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Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Diplomski sveučilišni studij Engleskog jezika i književnosti; smjer: nastavnički (dvopredmetni)

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Student/ica: Franko Miloš

Mentor/ica: Doc.dr.sc. Vesna Ukić Košta

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Zadar, 7. listopad 2020.

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Introduction

According to Graham MacPhee, the fundamental parameters of post-war British society and culture are the product of its violent and exploitative imperial history.However, the main perspectives that have emerged from the same history conceive it as completely disconnected from the present, arguing that the present has become "imperially innocent" (5). MacPhee does not agree with this separation of the imperial past from the present, and insists that the understanding of the term 'postcolonial' needs to be broadened, in other words, it needs to be understood as much more central to post-war British literature and culture than has previously been the case. This view is also reflected by Paul Gilroy who believes that the imperial and colonial past still shapes political life in the countries which are "overdeveloped", but can no longer be defined as imperial in the strict sense of the term (2).

In order to fully understand the importance of British imperialism and its impact on the present, it is important to consider that the overall process of decolonization was incomplete, and in many ways dictated the reconstruction of the Western global hegemony (MacPhee, 6). The undeniable influence of British imperialism did not simply vanish after the Second World War and the events that followed; therefore it is difficult to argue that the present is "imperially innocent". Gilroy believes that a new form of colonial domination is being instituted as part of a heavily militarized globalization process, which is spearheaded by the United States of America. Gilroy identifies USA as a successor to the European empires that had their downfalls and experienced major transformations during the 20th century (3). The main reason why it is vital to establish a connection between the imperial past and the present and not to shy away from it or discard it is because many of the contemporary British novels, like those that will be analyzed in this diploma paper, grapple with imperialism's remains and legacy. Gilroy maintains that a deliberate engagement with the 20th century and

its histories of suffering may embellish resources for the peaceful accommodation of otherness, particularly in relation with the “fundamental commonality” (4).

Significance of Postcolonialismin Literature

Said’s *Orientalism*

The notion of ‘otherness’ in the context of Western hegemony and superiority over the East, especially in the cultural sense, was greatly popularized by Edward Said's tremendously vital theories about ‘Orientalism’, which the author defines as follows: “Orientalism is an academic term which is a critical approach to representations of the Orient, vision of the West towards the Orient, which includes Middle Eastern, African and Asian societies“ (96). Orientalism, according to Said, almost always implies that Western culture is superior to Eastern cultures. The idea of Western superiority over the Orient was created through a large body of texts Said calls “Orientalist”, and through consent within Western civil society. The same Orientalist perceives the “Other” as static, eternal, exotic, dangerous, and inferior. Said argues that it is cultural hegemony which gives Orientalism its durability and strength. The idea of European/Western culture as the superior one is always firmly tied to its “Other” in a way that the perceived underdevelopment of the Orient is crucial for defining Western culture as superior. According to Said, Europe and America need the Orient or “the other” as this constructed idea of a rival which is inferior, underdeveloped, foreign, and exotic in order to further solidify the perception of complete Western superiority and progress (97).

The selection of analyzed novels in this paper reflects the discussion on otherness and Western cultural hegemony. The authors and the novels that will be discussed in this paper all technically belong to the Orientalist notion of otherness, in other words, Zadie Smith, Monica

Ali, Andrea Levy and Hanif Kureishi are all authors that have roots outside the dominant Western hubs. Because of their specific roots and the main topics and themes in each of the selected novels, their works can be viewed as attempts to reconstruct the problematic visions of the Orient, and to provide an alternative perspective on issues of decaying racial identities and cultural displacement.

In order to provide further context on Said's monumental theories and his inspirations, it is important to consider the works of Karlis Racevskis and Carl Olson, who analyzed the intellectual ties between Said and Foucault, with a particular emphasis on how Said interacted with Foucault's most prominent theories on discourse and power. Initially, Said agreed with Foucault and leaned heavily on his theories, believing that Foucault's greatest intellectual contribution is the fact that he actively connected the text with its affiliations, in other words, Foucault attempted to uncover the relationships between the discursive and the non-discursive power/knowledge networks, thus taking into account not only the semantic but also the material reality of the text. Olson states that Said's understanding of power, nature of texts, and discourse was heavily influenced by his reading of Foucault's work (320). Said also constituted and shaped his own theories in accordance with Foucault's belief that discourse always involves some kind of violence. In other words, Said defined Orientalism as a violent form of discourse, one that reflected the West's desire to dominate and control the Orient (321).

However, according to Olson, Said's work is anything but powerless and passive. The same author goes on to elaborate how Said turned the tables on the powerful using their own theoretical knowledge and tools, mainly those developed by Foucault and Nietzsche, in order to critically evaluate the ways that the Occident (the West) portrays the Orient (324). By adopting Foucault's theories, Said exposed his work to criticism, mostly because Foucault's definition of power differs from what Orientalism proclaims; as per Olson, "if Said were to

truly adopt Foucault's notion of power, Said would have to admit that members of the Orient do not possess power" (325). It is important to note that Said did not blindly worship the work of Foucault, despite the fact that Foucault's work greatly influenced and inspired his own. Racevskis maintains that one of the main aims of Foucault's work, which was unrecognized by Said, was to clear a path for those voices that had been silenced and to help rebuild stigmatized languages and forgotten knowledges (91). Racevskis reaches this verdict after examining Foucault's book on the history of madness, but believes that Foucault's words about the systems of exclusion, rejection, and refusal need not be limited to psychiatric hospitals, and should also be taken as a metaphor for everything that the Western civilization had preferred to keep silent over the ages (92).

Said would eventually move away and distance himself from Foucault's work later in his career. Racevskis argues that this was due to the political differences between the two, different theoretical approaches to defining the concept of power, but also because Said believed that Foucault was not engaged enough with postcolonial issues (93). Regardless of their disagreements and Said's many critiques of Foucault, Racevskis notes that Said appreciated Foucault's work mainly because it provided the theoretical tools that he later used to create and problematize the notion of the 'Orient' in his own work. In an essay commemorating Foucault's passing, Said wrote about the rift between himself and Foucault, stating that Foucault's "Eurocentrism" prevented him from being more engaged with both the feminist and the postcolonial issues. Although Foucault never explicitly made a theoretical corpus to be used for feminist or postcolonial causes, many of the prominent authors from those fields used Foucault's work to develop their own theories and explain power relations, one of those authors being Said himself (Racevskis 95).

The Rise and Fall of the Term 'Commonwealth Literature'

In addition to what can be ascertained from Said's 'Orientalism' and Foucault's theoretical foundations, Gilroy adds that the increased familiarity with the imperial past and its bloodstained workings of racism can be useful in the much more general process of understanding complex contemporary settings and multicultural social relations which extend past Britain. The essence of Gilroy's work and the connection between a wider socio-political context and postcolonial literature are best summarized by the following quote: "acceptance that race, nationality, and ethnicity are invariant relieves the anxieties that arise with a loss of certainty as to who one is and where one fits" (6). Race, nationality, and ethnicity can therefore be perceived as constant, but the mentioned anxiety relief is often a goal pursued desperately by many characters in postcolonial novels with varying levels of success.

Generally speaking, acceptance is one of the most sought after elements of many postcolonial novels and novels that tackle topics of immigration and life in a foreign land, and this applies to all four novels under discussion in this paper. The protagonists in these novels are often deliberately put into situations that highlight the society's inability to accept their otherness, which causes them great pain, feelings of displacement, loss of identity, and self-doubt. Gilroy claims that racism and the lasting power of racial identities still serve as a blockade, preventing marginalized people from belonging (151). The idea of belonging to a place is a powerful theme in all of the selected novels, but this concept extends past the literary into the biographies of these authors and the stigmas associated with the writing of colonial and ex-colonial migrants to Britain. MacPhee believes that their work was often perceived as marginal and even external to the British culture, but is now recognized as a significant contribution to the formation of the multi-cultural literary culture that is

recognized in the present (8). The following excerpt from Said's essay on colonialism[1] perfectly describes and summarizes this shift towards the acceptance of 'Commonwealth literature':

> Reading and interpreting the major metropolitan cultural texts in this newly activated, reinformed way could not have been possible without the movements of resistance that occurred everywhere in the peripheries against the empire. And today writers and scholars from the formerly colonized world have imposed their diverse histories on, have mapped their local geographies in, the great canonical texts of the European center. And from these overlapping yet discrepant interactions the new readings and knowledges are beginning to appear. One need only think of the tremendously powerful upheavals that occurred at the end of the 1980s—the breaking down of barriers, the popular insurgencies, the drift across borders, the looming problems of immigrant, refugee, and minority rights in the West—to see how obsolete are the old categories, the tight separations, and the comfortable autonomies (31).

MacPhee's work delves into the past to illustrate how in Britain, academic scholarship traditionally focused on what was then described as "the literature of empire", or in other words, canonical British literature set in "colonial locations", while from the 1960s and onward it also began to address what was known as "Commonwealth literature", or rather literature written in English by writers from the newly independent colonies ("New Commonwealth") and the former British dominions ("Old Commonwealth"). The same author argues that imperial ideology stresses inherent differences between cultures, separating

[1] Said's essay, "Secular Interpretation, the Geographical Element, and the Methodology of Imperialism" is the first chapter of *After Colonialism*, a volume of essays that emerged from a series of seminars held at Princeton University from 1990 to 1992. According to Niva, Said's wide-ranging essay outlines some of the central problems of modern academic disciplines, such as the suppression of their participation with colonial categorisations and their efforts to contain heterogenous knowledge and cultural differences.

non-Europeans as more primitive and immature when compared to the British, who represent the "final, modern end of human development" (11). This view serves as an extension of what Said formulated with his Orientalism, and is invaluable for the current discussion because it paves a way for the discussions about acts of discrimination in the literary field. MacPhee paraphrases a Trinidadian activist and intellectual C.L.R. James, who connected British accounts of the supposed savagery and primitiveness they saw in Africa to the need to justify and legitimize colonialism, which was often done through literature. Signs of imperial ideology are perhaps most apparent when considering the classifications of English literature that were commonly used in the past. All literature written in English by authors that were not originally from the British Isles was dubbed "Commonwealth literature", and, according to Salman Rushdie, often ignored and undervalued, especially in comparisons with what was known as "authentic" English literature (MacPhee 76).

To further elaborate, Salman Rushdie perceives the term 'Commonwealth literature' as a problematic umbrella term, used to assemble different authors from the Commonwealth countries, but also those that had nothing to do with it, for example, authors from South Africa and Pakistan. He believes that Commonwealth literature is a fundamentally flawed concept, made obsolete due to the significant differences between numerous different countries. These authors and their specific backgrounds are all unnaturally grouped together and essentially categorized as a body of writing that is not made by a white author living in Britain, Ireland or the United States of America (63). The term is, according to Rushdie, used to divide the English literature 'proper' from the Commonwealth literature which is placed below it. In other words, this divide places English literature 'proper' in the centre and the rest of the world at the periphery. Rushdie argues that this centre simply cannot hold any longer, and that all English literatures should be studied together in order to accommodate the growth

of English as a world language which now also possesses a world literature that is quickly growing and expanding beyond national borders and historical boundaries.

Critiques of Postcolonial Studies

As EliSorensen claims, one of the characteristic aspects of postcolonial studies as a theoretical field, which has defined its relatively brief history, has been its amorphousness or shapelessness. In other words, it is both self-critical and oppositional, and this, according to Sorensen, prevents the discipline from reaching a stagnant and self-complacent level of homogeneity (66). That being said, he emphasizes the ambiguous relationship between postcolonial studies as a theoretical and academic field and postcolonial literary texts, while also believing that there has been a tendency in postcolonial studies to suppress more conventional modes of writing that are not distanced enough from imperialist ideology. Moreover, there seems to be a very narrow list of postcolonial "canonical" works which are not just being taught in departments of postcolonial studies, but also lauded by postcolonial critics. Sorensen turns to Neil Lazarus, who has stated that there is only one author in the postcolonial literary canon, and that author is Salman Rushdie.

However, the glaring issue is that even Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* seems to be continuously reread and reiterated by the postcolonial critics. Sorensen and Lazarus both believe that there is an issue with how the field of postcolonial studies and its norms exclude many works which can be labelled as postcolonial literature. Sorensen attempts to uncover which literary aspects are valued in particular by postcolonial critics, and which objectives related to the general notion of postcolonialism would have influence on the overall process of value-coding (71). He believes that such restrictive value-coding is harmful to the field, and that this situation, in which only works with perfect political credentials and those that

meet the established standards can be viewed as praiseworthy, seems to be creating a specific burden for the writers themselves, but also for the readers and critics.[2]

In addition, the criteria used to canonize certain works as representative of postcoloniality seem to be heavily influenced by Western (postmodern) criteria, which primarily emphasize and value experimental works, frequent usage of irony, resistance towards closure, and questioning of traditional boundaries. Alistair Cormack believes that making a strict connection between cultural hybridity and experimental forms of writing is not necessary, and that realism in literature does not have to be exclusively viewed as traditional and unsuitable for postcolonial works (696). Moreover, Michael Perfect notes how representations of cultural otherness in contemporary British literature seem to be categorized as either "progressive" or "reductive", which in his view severely obstructs the reading and analysis of contemporary postcolonial novels, as most critical views tend to gravitate towards a very specific configuration of "progressiveness" (111).

Sorensen continues by noting that postcolonial studies have previously brought a revolution to the field of literary studies by creating consciousness-raising readings of texts that were previously located within narrow, local frameworks (72). However, the same author believes that postcolonial studies are at present plagued by melancholia because of a loss of "critical marginality". He also quotes Spivak who implies that the contemporary field of postcolonial studies has lost its identity as a critical margin, and has become commoditized (73). Adding to the list of possible critiques, Perfect highlights the eagerness that critics have displayed when excavating instances of "knowing irony" from novels such as Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*. According to him, this is indicative of "a critical readiness to read any

[2] According to Alison Donnell the institutionalization and consolidation of postcolonial works created a sort of "unhelpful homogenization of political intent", which neglects those works that are not disengaged from colonial culture in an explicitly self-conscious way. Donnel believes that this creates a burden not just for the writers, who are condemned to oppressed self-defining narratives, but also for the readers and the critics (qtd. in Sorensen 70).

contemporary text which deals with cultural difference in a particular, predetermined way", which he finds concerning and counterproductive (119).

Western Corruption in the Postcolonial Novels

Before moving on to more detailed analyses of selected novels, it is important to note the common themes and narrative elements that these novels share. Firstly, one of the most common issues of many postcolonial novels is Western corruption, or rather how Britain corrupts those that come to its doorstep, whilst having a negative impact on their cultural identities and sense of belonging. Mindi McMann believes that the passing of the British Nationality Act of 1948 placed a certain "strain" on traditional notions of Britishness – which were up until then exclusively associated with being white. Issues of race were, in a way, quarantined in the colonies, but the aforementioned act changed this, welcoming all citizens of the Commonwealth to England (at least in theory) as a way to lift the crumbling nation after the Second World War and provide much needed labor from the colonies (McMann 623). However, the mixing and coexistence of different races, ethnicities, and cultures in a single place led to the rise of racism based on cultural difference and fears that this process will cause violent conflicts and the gradual destruction of social bonds (McMann 623-624). The fear of the immigrant becoming too British is not just the fear of the British, as emphasized by McMann, but also the fear of the immigrant as well; often highlighted in novels such as *White Teeth*, which primarily grapples with multiculturalism and hybrid social structures.

In Zadie Smith's *White Teeth,* Samad Iqbal becomes outraged by Britain and its society so much, he ultimately decides to gather as much money as possible and send one of his sons back home to Bangladesh. This is easily one of the crucial moments in the story, and it is clear that the author wishes to emphasize the importance of seemingly desperate attempts

of displaced individuals to find their true identity or secure a better future for their children, or so they believe at the time. Samad describes Britain as “a place where you are never welcomed, only tolerated”, and a place that “drags you in and suddenly you are unsuitable to return, your children are unrecognizable, you belong nowhere” (414). His wife Alsana supports this belief, worrying about how the society around her family is taking her son away from her, and “Englishifying him completely” (354), leading him (Millat Iqbal) away from his culture, his religion, and his family. In a noteworthy sequence that focuses on Alsana's nightmares, she imagines generations of her Bengali grandchildren being completely assimilated in Britain, becoming almost unrecognizable to her. Whilst Samad is afraid of the immediate cultural influences from the West corrupting his children, Alsana looks towards the future and fears what generations of mixed marriages will result in. She

> would regularly wake up in a puddle of her own sweat after a night visited by visions of Millat (genetically BB where B stands for Bengaliness) marrying someone called Sarah (aa where a stands for Aryan), resulting in a child called Michael (Ba), who in turn marries somebody called Lucy (aa), leaving Alsana with a legacy of unrecognizable greatgrandchildren (Aaaaaaa!), their Bengaliness thoroughly diluted, genotype hidden by phenotype (272).

Chanu, one of the central characters of *Brick Lane* also believes that Britain corrupts immigrants that come to Britain to search for a better life, and vows to never let his children be corrupted by the West: “Our community is not educated about this, and much else besides. But for my part, I don't plan to risk these things happening to my children. We will go back before they get spoiled” (28).

Much like in *White Teeth*, characters in *Brick Lane* also present a very distinct rift between the first and the second generation of immigrants, with the former having a more reserved approach towards the Western culture, and the latter, represented mostly through

Chanu's daughters, trying to assimilate and live just like the English. Chanu is a firm believer that British society is a battleground where Western values clash with Eastern, such as his own. He believes that his daughters are not aware of their identity, and his paranoia is almost tangible, which causes arguments between him and his eldest daughter. Chanu reveals how he truly feels only when talking to Dr Azad, and the following passage neatly summarizes his thoughts on immigration, clash of cultures and assimilation:

> '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 endangered 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… (101).

Chanu uses the word 'endangered' to describe the effects of Western culture on his own and his children's identities, and this could be linked to what Gilroy emphasized when talking about how important acceptance of otherness truly is. The characters of *Brick Lane* are not given any acceptance, and are simply expected to adapt to dominant values, with no consideration that they may lose their own identity in the process.

Small Island **– Origins of Britain as a Multicultural Society**

Andrea Levy's *Small Island* presents a vivid and merciless vision of Britain, a broken nation struggling through a major world conflict, to then emerge from the fray as the 'mother country' which does not look kindly upon her own subjects. Among those praising the novel is Alicia Ellis, who believes the novel created a common narrative of nation and identity for the purpose of understanding the experiences of Black people in Britain (69). Futhermore, Duboin emphasizes that *Small Island* is a crucial postcolonial novel which provides the

contexts and the origin story of Britain as a multicultural society (11). Firstly, it offers a look back on the Windrush generation, Caribbean migrants who travelled to the 'Mother Country' in search of a brighter future. According to Ellis, the significance of the Windrush migration lies in the fact that it is often perceived as an event that marked the rise of multicultural, multiracial Britain (80). Secondly, it illustrates how World War Two and the Blitz destroyed a national identity that was built on the "persistent myth that the British Isles formed an impregnable archipelago safely separated from continental Europe" (Duboin 11). Thirdly, the novel aims to explain how all these historical events affected the process of redefining what is British, which included extensive changes to the traditional white British identity under the new paradigm of multiculturalism.

Two major characters in the novel, Hortense and Gilbert, are both young immigrants who arrive in Britain from their homeland of Jamaica to create a new identity and secure a better future for themselves, believing in equality and solidarity under the aforementioned rule of 'mother country'. MacPhee argues that the novel's earlier setting (right before, during, and after WW2) lends it a more critical edge on the present, especially when compared to the more optimistic endings of many other more recent novels that deal with Britain's multicultural society, such as Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane. "*In rewriting this past moment, the novel confirms its still living significance for our own present" (MacPhee 163). According to Corinne Duboin, the novel expands beyond post-war London to rural England, Jamaica and India, and in doing so it provides the needed context for the migrants' arrival and the subsequent encounter with the racial 'Other'. *Small Island* displays how the traumatic events of World War Two, the decline of the British Empire, transnational migration and the beginnings of what Duboin refers to as "colonization in reverse" led to significant changes that shaped both Jamaica and Britain into *small islands* (2).

The idea that Britain is a “mother country” to all its colonies and distant holdings is best reflected in one of Gilbert's short speeches, which present a hopeful and idealistic vision of Britain:

> Let me ask you to imagine this. Living far from you is a beloved relation whom you have never met. Yet this relation is so dear a kin she is known as Mother. (..) There are many valorous stories told of her, which enthral grown men as well as children. Her photographs are cherished, pinned in your own family album to be admired over and over. Your finest, your best, everything you have that is worthy is sent to Mother as gifts (120).

This idealistic vision of Britain is immediately contrasted by Gilbert’s uglier and more realistic vision of ‘mother country’: “The filthy tramp [...]. Ragged, old and dusty as the long dead [...] This stinking cantankerous hag. She offers you no comfort after your journey. No smile. No welcome. Yet she looks down at you through lordly eyes and says, ‘Who the bloody hell are you?’” (120). Gilbert essentially fast-forwarded through his very traumatic and disappointing experiences to deliver a description which adequately summarizes how the Windrush generation felt after arriving in Britain. Ellis maintains that Levy drew inspiration for such vivid descriptions from her personal life and sense of identity, which has been shaped by her own family’s migrant past and journey from Jamaica to Britain during the Windrush period (70).

According to Duboin, Andrea Levy counters this injustice with a specific structural arrangement of the narrative, which places Gilbert, Hortense, and Queenie (who is white and British but greatly sympathizes with the newcomers) ahead of Bernard, who represents a once predominant white male discourse. Levy silences Bernard for a large part of the novel (his first narrative segment being in chapter 35 out of the total 59), thus moving his narrative to the margin and limiting it to occasional mentions by the other characters (23). Levy also

decided to conclude the novel using Winston Churchill's words: “Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few”, a quote that was originally directed towards RAF combatants after a decisive victory against the Nazis. However, she added another meaning to this quote by directing it towards the immigrants from Jamaica and other former British colonies that arrived in Britain to show their loyalty to mother country and to help reconstruct contemporary Britain.

Going back to the relationship between Britain as the mother country and its colonial daughters, Gilroy explains that “the colonial strangers' intimate association with their 'mother country' was always qualified and heavily influenced by the exclusionary workings of informal institutions like the 'Colour Bar'” (102). Nonetheless, the citizen-settlers appeared mostly confident and remained hopeful that their requests for hospitality and understanding will eventually be acknowledged by the mother country. However, Gilroy argues that such requests could never be fulfilled, especially when taking into consideration Britain’s image of a “melancholic island race“ (102). In Gilbert’s case, he joins the Royal Air Force to fight for Britain, but that is where he quickly discovers all the ugly truths about Britain and its people, who are less than thrilled to see men from Jamaica fight alongside them against a common enemy.

Gilbert's feelings of displacement spiral out of control almost immediately after joining the RAF, becoming almost palpable. He experiences prejudice and racism everywhere he is sent, including the United States of America, where his experiences are somehow even worse when compared to Britain. He recalls how he “yearned for home as a drunk man for whisky” (274), because only in Jamaica people looking on his face for the first time would regard it with no reaction. Gilbert also becomes aware of the fact that Jamaica is unknown to most Westerners, which to Duboin illustrates his invisibility as a colonial subject, and begins to unravel some details about the relationship between “mother country” and its “daughters”,

which is plagued by inequalities (8). Eventually, Gilbert draws strength from his negative experiences, and becomes determined to fulfil his dreams of studying law and fighting for justice and equality. His tremendous growth as a character is apparent when he offers comforting words to his wife Hortense, who suffers the same cultural shock and disappointment as he did, but at a different time.

Furthermore, Gilbert's father is a Jew, and his mother is Jamaican, so his character becomes torn between fighting Western racism and fighting the Nazi ideology that orders the systematic extermination of Jews. Both sides want to destroy large portions of what Gilbert is and what he stands for, but his suffering is made greater because he is unable to fight both sides at the same time. He decides to fight against the master race theory, therefore making the fight against Nazism his own in order to challenge colonial racism. He explains this decision to his cousin Elwood, stating that "if this war is not won then you can be certain nothing here will ever change" (113). However, after the war ends, Gilbert finds himself in a difficult situation in Britain, as he is unable to construct a concrete individual and collective identity. This is one of the main themes of *Small Island*; identity formation made complicated by gender and racial biases under the influence of Eurocentric configurations of the western societies (Duboin 1).

Although the novel does not address modern multiculturalism as a supposed happy ending, Ellis maintains that the novel successfully invites the reader to experience encounters between different cultures, and to think about the competing claims on nationhood, citizenship, and culture (69). The same author reads and analyzes *Small Island* as a novel that focuses on the issues of cultural transformation, which is an important issue for many of the postcolonial novels, including those that are accentuated in this work. *Small Island* ends with Queenie giving her mixed-race child to the Jamaican couple, which is closely related to Ellis' concluding words about the novel: "[…] new ways of belonging must linger in the imaginary

until they are ready to be embraced as new realities" (80). Queenie's child, born from a mixed-race relationship, had to linger in the imaginary, forced to disregard its real origin and accepting the fabricated one with its new Jamaican parents because the British society in the mid-20th century was not ready for that new reality.

White Teeth – Clash of Generations

One of the vital aspects of *White Teeth* which makes it particularly interesting and relevant for this discussion is its setting; the novel, like many other postcolonial novels, is set in London, which is often perceived as the perfect place for post-colonialist theories, and particularly cosmopolitanism (Rogers 45). London is also described as a sort of "colonialism in reverse", a place that contains individuals originating from every corner of its once extensive empire (Ball 15, qtd. in Rogers 45). Katina Rogers argues that constant interactions between a wide range of different cultures enables London to become a hub of cultural hybridity, which then enables the second generation of immigrant families to change their cultural values significantly from their parents (45). This clash between the values of the first generation of immigrants and their children (the second generation) is one of the central topics of *White Teeth*, and a definite driving force of the whole narrative. The clash of generations is presented to the reader mainly through the Iqbal family, consisting of Samad and Alsana Iqbal and their sons, Magid and Millat. Every member of the family has a different standpoint and method of dealing with assimilation, however, the main difference between the parents and the children is that the latter simply cannot avoid the influence of the British culture, and the former are often stuck in their own past.

In one of the earlier chapters of the novel, we learn that Millat Iqbal listens to Michael Jackson and Bruce Springsteen, whilst Irie Jones, who is mixed-race and very close to both

Iqbal brothers, wants to have straight hair and be one of the popular girls. In addition, Magib Iqbal, Millat's twin brother,has an innate talent for everything academic and has no issues with adopting Western values and fashion. Banaz Wirya Ali points out that Magid is very persistent and creative in his struggles to fully assimilate, even going as far as renaming himself to “Mark Smith” so that the other kids do not suspect that he is different (332). The generic nature of the Anglicized name is completely intentional, as it shows Magid’s intent on becoming an average British citizen. All three children are also, in their own ways, very much fond of the Chalfens, a typical highbrow family full of intellectuals with distinct cultural tastes. As per McMann, the children of *White Teeth* explicitly desire assimilation; for them, the virtue of balancing between traditions of their roots and western metropolitan lifestyles comes much more naturally compared to their parents (625). On the other hand, Samad Iqbal openly complains about Christian holidays at his sons' school, and firmly believes that England is corrupting his family. While his children and Irie Jones are mostly hopeful and look forward to the future, Samad is bursting with concerns and uncertainty, which is reflected in many of his frequent rants and speeches he has about Western corruption and his position of a middle aged man who is afraid of losing his footing, namely his religion and cultural values.

Samad's wife Alsana shares many of his conservative views, even though the spouses often argue and even fight in front of their sons. Alsana chooses her friends carefully, listens to music from her homeland, and is openly critical towards her niece Neena, who is lesbian. Alsana often refers to Neena as “niece-of-shame“, and even punishes her son Millat for participating in protests by burning his “secular stuff, four years' worth of cool“ (243), in other words, items that were sacred to him, but were also very much Western by nature. The author clearly establishes this gap between the first generation and the second, and most of the attempts (by the parents) to eliminate these gaps end up being unsuccessful.

Smith populates *White Teeth* with characters filled with "hybridity"; this hybridity relates to their mixed backgrounds and a variety of religions, which results in a subsequent generation of blended cultures. However, she does not present these characters and their interactions in the utopic and idyllic light of cosmopolitanism, instead opting to write about characters that are rooted in the past or idealize a perfect future and a cosmopolitan utopia. Rogers maintains that both of these perspectives are faulty, because they are both incomplete and represent only half of the picture (385). The complexity of Smith's characters encourages us to think critically about concepts such as history, identity, hybridity, marginalization, and cosmopolitanism. Rogers views *White Teeth* as an argument against cosmopolitan utopias, which Smith exposes as fundamentally flawed simply because cosmopolitanism strives to bypass the immigrants' past. This effort is made almost impossible by Western cultural hegemony and immigrants' feelings of displacement, which results in them clinging to their past even more and rejecting assimilation in fear of losing their identity (385).

In addition, Rogers emphasizes Smith's usage of cleverly written characters, which are used to present a variety of different critiques directed towards hybridity and multiculturalism. For example, Joyce Chalfen uses gardening as an analogy to explain how people with multicultural/hybrid backgrounds have a better ability to adapt to changing environments, stating that "cross-pollination produces more varied offspring, which are better able to cope with a changed environment […] If my one-year-old son is anything to go by (a cross-pollination between a lapsed Catholic horticulturalist feminist and an intellectual Jew!), then I can certainly vouch for the truth of this" (258). She is fascinated by Millat and Irie because of their multicultural backgrounds, but Rogers points out that this interest is "surface-level" and that it does more harm than good and lacks sincerity (56). In other words, Joyce does not trust Millat and Irie to resolve their own issues and instead tries to help them directly. Joyce is not the only character that represents a satirized cosmopolitan standpoint, as she is often joined by

Poppy and Archie, who are also unable to fully comprehend the complex social situations they witness.

Standing opposite of them is Samad, who represents a patriotic view, one that aims to protect the invaluable cultural value and heritage, but is struggling to find any success due to the increasing insistence on cultural hybridity and multiculturalism. As stated by Ali, *White Teeth* provides an insight into some of the issues related with the creation of an authentic identity in a multicultural environment. The same author highlights Samad's plight to turn his sons into respectable Muslim men who are fully aware of their identity and able to separate Western and Eastern cultural values, but the plan completely backfires when both of his sons adopt entire sets of Western values (331). Samad's insistence on tradition exhausts him to the point of being unfaithful to his wife, and diving into an affair with a much younger teacher of his two sons, which tragicomically twists Samad's plotline and motivations.

Eventually, one of Chanu's sons (Magid) becomes more British than the British, even ignoring the tenets of his father's faith, while the other (Millat) becomes a militant Muslim who struggles to find any constants in his life. Ali explains this outcome by pointing out that both Magid and Millat experienced instability of the lower-working class and identified the perceived happiness related to the higher-class families (through the influence of the Chalfen family). This, in turn, left them vulnerable to "growing away from their family traditions and becoming more modernized" (333). This class-oriented observation presented by Ali partly explains why Samad's attempts to steer his sons away from radicalism and western values were ultimately unsuccessful, but there is no doubt that exposure to western media also played a major role in the twins' transformations, especially when considering Millat's character development and obsession with Hollywood mobsters.

On the other hand, Irie's situation is very similar to that of Millat, Magid and Samad; difference being that she seems to prevail over her identity issues by seeking refuge in her grandmother's house after having an argument with her parents. Her grandmother Hortense helps her understand her roots and identity, despite the fact that Hortense is very religious and Irie is the polar opposite. Nevertheless, Irie eventually realizes that she has a place in the world, that place being her mother's homeland of Jamaica. Ali argues that Hortense is the only person in Irie's life who encourages her to turn towards her Jamaican roots and find strength by embracing her specific cultural background instead of blindly chasing British values (335).

Smith brings attention to how important identities are in multicultural societies, and how in such conditions many migrants fail to escape from their own histories. The immigrant family's origins and history seem to be important elements for constructing an individual's identity, which would then be used to tackle the issues related with mixing different identities within a multicultural society. The problem lies in the fact that second generation characters (such as Magid, Millat, and Irie) do not possess the crucial information about their own past. Consequently, this leaves them lost and torn between two strong cultural currents; one that is dominant and Western, but very foreign and often harsh towards outsiders, and the culture of their parents, which is tangled and complicated. When it comes to the first generation of immigrants, the issue of displacement plays a vital role in the process of the construction, or rather deconstruction, of their identities. Ali further elaborates on this issue in the following paragraph:

> An intact sense of place and belonging is deeply embedded in a person’s tradition, language and history. Moving from the former colonies to the British “Motherland”, many Commonwealth migrants felt alienated and displaced. Furthermore, they attempt to reconstruct their identity to assimilate to the dominant society and in many cases,

> the ethnic diaspora to which they were restricted to, became their new home. As a result, their former home countries were transformed into distorted. Having the possibility of returning to their place of origin, they sense that their motherland became foreign to them (340).

The loss of identity is closely followed by a lack of proper representation and understanding, which is another important issue that presents itself to Samad's son Millat as he gets involved in a political group aiming to give Muslim immigrants a public voice. This ultimately leads him towards increased radicalization, and by the end of the novel he becomes progressively more outraged by his position and lack of clear vision for his future, culminating in his decision to take up arms against the *FutureMouse* project, Marcus Chalfen's genetic experiment on a mouse which challenges God's power and authority. In reality, it could be argued that Millat does not care much about this particular project and its implications, and only took drastic actions so that he can finally feel like he belongs somewhere and is fighting for a just cause.

In addition to the aforementioned loss of identity, lack of representation and other demoralizing factors that Smith's characters face, they also face marginalization. As stated by Rogers, the elements of marginalization are especially apparent when observing the second generation characters, such as Irie. Her struggles include not only those of culture and heritage, but also physical appearance and relationship with her family. She feels like "a stranger in a stranger land" (222), and all of her issues merge within her and leave her with feelings of complete isolation. Her issues mostly stem from the fact that she has inherited the physical attributes of her Jamaican ancestors, which clash with the ideals of European beauty standards she desperately tries to replicate. However, second generation characters are not the only ones facing marginalization, as Rogers concludes that marginalization is a

multidimensional issue, one that is not limited to cultural themes, and therefore should be recognized in its complexity rather than artificially reduced to the simplest possible solution (59-60).

Ali comes to a conclusion that Smith, through her characters, suggests that a healthy identity can only exist once the individual accepts and embraces their cultural history. In Irie's case, however, this acceptance and peace can only be found outside the boundaries of Britain, in Jamaica. The ending scene with Irie relaxing on a beach in Jamaica with Joshua and her grandmother could be perceived as bitter-sweet, mostly due to the fact that she had to return to Jamaica to finally be happy with how her life has turned out, which goes against the idea that racial differences can co-exist in Britain (338). It is important to note that Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* explores a wide variety of different topics, ranging from genetic engineering to personal struggles with cultural displacement, but arguably the main message it sends is that everyone has a chance to change their fate and take control of their own lives.

The Buddha of Suburbia - Hybrid Space of Multiculturalism

From the very beginning of *Buddha of Suburbia*, the readers know exactly how the protagonist of the novel, Karim Amir, feels about his cultural and ethnic position in Britain. He considers himself an Englishman, as he was born in Britain, although he carefully points out that he is a new breed of Englishman, a sort of privileged vehicle for understanding post-imperial Britain (McMann628). Karim is mixed-race, and although he was born in Britain and his mother is white and British, his background and appearance position him as 'Other' within the British society (Yousaf 17). McMann maintains that, although race is inescapably present in the narrative, the novel focuses on the story of characters that are neither black nor white, but instead represent a hybrid space of multiculturalism. The same author explains that Britain

in the 1990s was “in the process of rebranding itself as ‘Cool Britannia’, and multiculturalism constituted one aspect of this reinvention” (624). According to NahemYousaf, “Kureishi attempts to tell the stories of the father *and* of the son in *The Buddha of Suburbia* and clearly differentiates between their experiences” (17). He elaborates by pointing out how Haroon, Karim’s father, perceives himself as an Indian man, and vows that he will never be anything but an Indian.

On the other hand, Karim believes that he is an Englishman (although he is not proud of it), one that emerged from two old histories. The novel offers an interesting perspective on identities in a post-colonial world, mostly because certain characters of the novel do not seem to fully understand themselves or their cultural and ethnic positions. According to Radek Glabazňa, migrancy seems to have dislocated and obscured the very self that is supposed to be the subject of understanding, and this sets the tone of the entire novel. Glabazňa believes that the central metaphor of the novel is Karim's acting. In other words, the readers follow Karim's story as he develops a passion for acting, which for him means a potential escape from the rather monotonous and unfulfilling life he had beforehand. However, Karim quickly learns that he will have to sacrifice his own identity and dreams of becoming a 'true Englishman' in favour of blatant cultural stereotypes which are demanded by the culture industry. Karim ends up portraying stereotypical South Asian characters such as Kipling's *Mowgli* or his friend Changez, the latter being portrayed as rather dumb and economically irresponsible. Other characters in the novel, like Mr Shadwell, are openly intrigued by Karim and his hybridity, pointing out how many people would expect him to be an exotic individual full of interesting stories from faraway lands, when in reality Karim is just a boy from Orpington, a half-caste in England who belongs nowhere, and is wanted nowhere.

Karim's acting brings him a lot of success and recognition in the new social environments he is trying to navigate, but at the cost of his own identity. Eventually, Karim

does not turn up at the anti-fascist protests as instructed by Jamila, his cousin, instead choosing his acting career and his new white middle-class friends from the theatre over his fellow South Asians and their very specific issues that should concern him (Glabazňa 69). Later on in the novel, Karim begins to better understand the consequences of his actions, admitting that:

> I did feel, looking at these strange creatures now—the Indians—that in some way these were my people, and that I'd spent my life denying or avoiding that fact. I felt ashamed and incomplete at the same time, as if half of me were missing, and as if I'd been colluding with my enemies, those whites who wanted Indians to be like them. (212)

Karim is clearly a character who is torn between two cultures, and this is where his story has many similarities with characters from *White Teeth* or *Small Island*. The ambitions to succeed in a foreign society and culture require many sacrifices, mainly those related to one's cultural identity. Karim, belonging to a second generation of immigrants, shares many of the same concerns with some of the aforementioned second generation characters from *White Teeth*. His father, a first generation immigrant, often endorses his fatalistic views on multiculturalism, and even tries to resist the English influence:

> 'The whites will never promote us,' Dad said. 'Not an Indian while there is a white man left on the earth. You don't have to deal with them – they still think they have an Empire when they don't have two pennies to rub together... Now, as they aged and seemed settled here, Anwar and Dad appeared to be returning internally to India, or at least to be resisting the English here (27, 64).

Karim does not feel the same way about his life in Britain, and tries to distance himself from his father and his uncle's negative views, stating that "Muslim fatalism – Allah was

responsible for everything – depressed me" (172). However, according to Glabazňa, both Karim and his father Haroon share how they utilize different forms of Orientalist stereotypes and serve them to the British public in exchange for money or other bonuses (72). Karim's father, although not an actor, transforms himself from a secular British-Indian Muslim (as described by Karim) into a suburban mystic, and lectures "Chrislehurst bourgeoisie" on Buddhism, Taoism, and Zen. Huggan argues that minorities are encouraged, and in some cases obliged, to stage and perform their racial identities which are constructed according to the white stereotypical perceptions of an exotic culture; these performances can be either parodies of white expectations or demonstrations of the performative basis of all identity formation (qtd. in Glabazňa 7).

As opposed to Karim, Jamilla, is, according to Glabazňa, located at the ethical center of the novel. Her radical politics and passion when dealing with her enemies indicate that her sense of self is much more coherent and grounded when compared to Karim's. "Jamila thus epitomizes the central (and insoluble) conflict of *The Buddha*—the conflict between the politics of the self and the politics of the lack of thereof" (Glabazňa 76). Her strong sense of self is most apparent in dialogues with Karim, which are often based on her attempts to explain to him that the world is full of people needing empathy, especially people that are in a similar position to them, oppressed and displaced. However, Jamila's strong views are countered by the fact that she is a woman living not just as a foreigner in a foreign country, but also in a very traditional South Asian family. She is eventually forced into an arranged marriage by her father, who almost starves himself to death just to force Jamila to go through with the arrangement.

Berthold Schoene argues that *The Buddha* is a novel that aims to jump out of the prejudice-ridden culture, whilst confronting the reality of cultural dislocation (126). It promotes an "emancipation of ethnic difference from both the discriminatory stereotyping

institutionalized by current multiculturalist discourse as well as the postcolonial migrant subject's propensity for self-oppressive role-play and anglophile mimicry" (109). Unlike *Small Island,* Kureishi's novel ends on a more optimistic note, with Karim dining in the company of his family and friends, celebrating his new job as a rebellious student son of an Indian shopkeeper in a TV show. Yu-cheng points out that in the end Karim is still balancing between the two worlds, one that is rooted in old histories, and one that is turned towards the future and emancipation of cultural hybridity (16).

Brick Lane **– Two Sides of the Same Coin**

Brick Lane is a novel that sparked a lot of discussions when it was published, mainly because of the way Monica Ali portrayed the lives of the Bangladeshi community in London's East End. Whilst many praised the novel for its realistic depictions, others were critical and discontent, believing that Ali's characters provide a gross misinterpretation of Bengali culture in London (Hiddleston 57). Among those praising the novel is Cormack, who believes that the novel presents an insightful realist narrative with a postcolonial story, one that bridges the gap between mimetic fiction and actual historical contexts of immigration and multiculturalism (695). As Jane Hiddleston argues, Ali's novel aims to give a look "behind the closed doors of a segregated community" located at the centre of the British capital, the heart of London, also known as Brick Lane. This location, situated right beside the financial centre of the city, is often associated with "stereotypes and myths of backwardness, delinquency and social nonconformity" (58). Brick Lane also represents a site of cultural conflict, with an increasing number of racist attacks and growing influence of radical Islam, which can be perceived as an attempt by the immigrants to find their own voices and identities.

Hiddleston maintains that *Brick Lane* leads us into the world of the disenfranchised, whilst also showing the permeating influence of myth in our understanding of Eastern

cultures. *Brick Lane* strives to uncover and expose the suffering of a repressed segment of British society, which has also caused some controversy and critique directed towards Ali (60). For example, one criticism presented by Hiddleston is that "[Brick Lane] testifies to the impossibility of ridding one's narrative of any mythologizing tendencies, and it displays the traps and lures of the representation process itself" (60). In other words, Hiddleston believes that *Brick Lane* can be read as both a quest for knowledge and a fictional construction that covers as much as it reveals.

Alongside Hiddleston, Perfect also notes that *Brick Lane* is one of the most controversial novels in the category of contemporary novels that deal with the experiences of Asian immigrants in Britain. According to the same author, Ali has been accused of promoting stereotypes about Bangladeshi communities in both London and Bangladesh, which has resulted in Ali attempting to distance the novel and its narrative from the "burden of representation" (110), stating that *Brick Lane* is a story about one family rather than an entire community. Perfect finds this particularly intriguing as he believes that the novel actively engages with such troublesome representation and aims to unveil a particular marginalized community. Active engagement with stereotypes allows Ali to further emphasize and develop her protagonist's gradual integration into contemporary British society, which is the reason why Perfect classifies it as a "multicultural Bildungsroman" (110).

Cormack pays close attention to initial stages of Nazneen's gradual integration into British society, in which Nazneen watches ice skating on television, but is left confused and bewildered by what she is seeing on the screen (709). Cormack believes that this segment of the novel allows us to perceive the Western world through the eyes of someone whose frame of reference is significantly different, which may not be the case for the readers. The female figure that is ice skating on television is in many ways the polar opposite of Nazneen;

specifically, shecontrols her own body, expresses freely through her movements, and even has certain control over the opposite sex (709). It is only fitting that the final scene of the novel has Nazneen ice-skating with her friend, after she has thrown away many of the shackles from her past and taken control of her life.

Contrarily, Hasina's story seems to be one of the most controversial elements of *Brick Lane*, as it is presented through often despairing and downcast letters that Hasina sends to her sister Nazneen from Bangladesh. Critics believe that Hasina as a character constitutes a stereotype, a naïve Eastern woman that believes Allah will eventually save her from her cruel fate. Hasina's letters are written in broken English, which to Perfect represents a "linguistic remove" (112), which is used strategically throughout the novel to signify fragility and inability of the sisters to properly grasp or explain the events happening around them. However, fragility and instability seems to be prevalent only for Hasina's narrative, whilst the main three plotlines of the novel center on Nazneen gaining agency and taking command of her own fate. The three main plotlines, according to Cormack are: Nazneen's affair with Karim, potential return to Bangladesh orchestrated by Nazneen's husband Chanu, and the extraction of debt by Mrs. Islam (706). All three plotlines follow Nazneen's growth and empowerment, and even subvert expectations, especially when Nazneen rejects her lover Karim (who she wanted to be with because of his seemingly comfortable position in a foreign country) after she begins to understand his love for her and why it came to be. Essentially, Karim saw her as an idea of a lost home that he desperately needed, and once Nazneen realized this, she decided to break away from Karim.

Going back to why Hasina's letters are crucial for the narrative, Perfect draws attention to the fact that her letters are essentially used to persuade Nazneen to stay in Britain; this decision is ultimately not made because of the attractiveness of life in England, but rather because Nazneen is afraid of all the horrors described by her sister in Bangladesh through the

infrequent and troubling letters (115). Although stereotypical in nature, Hasina's letters represent the novel's usage of stereotypes to celebrate agency and integration, which is a different take compared to the usual "commodified" vs "authentic" critical binary often associated with *Brick Lane* and criticized by Perfect:

> That Ali so obviously bases Hasina – her general and more specific circumstances, as well as her attitudes and beliefs – on the testimonies recorded in *The Power To Choose* is perhaps indicative of an attempt to make her an "authentic" character, and might seem to offer a means of debunking accusations of the novel simply propagating stereotypes. Women like Hasina, Ali might retort, "really exist" (118)

This quote by Perfect perfectly illustrates the importance of *Brick Lane* as a postcolonial novel. *Brick Lane* does not just simply tell a story about a group of fictional Oriental characters, and instead goes a step further to connect the literary with the authentic, based on actual social research and real accounts by people reflected by these fictional characters. This view is supported by Perfect's analysis of the findings from Kabeer's London-based research, during which many of the women that participated revealed their painful realities filled with physical abuse, racism, isolation, and financial struggles. Nazneen's story obviously does not directly relate to these testimonies, however, her sister Hasina experiences almost all of the previously mentioned transgressions in Bangladesh. Perfect goes on to analyze how in the final stages of the novel, Ali completely shifts the attention towards empowering Nazneen, who goes beyond people's expectations and prevails the stereotypical notions associated with a Bengali woman. She proves to Karim that she is not merely a simple wife and mother, which marks the peak of polarization between Nazneen and Hasina; "Hasina becomes increasingly powerless and socially excluded, while Nazneen undergoes such a powerful emancipation that she is startled by her own agency" (Perfect 119).

Other examples of this polarization can be found in chapters where Hasina gets abandoned by multiple men, whilst Nazneen chooses to leave Karim and go against her husband's will. Nazneen also embraces and thrives in the garment industry, whilst Hasina completely loses contact with it. Cormack maintains that realism is not just about mimesis, in other words, realism is also about movement, historical progress, and the "Aristotelian telos". To elaborate, Nazneen goes from "being the passive object of established historical forces to being in position where she can utilize her newfound agency and take command of her own life" (712). Interestingly, the progress of Nazneen's journey can easily be tracked if we observe how Nazneen thinks about her mother's suicide, which happened during her and Hasina's childhood and marked their early lives. At first, Nazneen did not understand why her mother committed suicide, but as she grows and develops as a free individual, she slowly begins to unravel the reasoning behind her mother's decision, realizing that is was not merely the abrupt end of her life, but also an act of defiance and display of agency.

Furthermore, a strong argument could be made that Ali's novel "draws inspiration" from Kabeer's study, that is, both the novel and the study celebrate the power to choose, which is interesting if we consider that Ali convincingly denies Hasina this power, but grants it fully to Nazneen (Perfect 116). Gradually, as the plot progresses, Nazneen discovers certain Western freedoms, and eventually finds her own voice and self-determination, which is, according to Ana-Blanca Ciocoi-Pop, a "typical feminist manifesto" (20). Ciocoi-Pop points out that most of the main protagonists in *Brick Lane* are women, and that men appear frugally and hastily, only to then quickly disappear, leaving little to no trace. According to the same author, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* leans heavily towards women taking control of their own existence, rather than placing it in the hands of men that are in their lives at the time, but seem to be fleeting (22).

The connection between Ali's novel and actual sociological studies, such as the one conducted by Kabeer, is crucial because it further blurs the lines between the fictional and the real, thus bringing to life actual social and cultural concerns in the form of an easily digestible novel. Going back to why Ali gives Nazneen the power to choose but does not do the same for Hasina, Perfect is a firm believer that this is not due to the fact the novel wants to portray a stereotypical Eastern woman, but rather because the novel wants to create a polarity between Nazneen's story of emancipation and Hasina's story filled with "defeat and naivety" (Perfect 119). Ciocoi-Pop explains that the novel offers various ways of coping and resistance, with Nazneen and Razia being the central figures for spiritual growth and finding one's own voice, identity and sense of individuality (24).

As mentioned previously, Nazneen's growth reaches its absolute peak by the end of the novel, when she fully embraces her new-found agency, sense of self-worth, and self-awareness, whilst also acquiring a better understanding of the social dynamics around her. By reconciling individuation and socialization, *Brick Lane* becomes a "multicultural Bildungsroman", one that celebrates the adaptability of its immigrant protagonist in a multicultural setting (Perfect 119), but also a novel that places great emphasis on the value of a true female friendship, which seems to have the potential to outlast all heterosexual relations, and offers a way towards female self-sufficiency (Ciocoi-Pop 27). Perfect also notes how it is worrying that this novel has been almost exclusively analyzed as a postmodern and metatextual work, which speaks volumes about how the critiques have been mostly focused on the novel's usage and apparent propagation of stereotypes. Whilst some critics may perceive Ali's usage of stereotypes as a flaw, Perfect praises the employment of stereotypes, which are used as strong a counterpoint to the narrative of empowerment. The usage of stereotypes in postcolonial novels is a discussion which is relevant for all of the novels mentioned in this work, however, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* is perhaps the best example of a

novel that does not shy away from stereotypes, and instead uses them cleverly to emphasize individual stories of empowerment, and not the destabilization of the stereotypes themselves.

Conclusion

Each of the four novels analyzed in this work reflect the authors' specific background and offer valuable insights into the world of the "Others", groups of people that were part of the British Empire before its dissolution and helped rebuild the country after WW2, but were nevertheless discriminated against and made feel displaced in their own "Mother Country". The four sets of characters in the selected novels all encounter barriers and challenges which limit their processes of forming new identities and succeeding in Britain, whilst also sharing the strong feelings of cultural and social displacement. This diploma paper highlights the different ways that these displaced individuals tackle their issues, focusing primarily on the protagonists of these stories. Acceptance of one's specific cultural background seems to be one of the dominant "happy endings" that most of the analyzed novels share, in other words, successful integration into British society is achieved once the displaced individual accepts his or her position and features that they cannot run away from.

For example, Irie, one of the main characters of *White Teeth,* embraces her Jamaican side and reaches a point in her life where she finally feels like she is in control of her own destiny and at home. She achieves this by moving to Jamaica, rather than staying in London. However, acceptance in these novels is not attained only when a character moves out of Britain, which is underlined in *The Buddha of Suburbia, Brick Lane,* and *Small Island*. The protagonists of these novels attain complete acceptance of their own identities whilst in Britain, and the endings imply that they plan on staying in Britain to create a better future for themselves and their children. Unity of characters that are in similar situations in terms of displacement seems to be another important element of the endings, which can be observed in

all of the analyzed novels. Characters like Gilbert and Hortense from *Small Island*, or Nazneen and her friend Razia from *Brick Lane* draw strength and motivation from one another, which would be almost impossible if these characters were paired up with individuals that do not understand their specific position as the "Others" in a society that does not look kindly on strangers.

It is difficult to argue that these negative feelings and assimilation barriers are just a relic of the past, and that the present-day situation is significantly improved. Fernández-Kelly believes that the recent deaths of unarmed African Americans unleashed a tempest of outrage in the United States, which quickly spread worldwide and became a global movement against institutionalized racism and inequality. The same author believes that the experiences of Black populations in the United States resonate with the experiences of immigrant populations in the UK and other countries in Europe. The novels analyzed in this work all deal with issues that are anything but irrelevant, despite the fact that they cover varying periods during and after WW2.

The arguments revolving around whether or not realist novels are an appropriate way of grappling postcolonial content are intriguing to say the least, and can be viewed in a different light when we consider the uneasiness that spawns when realist novels use and seemingly propagate stereotypes about the "Others" in multicultural locations like London. However, the trend in postcolonial literature of favouring magical realism over any other forms of expression seems to be harmful and counterproductive. This work attempted to showcase how important it is for postcolonial novels to face the ingrained stereotypes, and in doing so, empower the stories of growth and self-awareness.

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Displacement of the Colonized Other in Contemporary British Novels

Abstract

This diploma paper analyzes a selection of four British postcolonial novels, Andrea Levy's *Small Island,* Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddhaof Suburbia*, and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*. Emphasis is placed on how the authors of these novels use literary realism to present stories of cultural and social displacement caused by the protagonists' position as the "Other" within the British society. Edward Said's *Orientalism* is used as a theoretical background, as well as to explain the uneven treatment of "Commonwealth literature" when compared to the English literature "proper". Common themes within the analyzed novels include Western corruption, idea of unity among the displaced, self-acceptance, and emancipation of cultural hybridity. In order to understand the term "displacement" in its social and cultural sense, it is imperative to recognize the significance of British imperialism, as well as the role of postcolonial studies, the position of its authors, and the historical relevance of their novels, which serve as testimonies for the unjust and unequal treatment of the 'Orient' and everything that is not part of the Western hegemony.

Key words: postcolonial novel, the Other, displacement, cultural hybridity, multicultural society, British imperialism

Izmještanje koloniziranog Drugog u suvremenim britanskim romanima

Sažetak

Ovaj diplomski rad bavi se analizom četiri odabrana britanska postkolonijalna romana. Riječ je o romanima *Mali otok* (Andrea Levy), *Bijeli zubi* (Zadie Smith), *Buddha iz predgrađa* (Hanif Kureishi) i *Brick Lane* (Monica Ali). Poseban naglasak stavljen je na to kako autori ovih romana koriste književni realizam da bi predstavili priče o kulturnim i društvenim razmještanjima, kao i priče o traumatičnim događajima zbog specifične pozicije glavnih likova u Britanskom društvu, gdje su percipirani kao „drugi" tj. kao stranci. *Orijentalizam* Edwarda Saida koristi se kao jedna od glavnih teorijskih podloga za analizu romana, kao i za analizu nejednakog postupanja prema „Commonwealth književnosti" u usporedbi sa „pravom" britanskom književnošću. Ideja da zapadnjačka društva korumpiraju pridošlice iz bivših kolonija prisutna je u svim odabranim romanima, a prisutne su još i tematike jedinstva, samoprihvaćanja i emancipacije kulturalne hibridnosti. Kako bi se što bolje zahvatio pojam kulturnog i društvenog „izmještanja", potrebno je razmotriti važnost britanskog imperijalizma, kao i ulogu postkolonijalnih studija, specifičnu poziciju postkolonijalnih autora i relevantnost njihovih romana, koji svjedoče o nepravdama prema „Orijentu" i svemu što nije dio zapadne hegemonije.

Ključne riječi: postkolonijalni roman, Saidov koncept „Drugoga",razmještanje, kulturalna hibridnost, multikulturalno društvo, britanski imperijalizam