmodernism: Contemporary Women  
Writers in Britain*. Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi, 2001. Print.

- Bhabha, Homi K. "Culture's in Between." *Multicultural States: Rethinking Difference and Identity*. Ed. David Bennett. New York: Routledge, 1998. 29-36. Print.
- ."Difference, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism." *The Politics of Theory*. Ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iverson, and Dianna Loxley. Colchester: U of Essex P, 1983, 194-211. Print.
- ."Postcolonial Authority and Postmodern Guilt." *Cultural Studies*, Ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler. New York: Routledge, 1992. 56-68. Print.
- ." *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- ."The Manifesto." *Wasafiri* 14.29 (1999): 38-9. Web.
- Blake, Ann, Leela Gandhi, and Sue Thomas. *England through Colonial Eyes in Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Palgrave: New York, 2001. Print.
- Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.
- Bromley Roger. *Narratives for a New Belonging: Diasporic Cultural Fictions*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000. Print.
- Bruner, Charlotte H. "A Caribbean Madness: Half Salve and Half Free." *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 11 (1984): 236-248. Web.
- Bryan, Beverley, Stella Dadzie, and Suzanne Scafe. *The Heart of the race: Black Women's Lives in Britain*. London: Virago Press, 1985. Print.
- Budhos, Shirley. *The Theme of Enclosure in Selected Works of Doris Lessing*. New York: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1987. Print.
- Campbell-hall, Devon. "Renegotiating the Asian-British Domestic Community in Recent Fiction." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 45.2 (2009): 171-79.

- Carby, Hazel. "White Women Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood." In *The Empire Strike Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain*. Centre for Cultural Studies London: Hutchinson, 1982. Web.
- Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U P, 1997. Print.
- Cormack, Alistair. "Migration and the Politics of Narrative Form: Realism and the Postcolonial Subject in *Brick Lane*" *Contemporary Literature* 47.4 (Winter 2006): 695-721. Web.
- Dalleo, Raphael. "Colonization in Reverse: White Teeth as Caribbean Novel." Ed. Tracey L. Walters. *Zadie Smith: Critical Essays*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. 91-104. Print.
- Davies, Carole Boyce. *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migration of the Subject*. London: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984. Print.
- Dell'Amico, Carol. *Colonialism and the Modernist Moment in the Early Novels of Jean Rhys*. New York and London: Routledge, 2005. Print.
- Dench, Geoff, Kate Gavron and Michael Young. *The New East End: Kinship, Race and Conflict*. London: Profile Books, 2006. Print.
- Ellis, Nadia. "London Chiming." *Postcolonial Studies* 9.3 (2006): 337-42. Web.
- Emecheta, Buchi. *Second-Class Citizen*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1994. Print.
- Emery, Mary Lou. *Jean Rhys's "World's End:" Novels of Colonial and Sexual Exile*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1990. Print.
- Fabian, Johannes. "The Other Revisited: Critical Afterthoughts." *Anthropological Theory* 6.2 (2006):139-152. Web.

- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991. Print.
- , *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove P, 2004. Print.
- Fischer, Susan Alice Fischer. "Global Migration, and the City: Joan Riley's *Waiting in the Twilight* and Hanan Al-Shaykh's *Only in London*." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 23.1 (Spring 2004): 107-120. Web.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. "The "New Migration": Clashes, Connections, and Diasporic Women's Writing." *Contemporary Women's Writing* 3.1 (2009): 6-27.
- Fryer, Peter. *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*. London: Pluto, 1984. Print.
- Gilroy, Paul. *There Ain't No Black in The Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*. London: Hutchinson, 1987. Print.
- Wisker, Gina. *Black Women's Writing*. New York: St. Martin's P, 1993. Print.
- Green, Martin. *The English Novel in the Twentieth Century: The Doom of Empire*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984. Print.
- Gregg, Veronica Marie. *Jean Rhys's Historical Imagination: Reading and Writing*. Chapel Hill & London: U of North Carolina P, 1995. Print.
- Grewal, Shabnam and *et.al.* *Charting the Journey: Writings by Black and Third World Women*. London: Sheba Feminist Publishers, 1988. Print.
- Hall, Catherine. "Cultural Identities and the Legacy of the Empire." *British Cultural Studies*. Ed. David Morley and Kevin Robbins. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001. 27-40. Print.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Ed. Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990. 222-37. Print.

- , "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity." *Dangerous Liaisons: Gendre, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*. Ed. McClintock, Anne, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997. 173-187. Print.
- Hiddleston, Jane. "Shapes and Shadows: (Un)veiling the Immigrant in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 40.57 (2005): 57-72. Web.
- Hron, Madelaine. *Translating Pain: Immigrant Suffering in Literature and Culture*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2009. Print.
- Hussain, Yasmin. *Writing Diaspora: South Asian Women, Culture and Ethnicity*. Burlington: Ashgate, 1988. Print.
- Hussein, Aamer. "Joan Riley talks with Aamer Hussein." *Wasafiri* 8.17 (1993): 17-19. Web.
- Hutnyk, John. "Hybridity." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28.1 (January 2005):79-102. Web.
- Innes, C.L. *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008. Print.
- Jacobs, Jane M. *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City*. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.
- JanMohamed, Abdul. "The Economy of the Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature." *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (Autumn 1985): 59–87. Web.
- Joseph, Margaret Paul. *Caliban in Exile: The Outsider in Caribbean Fiction*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. Print.
- Kabeer, Naila. *The Power to Choose: Bangladeshi Women and the Labour Market Decisions in London and Dhaka*. New York: Verso, 2000. Print.
- Kalliney, Peter J. *Cities of Affluence and Anger: A Literary Geography of Modern Englishness*. Charlottesville and London, U of Virginia P, 2006. Print.

- Kearney, Richard. "Emmanuel Levinas." *Dialogues With Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984. 47-70. Print.
- Klein, Carole. *Doris Lessing: A Biography*. Duckworth: London, 2000. Print.
- Knauer, Kris. "The Root Canals of Zadie Smith: London's Intergenerational Adaptation." *Zadie Smith: Critical Essays*. Ed. Tracey L. Walters. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. 171-86. Print.
- Lau, Lisa. "Making the Difference: The Differing Presentations and Representations of South Asia in the Contemporary Fiction of Home and Diasporic South Asian Women Writers." *Modern Asian Studies* 39.1 (2005): 237-56. Web.
- Lazarus, Neil. *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. Print.
- Lessing, Doris. *In Pursuit of the English*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961. Print.
- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge, 2005. Print.
- López, Alfred J. "'Everybody else just living their lives': 9/11, race and the new postglobal literature." *Patterns of Prejudice* 42.4-5 (2008): 509-529. Web.
- McLeod, John. *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Mellown, Elgin W. "Characters and Themes in the Novels of Jean Rhys." *Critical Perspectives on Jean Rhys*. Ed. Pierrette M. Frickey. Washington: Three Continents Press, 1990. 103-17. Print.
- Miller, J. Hillis. *Others*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001. Print.
- Minh-ha, Trinh T. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989.

- Mirze, Z. Esra. "Fundamental Differences in Zadie Smith's White Teeth." *Zadie Smith: Critical Essays*. Ed. Tracey L. Walters. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. 187-200.
- Modood, Tariq. "British Asian Identities: Something Old, Something Borrowed, Something New." *British Cultural Studies*. Ed. David Morley and Kevin Robbins. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001. 67-78. Print.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Feminist Review* 30 (Autumn 1988): 61-88. Web.
- Mohanty, Satya P. "Colonial Legacies, Multicultural Futures: Relativism, Objectivity and the Challenge of Otherness." *Publication of the Modern Languages Association* 110.1 (January 1995): 108-18. Web.
- Moore-Gilbert, Bart. *Postcolonial Theory: Context, Practices, Politics*. New York: Verso, 1998. Print.
- Nasta, Susheila, Ed. *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1992. Print.
- O'Brien, Louise. "Buchi Emecheta and the "African Dilemma"." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 36 (2001): 95-106. Web.
- O'Connor, Teresa F. *Jean Rhys: the West Indian Novels*. New York: New York UP, 1986. Print.
- Paproth, Matthew. "The Flipping Coin: The Modernist and Postmodernist Zadie Smith." *Zadie Smith: Critical Essays*. Ed. Tracey L. Walters. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. 9-29. Print.
- Parry, Benita. *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*. London: Routledge, 2005. Print.
- Parsons, Deborah L. *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity*. New York: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

- Perfect, Michael. "The Multicultural Bildungsroman: Stereotypes in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*" *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 43.3 (2008): 109-120. Web.
- Pitcher, Ben. *The politics of Multiculturalism: Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain*. New York: palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.
- Poon, Angelia. "To know what's what: Forms of migrant knowing in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 45: 4 (December 2009), 426-437. Web.
- Porter, Abioseh Michael. "Second-Class Citizen: The Point of Departure for Understanding Buchi Emecheta's Major Fiction." *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta*. Ed. Marie Umeh. New Jersey – Asmara: Africa World P, Inc., 1996. 267-75. Print.
- Porter, Dennis. "Of Heroines and Victims: Jean Rhys and *Jane Eyre*," *The Massachusetts Review* 17.3 (Autumn 1976): 540-552. Web.
- Lauren, Paul Gorden. *Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination*. Boulder & London: Westview Press, 1988. Print.
- Nasta, Susheila; Araeen, Rasheed; Bhabha, Homi. "Radio 3 'Night Waves' discussion." *Wasafiri* 14.29 (1999): 39-43. Web.
- Ramchand, Kenneth. *The West Indian Novel and its Background*. London: Heinemann, 1983. Print.
- Ranasnha, Ruvani. *South Asian Writers in Twentieth-Century Britain: Culture in Translation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007. Print.
- Rhys, Jean. *Voyage in the Dark*. London: Penguin Books, 2000. Print.
- Ridout, Alice and Susan Watkins. *Doris Lessing: Border Crossings*. London: Continuum, 2009. Print.

Riley, Joan and Brair Wood. Ed. *Leave to Stay: Stories of Exile and Belonging*. London: Virago, 1996. Print.

----- . *Waiting in the Twilight*. London: The Women's Press Ltd., 1987. Print.

----- . "Writing Reality in a Hostile Environment." *Us/ Them: Translation, Transcription and Identity in Post-Colonial Literary Cultures*. Ed. Gordon Collier. Amsterdam – Atlanta: Rodopi, 1992. 213-218. Print.

Rutherford, Jonathan. "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* Ed. Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990. 207-21. Print.

Rutherford, Jonathan. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990. 222-37. Print.

Sage, Lorna. *Women in the House of Fiction: Post-War Women Novelists*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage, 1993. Print.

----- . *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1994. Print.

----- . *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000. Print.

----- . "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors." *Critical Inquiry* 15.2 (Winter 1989): 205-25. Web.

Sandhu, Sukhdev. *London Calling: How Black and Asian Writers Imagined a City*. London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003. Print.

Seamon, David. "Newcomers, Existential Outsiders and Insiders: Their Portrayal in Two Books by Doris Lessing." *Humanistic Geography and literature: Essays on the Experience of Place*. Ed. Douglas C. D. Pocock. London: Croom Helm, 1981. 85-100. Print.

- Sheppard, Francis Henry Wollaston. *London: A History*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. Print.
- Sizemore, Christine W. "The London Novels of Buchi Emecheta." *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta*. Ed. Marie Umeh. New Jersey – Asmara: Africa World P, Inc., 1996. 367-385. Print.
- , *Negotiating Identities in Women's Lives: English Postcolonial and Contemporary British Novels*. London: Greenwood Press, 2002. Print.
- , "In Pursuit of the English: Hybridity and the Local in Doris Lessing's First Urban Text." *The Journal of the Commonwealth Literature* 43.2 (June 2008). 133-144. Web.
- Smith, Zadie. *White Teeth*. New York: Vintage, 2001. Print.
- Sougou, Omar. *Writing Across Cultures: Gender Politics and Difference in the Fiction of Buchi Emecheta*. Rodopi: Amsterdam – New York, 2002. Print.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999. Print.
- Staley, Thomas F. *Jean Rhys: A Critical Study*. London: The Macmillan Press, 1979. Print.
- Suárez, Isabel Carrera. "Absent Mother(Land)s: Joan Riley's Fiction." *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia*. Ed. Susheila Nasta. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1992. 290-309. Print.
- Thomas, Sue. "Black Families in Buchi Emecheta's England(s)." *England Through Colonial Eyes in Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Ed. Ann Blake, Leela Gandhi, and Sue Thomas. New York: Palgrave, 2001: 143-56. Print.
- Thompson, Molly. "'Happy Multicultural land'? The Implications of an 'Excess of Belonging' in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*." *Write Black, Write British: From Post Colonial to Black British Literature* Ed. Kadija Sessay. Hertford: Hansib, 2005. 122-140. Print.

- Tiffin, Helen. "Mirrors and Masks: Colonial Motifs in the Novels of Jean Rhys," *World Literature Written in English* 17.1 (1978): 328-341. Web.
- Umeh, Marie Alene. "Women and Social Realism in the Novels of Buchi Emecheta." The University of Wisconsin - Madison, ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 1981. 8129810.
- Upstone, Sara. "SAME OLD, SAME OLD" Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*" *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 43.3 (2007): 336-349. Web.
- Valman, Nadia. "The East End Bildungsroman from Israel Zangwill to Monica Ali." *Wasafiri* 24.1 (2009): 3-8.
- Walters, Tracey L. "Still Mammies and Hos: Stereotypical Images of Black Women in Zadie Smith's Novels" *Zadie Smith: Critical Essays*. Ed. Tracey L. Walters. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. 141-55. Print.
- Walters, Tracey L. Ed. *Zadie Smith: Critical Essays*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. Print.
- Weedon, Chris. "Redefining Otherness, Negotiating Difference: Contemporary British Asian Women's Writing." *Engendering Realism and Postmodernism: contemporary Women Writers in Britain*. Ed. Beate Neumeier. Amsterdam - New York, 2001. Print.
- "Migration, Identity, and Belonging in British Black and South Asian Women's Writing." *Contemporary Women's Writing* 2.1 (June 2008): 17-35. Web.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford U. P., 1973. Print.
- Wright, Michelle M. *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2004. Print.
- Wyndham, Francis and Diana Melly. Ed. *Jean Rhys: Letters, 1931-1966*. Bristol: Andre Deutsch, 1984. Print.

Xie, Shaobo. "Postcolonialism" *Encyclopedia of Globalization*. Ed. Ronald Robertson and Jan Aart Scholte 3. New York: Routledge, 2007. Print.

---. "Writing On Boundaries: Homi Bhabha's Recent Essays" *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 27.4 (1996): 155-166. Print.

Yelin, Louise. *From the Margins of Empire: Christina Stead, Doris Lessing, Nadine Gordimer*. London: Cornell UP, 1998. Print.

Young, Robert. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. Print.

Young, Robert. *White Mythologies: Writing, History and the West*. London: Routledge, 1990. Print.