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THEME

Negotiating Identity and Belonging Through the Discourse of Exile in Four Contemporary British Novels: Fadia Faqir's My Name is Salma, Leila Aboulela's Minaret , Monica Alis's Brick Lane and Hanif Kureishi's The Buddha of Suburbia

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DEDICATION

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Abstract

The present thesis presents a critical study of how four contemporary ethnic British writers present four exile cases and counter hegemonic discourses throughout them as regards to notions of belonging, home and identity. The process of identity making is discussed through an examination of the protagonists' development in Fadia Faqir's *My Name is Salma* (2007), Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* (2005), Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) and Hanif Kureishi's *the Buddha of Suburbia* (1990). We have chosen these writers as typical representatives of the cultures of the "other" in Great Britain in order to back up the argument of alterity. In the discussion of these works, the focus is on how the protagonists construct new meanings of exile that challenge previous conventions regarding the concept. While the protagonists resist conventional meanings of exile as well as gender roles and patriarchy; throughout their works, the authors react against imperialistic and supremacist structures and seek to recuperate the sense of pride in cultural difference. In this research, we attempt to highlight how these four literary works are counter-narratives at many levels. On the one hand, the female writers celebrate the feminist call for gender equality and defy the patriarchal structures in their respective societies; and thus create a counter-narrative regarding gender issues. On the other hand, all the writers in this work create counter narratives regarding the histories of their respective homelands that are hitherto narrated by the omniscient Western narrator. At yet another level, the protagonists present counter-narratives regarding their cultural practices that have hitherto been regarded as archaic, backward, and not fit to adapt to the avant-garde changes of the Western world.

Key words: Exile, Identity, Belonging, Home, Postcolonialism

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Introduction

The theme of exile lies at the heart of many sociological, ontological, literary as well as historical works in the postmodern age. Many writers choose the venue of literature to express their feelings of exile and uprootedness that is no more discussed in the same way it used to be in the past. Whereas exile in the Roman or Greek epoch was hard to live because of the particularity of each nation state and the impossibility for the exile subject to adapt to the radical changes of the host nation state, many critics presently view exile as no more than a form of displacement akin to immigration because of globalization and mass immigration.

Therefore, this chapter seeks to display the portrait of the modern exile subject by way of comparing him to the canonical political exile of the Roman and Greek epochs. Because exile is closely related to feelings of attachment, a section will be devoted to the discussion of home matters in the case of exile subjects. This chapter also provides a theoretical approach about the process of identification of exile subjects who are torn between two homelands. It examines the three possible identification processes of displaced subjects, most notably, assimilation, nationalism and hybridity. The last section in this chapter presents a brief rundown on exile literature and the way it profiles exile subjects.

The Notion of Exile

The notion of exile is polysemous and can be discussed from multifarious perspectives. While exile is originally related to geographical displacement, some writers and critics discuss feelings of exile even though they have never quitted their homelands.

In this sense, exile cannot be confined to spatial uprootedness; however its definition can rely on other parameters such as time. Conveniently, many scholars deal with the experience of exile in terms of their nostalgia for, what Marcel Proust calls,

“times past.” Concepts of mobility and displacement lie at the center of the Western canon beginning with the idea that to be a human is to be exiled from God¹. In terms of ontology, some critics like Ian Buruma regard the entire human race as an exiled race:

Exile as a metaphor did not begin with the Jewish Diaspora. The first story of exile in our tradition is the story of Adam and Eve. No matter how we interpret the story of their expulsion from the Garden of Eden – original sin or not – we may be certain of one thing: there is no way back to paradise. After that fatal bite of the apple, the return to pure innocence was cut off forever. The exile of Adam and Eve is the mark of maturity, the consequence of growing up. (3)

The theme of exile has floated through myriad scholarly texts by authors like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Theodor Adorno, Salman Rushdie among many others whose aim was to report various experiences of exile and analyze its consequential losses from different perspectives. Depicting exile as a condemnation, Paul Tabori begins *The Anatomy of Exile* with “Song of Exile” wherein he writes:

Exile is a song that only the singer can hear.

Exile is an illness that not even death can cure—for how

can you rest in a soil that did not nourish you? Exile is the warning example to those who still

Have their homes, who belong

But will you take heed of the warning? (1-6)

Identifying exile as an incurable illness, Tabori overlooks any opportunity of well-being offered in the hostland and discusses exile in terms of Ovidian nostalgia. Similarly, Edward Said, himself a Palestinian exile in the United States, is no less pessimistic than

¹ Cf. John Durham Peters, “Exile, Nomadism and Diaspora: the Stakes of Mobility in the Western Canon”. Ed. Hamid Naficy, *Home, Exile, Homeland*, New York, Routledge, 1999: (17-41).

Paul Tabori and opens “Reflections on Exile” with a morose description of the experience of exile as being:

Strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home; its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile’s life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever. (173)

Although Said’s portrayal of exile emanates from his personal experience, it is far from being subjective since it is universally agreed upon the tormenting tribulations of exile. However, exile in the postmodern age has conversely come to signify relief from strenuous life conditions in the homeland, or is synonymously used with the term refuge. It has also come to denote not a fragmented identity but an “international one” to use Chris Abani’s terms. In the postmodern globalized age marked by transnationalism and multiculturalism, exile becomes a source of creativity rather than a source of despair. Taking into account the multiple enclaves in the United Kingdom, for instance, an exile subject’s strangeness in the hostland is no more as acute as it used to be in the past. In this typical case, his difference is allowed and tolerated in the sense that his cultural practices are no more regarded as awkward.

Key Words of Exile

In the past, the notion of exile was associated with the image of individuals having oftentimes an intellectual or scholarly character. Currently, however, the notion of exile embraces supplementary new variables i.e., collectivities banished or moving from the homeland voluntarily. This variable is distinguished from the movement of individuals as

Diaspora² that refers to a group of people deterritorialized, to use Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's term, and dispossessed of national ties.

In fact, exile that once denoted the political expulsion of an individual in the Ovidian sense of the term presently bears more than one connotation. The losses and nostalgia of exile can no more be confined to the prototypical experience of the political exile. However, these are also sensed through the adventures of war refugees, expatriates and immigrants. This is mainly because in all of these cases home is left behind and the displaced subjects have to adapt to the changes of the hostland. that refers to a group of people deterritorialized, to use Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's term, and dispossessed of national ties.

Thus, the discrepancy between earlier exiles and contemporary ones, Edward Said stresses in "Reflections on Exile," is that "Our age – with its modern warfare, imperialism, and the quasi-theological ambitions of totalitarian rulers – is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration" (174). Despite the dissimilarities explained so far, exiles across different generations share the same crosscultural and transnational visions, and suffer similar frustrations and anguish related to their displacement. It bears stressing that in the contemporaneous globalized age the meaning of exile has become more generic and can thus encompass all experiences of displacement. To put it otherwise, experiences of displacement are being revised as both the meaning and feeling of homelessness are currently less strenuous. In fact, this is due to the technological advances that reduce the

² Apart from the classical form of diaspora that refers to forced movements and the inability to return of notably Jews exiled to Babylon and Africans exiled to the Americas, Diaspora here is used in its contemporary sense pointing to ethnicity, immigration, settlement and race as notions that intersect and scrutinize conceptualizations of diaspora. More importantly, one may agree with Khachig Tölölyan who writes in the introduction to *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, "we use diaspora provisionally to indicate our belief that the term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, overseas community, ethnic community" (3-7).

effects that distance and estrangement can have on the migrant³. This terminological shift from the specific to the general explains the new varieties of exile analyzed in sociological theory i.e., internal exile, self-exile, voluntary exile and other varieties yet to be mentioned in what follows.

A more accurate distinction between exile and immigration can be made. While immigration delineates peoples' voluntary choice to migrate, immigrate or emigrate, exile generally pertains to forced dislocation. More precisely, whereas exile oftentimes features political expulsion, immigration is generally motivated by economic reasons. Henceforth, the latter can be viewed as an "economic expatriation" to use Sophia McClennen's categorization of immigration. Indeed, exile can be voluntary. In this case, it is closer to the sense of immigration than to the prototypical political significance of exile. To put it otherwise, voluntary exile, according to Bettina L. Knapp, is a situation where one flees stressful circumstances or persecution, or forms a new life for oneself⁴

Worth mentioning in this context is Halim Barakat's definition of exile. The latter explains, "My definition of exile is not restricted to forceful banishment by political authorities. The literature in this area of research has often distinguished between involuntary and voluntary forms of exile" (Qtd. in Abdel-Malek and Hallaq 306).

Although etymologically the notion of expatriate and exile share the Latin prefix "ex" meaning "out", the roots of the two words are different. The root for exile is *solum* and it refers to "ground, soil or land," whereas the prefix of expatriate is joined to *patria* meaning "fatherland or native land". However similar they can seem, scholars of exile still distinguish between the two. Sophia McClennen, to cite one, explains in *The Dialectics of*

³ In contemporary times of technology and increasing human flows, the significance of boundaries and their relevance in the process of constructing one's sense of 'homeness' is undoubtedly changing ... What does geographical distance effectively stand for when just about everything and everyone is one phone call or one mouse click away?" (Gonçalves and Oliveira de Morais 16).

⁴ Cf. Bettina L. Knapp, *Exile and the Writer: Exoteric and Esoteric Experiences in a Jungian Approach*, Pennsylvania University Press, 1991.

Exile, “Even though these words [exile and expatriate] share a similar etymology, “exile” typically refers to one who has been forced to leave one’s country, whereas “expatriate” suggests that the separation is voluntary” (15). What is problematic is that none of these concepts has a clear-cut definition. Furthermore, definitions of such concepts can vary from one source to the other, and can even contrast.

While McClennen, among others, emphasized the voluntary aspect of expatriation and the absence of choice for exiles, dictionary definitions of exile are often inclusive of the idea of voluntary absence from the homeland. In the 8th edition of the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, for instance, the definition of the noun “exile” refers to the political punishment of a person by sending him/ her away from home. However, “exile” as a person is defined as the one “who chooses, or is forced to live away from his or her country: political exile, tax exile.” Worth citing in this concern is that politics is the basic cause leading to the experience of exile. However, its effects and weight are minimized in the definition of exile: the subject. In the latter definition of exile, political exile is no more than a variable that can be compared to other variables, notably, tax exile, either willing or forced to leave the country. Paul Tabori goes in the same direction as McLennan as he explains in *The Anatomy of Exile* that expatriate, when used as a noun “emphasizes its voluntary character” (23).

Although one may agree with Sophia McClennen in her distinctive definition of immigration as an economic expatriation, the movement of immigration would not be definitely judged as not being linked with the land. First, McClennen defines immigration as an “economic expatriation” and expatriation is related to the land. Second, although immigration may seem a choice for many, it might oftentimes be the last resort especially if it is motivated by economic reasons. Henceforth, it should not be dismissed out of hand that immigration is not always a voluntary choice.

The idea of forced exile applies also to contemporary migrations. It is useful at this level to point to the idea of force as an incentive for migration highlighted by Virinder Kalra et al. in *Diaspora and Hybridity*:

Migration of all sorts carries with it varying degrees of compulsion, these may not be directly traced to the actions of a nation-state, but do relate to the inequalities created by capitalism, such as the demand for labour, the rise of poverty or famine and the basic demand for better social and economic conditions. (11)

Although migration does not necessarily imply that going back home is barred and the act of leaving the country is not politically or legally but economically foisted upon immigrant subjects, immigration as a variable comes under the rubric of “exile” due to the minimum amount of duress present in the act of leaving one’s country. Amy Kaminsky’s reflection is illuminating in this concern as she states, “Exile as I use the term is always coerced. “Voluntary exile” is, I believe, an oxymoron that masks the cruelly limited choices imposed on the subject” (9). The events in Algeria during the Black decade (1990’s), for instance, witnessed forced movements and resettlements of Algerians in some parts of Europe, notably France. Another example of this is the partitioning of former Yugoslavia into Bosnia, Kosovo, Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovenia, which resulted in the fact that many people reside near their former homes, yet are not capable of returning.

Although the terms exile, refugee, expatriate and immigrant relate because they all refer to some sort of displacement either forced or voluntary, some scholars emphasize the difference between these. Edward Said, in “Reflections on Exile,” focuses on the morose and solitary conditions of an exile as opposed to the conditions of refugees:

Exile originated in the age-old practice of banishment. Once banished, the exile lives an anomalous and miserable life, with the stigma of being an outsider.

Refugees, on the other hand, are a creation of the twentieth century state. The word “refugee” has become a political one, suggesting large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance, whereas “exile” carries with it, I think, a touch of solitude and spirituality. (181)

Although one can agree with Edward Said in that the labels “exile” and “refugee” are different in many respects notably terminological ones, life conditions in the host country foster feelings of alienhood and outsider status not only for exiles, but also for refugees, expatriates and immigrants.

In many cases, immigration is seen as a refuge and here one can take Paul Tabori’s part in that the two terms “exile” and “expatriate” are political and ethical, but not legal. Legally, according to Tabori, the exile will be referred to as a refugee, rooted in the Latin word *refugiare* that means, “To flee, run away, and escape.” Although little attention is relatively paid to the question of legality in this work (mainly designed as a literary study of forced displacements), clarification over terminological matters is deemed necessary for it stands as a background for the understanding of what follows. Refugee, thus, in a legal context is defined in Article 1 of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as:

[A person who] owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/o_c_ref.htm)

Thus, the four terms exile, refugee, expatriate and immigrant overlap and are often epiphenomenal. Following this line of thought, the literature of immigrants can be interestingly compared with the literature of refugees, expatriates and exiles particularly owing to the common themes that might be approached.

A further distinction has been made by Leon and Rebeca Grinberg in *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile*. According to them, “Migration and exile create similar problems for the transplanted individual, but the case of exile is “unique” because the exile’s condition is involuntary and return is impossible” (2). Here, once more, the impossibility to return is a defining characteristic of exile but not a definite one. Many instances show that return, however unusual, is not always impossible. Worth to be cited here is the case of African-Americans’ return to Liberia at the behest of Marcus Garvey in the 1920’s⁵.

The question of return is of high significance in the discussion of exile. In the past, the term exile was synonymous with banishment that is definitely accompanied with the probable impossibility to return to the homeland. Nowadays, however, and due to the nuances between the conceptualization of exile and many other forms of displacement, return for many voluntary exiles is not envisaged. The only priority in their case is how to adapt to the changes of the hostland, unlike the conventional exiles who desperately used to spend their time agonizing and reminiscing about the past.

A Historical Approach to Exile

As a primary human experience, exile is inscribed into Biblical banishment from Paradise as well as in other religious legends. In the history of Europe, people have been constrained to leave their homes due to religious persecution or the desire to efface ethnic and minority groupings for the benefit of national debates. In addition to ejections foisted

⁵ Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) was a Jamaican notorious advocate of Black Nationalism and Pan Africanism. Persuaded that Blacks should have a permanent homeland in Africa rather than being scattered like the Jewish Diaspora, Garvey launched the Liberia program in 1920 seeking to develop Liberia.

on whole groups, many forms of individual displacements existed, the most famous of which we can cite the Greek practice of Ostracism and Roman, Medieval and Renaissance practices of banishment. Exile in Ancient Greece took many forms and its conception has been renewed constantly. The most famous kind of exile in Ancient Greece was the practice of ostracism that was introduced to redefine and alter the violent practice of intra-elite politics of exile. The latter meant that the political power of the ruler was in some sense the power to expel one's political opponents. Ostracism, however, was a two-stage procedure that involved an initial vote on whether to hold an ostracism, conceived as a ritual, followed months later by ostracism per se in case the first vote was affirmative.

The difference between the two practices is that the power to exile through the intra-elite politics was in the hands of the elite, while the basic significance of ostracism, writes Sara Fordsyke in *Exile, Ostracism and Democracy*, is that "Non-elites simultaneously took control over decisions of exile and established themselves as the dominant political force in the polis" (150). Fordsyke further provides a distinctive analysis between the two practices in the following passage:

In particular, ostracism allowed for the expulsion of a single individual for the limited period of ten years. While a term of exile of ten years may not seem moderate to a modern observer, it is nevertheless vital to recall that the norm of intra-elite politics of exile entailed violent expulsion of a political leader, his associates, and their families for a potentially unlimited period of time, with total loss of property and power in Athens. Under those conditions, as we have seen, there was a great incentive for those exiled to attempt to return by force. By contrast, a person exiled by vote of ostracism not only lacked the support of a group of fellow exiles, but also was assured that he could return to Athens after ten years with his property intact and citizenship rights restored. (152)

To illustrate such arguments, Fordsyke mentions cases of ostracized individuals who served in significant public offices after their return from exile. These cases include Megacles, Xanthippus and Aristides who were recalled from exile when Athens was menaced by the second Persian invasion in 480, and performed substantial public roles.⁶

While ostracism was the most popular form of exile in democratic Athens, since it served to stabilize the political balance between the patrician and plebeian classes, other forms existed. Traitors, for instance, were subject to severe penalties for treason that could range from banishment (an extreme form of exile) to condemnation to death. Unlike victims of ostracism, “traitors suffered total loss of property and loss of the right to burial in the territory of the polis” (Fordsyke 155). Scapegoating was also related to the practice of exile in ancient Greece. In this ritual, Fordsyke writes, “One or more persons were expelled from the community in order to purify it and prevent the gods from harming its members. Failure to expel pollution from the community was thought to cause pestilence (λοιμός) and famine (λιμός)” (157).

Those expelled through the scapegoating ritual were oftentimes culpable of religious offenses that Athenians believed could pollute the whole community. This can be paralleled to the excluding aspect of the Salem Witchcraft Trials in the United States, although penalties in the latter case were either execution or lifetime prison. Another analogy could be made between the practice of scapegoating and the exclusion of communists from the USA during the Cold War as they were seen as “polluting” individuals to Capitalist USA.

The Roman custom of exile has been distinguished since it opposed the voluntary nature of Roman exilium to the penal aspect of exile in laws of other nations. In his

⁶ Xanthippus commanded the Athenian fleet at the battles of Mycale in 479 and Sestus in 478. Aristides served as a general at the battles of Salamis and Platea.

description of the Roman constitution, the historian Polybius reports the details of the procedure of exile as follows:

Therefore, the people often judge crimes punishable by a fine when the defendants have held the highest office, and the people alone judge capital cases. Concerning the latter, they have a practice which is notable and deserves mention. Their custom allows those on trials for capital offenses the freedom to depart openly when found guilty, thus sentencing themselves to voluntary exile, even if only one of the “tribes” has not yet given their verdict. There is safe refuge for these exiles in Neapolis, Praeneste, Tibur, and other states which have treaties with the Romans. (Qtd. in Kelly 17)

Thus, rather than being a kind of punishment as in other nations, exilium in the Roman republic was a form of allowing criminals to escape punishment by choosing voluntary banishment⁷This conception of exilium has been considered as an essential element in the understanding of *humanitas Romana* whose principles rest on a civilized behavior and attitude free from acts of inhumanity toward members of the human race. As a voluntary act through which a citizen could avoid punishment, exilium is considered by R.A Bauman to be “one of Rome’s greatest contributions to human rights.”⁸

After a criminal subject had escaped punishment, he could return to Rome but had to wait until the threat of renewed prosecution had faded. In another case, exiles could not return to Rome especially if a post-exilic plebiscite is held to enforce the *aquae et ignis interdictio* translated as interdiction from fire and water. This procedure, writes Gordon P.

⁷ Cicero says in this concern, “Exsilium enim non supplicium est sed perfugium portusque supplicii ... itaque nulla in lege nostra reperitur, ut apud ceteras civitates, maleficium ullum exilio esse mulctatum.” (Exile is not a punishment, but a sanctuary and refuge from punishment. Thus in no law of ours is exile found as punishment for any offense, as it is among other nations). Cicero delivered this speech in 69; six years later, his own *lex Tullia de ambitu* would initiate the use of exile as a penalty, albeit for a period of ten years” (Kelly 19, fn. 9).

⁸ For more details see R.A Bauman, *Crime and Punishment in Ancient Rome*, New York, 1996, pp.13-14 and *Human Rights in Ancient Rome*, New York, 2000, pp. 44-46.

Kelly in *The History of Exile in the Roman Republic*, “was thus used by the plebs to prevent the subsequent return of a fugitive from Roman justice” (32). Without this post-exilic sanction, an exile who fled before formal condemnation could go back to Rome after the legal issues of his trial had passed.

The Greek and Roman conceptions of exile as a political variety⁹ were revived during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Exile, Vladimir Zoric writes in “Metaphoric Aspects of Exile,” was the fate of “members of royal families who were defeated in the contest for the throne and by dignitaries who were overpowered in strife for influence in a court or for a public office” (11). Dynastic disputes resulted, for instance, in the expulsion of a number of such important royal figures as Henry IV who was exiled for ten years by King Richard II in 1398. However, unlike the democratic principle of exile in Ancient Greece, the medieval practice of exile depended instead on the privilege of power. In the ecclesiastical sphere, two forms of exile can be identified. First, monasticism could be seen as a spiritual and oftentimes permanent self-exile from the amoral secular world. Excommunication was a sort of punishment exercised by the church to expel persons from the Christian community as was the case of the Germanic emperor Henry IV.

In pre-modern ages, exile referred to experiences of individuals or, to a lesser degree, groups of people who were expelled. Through Renaissance and the period that followed, increased masses of people were evicted and the term “refugee” was introduced to refer to groups of people who were eager to escape persecution by asking for asylum in other countries. Cases of such a variable include the French Huguenots, the French Acadians ejected by the British from Nova Scotia, and the refugees or émigrés escaping the French Revolution.

⁹ For more details see R.A Bauman, *Crime and Punishment in Ancient Rome*, New York, 1996, pp.13-14 and *Human Rights in Ancient Rome*, New York, 2000, pp. 44-46

During the Reformation and counter-Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the religious incentive for exile gained momentum as masses of people fled religious persecution all over Europe. The English Protestants who fled the persecution of Queen Mary and left for North America best represent this religiously induced self-exile.

Expulsion in the conventional sense became relatively scarce in the twentieth century, although it was intermittently practiced in some parts of the world, notably the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic. The methods of eviction differed from one country to the other. Some dissidents were simply evicted, others were denied reentry after a trip abroad, and others were forced to leave due to job expropriation or deprivation, publication prohibition –in the case of writers – and many other kinds of harassments.

John Neubauer described twentieth century East-Central European exile in *Exile: Home of the Twentieth Century* as a new conception of this form of displacement:

In twentieth-century East-Central Europe exile usually meant a self motivated or occasionally forced departure from the home country or the habitual residence because of a threat to the person's freedom or dignified survival, such as an imminent arrest, sentence, forced labor, or even extermination. The departure was for an unforeseeable time irreversible. (8)

Despite the fact that Neubauer restricts his definition of twentieth-century exile to East-Central European experiences, his definition still applies to other groups and individuals especially those who left home “because of a threat to a person's freedom or dignified survival,” most notably individuals or groups escaping totalitarian regimes or dictatorships. To this core group of exiles, John Neubauer has added those to whom the fundamental standards of “immediate threat” and “no return” apply partially: the émigrés and expatriates. “In Praise of Exile,” Leszek Kolakowski states in this concern:

More often than not, modern exiles have been expatriates, rather than exiles in the strict sense; usually they were not physically deported from their countries or banished by law; they escaped from political persecution, prison, death, or simply censorship. The distinction is important insofar as it has had a psychological effect. Many voluntary exiles from tyrannical regimes cannot rid themselves of a feeling of discomfort A certain ambiguity is therefore unavoidable and it is impossible to draw up any hard-and-fast rules to distinguish justifiable from unjustifiable self-exile. (55)

Since it is unstated in this passage through what standards a self-exile is unjustifiable, the latter being a qualifier open to many interpretations, it would perhaps be appropriate to discuss the kind of departure that is not induced by political coercion. The argument advanced in this work agrees with that of Kolakowski in that earlier exiles were evicted whereas modern ones enter oftentimes a self-exile. Following Kolakowski's argument, once and again, it is emphasized in this work that when life conditions become suffocating, self-exile remains the only self-defense.

Following this line of understanding, immigrants, refugees and expatriates can be limped together in a flexible and multifaceted category that is postmodern exile. The decision over the exile status of a person rests on some key factors among which John Neubauer prioritizes "the socio-political conditions at the time of departure and the original intentions of the departing person" (9)¹⁰. Still the cited cases do not cover all types of displacements. Twentieth-century European and Latin American dictatorships, to add some other cases, opted for keeping their critics and dissidents at home rather than sending

¹⁰ The case of Eugène Ionesco is an exemplar of such an argument. Ionesco left Romania as an expatriate but then became an exile when his play *Le Rhinoceros* came to be viewed as an allegorical work pointing to suppressive states like Romania. More illustrative perhaps is the self-exile of Rodolphe Boulanger in Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. Rodolphe Boulanger quitted Emma with this farewell statement, "I punish myself by exile for all wrong I have done you. I leave. Where? I don't know. I am mad. Adieu" (Flaubert 230). Boulanger's departure is categorized as self-exile as "it is not enforced but self-imposed because in leaving Emma he did not act by an external influence but by free will" (Zoric 6).

them abroad. At home, these political opponents could be subdued, silenced, locked up in prisons, or simply killed. Abroad, it is maintained, “They [dissidents] could rally politicians and public opinion against the dictatorial regime” (Neubauer 8). In this context, exiles are usually not expelled from their home country; instead exiles flee by their own volition to evade the threats posed on their lives, survival or dignity.

Following the 9/11 events and the drastic changes they brought about to Muslim communities all over the world, a new designation of displaced individuals comes under the rubric of exile insofar as the notion of exile conjures up forced displacement. This twenty-first-century new form of exile is the repatriation of Muslims, or what might be called in this work “post 9/11 Muslims’ double-exile”¹¹. Even though repatriation could seem to many the opposite of exile being primarily concerned with the notion of return, it might be considered as a form of exile. This is mainly because exile is experienced twice. First, when the individual is forced out of the homeland, and second, when he/ she is forced out of the host country after being exiled into it.

I. 3. Exile and Home Matters

One of the basic concepts explaining the condition of exile is the feeling of homelessness, the latter points to an individual’s feelings of anguish and estrangement while being out of home. But what does home mean? Is it necessarily the place where one is born and brought up? Or a place where one feels security and exercises all liberties and enjoys all rights? If we take the first alternative into consideration, homelessness is felt outside the geographical contours of one’s country of birth. It places a great emphasis on the politics of nationalism that will be developed in one of the following sections. The second alternative, however, puts a link between one’s wellbeing and feelings of

¹¹ The condition of double exile is neither specific of nor limited to the Muslim community of post-9 / 11, there have existed more painful forms of exile in terms of the number of times of displacement. Kolakowski, for instance, evokes the case of Baruch Spinoza who “was excommunicated from the Jewish community which established itself in Amsterdam after the expulsion from Portugal, where they had lived as exiles from the Eretz given them by God as a place of exile from Ede” (58)

homelessness. In this sense, home is not a place but a space. In a precisely distinctive manner, Yi-Fu Tuan points to the difference between place and space in his seminal work *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*:

Space that is stretched over a grid of cardinal points makes the idea of place vivid, but it does not make any particular geographical locality the place. A spatial frame determined by the stars is anthropocentric rather than place-centric, and it can be moved as human beings themselves move (150).

Conceptions of home are, thus, problematic. Home, in this sense, refers either to the country or the particular locus that one occupies, and is a signifier of “homeland” or as Yi-Fu Tuan put it in *Space and Place*, “homeland is an important type of place at the medium scale. It is a region (city or countryside) large enough to support a people’s livelihood” (149).

So, rather than concretely defined through geographical contours, home has become an abstract notion reflecting a feeling of belonging in a space and not a place where someone belongs. Edward Said provides a good example for this argument in “Reflections on Exile,” although non-referential of the link between home, belonging and space. In a quite narrative mode, Said tells his readers about the time he spent with Faiz Ahmad Faiz, the most distinguished of Urdu poets who was exiled from Pakistan by Zia’s military regime and found shelter in strife-torn Beirut. Said explains that despite the affinity of spirit between Faiz Ahmad Faiz and his Palestinian closest friends, nothing really matched – language, life history, culture or poetic convention. After providing his reflections, Said moves to the cathartic event that he describes as follows:

Only once, when Iqbal Ahmad, a Pakistani friend and a fellow-exile, came to Beirut, did Faiz seem to overcome his sense of constant estrangement. The three of us sat in a dingy Beirut restaurant late one night, while Faiz recited poems. After a

time, he and Iqbal stopped translating his verses for my benefit, but as the night wore on it did not matter. What I watched required no translation: it was an enactment of a homecoming expressed through defiance and loss, as if to say, “Zia, we are here”. (“Reflections on Exile” 175)

Although Faiz was in the same place, the “dingy restaurant” being situated in Beirut, he was in a different space ambient with the homecoming atmosphere that the presence of Iqbal Ahmad fostered. Thus, both feelings of homelessness and belonging have been felt in the same place that is not Faiz’s native homeland. Yet, they have been experienced in different spaces.

Understandably, twentieth-century exiles’ feelings of estrangement and homelessness are also different from pre-modern conceptions of homelessness. This means that in a globalized world characterized by constant displacement, either urged or voluntary, and where cultural as well as national borders tend to dissolve, the feeling of homelessness tends to be present constantly and everywhere.

In *The Need for Roots*, Simone Weil contends, “To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul” (40). Modern mass dislocations have become defining factors in connection with feelings of belonging. Displacement also generates feelings of homelessness that can be psychologically as well as socially destructive for exile subjects.

Let us recall that home is not necessarily a physical structure or a geographical location but always an emotional space. Moreover, it is among the most emotionally complex and resonant concepts in our psychic vocabularies. In a pre-global epoch, identifying a place as home could be delineated through the feeling of belonging in a specific place whereas the lack thereof translates into feelings of homelessness. The feeling of belonging is relatively linked to experiences of exclusion or inclusion. The sense

of being at home and the sense of harmony between one's innermost self and the cosmos obviate the need for political markers of identity to feel belonging to a specific home.

At this level, some questions can be raised: Is home where one's family is? Where one has been born and brought up? Is home the place from where one has been displaced? Or is it where the displaced person finds himself after exile? How does the to and fro between one's adopted home and one's original home model and, at times, alter one's view of home? In order to answer these questions an elementary answer to the substantial question "what makes a place home?" should not be dismissed out of hand.

A human being feels home or "has roots", according to Simone Weil, "by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations of the future" (40). By "treasures of the past", Weil may well have referred to heritage. Therefore, home can be seen as a place where history, religion, culture, and rhetoric of belonging are shared by a community. Alternatively, as Liisa Malkki explains, "the metaphorical concept of having roots involves intimate linkages between people and place – linkages that are increasingly recognized in anthropology as areas to be denatured and explored afresh" (24). This collective ethos forms and refers to what Pierre Bourdieu names the *habitus*, the consistent composite of practices linking habit with inhabitance¹².

A defining element of exile is a blockade to "return" i.e., that there is a ban, either de facto or de jure, on returning to the homeland and hence feelings of longing and nostalgia. Exile is oftentimes analyzed according to the dialectic scheme that opposes home and abroad from psychological, sociological and cultural viewpoints.

¹²In *The Logic of Practice*, Bourdieu explains this linkage in these words, "as an acquired system of generative schemes, the *habitus* makes possible the free production of all the thoughts, perceptions and actions inherent in the particular conditions of its production – and only those [...] Because the *habitus* is an infinite capacity for generating products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions – whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production". See Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Logic of Practice*, Trans. Richard Nice, Cambridge Polity Press, 1990, p. 55.

Pragmatically, ejection from home need not necessarily result into displacement to another country. It also involves internal exile i.e., the expulsion of a person to some distant part of an empire or a country. Examples of such a variable are Ovid's banishment to Tomis, Napoleon's to Elba, and Dostoevsky's to Siberia. This practice continued well in the twentieth-century when "various countries sent their people into an internal exile that involved confinement to a certain village but not to a camp" (Neubauer 6).

Home, in the latter sense, also refers to dwelling. According to Adorno, himself an exile, "dwelling in the proper sense is now impossible"¹³. Feelings of homelessness that are brought about by war and modern technologies are resumed in his phrase "the house is past" through which he eloquently indicates:

They attempt to evade responsibility for one's residence by moving into a hotel or furnished rooms, makes the enforced conditions of emigration a wisely-chosen norm. They live, if not in slums, in bungalows that by tomorrow may be leaf-huts, trailers, cars, camps, or the open air. The bombing of European cities as well as the labour and concentration camps merely proceed as executors, with what the immanent development of technology had long decided was to be the fate of houses. (Adorno 38-39)

From a clinical point of view, one's home can also be one's memories. Take for instance, people affected by Alzheimer's disease who feel estrangement vis-à-vis the time they are living and their sense of "homeness" or "placeness" is to be found in their memories. Therefore, the concept of exile is not only related to places, but pertains to spaces and time as well.

As a result, all conceptions of home are framed within geographical as well as historical contexts. Exile narratives, in their earlier forms, emphasized the impossibility to

¹³Cf. Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia, Reflections on a Damaged Life, "Refuge for the Homeless" (38-39)*, trans. E. F. N Jephcott, Verso Editions, UK, 2005. (Originally published in 1951).

separate history from its geographical context or more appropriately the place of its birth and emergence, and hence the sorrow of earlier authors of exile. Modern narratives of exile, however, seek to create their own histories in new geographical locales. Thus, contemporaneous representations of home in exile narratives pertain more to the way history can be transplanted in geographical locus. And all this has been made possible by multiculturalism and globalization.

Exile and the Politics of Belonging

Conceptions of belonging can vary in scope. Belonging either relates to group memberships that are limited or broad in spatial scope. In the first case, individuals can claim membership within a group of individuals that share sameness with them in terms of specific representations like professional ones. In the latter case, individuals deliberately claim membership within a group of individuals that share sameness with them in terms of historical experiences, language, culture and territory. At this level of analysis, a question may arise: what groups do exiles claim membership in? Do they feel they belong to the international group of exiles, the transnational group of hybrid citizens or the nationalistic nostalgic group of those dreaming to return home? This brings me to the concept of nationalism and the way it pertains to feelings of belonging among exile subjects.

The Politics of Nationalism

Nationalism is associated with exile in that it represents belonging in and to a place, a people, a culture and defines membership by distinguishing members of the nation from outsiders. What is at stake for the exile subject is the ambiguity surrounding the notion of group membership, or to put it otherwise where does an exile belong as the status of “outsider” becomes confirmed? Feelings of belonging are delineated by geographical lines i.e. frontiers that separate “us” from “them”, and “just beyond the frontier between

“us” and “them”” explains Edward Said, “is the perilous territory of not-belonging” (“Reflections on Exile” 177).

Before moving to nationalism, the concept of “nation” has to be defined in order to be able to carry out debate on nationalism that is by essence a feeling of belonging in and to a nation. Nationalism literature consists in different approaches to defining the concept of “nation”. In his work entitled *Nations and States an Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*, Hugh Seton-Watson is rather skeptic than simplistic when defining the concept of nation. He says, “All that I can find to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one” (5).

Benedict Anderson follows the same path as Hugh Seton-Watson, in *Imagined Communities* when he defines nation as “an imagined community” since “the members of the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Qtd. in Seton-Watson 6). Anthony Smith, in *National Identity* defines nation as, “a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths, and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members” (14).

Nationalism as well as nation has proved difficult to define. Hugh Seton-Watson, author of the most comprehensive work on nationalism concludes that it is impossible to assign a clear-cut definition to the notions of nation and nationalism. After carrying extensive research on the subject matter, he concludes that there can be no “scientific definition” of the word nation although the phenomenon has existed and still exists¹⁴.

¹⁴ Cf. Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*, Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1977, p.5.

Nearly all political scientists emphasize two main factors in their definitions of nation. First, that nation has the right to control territorial boundaries, and second that there are membership boundaries of the population that makes up the nation. The notion of territorial self-determination is an important element in the definition of nation and nationalism. The importance of the belief in territorial self-determination for the group is cardinal in defining “nation”, in the nationalism literature, and provides a significant norm in the differentiation between nations and other social categories. As Haas put it, “a nation is a socially mobilized body of individuals, believing themselves to be united by some set of characteristics that differentiate them (in their own minds) from outsiders, striving to create or maintain their own state” (726). It, then, becomes problematic whether to use the concepts of “nation” and “state” interchangeably or separately.

While some theorists may not conceive of a nation as pursuing its own state, the idea of territory is pivotal to the understanding of nation. Taking into consideration these ideas, some of the common strands of the definitions of “nation” in the nationalism literature revolve around the idea that a nation is a collective of people. This is an essential detail, yet it does not help us draw a distinction between nations and other social constructs. Thus, nations are groups of people connected by unifying traits and the will to control a territory that is believed to be the group’s national homeland.

The idea of territorial control and its conception as a right is necessary in making distinctions between nations and other collectives. We should also point out that nations are not just unified by culture, be it civic or ethnic, they are unified by a sense of purpose as well i.e. to control the territory that the members of the group think to be theirs. In sum, a nation needs a “territorial referent”¹⁵.

¹⁵A term used by Anthony Richmond in *Ethnic Nationalism: Social Science Paradigms* (International Social Science Journal 111), pp. 3-18.

If a nation is a community of people who share history, culture and beliefs that are confined to geographical limitations which determine the state, what, then, is nationalism? As in the case of nation, a variety of definitions is available for the concept of nationalism. Ernest Gellner rules in *Thought and Change* that, “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist” (169). Like Edward Said who believes, “all nationalisms in their early stages develop from a condition of estrangement” (“Reflections on Exile” 176), Sophia McClennen sees nationalism as a concept that “has been used to construct nations, as in the case of wars of independence or in revolutionary rhetoric, and has been used to maintain nations [...]” (20). Henceforth, a basic element in the understanding of nationalism is a people’s claim for a territory.

Nationalism calls into question a sense of national identity that determines characteristics that shape the cultural link between a people and its land. National identity is the basic step in an argument for nationalism that can be distinguished from the latter as a more direct call to action or defense.

National identity, as opposed to other categories of identity, invokes more open self-understandings; including some sense of connectedness, affinity, or commonality and affiliation to particular others. Brubaker and Cooper consider national identity as invoking three main ideas: commonality, connectedness, and groupness. In “Beyond Identity”, they define commonality as, “the sharing of some common attribute, connectedness as the relational ties that link people, and groupness as the sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded, solidary group” (20).

According to the authors of the article, neither connectedness nor commonality alone generates groupness that in this context alludes to national identity, yet they may indeed do so. To achieve a sense of groupness, a third element should be supplemented to commonality and connectedness. It is what Max Weber called

‘*zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl*’, translated as “a feeling of belonging together”. National identity, in this sense, is defined through the “analytical triad” or “dynamic nexus” of “identities-borders-orders”¹⁶. Yosef Lapid is illuminating in this concern as he writes:

Processes of collective identity formation invariably involve complex bordering issues [...] Processes of identity, border and order construction are therefore mutually self-constituting. Borders, for instance, are in many ways inseparable from the identities they help demarcate or individuate. Likewise, they are also inseparable from orders constituted to a large extent via such acts of individuation and segmentation (Albert and Lapid 7).

In other words, a sense of collective identity, or in this case national identity, characterizes a people and their identity that is coterminous a territory, delimited by a border within which laws define a particular social and political order that is, in turn, conceived to be different from orders outside the border.

Generally, the definition of national identity depends on the way the concept of “nationalism” is interpreted in particular states. In other words, some definitions of nationalism tend to emphasize cultural features more than political ones and vice versa. More acutely, a distinction is made between two nationalisms that can operate separately or jointly i.e. *cultural nationalism* and *statist nationalism*¹⁷. In *The Limits of Nationalism*, Chaim Gans identifies the two kinds of nationalism as two families:

One family is that of statist nationalism. According to this type of nationalism, in order for states to realize political values such as democracy, economic welfare and distributive justice, the citizenries of states must share a homogeneous national culture. It must be noted that the values in question do not derive from specific

¹⁶Cf. Albert, M., D. Jackson and Y. Lapid, *Identities, Borders, Orders: Rethinking International Relations Theory*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

¹⁷Statist nationalism represents the type of nationalism that historians and sociologists call *territorial-civic nationalism*, while cultural nationalism expresses the normative essence of the kind of nationalism historian and sociologists refer to as *ethno-cultural nationalism*.

national cultures. Nor are they aimed at their protection. The second family is that of cultural nationalism. According to this nationalism, members of groups sharing a common history and societal culture has a fundamental, morally significant interest in adhering to their culture and in sustaining it across generations. This interest warrants the protection of states [...] within statist nationalism, the national culture is the means, and the values of the state are the aims. Within cultural nationalism, however, the national culture is the aim, and the state is the means (7).

Chaim Gans further clarifies that in statist nationalism any national culture could be the mode for fulfilling the political values of the state. Within cultural nationalism, on the other hand, states act as the providers of the mode for maintaining the particular national cultures of their citizenry or parts thereof.

Statist nationalism refers to the civic culture of a state and evokes the notion of citizenship that is another constitutive element of nationalism and national identity, albeit civically defined, and whose relationship with feelings of belonging is so difficult to discern. Citizenship would define the national boundaries of belonging for the residents of a state. Those out of these boundaries would be considered aliens and nonmembers of the state. Conveniently, if statist nationalism were the defining ideology of a state's nationalism, citizenship (devoid of cultural and ethnic bearings) would be prominent in the understanding of national identity. Although, statist nationalism and cultural nationalism are different and have different constituents, they are complementary and altogether define a stable identity. If detached, these elements may lead to identity crises. Imagine for a moment a French person was born in Algeria in the 1940's and moved to France in the 1960's then immigrated and became a citizen of the United States in the 1990's. Which country does this person really feel he belongs to and in? All we can say about the identity

of this person is that it is problematic and difficult to determine given the identity crisis that the person might experience.

With the explanations brought so far, the question that is raised is where do exiles stand in this labyrinthine terminology? Which categories do they belong to? In exile debates, a sense of both national identity and nationalism are cardinal. The reason that stands behind such eminence is that without the assurance that there is a bond between a person and a place, the notion of exile is meaningless.

In terms of citizenship, exiles experience shifts in their political loyalties. Not very different from exiles in the ancient Roman republic¹⁸, being an exile in the modern epoch deprives the displaced person from all his citizen rights and exempts him from all his citizen duties in the homeland when he finds refuge in another country and takes up the franchise of the new state. This passive condition of exiles neither participating in nor taking profit from the political institutions of their homelands makes of them “outsiders” in their homelands.

Zachary and Sides argue that *distinctive citizens* i.e. those who are not native-born citizens, naturally manifest less attachment to the locus of residence than native-born citizens because of two reasons. First, foreign born residents of a country may not, because of being immigrants, have been acquainted with the standard “socialization process” that cultivates national attachment in native born citizens. Thus, foreign born citizens may

¹⁸When a Roman citizen quitted his homeland to avoid a legal penalty, he was always considered as a *civis Romanus*. Even when the *aqua et ignis interdictio* was applied against him, he did not cease to be a citizen of Rome, unless he willingly put his Roman citizenship aside and adopted another one. Cicero best explained the relationship between exile and citizenship in the Roman republic when he stated “*qui si in civitate legis vim subire vellent, non prius civitatem quam vitam mitterant: quia nolunt, non adimituri civitas, sed ab eis relinquuntur atque deponitur. nam quum ex nostro iure duarum civitatum nemo esse possit, tum amittitur haec civitas denique, quum is qui profugit receptus est in exilium, hoc est, in aliam civitatem.*” “If any citizens wish to suffer the execution of the law, they would not lose their citizenship before they lose their lives. Because they do not so wish, their citizenship is not taken away from them, but they abandon it and put it aside. Since no one can be a citizen of two states under our law, Roman citizenship is finally lost at that point when a fugitive has been received into exile, that is, into the citizenship of another state.” Cf. Gordon P. Kelly, *A History of Exile in the Roman Republic*, Cambridge University Press, USA, 2006, pp. 45-46.

retain national attachment and loyalty to their countries of birth. It is further argued that even among native born citizens; distinctive in racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious terms, may feel the same as foreign born citizens in terms of national attachment. These feelings may be rooted in the implicit or explicit “exclusionary content” of the concept of national identity¹⁹.

To the category of immigrants we may add exiles, since they also, by virtue of being outsiders, might become distinctive citizens in a non-homeland state. Although attachment to the host country, in the case of exiles, may vary in degree, it is conceived as a source of dilemma. In this sense, being politically attached to the host country is not necessarily conducive of any particular kind of attachment i.e. love or pride to cite only some. Thus, far from being complementary, an exile might feel contrastive attachments i.e. political attachment to the host country and cultural attachment to the homeland that might, in turn, produce an identity crisis.

Cultural nationalism, on the other hand, plays a significant role for the cultural production of intellectual exiles. Benedict Anderson argues that cultural forms are necessary in the shaping of nationalism and explains that the attachment people feel for their nation requires cultural products of nationalism that he calls in *Imagined Communities* “inventions of their imagination” such as music, prose fiction, , poetry and plastic arts. These products, namely, literature, anthems, flags, and the arts shape the cultural framework of the nation and foster love for the nation or, as Anderson put it, “self-sacrificing love” that is shown “very clearly and in thousand different forms and styles” (141).

Considering cultural nationalism as a reason for the probable expulsion of citizens,

Sophia McClennen writes:

¹⁹See Zachary Elkins & John Sides, *In Search of the United Nation-State: National Attachment among Distinctive Citizens*, Center for the Study of Democracy, University of California, Irvine, Paper 06-08, 2006, p.4.

In so far as exiles are challenging the official culture of their nation, they must argue for an alternative cultural nationalism. This position typically maintains that there is a story that is being suppressed by official versions of cultural identity, which the exile must tell. The narrative of exiles attempting to counter official versions of their nation's culture includes stories that are no longer told within their countries and which exiles hope will reach their compatriots"(23).

Although McClennen refers here to political and intellectual exiles only, expatriates leave their countries for mainly the same reasons. Take, for instance, the case of American expatriates of the Lost Generation, namely Gertrude Stein and Scott Fitzgerald who immigrated to France and wrote about America of the twenties for the purpose of disillusionment.

For other categories of exiles i.e. self-exiles and refugees, the cultural products Anderson refers to as *inventions of our imagination* are inherent and can never be erased even if the exile subject assimilates into another culture. This can be seen throughout the majority of *distinctive citizens* in France, for instance, who do not learn La Marseillaise by heart, or those immigrants in the UK who do not even have an idea about the title of the British anthem, let alone sing it or feel it, and are moved each time they hear the national anthem of the homeland sung²⁰.

Anderson explains that the *unisonance* while singing national anthems has a substantial effect on the feeling of belonging and groupness. Apart from national anthems, Anderson illustrates with the example of the recitation of ceremonial poetry on special

²⁰On the uniting effect national anthems, Anderson states, "Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance [...] How selfless this unisonance feels! If we are aware that others are singing these songs precisely when and as we are, we have no idea who they may be, or even where, out of earshot, they are singing. Nothing connects us all but imagined sounds." Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition, published by Verso, USA, 1993, p.145.

religious occasions that unite people sharing the same religion such as the Book of Common Prayer. Other examples may include Tarawih Prayer for Muslims in Ramadan, Passover prayers for Jews or Christmas Prayers for Christians.

Statist nationalism among exiles may vanish over time, especially in the case of political opposition. However, the imprints that cultural nationalism leaves in the hearts of exiles are part of an exile's inherent elements of identity the same way his / her physical traits are, and are thus ineffaceable. What is problematic, however, is whether feelings of nationalism among exiles are possible without the significant geographical spirit of a territory where one's innermost sense of being is felt and exteriorized without constraints.

However, all these assumptions are to be revised in a global era when according to Appadurai, "we need to think ourselves beyond the nation' because the modern nation-state is in a 'serious crisis' brought on by transnational conditions" (Qtd. in Young et al. 1). According to Appadurai, this global situation has "deterritorialized" the nation and produced a new kind of citizens that are the post-national *citoyens du monde* i.e. global citizens²¹. Indeed, globalization with its technological paraphernalia mainly internet and mass communication have deterritorialized and denationalized national cultures.

The Politics of Transnationalism

Exile and its border-crossing experience is as a *rite de passage* that marks the exile self's life forever. On the one hand, the exile self is detached from all sources of national sentiment and belonging, on the other hand, the exile is cast into a new ethnoscape that requires the adoption of the new culture in order to avoid the devastating condition of alienhood. Transnationalism is the movement that jeopardizes the survival of nationalism and nation-state:

²¹Cf. Ajun Appadurai, "Sovereignty without Territoriality: Notes for a Postnational Geography" in P. Yaeger (ed.) *The Geography of Identity*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1996.

Transnationalism renders the borders of a nation insignificant. People, goods and culture flow across borders, which become merely geographic and no longer culturally meaningful. There are no “Others” or “Aliens” and culture, goods, and people are absent of national attachments. (McClennen 24)

There are coarsely three social fields that can be identified in exile studies:

- 1- The exile subject who has a sense of collective identity.
- 2- The spatial context and nation-state where the exile subject resides.
- 3- The nation-state to which the exile subject maintains feelings of affiliation.

This “triadic relationship”²² forms a basic element of exile debates and holds a fundamental tension which calls into question two loci, once and again, home and abroad.

This idea brings us to the concept of homelessness which is represented through feelings of estrangement rooted in being far from home. Belonging, in this sense, relates to identity. In fact, both identity and belonging are words overused and under-theorized in the context of population movements and translocation. “A sense of collective identity”, writes Floya

Anthias:

And feelings of belonging to the country you reside in are neither necessarily coterminous nor mutually exclusive. You may identify but not feel that you ‘belong’ in the sense of being accepted or being a full member. Alternatively, you may feel that you are accepted and ‘belong’ but may not fully identify, or your allegiances may be split. Here it is useful to bring up the issue of multiple identities (19-20).

Accordingly, and in the case of exiles, the displaced people identify with compatriots of the homeland but do not really feel they belong in the homeland since they are neither full

²²I borrow this phrase from William Safran’s work, “*Diaspora in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return*”, *Diaspora*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 83-99. Safran uses the phrase “triadic relationship” to refer to the three central features in diasporic formations i.e. the dispersed group, the nation-state where they reside and the one to which they maintain affiliation.

members acting as citizens of the nation-state nor are they accepted. Alternatively, exiles may be accepted in another nation and feel they politically belong in it but do not necessarily identify with its members, being different from them in many aspects: cultural, linguistic, ideological, religious and so on (although these may not happen all together).

Advocates of transnationalism argue that nationalism is coercive, especially when the concept of identity is at work. For them, national identity in nationalism debates is oppressive as it is linked to many aspects, namely geography, while transnational identity is liberating as unlimited and unrelated to anything. Contrary to the coercive nature qualifying the conception identity in nationalism debates, Sophia McClennen states that it is less restrictive than nationalism²³ and that it “posits an alternative way of describing cultural identity that is less geographically restrictive” (25). All forms of displacement in transnational debates show that the physical borders of a country do not always have the importance that nationalist debates accord them. This is mainly because feelings of belonging to the homeland oftentimes persist outside the territorial boundaries of the nation mainly in the form of diasporas.

Transnationalism, in this sense, can be philosophically paralleled to the Heideggerian account of the built object of a bridge and the emergence of banks²⁴. Heidegger argues that the bridge induces the banks to lie across from each other and indicates that the environing land on either side of the stream is brought into juxtaposition.

Moreover, Heidegger states that bridges produce new social patterns “forming a locale or connecting different parts of a town, or the town with the country, or the town with the network of long-distance traffic, paced and calculated for maximum yield” (Qtd.

²³McClennen provided the pros and cons of transnationalism and argued that it can be viewed as a liberating force from the constraints of nationalism and yet it is itself a form of coercion as it “actually refers to an uneven more pervasive spread of Western-based culture.” She further explains that “transnational corporations are the messenger of Western culture and its mode of production.” (McLennen, 2004: 24). Other scholars such as Hardt and Negri argue that transnationalism can be more oppressive than nationalism as it is tied to empire and global capitalism.

²⁴ Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, (ed.) D. Farrell Krell, London, Routledge, 1993.

in Urry¹³²). In the same way bridges allow for crossing places, transnationalism crosses territories and cultures.

Two main concepts are at work in the debate of transnationalism: transculturation and hybridity. Transculturation describes the impact of the contact of two or cultures on cultural identity. As opposed to acculturation which results in assimilation of new aspects in the national culture²⁵, transculturation deals with the “importation of new cultural elements through a local, cultural filter” (McClennen 26). Uruguayan writer Angel Rama later on provided another definition of the concept of transculturation in his work *Transculturation Narrativa en América Latina* (Transculturation in Latin American Narrative). He describes it as, “the partial loss of the local and the partial gain of foreign elements” (Qtd. in McClennen 26).

Transculturation as a process, according to Ortiz, produces neo-culture that maintains elements of the original culture at the same time that it adopts elements of the new culture. Transculturation is also used to describe, like multiculturalism, a mosaic of cultural elements where none hold an advantageous position and all coexist in a state flux and motion.

As opposed to cultural nationalism, transculturation is subject to change. The difference between the two concepts is that cultural nationalism implies the idea of inheritance while transculturation is a form of recreation and constant change. Transculturation, like transnationalism, is crucial in the defining the cultural identity of exiles. It is often-times the case that exiles hold transnational views that result in changes

²⁵Although this may happen at varying degrees. In Milton Gordon’s account, for instance, acculturation is the process through which a minority group adopts the host society’s core culture, which remains fundamentally unchanged by this absorption. However; Gordon acknowledged the possibility of change at the peripheries that he cites in the following quotation “*minor modifications in cuisine, recreational patterns, place names, speech, residential architecture, sources of artistic inspiration, and perhaps few other areas*”. Thus, acculturation could happen without entailing other forms of assimilation, and the stage of acculturation could last constantly. Cf. Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: the Role of Race, Religion, and National Origin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.100.

at the level of identification. While the process of cultural identification of exiles demonstrates transculturation and changes at the level of the national culture, exiles do not lose all ties to the national culture. McClennen states in this concern, “even those exiles who reject their nation and embrace transnational culture cannot escape defining themselves culturally in relation to their past, which in their case was very deeply affected by national history” (27).

These conceptions of transnationalism as privileging newness that comes out of cultural contacts threatens the survival of all forms of nationalism and local cultures and puts the emphasis on global debates. As exiles meet in a foreign land and experience the same forms of alienation and sufferings, they develop a sense of groupness that might result in an “imaginary community”, to use Anderson’s words, of exiles. It is important at this level to recall Brubaker’s and Cooper’s conception of identity that signifies:

A fundamental sameness among members of a group or a category. This may be understood objectively (as an experienced, felt, or perceived sameness). This sameness is expected to manifest itself in solidarity, in shared dispositions or consciousness, or in collective action (7).

Thus, exiles as a general category might well create a community and new identity that are adapted to the post-national globalized age. On the basis of sameness at the level of experience and shared consciousness, exiles might manifest solidarity and feel they belong to the same category. As in exile narratives, exiles:

Often seek other lines along which they draw identity that are not merely national – such as gender, race, class, or sexuality [...] because of their isolation, exiles are in a situation that calls their attention to commonalities that transcend the national and link them to others regardless of nationality, or even historical synchronicity (McClennen 25).

What, then, is the fate of nationalism, in the face of human constant displacement? Is this state of human nomadology altogether with globalization carrying with them meanings of transcendental “homes”, found everywhere in the postmodern world where reality is replaced with image²⁶ the future defining aspect of belonging? To put it differently, is the discourse of “endism” regarding nationalism brought by this endless human movement? A definite answer to such question seems impossible as such concepts as nationalism flexible.

Another key concept relating transnationalism with the anthropological question of exile is, according to Homi Bhabha, hybridity that “entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (*The Location of Culture* 4). In fact, the notion of hybridity occupies a central place in postcolonial and transnational discourses. It is “celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference” (Hoogvelt 158).

In *Diaspora and Hybridity*, the latter is defined as follows, “In its most recent descriptive and realist usage, hybridity appears as a convenient category at ‘the edge’ or contact point of diaspora, describing cultural mixture where the diasporized meets the host in the scene of migration” (Kalra et al. 71). Thus, hybridity signifies the newness that comes out of the mixture of the host culture with the diaspora.

Cultural hybridity is the newness that comes out of the contact of two cultures. It relates to transnationalism and defines its results through the transformations of the

²⁶This idea is contained in one of Jean Baudrillard’s key theses: *Simulation: the Procession of Simulacra* in which he asserts that image is a copy of the real and has ontological priority over reality. Moreover “Baudrillard offers an apocalyptic characterization of the postmodern in that the construction of the real as film is said to mark the destruction of reality”. See Catherine Constable, *Postmodernism and Film*, in (ed.) Steven Connor, *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 43-47.

process of cultural identification. Homi Bhabha defines hybridity as, “the third space which enables other positions to emerge” (*The Third Space* 211).

Although hybridity and transnationalism endorse cultural diversity that, in turn, becomes bedrock of multiculturalism, it still lacks efficiency in terms of equilibrium between the two cultures’ amount of supplementing the hybrid culture. Hybridity, as defined in the postcolonial discourse by Homi Bhabha, preaches cultural diversity yet shows consciousness towards difference.

Cultural hybridity, in the case of exiles takes place in the host nation-states. As the culture of the newcomers i.e. exiles, is fused with the culture of the host members, a neo-culture arises, yet a question arises at this level: Who is the agent that controls the changes brought to both cultures and which culture dominates during the process of hybridity? Homi Bhabha explains that although multicultural states entertain and encourage diversity, they contain it. Furthermore, Bhabha contends that it is the host nation that controls the process of cultural hybridity as “a transparent norm is constituted, a norm given by the host society or dominant culture, which says that ‘these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid” (*The Third Space* 208).

Ergo, one should avoid discussing hybridity “outside the parameters of unequal power relations that exist between and within cultures” (Anthias 24). Here once again, McClennen’s reflection about transnationalism as even more confining than nationalism is true. Even though hybridity, as explained above, is a form of comfort for the displaced peoples as they are afforded the opportunity to retain vestiges of their national cultures, it is the task of the host nation-state to decide which elements to maintain and which ones to erase. Henceforth the culture of the displaced is located by the host state according to its needs and taking into account the privilege of its national culture which takes precedence over the culture of the foreigners.

Following this line of thought, even in the process of hybridization the displaced people do not enjoy total freedom to choose what to keep from the national culture and their capability to express themselves as they wish is once again subjected to the norms of the host state that regulate hybridization so as the new elements brought to the national culture do not efface the cultural singularity of the host nation.

Worth citing, in this concern, is the case of Muslim women workers who have been forbidden from wearing the veil in all professional institutions in France. Although France is a cosmopolitan multicultural nation that allows for various cultural practices within its national borders, still the state is the only agent that determines whether specific cultural practices are practicable or not.

The question that arises at this level is whether hybridity as understood in the Du Boisian context of “double consciousness”²⁷ is beneficial or detrimental to the exile self. Providing an answer to this question at this level of analysis is deemed early as a discussion of the notion of identity and identification should precede such flexible reflections. Hence, the extent of comfort an exile might find in this state of in-betweenness cannot be decided and generalized as a rule but differs from one person to the other. More importantly, feelings and manifestations of belonging are defining traits of identity and the identification process.

The Practice of Identification of Exiles

Identity and other affiliated concepts have a long history as technical terms in Western philosophy. They have been used to address the perennial philosophical problems of permanence amidst manifest change, and unity amidst manifest diversity²⁸. What interests us most, in exile studies, is the definition of identity in postmodern and psychological theories as the case study of my work are late twentieth-century displaced

²⁷W. E. B. Du Bois's theory that African Americans possess a double consciousness has engendered a great amount of contemporary criticism of African American identity and literature.

²⁸Cf. Avrum Stroll, *Identity* (Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Macmillan, New York, 1967, Vol IV), pp.121-124.

characters. Thus, it is the concern of this work to show that exile and displacement are the prototype of the postmodern fragmented persona.

In a postmodern context, identity is explained through two contradicting concepts i.e. “Idem” and “Ipse” explained by Ritivoi. “In Latin two terms for the idea of identity, although they are perfect synonyms: idem, the first term signifies identity as something permanent in time, while ipse tolerates change, degrees and variations, and thus, includes difference and otherness” (44). The “ipse” is related to Derrida’s thoughts about identity as non-static and constantly shifting. Identity according to him is under construction as much as we live. “Ipse”, on the other hand, is a postmodern concept of identity that includes multiplicity, fragmentation, and hybridity.

It also interacts with transnationalism since the latter coincides with difference and change. Likewise, in a Foucauldian post-structuralist, post-modernist context, “identity is invoked to highlight the unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented nature of the contemporary self” (Brubaker and Cooper 8). In psychologizing literature, identity is summoned to point to something supposedly deep and basic. This may be distinguished from more superficial and accidental attributes of the self and is understood as something to be necessarily preserved and valued.

Identity scholars discuss the issue of identity stating its relation to numerous features: gender, sexuality, nationality, language, race, ethnicity, culture and many other features. Identity has oftentimes been studied in relation to home, place, border, and frontier. In his work *Identity, culture and the postmodern world*, Peter Brooker states, “Frontier does not merely close the nation in on itself but also immediately opens it to an outside, to other nations” (Brooker 6). Boundaries, he explains, may refer to geographical areas, political or religious ones, occupational categories, and linguistic or cultural traditions delimitating a nation. Therefore, the question that interests researchers is how

one does represent oneself? Shall identity, single, hybrid or multiple, be classified through communitarian, regional, family, cultural or national attachments?

In fact, the people included in the exile category have different nationalities. Nationality in this specific context has two layer meanings: (a) feelings of loyalty towards a nation, or (b) citizenship, i.e. the official recognition of a state that someone is a member of such a state. Taking into account national identities and citizenships of exiles, at least three types of identification are discernible.

Exiles, when they become citizens of the host nation-state identify with the latter, both politically and culturally. Second, exiles might still identify themselves with and feel loyalty towards their nations of origin despite their political identification as members of another nation-state through citizenship. Third, there are exiles that neither holds the citizenship of the host nation-state, nor do they identify themselves with it.

We may cite for instance, within this category, migrant workers who cross borders seeking a particular job without having any interest in the host-nation save economic opportunity. Thus, it is all a matter of positionality, i.e. the self-identification of a displaced person rests on the position s/he holds in the host society. Being a UK born son of an exile, for instance, implies pledging allegiance to the British nation, and thus self-identifying with British principles of freedom, equality, and the work Ethic. These are what we may call political and nationality self-identifiers.

Cultural self-identifiers, by contrast, do not rely on politics but rather on internalized factors mainly preserved through family background. Identity, thus, becomes the subjective sense of what group membership means. In this particular sense, the problematic that arises is that one may identify with the British but might not self-identify as a British.

In an attempt to draw a distinction between political assimilation and cultural assimilation, German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas categorizes two levels of assimilation:

- a) Assent to the principles of the constitution within the scope of interpretation determined by the ethical-political self-understanding of the citizens and the political culture of the country ...
- b) The further level of a willingness to become acculturated, that is, not only to conform externally but to become habituated to the way of life, the practices, and customs of the local culture (138).

Thus, we can extract from the above passage two kinds of assimilation: political assimilation that seems almost imperative and cultural assimilation that remains a matter of choice and that is often-times in Paula Moya's words, "epistemically and morally detrimental"²⁹.

It has been argued earlier that group membership is of a basic meaning to the self-understanding of any person. Let us first suggest that having an identity stands for having a particular understanding of "who I am" that brings about awareness of the features that characterize me as a human being.

Thus, we may characterize ourselves as teachers, women, Muslims, Algerians and in such an act we express our self-understanding. Note, in this case, that characterization entails association with and membership within a group. Thus, it becomes evident that the understanding of "who I am" is often relational i.e. linked to a set of people. For instance, in characterizing ourselves as students, we are saying that we belong to the set of students with whom I certainly have features in common.

²⁹Cf. Paula M. L. Moya, "Cultural Particularity Versus Universal Humanity: The value of Being Asimilao", eds., Jorge J. E. Gracia & Pablo De Greiff, *Hispanics/ Latinos in the United States, Ethnicity, Race, and Rights*, (Routledge, New York 2000).

Two aspects of identity-bearing have so far been shown: self-understanding and group membership. Consequently, to have an identity is to have an understanding of “who I am”, marked by characterization that makes one a member in a group.

We set out to inquire about the status of exiles’ self-identification within the framework of group membership. We have seen that exiles have, as a matter of fact, various nationalities. Given this complex structure of defining identity through group membership, an interesting question arises: do exiles claim membership to their host nation-states or to their original nationalities?

The case studies of my work are exiles of racial, religious and political orders. Exile, one should recall, includes many categories i.e. self-exile, internal exile and so on. Thus, I will be interested in discussing the way these particular exiles identify in such liminal spaces. While trying to steer clear of Foucault and Freud among others, Chris Abani, himself an exile, opines:

we do for the most part construct our identity, and at an even deeper more ineffable level, the self, from our interaction with our environment”, and goes on to explain that “identity is not a ‘thing’ or ‘place’ we construct or arrive at, but simply a constant flux created by the tensions between the promptings of our internal voice and the external forces of experience (26).

Furthermore, Abani explains the way exiles identify while taking into account their numerous losses and how they impact their self-identification. Abani explains the way exiles identify after their exile stressing the link between identification and the loss of the motherland:

We first begin to understand the confusion facing the exile with regards to identity when we lose someone in our lives to death. This is further complicated by the

addition of an unresolved tension or by the fact that we have often based our ideas of who we are in conflict or in opposition to the one lost (26-7).

This, in fact goes straight to the heart of the questions about identity and how it is constructed in a liminal space. As the notion of exile calls into question two spaces or places home and abroad, the exile subjects are cast into a status of in-betweeness where identification is neither definite nor easy. The process of identification varies from one case to the other and encompasses three varieties.

Assimilation

First, exiles may totally assimilate in the mainstream culture of the host society because of the bad reminiscences they have on their culture, race, religion or nation in general, and thus identify with people of the host nation and as a member of it. Assimilation in this case is both political and cultural. The merit and inevitability of assimilation is considered one of the most hotly disputed issues in multicultural nation-states.

Thus, we cannot speak of assimilation without evoking the canonical and authoritative works of Park and Gordon. In 1921 Robert Park and E.W. Burgess provided an early definition of assimilation understood as, “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups, and by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life” (735).

Park’s legacy is closely identified with the notion of assimilation at the end-stage of a “race relations cycle of contact, competition, accommodation, and eventual assimilation”. In depicting the "race relations cycle", Park refers obliquely to the processes in the modern world.

Contact is the first step in this cycle when immigrants come into contact with host members. Competition, then, is the initial unstable result of that contact as groups strive to gain advantages over one another, and this ensues the more stable stage of accommodation, whence assimilation.

The critical distinction in Gordon's conceptual scheme lay between acculturation and what he termed 'structural assimilation' that meant "the entry of members of an ethnic minority into primary group relationships with the majority group" (Alba & Nee 829). Gordon specified seven variables of assimilation:

1/ Change of cultural patterns to those of the host society that result in cultural or behavioural assimilation,

2/ large scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society on primary group level that define structural assimilation,

3/ large scale intermarriage that is called marital assimilation,

4/ The development of a sense of peoplehood based exclusively on the host society that typifies identificational assimilation,

5/ The absence of prejudice that engenders attitude receptional assimilation,

6/ The absence of discrimination called behaviorreceptional assimilation, and

7/ The absence of value and power conflict that describes civic assimilation.³⁰

Structural assimilation is the final stage of integration. In this concern, Gordon hypothesized, "once structural assimilation has occurred ... all of the other types will naturally follow" (80-1). Worth citing in this concern, is the most famous instance of Michael Jackson who completely detached himself from the Black community through his recourse to surgery in order to whiten himself and be fully integrated in the White community. In the case of Michael Jackson, structural assimilation happened first and then

³⁰ See Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: the Role of Race, Religion, and National Origin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), table p.71.

all other types of assimilation ensued by way of his denial of his Black origins and adoption of the White culture through racial change.

Exile and Hybridity

Exiles might identify in both cultures so as to create a new culture due to the impossibility to assimilate entirely in a new culture. In an oft-quoted statement of Horace Kallen, it is assured that, “Men change their clothes, their politics, their wives, their religions, their philosophies to a greater or lesser extent ; they cannot change their grandfathers. An Irishman is always an Irishman, a Jew always a Jew” (Qtd. in Huntington, *Who Are We? America’s Great Debate*131).

In this particular context, newness is defined through the process of hybridization. Kallen implicitly emphasizes the idea that people can change things that are adopted after birth as culture, but cannot alter things that have biological aspects such as ancestral background that is part of ethnicity. In order to contradict myself, the case of Michael Jackson raised a controversial debate. Did Michael Jackson’s assimilation allow for viewing Michael Jackson as part of the White community? Providing an answer for this question may be as controversial as the question proper.

The answer depends on whose view one is debating. In Jackson’s point of view he was part of the White community as his self-identification was explained by his surgical transformation. Seen from a nativist point of view, this surgical transformation is considered as superficial and could never efface the biological and ancestral traits of Michael Jackson.

Following this line of thought, a great number of displaced people try to join the two cultures into a new culture. People embracing these hybrid cultures are called in identity theories “Third space people” who, according to Ingleby, “have decided to create new routes for themselves as an alternative to defining their roots in a particular

community identity” (3). This hypothesis, although not definite, is the most probable one among displaced people as they displacement conjures up ideas of opposition towards the nation’s institutions, be they cultural, governmental or social. Thus, displaced people wish to create their own new visions of their nation or national culture and can avoid being influenced by neither the host nation nor their cultural heritage.

Hybridity is a recurrent theme in contemporary works of literature dealing with identity. It is by now established that authors writing on migration, exile, refuge and diaspora much often engage in a hybridity discourse. Its expression can vary from the hybrid selves constructed through the combination of parental aspects or the combination of two cultures, two linguistic modes of expression and so on.

In *DissemiNation*, Homi Bhabha assumes that hybridity is the process through which one’s culture is brought along rather than left behind throughout the gatherings of individuals³¹ outside the homeland. To these gathering individuals, nation becomes a metaphorical concept that they carry with them along the distances. According to Homi Bhabha, “the scattering of people is less a destruction of a culture abandoned (perhaps through force) than the constitution of a culture that one enters by bringing along cultural fragments to a new accumulation of cultural fragments” (Qtd. in Teeuwen 289)

Viewed as such, hybridity becomes an agent of cross-cultural contacts resulting in new tolerant and “anationalistic” cultures.

Exile and Nationalistic Attachment

There is a general assumption that some displaced people retaining some hope to return home are usually unwilling to assimilate into the culture of the host society. It thus

³¹“Gatherings of exiles and émigrés and refugees, gathering on the edge of ‘foreign cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gathering in the ghettos or cafés of city centres, gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another’s language [...] Also the gathering of people in diaspora: indentured, migrant, interned [...]” These are the types, among others, of gatherings Homi Bhabha referred to. See Homi Bhabha, “Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation”, in Homi Bhabha (ed.), *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London, 1994, p. 139.

becomes important to link self-identification, in the case of the displaced, to the horizon of return and the displaced subject's intentions towards both the host nation and the homeland. This alternative is usually probable when the displaced subject regards both assimilation and hybridity as disadvantageous to his/ her identity and psychological well-being. In this case, the exile cannot conceive of his/her identity in the absence of a territorial referent, in this case the motherland.

Trying to emphasize the eminence of the motherland, both as a place and a space, in the self-identification of people, Abani provides a metaphor that is highly explicative of the status of exiles. He inquires, "So, for instance, a mother who loses a child faces a real crisis of identity. Who is she now? Is she still a mother? Does she have enough of the self prior to motherhood left over to reconstitute a new one" (27). While Abani inquires about the status of a mother who loses her child, one would additionally inquire about the status of a child who loses his mother to death. How will s/he identify? The answer is to be found in the observation of orphans who experience crises at the level of identification and whose loss of mothers or fathers is manifested throughout behavioral anomalies, experienced at different degrees. The same is to be said of exiles who lose a sense of a motherland that is unquestionably primordial for the stability of the self. In this context, the status of the exile is similar to the one of the adoptee "who has lost its primal family and yet can never really find acceptance or possibly even certain depths of emotional syntax" (Abani 27)

Above all, the negative aspect of assimilation in the view of ethnic minority groups lays in its very definition as, "The decline, and at its endpoint the disappearance, of an ethnic/ racial distinction and the cultural and social differences that express it" (Alba & Nee 863). Cultural assimilation, particularly, is more often than not considered a loss rather than a profit in the view of the displaced. Likewise, hybridity, for such a category is

seen as a transgressive element of the purity of one's culture. It is argued, in this concern, that, "Hybridity signals the threat of 'contamination' to those who espouse an essentialist notion of pure and authentic origins" (Coombess & Brah 1). People willing to return to their homeland generally maintain the umbilical cord attaching them to the homeland unaffected by external influence throughout the extraterritorial maintenance of the cultural practices of the homeland. These are the kind of people who create spaces with national sentiments in places beyond the national contours of the culture. This repudiation of assimilation and hybridization is generally manifested in various forms the most famous of which is the preservation of the use of one's mother tongue in places where the latter is a foreign language.

Thus, at least three possible ways of identification could be discerned among exiles or diaspora communities: the assimilated self, the hybrid self, and the nostalgic recalcitrant self. However, the question that currently confuses scholars and researchers alike is whether one's identification with a nation-state implies loyalty to that nation. Take, for instance, the different diaspora communities that support the football teams of their homeland when they confront the nation-states that shelter them. In fact, one's attachment to the homeland does never fade completely. To conclude this section and decide over issues of identification among exiles seems an impossible task given the perplexities and varieties surrounding the exile subject. There still remains a question to be answered: is the exile's attachment to the homeland more important than the one to the hostland in the process of identification, or is the exile simply exilian, to use Wole Soyinka's term, exile being his home, identity and nationality?

1.6. Exile Writing Between Nostalgia and Creativity

The history of exile writing is as old as the history of literature itself. Together with themes of alienation, detachment, diaspora and distance, exile has been one of the most

productive themes in literature. Exiled scholars wrote about their experiences, the losses of exile and their sufferings. However, exile as an experience either fosters creativity outside the homeland or causes nostalgia and different crises for the displaced so that his life is consumed in his nostalgic memories. To put it otherwise, “criticism of exile writing has tended to analyse these works according to a binary logic, where exile either produces creative freedom or it traps the writer in restrictive nostalgia” (McClennen 2). In “Reflections on Exile”, Edward Said describes exile writing as *contrapuntal* since:

[Contrary to] most people [who] are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of visions gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is contrapuntal (186).

Seen from this dialectic vision, exile writing is hybrid and transnational as the writer is aware of two homes, two cultures and two settings. Conceived in a dialectic manner, but from a different perspective, Claudio Guillén distinguishes two kinds of exile writing in *On the Literature of Exile and Counter Exile*: exile as nostalgic and counter exile as creative.

Later, in *Múltiples Moradas*, Guillén suggests, “exiled writers can be described as solar (referring to Plutarch) if they tend to look up towards the sun and the stars, or they can look within (like Ovid) and focus on loss”³² (Qtd. in McClennen 2). While Guillén

³² In *Múltiples Moradas*, Claudio Guillén proposes a dichotomy in the writing of exile when he writes, “arranco de una polaridad. Me propongo destacar dos valoraciones fundamentales. La primera es la imagen solar [...] Esta actitud parte de la contemplación del sol y de los astros, continúa y se desarrolla rumbo a dimensiones universales [...] La segunda reacción valorativa, o bien opuesta, denuncia una pérdida, un empobrecimiento.” in Claudio Guillén, “El Sol de los Desterrados: Literatura y exilio” in Claudio Guillén (ed.), *Múltiples Moradas: Ensayo de Literatura Comparada*, Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 1998, 30. [“I start from a polarity. I would like to emphasize two fundamental value systems. “The first is the solar image [...] this attitude springs from the contemplation of the sun and the stars, it continues and develops towards universal dimensions [...] The second valuable reaction, perhaps associated with the first or its opposite, denounces a loss, an impoverishment.”] translated by Sophia McClennen, *The Dialectics of Exile: Nation, Time, Language, and Space in Hispanic Literatures*, Purdue University Press, USA, 2004, p. 32.

evokes here exiled writers only, his description of the two categories can be applied to both real and fictional exiles i.e. people, writers, and literary characters alike.

More clearly, Guillén defines exile literature as the one where “exile becomes its own subject matter” and such literature, according to him is exemplified by the writings of Ovid and the open expression of sorrow³³. In the counter exile literature, however, writers “incorporate the separation from place, class, language or native community, insofar as they triumph over the separation and thus offer wide dimensions of meaning and transcend the earlier attachments to place or native origin” (Guillén 272).

Moreover, the literature of exile is also linked to modern sentiments of nationalism and thus celebrates all aspects of attachment to the homeland, whereas in the literature of counter-exile “no great writer can remain a merely local mind, unwilling to question the relevance of the particular place from which he writes” (Guillén 280).

From this, it follows that what Guillén calls “the literature of exile” stresses the idea that exile is not only physical but spiritual as well and thus nostalgic insofar as this category of literature is linked to feelings of nationalism. What he names “the literature of counter exile”, however, emphasizes that exile is physical and that this physical displacement is transcended by creativity while in exile. While Guillén described the literature of counter exile as solar he remained silent over providing a label for the literature of exile, a task Sophia McClennen accomplished instead by characterizing the literature of exile as *terrestrial* since exiles “gaze down at the ground, contemplating his material existence far from his native land” (McClennen 32). It follows, thus, that exile writing is either nostalgic or creative.

³³See Claudio Guillén, “*On the Literature of Exile and Counter Exile*”, Books Abroad 50, 1976, p. 272.

The feeling of nostalgia while in exile is not a new phenomenon. The word “nostalgia” comes from Greek roots *nostos* meaning “home” and *algia* meaning “longing”. Nostalgia therefore is the feeling of longing to home:

The nostalgic disorder was first diagnosed by seventeenth-century Swiss doctors and detected in mercenary soldiers. This contagious modern disease of homesickness –la maladie du pays – was treated in a seventeenth-century scientific manner with leeches, hypnotic emulsions, opium, and a trip to the Alps (Boym 241).

Feelings of nostalgia may vary in degree and so do their impact on the exile subject. In the Greco-Roman discourse, manifestations of nostalgia differed from one person to another:

Xenophanes may offer a first certain example of nostalgia in his poem on his home town Colophon [...], and Alcaeus and Theognis not only lament “the toils of vexatious exile” and the loss of their property but also establish the imagery of ‘exile as shipwreck’, the motif of desertion and that of the exile’s wish for death (Gaertner 9).

Gaertner further argues that there is a variety of motifs and themes of exile ranging among which he cites, “recollection of one’s patria, ‘exile as shipwreck’, wish for death, desertion, linguistic and cultural isolation” (9). Paul Tabori, following the same line of thought, asked in *The Pen in Exile*, “What else could the exile be except nostalgic and homesick?” (6).

Exiled writers, exiled characters, or simply exiles falling in this category tend to be local. What is more is that the feeling of attachment to the homeland among them, although affected by physical displacement, grows stronger and traps them into a self-destroying journey when return to the homeland becomes an obsession. In this case, nationalism becomes a cause.

Other exiles, however, tend to be global and rather than emphasizing the sense of loss and injury, find solace and empathy among other exiles of different nationalities and thus avoid the torturing effect of nationalism while being away from home. These exiles are creative and there is a tendency amongst them “to transmute their own bitter experience into an affinity with others in distress” (Hanne 9).

Therefore, instead of reminiscing about their past and living in a nostalgic atmosphere that idealizes home away from home, exiles in this case develop a sense of universal empathy or in Chris Abani’s words, “the condition of exile allows us to explore an international/ human identity” (28). Exile, following this line of thought, is seen as redemptive and encourages a form of double-mindedness that offers the exiled people substantial creative potential.

Much in the same way as Sophia McClennen, Chris Abani sees the condition of exile and its discourse as a chiaroscuro between at least two dominant binaries. On the one hand, according to him, are those who regard exile as positive and redemptive, on the other hand are those who consider it negative. Commenting on those who see exile as positive, Abani writes:

On the one hand are those who celebrate exile as redemptive. Homi Bhabha and Arjun Appadurai speak to the possibilities that displacement and exile offer. Salman Rushdie, C.L.R James, and George Lamming believe exile to be a vital condition for writing, a form of alienation that produces a useful double-mindedness (22).

Many other writers have romanticized the position of exile. Even though Edward Said described exile in “Reflections on Exile” as a “crippling and unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place”; he pointed out a romantic benefit of this

condition when he argues, “if true exile is a condition of terminal loss, why has it been transformed so easily into a potent, even enriching motif of modern culture?” (173).

I.7. Conclusion

In sum, there are exiles who regard their condition as liberating and thus a necessary precondition to creativity or, at a lesser degree, working. Writers like Zadie Smith, Buchi Echemeta, or come to mind. Other exiles, Chris Abani included, believe that the condition of exile gives way to an exploration of a broadly international human identity free from the constraints of place as being either “ours” or “theirs”. Other exiles treat their host locales with an almost angry reprisal that results in crises at the level of identity. These exiles see their condition as detrimental to their sense of themselves. Worth citing in this concern is Socrates who chose death over exile.

It should be stated that even with the plethora of books and authors examined so far, there is a much more generous number that had to be left out. The argument advanced in this work, however, pivots neither on an exhaustive catalogue of texts dealing with exile and related concepts nor upon a clearly demarcated set of texts, authors, and ideas that together make up the exile canon. Instead, this argument depends on a different methodological alternative whose concern is to facilitate a sociological understanding of exile both as a life condition and as a person. These are the notions that need to be covered now in more analytical detail throughout four exile narratives, namely Hanif Kureishi’s *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Fadia Faqir’s *My Name is Salma* , Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* , and Leila Aboulela’s *Minaret*.

Introduction

My Name is Salma, highlights the sufferings of the protagonist and those exiles in the diaspora as well as those in Hima and thus redefines the notion of exile. The novel narrates the story of Salma, a young woman from the Arab tribe in the Levant, who becomes pregnant out of marriage thus dishonoring her family. The only possibility to escape a most certain honor killing is protective prison. When her brother's thirst for vengeance becomes a pervading threat, exile becomes her only option. Salma arrives in England as an adopted young adult, enters the country as a refugee and lives her life as an exile.

This chapter seeks to analyze the way the experience of exile, be it existential or metaphorical, damages the self for some but helps to redefine the self for others. In this sense, *My Name is Salma* may be read as a bridge between Arabs and Arab British in the hope of reconciling the past with the present. Or to put it otherwise, the novel joins the experiences of those at home with those in the diaspora to shape an Arab British extraterritorial nation faithful to the legacy of Arabs history. As it has been suggested in chapter one, this section of the work questions the notion of exile and explores its reconfigurations throughout the exiled characters of *My Name is Salma*. Thus, the main problematic raised in this chapter is whether the state of exile contributes to the understanding of the self or complicates the maturation process and engenders an identity crisis.

This interrogation is motivated by the fact that exile is synonymous with geographical displacement that forces the exile subject into an outsider position. It follows then that this outsider status either forges creativity by rendering the exile subject an

objective critical observer of his homeland, or it disables the exile subject by hindering his integration in a new location.

Miscellaneous Exiles in *My Name is Salma*

Exile, as a theme and a trope, lies at the center of *My Name is Salma*. It is the major force defining identity crises experienced by different characters in the novel. Exile is highlighted as the cause of separation as well as a major force driving to a state of reunion. The experience of exile in the novel is not confined to Salma who left Hima but also includes those who stayed in Jordan and experienced the tribulations of exile in their “unhomely” homeland. Thus, this section is dedicated to an analysis of the exilic experience of “outsiders”, namely Salma, and then shifts to the more implicit exile experienced by those at home.

Faqir introduces the reader to Salma’s family and admirably depicts her life in both Jordan and Britain. Throughout the novel, the trope of exile is presented as a paradox. On the one hand, those in their home country see those in the diaspora as exiles. On the other hand, those in the diaspora identify their home as an exiled island severed from the world.

My Name is Salma is the story of a young unmarried Arab shepherdess, Salma, from a Bedouin village in the Levant. Her family is very conservative, thus her care-free life ends when she gets pregnant out of wedlock and flees the bullet of her brother who plans to kill her to purify the family’s blood and restore their honour.

In order to save Salma from such a crime, her teacher gets her taken into protective custody. She spends many years in prison where she gives birth to her baby girl, who is snatched out of her arms immediately by her cell mate, Noura and given to a prison warden to put in a home for illegitimate children.

Salma is then rescued and adopted by Miss Asher, under the name Sally Asher, and *My Name is Salma* is the story of a young unmarried Arab shepherdess, Salma, from a

Bedouin village in the Levant. Her family is very conservative, thus her care-free life ends when she gets pregnant out of wedlock and flees the bullet of her brother who plans to kill her to purify the family's blood and restore their honor.

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Salma is then rescued and adopted by Miss Asher, under the name Sally Asher, and taken to England. Being foreign, black, unsophisticated and semi unskilled Arab Bedouin young woman, She faces a new set of problems as she is torn between her past that she must bury and constantly can't forget. Salma feels alienated from both communities as she is cut off from her country of origin and arrives in Britain for a permanent stay.

Salma belongs to the "1.5 generation" who had no control over their fate as exiles. Ruben Rumbault describes this generation as:

Children who were born abroad but are being educated and come of age in the [United Kingdom] from what may be called the '1.5' generation. These refugee youth must cope with two crises producing and identity defining transitions; (1) adolescence and the task of managing the transition from childhood to adulthood, and (2) acculturation and the task of managing the transition from one socio-cultural environment to another. The 'first' generation of their parents, who are fully part of the "old" world, face only the latter; the "second" generation of children now being born and reared in the [United Kingdom], who as such become fully part of the "new" world, will need to confront only the former. But members of the "1.5" generation form a distinctive cohort that in many ways they are

marginal to both the old and the new world, and are fully part of neither of them.

(61)

Salma is a prototype of this generation since she was born in Hima and left it at an early age. Showing her state of in-betweenness as a result of exile, she raises the interrogation at the beginning of the novel, “Even though I’ve been living in England for many years, it doesn’t feel like home to me. I’m not sure Hima is, but I want to find out. If I could only see the Levant again, I’d know where I belonged” This feeling of belonging nowhere associated with the anguish of dismemberment brings the notion of dislocation to the fore. Although Salma did not choose to self-exile, the state of exile has been forced on her directly by her circumstances. It is clear that this lack of choice expresses a serious preoccupation for the “1.5 generation”. In this sense, being hurled to exilic condition, the “one and halfers” remain skeptical over whether the decision to leave their nations was well-grounded or whether it was incumbent on them to take such drastic action.

Salma conceives of her state of exile as being foisted upon her by the patriarchal system and the traditions it has orchestrated. Salma indirectly expresses her hatred towards her society. For this particular reason and like many exiles who strive for a sense of identity by returning to the original homeland, Salma decides to go back to Hima and discover her real homeland after many years of displacement. In fact, Salma’s choice of going back to the Levant implies that she cannot feel at home in Britain.

Parvin, Salma’s friend, also experiences various forms of exile; albeit not related to physical displacement. Faqir chronicles significant events in Parvins’s life beginning with her childhood, when she is exiled from her parents’ home following their divorce, and moving to her adulthood, when she is estranged from her husband Sadiq and her children. In one of her letters to Salma, Parvin further dramatizes her situation and expresses her wish for exile when she admits, “I wish I could walk out of my skin, my past, my name. I

wish I could live underwater. Maybe then my skin would absorb the sea's consoling silence. I'm a prisoner on this island, Salma, and I cannot sleep" (42). In this passage, Parvin conceives of her escape as a form of "osmosis in which she absorbs the therapeutic elements of the sea. Water becomes a symbol of departure and transparency as well as of healing and exile" (Shemak 7).

Parvin's most acute form of exile is described shortly after her son's birth when she is institutionalized following a serious nervous breakdown. Parvin's institutionalization is her only form of escape from the mistreatment and abusive behavior of her step-mother and her sister-in-law in the absence of her husband.

Another form of exile is shown through the character of Miss Nailah, Salma's neighbor, who rejects the realities of the Pakistani Revolution and is cast into a state of insanity much in the same way her friend Parvin did after the birth of her child. Shortly after her injection with syphilis, the latter suffers from amnesia. In this case, the loss of memory is her only way to escape her present diseased life. Arousing from an episode of amnesia, Miss Nailah finds herself in a room she had visibly adorned with history, with superannuated calendars, to conjure up the past and live in it. Miss Nailah's exile is explained by her wish to go back to the past for "the experience of exile accentuates this desire for a return to the past" (Machado Sáez 131). In this sense, displacement is not only related to place but pertains also to notions of time. In *Questions of Travel*, Caren Kaplan notes in this concern, "When the past is displaced, often to another location, the modern subject must travel to it as it were" (Kaplan 35).

Recalling the ecclesiastical form of exile during the Middle Ages, Miss Nailah further spiritually self-exiles from the decadent secular British society by embracing Islam. By so doing, Miss Nailah seeks to purify herself from her infectious disease. In her quest

for purification, she sets her husband to fire³⁴ and drives him into a state of exile due to his terrifying physical appearance. Although her husband is still living in Pakistan, he is exiled from Pakistani society since he is isolated and kept in quarantine because of the feeling of alienation arising from his burned disfigured face throwing him into a frightening otherness.

Exile in *My Name is Salma* is approached from two different points of view. On the one hand, Salma is conceived as an exile in Britain. This conception is well-grounded both historically and literarily in Faqir's novel because Salma feels estrangement away from home. On the other hand, the Levant that has been severed from the rest of the world is also represented in terms of exile throughout the novel, and thus people there are also viewed as exiles. Salma associates the Levant with isolation when she states, "The Levant is a peculiar exile" (105). Thus, exile in *My Name is Salma* is dealt with from both the insider's viewpoint as well as the outsider's one in a non-judgmental narrative to provide the reader with an objective account of the Arab/Muslim traditions and the way it greatly impacts on the lives of generations of Arabs as well as Arab-British.

The Discourse of Nostalgia in *My Name is Salma*

Many characters are affected by nostalgia in the novel, although for different losses. The narrative involves not only personal but cultural dimensions of nostalgia for the loss of self, the loss of the past, or the loss of a culture.

For Salma, the Levant represents the geographical equivalent of memory – the place where the past is housed and from which it continues to exert its complex influence.

Salma's nostalgia lies in her longing for her past. Being cut off her birthplace Hima, Salma

³⁴ In *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, Gaston Bachelard concurs that fire has a purifying effect throughout its "deodorizing action" and because it "separates substances and destroys material impurities". Fire is also purifying in the agricultural domain as Bachelard states, "There should doubtless be placed the agricultural fire, that which purifies the fields. This purification is truly conceived as going deep into the earth. Not only does the fire destroy the useless weed, but it enriches the soil" (103-4).

is not privy to the history of her home country, albeit through the few stories her father used to narrate to her from time to time. Salma's longing for the past in *My Name is Salma* is explained by her deduction that the past is partially, if not wholly, responsible for her deplorable present-day experience as an Arab being raised in Britain. Pilar feels nostalgia for her the Levant since her knowledge of her land is rudimentary and causes nuances with regard to her sense of belonging as she tells the reader, "the greyness of the skies carried me to my distant past, to a small mud village, tucked away between the deserted hills, to Hima, to silver-green olive groves gleaming in the morning light". The ambiguity surrounding Salma's sense of belonging is the cause justifying her nostalgia for the past. Salma expresses her dilemma in these words, "Even though I've been living in Exeter for many years, it doesn't feel like home to me." (50).

The absence of an episode of one's existence or the inability to reach it, in this case one's past, calls into question a nostalgic discourse vis-à-vis the past. Salma's journey back to the Levant, here representative of the past is thus a consequence of nostalgia. Worth citing at this level is that Salma was incapable of finding a sense of home in terms of place. Gustavo Pérez Firmat's use of metaphor in to explain losses pertaining to exile are relevant to the understanding of Salma's nostalgia for the past that substitutes her nostalgia for place:

Refugees are amputees. Someone who goes into exile abandons not just possessions but part of himself. This is true especially of children, who leave before achieving a durable, portable identity. Just as people who lose a limb sometimes continue to ache or tingle in the missing calf or hand, the exile suffers the absence of the self he left behind. (7)

The question that may be raised at this level is the following: what is there in the past that Salma is looking for since she claims, "Shit, I'm only twenty-one years old. How can I be

nostalgic for my youth?” (198)? Since *My Name is Salma* deals with the sense of dislocation and fragmentation at the level of identity, Salma’s nostalgia is best viewed as a quest for roots and connection. Therefore, her return to The Levant symbolizes the bridge she wants to build between her present and her past. All Salma is looking for throughout her wish to return to her land are family ties that would assist her in defining her identity. For this particular reason she wishes she “could only see her goats again” (7) for this will help her “know where (she) belonged” (7). As a result, nostalgia serves as the route Salma travels in order to recover her family memories as well as a sense of her own identity and space of belonging.

While Salma’s nostalgia is related to place i.e., her birthplace, Parvin’s nostalgia is for a time past, for Pakistani pre-Revolution times. Parvin’s letters to Salma, full of recollections and remembrances, are all written before the Revolution and help the reader learn about the family’s background. In one of these letters, Parvin describes as “a place where everything is for sale” (120). In the previous section, parvin’s portrayal of Pakistan as an exile has been stressed, yet her description is preceded by her wish for the reintegration of her country into the global market via the processing of sugarcane, “She pictures three-hundred-pound sacks of refined sugar deep in the hulls of ships. People in England and in the United States spoon out her sugar for coffee, or to bake in their birthday cakes. And Pakistan will grow prosperous” (40). Although Parvin’s nostalgia here is for the future, this scene represents Pre revolutionary Pakistan when the island was a site of British commerce. Furthermore, Fadia Faqir herself is nostalgic for Jordan and expresses her longing through her alter-ego Salma. Although an Arab British ethnic writer rather than Arab exile, Faqir shares the nostalgia of those Arab exiles living in the diaspora.

Salma’ nostalgia for the Levant is also manifested throughout her eating disorders. Upon her friend’s arrival in England for medical treatments, she became an excessive

consumer, in the form of eating and sex. This excessive consumption reflects both the disorder and instability in Salma's life caused by her relocation in the United Kingdom. In fact, Salma can be classified into what Homi Bhabha calls the "unhomed", those who have experienced the shock of being severed from all that is familiar and being relocated in an alien place. Although Salma considers herself fortunate because "immigration has redefined her, and she is grateful" (83), Miss Nailah, while trying to find out the causes of Salma's eating disorder, deduces, "I think that migration scrambles the appetite" (213).

Although seemingly Britishanized and satisfied with her new way of life as a British citizen, Salma is very nostalgic for the Levant, in this case her fatherland rather than motherland, because she fails to conceive her homeland through matrilineal lenses. Therefore, it can be argued that Salma's declared nostalgia is eclipsed by her fragmented relationship with her mother. In *My Name is Salma*, all matrilineal relations are fragmentary. Margaret and Smith, for instance, strive to unravel their complicated relationships with their daughters as well as with their mother.

Language loss and identity

The thematic issue and portrayal of language loss in *My Name is Salma* is legitimate since it is the biggest sacrifice exiles, immigrants and displaced people make as soon as they are transplanted into a new culture. In *My Name is Salma*, language loss is portrayed as a confusion that exacerbates exiles' feeling of alienation, or more exactly, hyphenation.

Language is not merely a means for communication and exchanging ideas but also a tool for constructing and organizing person's identity and also it is a vehicle that carries one's membership to a whole group. We try to investigate how Faqir has appropriated and reconstituted the English Language in her novel *My Name is Salma* through some linguistic strategies that are used to construct and express identity through the main

character into two major types: interlanguage and code-switching.

Interlanguage³⁵ as first defined by Selinker refers to “the separateness of a second language learners system, a system that has structurally intermediate status between the native and target languages” (Brown 215). This system which is developed by language learner is something similar to both the first and the second language and keeps on developing more and more until it becomes like the target language. Accordingly, Salma is developing her interlanguage, which is very similar to Arabic; she is considered as a L2 learner who acts upon its own right and to bring some order to the linguistic chaos that confronts her. Her interlanguage can be analysed syntactically, semantically and phonetically.

From the syntactic point of view, we find that her use of English at early stages of exposure to English is deviant from normal English structure. She is influenced by her native Arabic language but the new linguistic system she has built is a peculiar one. Let us consider the following exchange between Salma and the doctor:

‘What can I do for you, Miss Asher?’... ‘I ill, doctor. My heart beat, no sleep,’...

‘Any physical symptoms?’

‘Sick yes. Arms and legs see.’...

‘It is psoriasis. That’s all. A skin condition. Nothing serious’.

‘Sweat, heartbeat, cannot sleep,’

‘If your heart is beating the nit must be in good condition.

That’s what hearts are supposed to do’ ‘But I ill. Please. Today alive,

tomorrow dead me’ (114)

³⁵ The interlanguage theory assumes that an active and independent learning mind makes its own generalization upon grappling with a new language, argues that errors that a learner makes in the rules of the target language are often in fact correct by the rules of an interlanguage invented by the learner as a provisional and sufficiently workable substitute.

What is noticed here that the dots are used to omit the irrelevant texts and the prominent feature of Salma's English is the non-use of verb 'to be' as we can see above and the non-use of 'to have' in this example: 'That white dress you keep under your pillow. You made it? How did you see? Search the room when me out?' (136)

This may have been resulted from the non-existence of these two verbs in Arabic. Another prominent feature is the misuse of the object pronoun 'me' in place of the subject pronoun 'I', negation, on the other hand, is expressed by the use of 'no' followed by a noun, as in 'no sleep'. This use of 'no' followed by the element to be negated is the first stage of acquiring negation of L2. (Lightbrown and Spada 77)

Semantics is another criterion of interlanguage strategy which is defined as the study of meaning in language. Salma does not understand the meanings of certain words due to the lack of knowledge or complex structures. The best example is when she evokes the anger of the immigration officer when she gives a wrong answer due to misunderstanding:

The immigration officer at Southampton port detention centre kept asking

'What is your Christian Name?' I looked puzzled. 'Me Muslim,' I said.

He ran his fingers around his stiff collar as if trying to loosen it... 'Name?' he said.

Yes, Salma Ibrahim, I nodded my head to show him that I understood his question.

(148)

Salma has a difficulty in getting the connotations of certain words, such as 'Christian name'. Additionally, she has a difficulty in getting the reference of certain words, such as 'police' as illustrated in her exchange with Parvin: 'This song is before sting had left police' 'Left the police force,' / 'No. Police the band.' She said and smiled. (157)

Salma resorts to the avoidance technique, usually used by second language learners when she is confronted with a complex structure that blocks her understanding

.This seems obvious when Salma does not understand the immigrant officer's question when he asked her why have she come to England.

Salma, why have you come to England?

I did not understand 'have you come'. So I nodded. (153:4)

The third criterion of Salma's interlanguage strategy is concerned with phonology, specifically her pronunciation that reflects her identity as an Arab. She mispronounced some words, phrases and sentences; for example she pronounced 'England' as 'Heengland', 'world' as 'word', 'Shakespeare' as 'Shakesbeer' or 'let's go' as 'lits go'. Even when Salma approaches the advanced stages of proficiency in English, still her pronunciation is a reflection of her Arab Bedouin identity.

Faqir demonstrates also a brilliant use of another strategy in '*My Name is Salma*' which is code-switching. In 1977, Carol Myers Scotten and William Ury defined it as the "use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction" (13)

Code-switching is also identified as "the act of inserting words, phrases or even longer stretches of one language into the other" (Brown 67). This strategy is fully utilized by Salma. Additionally, it includes many categories such as: Loan words, untranslated words, and terms of address, items of clothing, food, reference to religion and reference to songs, proverbs, and wise sayings.

Loan words are English words borrowed from the Arabic language .These are some examples: sheikh, Imam, jinni,ghoul, falafel, kohl, madraqa...

Untranslated words may also be referred to as transliterated words, are written in italics and left without translation; thus, we can guess their meanings from the context. Salma expresses her desire to not go England by using untranslated words.

"You must go with Miss Asher to England"

Hingland? Fayn Hingland'

‘La ma widi hingland,’ (No, I don’t want England) I said and hugged her

‘I know you don’t want to go, but you’ll learn to like it, habibti,’ she said.

Another complete untranslated sentence is given by Salma when she imagines herself asking her brother to shoot her for her deliverance, as seen in: ‘*Yala tukhni w khalasni*’. (Go ahead, shoot me and relieve me) (109). We notice that most of the transliterated words and phrases in *My Name is Salma* are translated directly and literally, such as songs, wise sayings and matters related to religion. Moreover, there is an example of switching to classical Arabic when the ship’s pastor invites Salma to go with him using classical Arabic, as illustrated in this example:

When he said in Arabic, ‘Al jaw barden huna: the climate is cold here.’

I recognized him .He was the ship’s pastor. His Arabic sounded stiff and classic... so I laughed.

‘Haya bina ya Salma: let us go salma’, he said. ‘Ma’ak?’ I said.

‘Yes, na’am, ma’i, with me’, he said. .. ’ (199)

Another category of code-switching is terms of address which reflects Salma’s identity as an Arab Bedouin. Some of these are: Sheick, imam, yumma, yubba, jidu, bint...The next type is items of clothing which include, among other things, ‘madraqa’, ‘kufiyya’, ‘abaya’, and ‘chequered red-and-white headdresses. Food is another category of the code-switching strategy which is applied by Faqir. It is a cultural marker by which individuals are identified. Different types of food utilized in the novel, such as ‘falafel’, ‘kebab’, ‘sherbet’, ‘tahini’, ‘mjadara’.

Faqir uses another strategy which is the reference to religion that identifies Salma as a Muslim Bedouin. Salma refers to performing prayers in many occasions; she described everything related to this prominent pillar of Islam, starting from takbeer until tasleem including movements. For example, Salma describes in detail how the men in her

village gather together in the field to do the Rain evoking Prayer. Moreover, Salma mentions two other religious rituals: slaughtering lambs during Hadj and supplication when she narrates what happens to her after delivery. We quote: "I lay on the floor bleeding like a lamb slaughtered for the grand Eid festival..." (151).

The last type is reference to songs, proverbs, and wise sayings that are translated literally such as 'what was written on the forehead, what was ordained, must be seen by the eyes'. 'Hala hala Bik ya walla, hey ya hali liya walla': welcome welcome oh. Salma mentions both local and national Arabic songs. For example, we have two translated songs: the first one is sung by Salma's mother and the second by the "Egyptian diva Faiza Ahmad". The first, 'your camel, Jubayyna, /one he shouts, once he cries, /to cut the chains he tries. (93). The second, "don't say we were and it was. /I wish all of this had never happened/ I wish I'd never met you. I wish I never knew you.'

The linguistic analysis of *My Name is Salma* therefore illustrates that language and identity are inseparable and they can complement each other. It is seen also how language can be employed in a special way to reflect a special kind of identity. Although the function of variant strategies of appropriation is still metonymic, the connection of so many variants in her novel operates to give a sense of the language and identity itself in the process of change.

My Name is Salma has also been extensively examined critically by Geoffrey Nash in his book *The Anglo-Arab Encounter*. Diya M. Abdo, in her discussion of Faqir's earlier work *Pillars of Salt*, has argued that Faqir's novel 'creates a third language and space (...) by alienating English-speaking readers from their own language and estranging Arabic from the Arabic-speaking readership' (239) also argues that *My Name is Salma* explores 'the nullification of choice in context of globalised systems in which the individual is transplanted across lands and cultures with next to no say in the process or its incomes'

(Nash 127)

Nash also maintains that, structurally, the novel challenges the reader through breaking up Salma's story between 'a series of discrete time-blocks in Salma's life' to reflect 'the fragmentation and dislocation of her experience more successfully than a linear narrative would' (129)

Nash notes that Salma's 'multi-layered composite-self (...) is not much a hybrid as a set of juxtaposed parts that do not mix through their boundary lines may meet Nash points out that the Bedouin Arab and British / Western codes of cultures Salma engages with exist in 'a condition of chiasmic separation and mutual incongruence' and hence, we are never sure which aspect of Salma will predominate. (130)

Nash highlights Salma's traumatic experience of fragmentation and disconnectedness:

Faqir's decision to invest Salma with a full stock of handicaps and vulnerabilities, compounded by the removal of all but the basic elements of choice, foregrounds her migrant alienation- caught between two worlds-and, consequentially, deepens her sense of rejection by both.

Nash maintains that '[a] dreadful determinism undermines every step she makes toward integration in the land of migration: We see that Nash's analysis focus on Salma's experience in Britain is powerful. He rightly points out that the novel presents a theme that has not been explored adequately by previous Arab British novelists since the eponymous protagonist is an Arab woman refugee rather than an educated middle class Arab woman. In this context, we are interested in investigating the theme of exile and displacement and looking at how the protagonist manages to transform her new habitat to alleviate her intolerable experience.

Faqir successfully depicts how exiles are psychologically incapacitated by

language loss and how the latter engenders an identity malaise manifested throughout the various diseases that affect the characters and destabilize their identity constructs.

Exile and Identity in Faqir's novel

There is a complex relation between the name and the self in Faqir's *My Name Is Salma*, the heroine is obsessed with her name. The onomastic quality of the name identifies the individual with the collective, and it is this communal self that Salma wants to retain:

Despite correcting him several times, 'Salma, Jack, Salma please,' he would forget the next day and call me 'girl' again. But Jack never had anything to remind him because I never received any letters with my Arab name, Salma Ibrahim El-Musa, printed on them. (34)

Salma's name socially contextualizes the character's iridescent self whether its Arabic pronunciation is adopted, as Salma, or its English, as Sally. Becoming Sally, though it is still her, is a wounding metamorphosis. The novel opens with Salma walking in Exeter in the morning but remembering her past: It was a new day (...) it took me to Hima (...) I used to be a shepherdess, who under a barefaced sun guided her goats to be scarce green patches with her reed pipe' (7).

We immediately recognize her as a displaced and marginalized refugee whose status, as Agamben points out, 'is always considered a temporary condition that should lead either to naturalization or to repatriation'³⁶ When she passes by HM Prison in Exeter, Salma reveals to us that she is 'on the wrong side of the black iron gate' despite her dark deeds and her shameful past (8). Further along, Salma tells us that once she had her first fish and chips meal, but her mountainous Arab stomach could not digest the fat: 'Salma

³⁶ Giorgio Agamben, 'We Refugees', trans. by Michael Rocke, *Symposium*, 49. (1995),116.

resisted , but Sally must adapt. I kept looking up adapt in the Oxford English Dictionary: Adapt: fit, adjust, change' (9). Salma links her first experience of non-Arab food with immigration and exile: "an immigration officer might decide to use my ability to digest fish as test for my loyalty to the Queen' (9)

Salma's entry to Britain is marked by anti-immigration sentiments and this influences her experience. Upon entering in Britain as the adopted daughter of Miss Asher, the immigration officer asks her if she is 'Seeking political asylum?' (134). Salma's adoption papers are in order but the immigration authorities question their authenticity. Minister Mahoney, Miss Asher's friend who teaches Salma English and helps her settle in Britain, exposes the authorities' unwillingness to 'create a precedent' (142), highlighting what Lavie and Swedenburg call ' [t]he repressive style of response' by the West towards immigrants and refugees (3). They argue that:

The repressive style of response is exemplified in the hysterical talk in Western Europe about the 'invasion' and the 'flood' of immigrants, refugees, Muslims, and foreigners, and the concerted and ever escalating official efforts to stem the flow, to erect the ramparts of 'Fortress Europe,' to refuse residence to asylum seekers, to deny full citizenship rights to second-and third- generation resident 'others', and to marginalize, criminalize, and exploit the labor of undocumented Third World residents (3)

As an Arab, Salma's 'precarious set of life experiences' and her isolation are, to use Nash words, "rendered doubly deliberating (...because...) she belongs to no recognizable diasporic" (140) . The term '*Arab*' conjures up negative images for some characters. The porter at the hostel tells Parvin that Salma is from '[s]omewhere in the Middle East. Fucking A-rabic! She rode a camel all the way from Arabia to this dump in Exeter' (14). Parvin's initial response is that she does not want to 'share the room with an Arab' (14).

This stigmatization leads some Arabs in the novel to hide their Arabness. An Algerian waiter pretends to be French paper', whereby Labour is leading the Conservatives by five percent (23). Watching Spitting Images with Liz, Salma shows an interest in knowing British politics:

'Was that the shadow Chancellor?' [Salma] asked Liz.

'No, the Prime Minister. The Chancellor does not spit,' she answered and looked at the television screen, not wanting to be interrupted.

'Who are these puppets?' I asked.

'Foreigners! Aliens like you,' she said and smiled (24).

Liz insists on pushing Salma to the margins of the nation by highlighting her inability to understand British politics. In this way, the novel highlights Agamben's discussion of how refugees and citizens of the advanced industrialized states are both 'denizens', a term coined by T. Tammar to show 'that the concept citizen is no longer adequate to describe the sophisticated reality of modern states'. In other words, the integration attempts of Salma are confronted by Liz's reluctance to accept Salma as a British citizen. As Agamben notes, 'substantial assimilation in the presence of formal differences exasperates hatred and intolerance, xenophobia reactions and defensive mobilizations will increase'. (20).

In other words, as an Arab, Salma is rendered another, someone who does not fit easily in the existing racial and ethnic classifications in British popular culture. Faced with these exclusionary and essentialized social frameworks, Salma persistently fights social marginalization. Salma continues her attempts to integrate into mainstream British society. She tries to understand British politics. She tries to 'decode the latest poll in the paper', whereby Labour is leading the Conservatives by five percent (23).

While Salma feels that Britain is her country as she 'has nowhere to go' (71), Liz persistently treats Salma as an alien, a person who has no right to be in Britain. Similarly, Max

insists on excluding Salma from belonging to British culture. Looking at a photo of Princess Diana wearing a swimming suit, Max expresses his anger and dissatisfaction. When Salma tries to justify it, Max interrupts her: ‘Sal, you don’t know anything about us, the British, do you? (. . .) I don’t blame you, being foreign and all’ (241).

In short, Salma’s frequent experiences of exclusion and marginalization make her feel ‘surrounded by high walls [. . . but] ever grateful to the host country for allowing [her] to step on its soil’, to quote Faqir’s autobiographical essays’ (59). The immigration guide makes it clear that immigrants have to be passive and just follow the current.

Gradually, this sense of exclusion brings Salma closer to other marginalized people:

In the early evening the city belonged to us, the homeless drug addicts, alcoholics and immigrants, to those who were either without a family or were trying to blot out their history. In this space between five and seven we would spread and conquer like moss that grows between cracks in the pavement (25).

As a refugee with no family ties and a limited financial income, Salma is a marginalized person. Her survival hangs on building bridges with other marginalized people: the homeless, the poor and social pariahs. Salma identifies with these people who, like her, are uprooted and rendered powerless. As a group, refugees, to borrow Agamben’s words, ‘call into question the very principle of the inscription of nationality and the trinity of state/nation/territory which is based on it’. (118)

As mentioned previously, Salma Ibrahim El-Musa is Layla’s mother, but her daughter has been grabbed away from her at birth while she was in prison, allowing her to escape to England from the family wrath and honour killing that awaited her for having been raped by a village youth. She flees from Hima to Exeter where she manages to live as the norm sets the as the norm sets the standards: with work, husband and baby boy. She

finds a liminal space throughout the novel but in the end dies as Salma. She cannot deal with the complexity of being true to both her Arab mother and her British husband. She cannot wipe out the attributes of her identity. Even though she is successful as Sally, within her inner self the transition is a failure and, rather than breaking away from this, she feels the guilt is hers. She remains Salma though disowned; as she says: I stained my family's name with mud. (74)

Before we turn to a close analysis of *My Name is Salma*, it is eminent to mention that the ideas of Faqir and Salma, the author and the narrator, are, arguably, quite similar particularly where identity and belonging are concerned. To begin with, Faqir acknowledges that "she [Salma] is part of me, yet not me" They share the same ideas and thoughts. The perspective that Faqir uses in writing *My Name is Salma* seems to be the same as the one she uses in her non-fiction writings, especially when talking about the veil which is imposed on them both and both live more happily after leaving their traditional societies.

Honour killing, that is essential theme in the novel and the main problem of Salma in Hima, is one of the chief problems that women face in Jordan, Faqir's country of origin. Both left their countries to leave the traditional ordinances that cause their suffering. Like Salma, Faqir leaves Jordan in search for freedom, as she said, "For much of my childhood, I left that I was living in a prison, and likewise when I got married" (9).

In spite of her living for more than 20 years in Britain, Jordan is still vivid in Faqir's life. She acknowledges: "although I don't physically live there, Jordan is part of my mental landscape" (5). In this, again, she is similar to Salma who despite her many years in Exeter is still linked with Hima. In short, in spite of a few differences between Faqir and Salma, their viewpoints seem almost the same and it is difficult to divorce Salma in the text from Faqir in the context since she is a product of Faqir's culture observed from

Faqir's own perspective and as such seems to be her voice in the novel. Although there are many characters in the novel, because of their exile whether voluntary or not and their displacement, none of them seem to be successful and happy.

Salma has experienced the three types of identities during her life. With the exception of her relationship with Hamdan, she appears to be a conservative Arab when she is in Hima. She wears a scarf, a shawl, a black madraqa, a wide dress and loose pantaloons. Before reaching England and when she is on the ship with Miss Asher, Salma refuses to drink wine, eat pork and insists on eating "halal meat only"(188).

However, one day, after spending some years in England, she undergoes a complete transformation. She seems to have turned into a nominal Arab and Muslim when she declares: "[I] was really an infidel, who would never be allowed to enter the mosque" (46). Despite her seeming conservatism in Hima and her sudden adoption of a nominal identity one day in England, Salma appears to be fractured, who for the rest of her life insists on being conservative Arab despite committing certain sins. Thus though having committed the sin of zina (sexual relations out of wedlock) twice, one with Hamdan in Hima and the other with Jim in England, she tells Sadiq, her friend in England, "I don't have an English boyfriend. I am a [conservative] Arab" (261).

Salma's identity, "swaying" from an identity to another, is bound up with the place that she lives in. This, in fact, proves that Arabs, in Faqir's viewpoint, are influenced by the social environment more than their religion. Salma's veil is a striking example here. Because it is unacceptable to take off the veil in Hima, she says, "My hair is aura. I must hide it. Just like my private parts ... I cannot take off veil, Sister. My country, my language, my daughter. No piece of cloth. Feel naked, me" (189).

When mentioning the causes that prevent her from taking off the veil, she does not indicate God, Allah or Islam, but rather she mentions "the country". What makes her "feel

naked” without a veil is her country, not her religion, and when changing the country, the veil begins its process of change. Lebanon, the second country she lives in, witnesses the second stage of her relationship with the veil. In Hima, in addition to the veil, she wears traditional and conservative dresses but in Lebanon, in addition to the veil, she wears jeans and a T-shirt “conscious of the tight elastic around her hips and breasts” (87).

In Lebanon, the veil is still there covering her hair, but with “tight”, not “loose”, clothes. Her “tight” clothes in Lebanon show that the influence of Hima over her has waned and she begins to free herself from its system. In England, after taking off the veil, she once wears “the tightest and shortest skirt in the wardrobe” to live “the few precious moments of the evening when I forgot my past. Those moments when I looked at my reflection as if looking at a stranger were the best” (58). The veil and the loose clothes become something from the past that she wants to forget. In addition, the impracticality of the veil in England, as it is assumed from the novel, is another factor behind Salma’s unveiling. Parvin, while talking to Salma about the veil, acknowledges “it will be much harder to get a job while you insist on wearing it” (123). This image of the veil suggests that it belongs to the social traditions, not Islam. Being traditional, the veil is easily taken off, particularly in the West where modernity supersedes traditions.

Speaking about Islam, although the focus in this analysis is on Salma’s, Muslims in the novel deal with the Islamic injunctions selectively. They do not follow Islam because it deserves following. Rather, they follow it for their own personal purposes. The level of their belonging practically to Islam depends on the advantages or disadvantages they might receive from Islam. If Islam “brings” some benefits, they follow it. If it “takes” benefits away, they leave it. Haj Ibrahim (Salma’s father) , for example, prays only “whenever a goat was stolen or we were having a long spell of drought” (19). Similarly, when Noura’s child was sick she said, “I never prayed, but that night I prayed for the first time” (198).

Practising Islam here is not a want in itself. Haj Ibrahim and Noura do not pray regularly; they cannot see any point in praying or being close to God if their life is stable and without any problems. Islam, for them, is only needed whenever there is a need.

On the other hand, Islamic ordinances sometimes prevent Muslims from obtaining some reachable benefits and this led some of them to ignore Islam in order to get the benefits. When Salma asks Sadiq: “what about you? Praying all the time and selling alcohol to infidels!” he replies: “Business is business also” (125). Sadiq is willing to pray five times a day to satisfy his “Muslimness”, but he is not willing to lose his work because of that. Sadiq’s situation is similar to Salma’s when she takes off her veil to get a job.

Khairiyya accompanies Salma to Lebanon where she spends some months living with kind hospitality from the Christian religious women there. Then she leaves to England with the English Little Sister, Miss Asher, “a woman who had saved my life” (120). Miss Asher adopts Salma, teaches her and helps her to reach England and find safety. The Christian woman, represented by Khairiyya and Miss Asher, is extremely active in helping suffering women regardless of their religion. The Muslim woman, on the other hand, is either a victim like Salma or helpless like her mother. In addition, having two Christian women activists one from Lebanon, the East, and the second from England, the West might be taken as a sign of the Christian global interest in women’s affairs. Khairiyya, in particular, represents the active woman who, despite belonging to the East, appears to avoid suffering because she is a Christian by faith.

The difference between Khairiyya and Salma, or any other woman from Hima, is that the first is Christian and lives in a Christian society, while Muslim is the identity of Salma and her society. According to the novel, Christianity is more committed to participating in helping women than Islam. In other words, the rights of women in Islam are less protected than in Christianity. Because some might think of Khairiyya and Miss

Asher as feminists more than Christian, the priest Minister Mahoney appears to show that the male and female Christians are the same in practising their helping and tolerant religion. Like Khairiyya, “he spent his time visiting immigrants in prisons” (143). But unlike her, he seems to visit immigrants in general not women in specific. He helps promote Salma’s case and argues that she should be given asylum as ‘thousands of women are killed every year’ (162).

She ‘was happy’ in Lebanon (95) with the Christian women and she seems to be happy with the kind Mahoney who reminds her of her father. “You are so kind. Like (...) a father to me” (209). He tries to calm Salma down. When she tells him “I did shameful things”, he tries to calm her: “We have all done things we regret ... its part of being human” (39).

Mahoney, in Salma’s eyes, is a unique holy man because “although he was a man of religion he was so kind and under-standing” (161). It could be inferred here that the men of religion she knows are not so kind and understanding. Accordingly, the religious Christian is kind and understanding while the religious Muslim is not. Muslims, in comparison to Christians, are silent, helpless, and without kindness and understanding where the issue of honour killing is concerned.

If Mahmoud, who “thinks he is the sheikh of the tribe” (241), represents eastern Muslim men, Minister Mahoney seems to represent the western Christian ones. For Salma, in spite of some differences between her father, Mahmoud and Hamdan, they are all represented by Mahmoud, who is intent on killing her in the name of the tribe’s males and in order to keep their heads high. The Muslim man in Hima, for Salma, is intolerant and very aggressive. Minister Mahoney, on the other hand, represents the tolerant and kind Christian man in the West, as he is the first western man encountered by Salma who flees from Hima because of its aggressive men, describes Mahoney as “this honey man” (209)

and “my savior” (38). She seems to love him as a father because he has saved her from the dangerous men in Hima. If Mahoney becomes like her father, Allan becomes like her brother.

She tells him, “you’re like a brother to me” (240) because “he was honest, discreet and protective” (240). Her real Muslim brother wants to kill her, but Allan is “protective”. Her real father could not save her, but Mahoney is a “savior”. The meanings of fatherhood and brotherhood are in question here. In fact, this opposition seems to prove, in Faqir’s perspective, the superiority of modern western civilization over the Arab traditional one. Allan and Mahoney are two products of the kindness of the West and Salma’s father and brother are products of the aggressive Arab society.

The idea is: people are different because their cultures are different. The western secular culture appears to be best in the novel. The Arab and the traditional culture of Hima is stereotyped and presented as backward.

Arab women seem to live in misery in Arab societies. Although Salma is the clear example of that, there is a history of suffering there. “My mother had nothing of her own, her brother took her share of the farm; when her husband died Shahla was thrown out of her house so she came to live with us; and all I had was a daughter of my own, who cried and cried for me” (210). Salma, her mother and her grandmother are all victims of the greedy and aggressive men. A “house” is taken from her grandmother, a “share of the farm” from her mother, and Salma is forced to leave all the farms and the houses of Hima in addition to her little daughter and her life. Honor killing appears to be happening in Hima quite frequently because of a rumor, Sabha’s “brother shot her during the wedding” and “it did not take long for her mother to follow her” (115). The death of Sabha’s mother and the killing of Salma’s daughter at the end of the novel show that honor killing causes

other indirect killings of other women. If the women of Hima deserve killing because of a rumour, they are voiceless and without protection.

Not in Arab societies only, to prove that Muslim women in all Muslim societies are subordinated, Faqir provides Parvin, the British Pakistani friend of Salma in England, as another example of a Muslim woman who is a victim of male superiority. She suffers in Pakistan as her father intends to force to marry a man she does not like. Parvin and Khairiyya, the Lebanese civil nun, add new dimensions to the Muslim identity of Salma in the novel.

Each of these three women has two identities: national and religious. Salma is a Muslim Arab, Parvin is a Muslim Pakistani, and Khairiyya is a Christian Arab. The question is: which identity is it that causes the suffering of Salma, the Arab or the Muslim? Although she is an Arab, Khairiyya does not suffer, because she is Christian. Although she is Pakistani, Parvin suffers because she is a Muslim. So the Arab identity of Salma in itself does not relate to suffering; Islam is, seemingly, the main cause.

According to the novel, love affairs in Hima are of three types. All of them present women as victims to the discriminatory cultural systems of Muslim societies. The first type depends largely on rumors without any real incidents. They are “some whispers in the dark turned into a rumor and then turned into a bullet in the head” (106).

The second type consists of those cases in which women are led indirectly by men to lose their virginity or to be considered as prostitutes. Salma, as it seems, thinks that Hamdan is going to marry her, but after her pregnancy he “refused to marry me and disappeared. He said that “I was a slut, cheap ... and a liar” (289). Madam Lamma, Salma’s friend in the prison of Hima, is another example of this type. After learning that her husband is going to take a second wife, she stood “naked under the lamp post in the main street. They thought “I was a prostitute. I am not a prostitute” (180).

The third type consists of those women who become prostitutes for economic reasons. Noura, Salma's best friend in prison, is a good example here. Noura's husband takes a second wife and leaves her with her children. When one of her children becomes sick, she needs money for treatment. She "used to go to the kebab shop to wash dishes at night and then rush to the hospital in the morning" (197). But after losing her job and to have some money for her son's treatment, as she confesses, "I began taking off my clothes" (198). Faqir depicts all women in traditional societies as victims of patriarchy.

As a result of the widespread inequality in Muslim societies, Islam itself is targeted by the subordinated women like Salma. For her, Islam is not a "neutral" religion; it is rather the religion which is used by men to oppress women. Women in Hima are always forced by men to follow the tribal orders whether they are religious or not. To be forced, not convinced, to do something by somebody else, it is natural to hate them both: the something and the somebody.

The Islamic ordinances, mixing up with the tribal Arabic customary laws, were forced upon women by men in Hima- to refuse the patriarchal system in society, Islam should be refused too. Salma asks: "If you didn't force people to go to church [or mosque] why would they? There had to be a strong imam or priest shaking his stick, invoking God and promising sorrow" (44). For Salma, there is no point in religion and people only practise it when forced. Salma repeats the same formula about religion when she is in England and after her great suffering from the Muslim men in Hima.

Not being able to protect Salma, Islam does not seem important in her life. It is notable in Salma's life that she is always regretting her sins, but without trying to stop committing them. She is always remembering her "dark deeds" and "shameful past"(8) depending on what she does with Hamdan, but she does the same with Jim in England. After taking off her veil, she regrets it: "I felt as dirty as a whore ... a sinner who would

never see paradise and drink from its rivers of milk and honey” and then she “cried and cried for hours” (129).

This situation in Salma’s life could be explained by her ideas about religion. She seems to believe that all these religious rules belong to the system which causes all her suffering in life. Therefore, to have a new life and to live without suffering, all these should be ignored. In spite of all her regret and tears, she cannot follow this “oppressive” system. When she is “completely mute and on hunger strike” in Hima’s prison, she thinks: “they put us in prison, took away our children, killed us and we were supposed to say God was only testing his true believers” (136). It is clear here that women are always asked to accept their suffering as something from God.

As a result of the false use of Islam by men over women in Hima, Salma does not just refuse to follow Islamic prescription in the things relating to women’s issues only, but she begins to refuse to practise those rules that she has already practiced. From the beginning, Salma does not appear to pray, for example. When Sadiq asks her “Do you want me to teach you how to pray to Allah also? I waved a hello and crossed the street quickly” (205). However, she wears hijab and does not drink alcohol. After a while, as a way of refusing the oppressing system, she takes off the hijab. Alcohol does not relate to gender issues and she says once that “alcohol had never passed my lips ever. I was a goddamn Muslim”(258). Sometime later, she says, “I drank my first glass of champagne ever ... ‘Damned is the carrier, buyer and drinker of alcohol’ I heard my father’s voice. My hand trembled carrying the forbidden drink to my lips. It had been almost sixteen years since I last saw them” (265).

Although she has mentioned a tradition, this does not remind her of the Prophet or God; it reminds her of her father. By drinking alcohol she seems to refuse her father’s order, not the Islamic one. Similarly, she takes off the veil “which my father had asked me

to wear”(129). The influence of her father over her, which represents Hima’s patriarchal system, has waned. When Salma is asked by her father to wear the veil, she seems to refuse to follow him, not her religion, when taking off the veil. The veil is traditional here and to be modern in England she should take it off. Faqir always depicts the veil as traditional to justify its removal following the western feminism that she seems to believe in.

Although Salma appears to be a conservative woman in Hima, her clothes show that her conservatism is forced on her by society. From the beginning, her clothes signal the conflict between her and her society. To satisfy her society she wears “wide pantaloons and loose flowery dresses”, but some of the colours of her dress imply her resistance: “red to be noticed, black for anger”. She wants to be noticed by men and she seems angry for not having the freedom to wear whatever she wants.

In addition, Salma seems to have the courage to be free in performing some actions publicly which might anger men. In spite of her knowing that, in her conservative society, “only a loose woman takes off her clothes and swims in public. Men might see you”(287), she dares to do it, ignoring men and what people might say about her. In spite of her “wide” and “loose” conservative clothes, her father has to warn her about her breasts: “cover them up” (13). However, she does not follow her father’s advice and her breasts “was the first thing Hamdan had noticed” (13). In spite of her seemingly conservative clothes in Hima, Salma is not conservative in reality. By wearing such clothes, she tries to follow her social traditions not her religion.

In spite of her conservative clothes in Hima, Salma appears happy to make love with Hamdan. If Salma, when she was in Hima, is taken as representative of conservative Muslim women in Muslim societies, this action will distort the image of Muslim women. The whole love story between Salma and Hamdan shows Salma’s opposition to the system

of her tribe.

It is striking to notice that she does not seem to regret her love making with Hamdan after the incident. The society forces her, directly or indirectly, to regret it. After sleeping with him, for the first time, “I wrapped my mother’s shawl around me and walked back home” (29). She returned home without regretting, without crying, and without feeling guilty about having sex out of wedlock. She seems happy as she says, “From then on I lay under the fig tree waiting for him most nights” (36). Salma’s reaction after her love making with Hamdan is similar to her reaction after sleeping with Jim in England. Of sleeping with a man at night and his leaving in the morning, she acknowledges, “I continued eating my breakfast. No yanking of hair, crying or rending of garments ... do your ablutions then pray for forgiveness” (80). Salma, in Hima and England, seems the same in her reaction after committing one of the major sins in Islam. However, the conservatism of Hima’s society and what happened later to her and her daughter shows her the seriousness of her deed.

Like Hima’s, it could be said that English society changes Salma. When she is wearing hijab, “people look at me all time as if disease” (123). Society here, in a sense, plays the role of Salma’s father in Hima who asks her to wear the headscarf. Indirectly, Salma is forced to take off the veil because of this “look” from English society and because “it will be much harder to get a job while you insist on wearing it” (123).

In addition to the veil, she is forced, indirectly of course, to work in a bar and to wear even more revealing clothes than the English themselves: “there were very few women customers, and they were all better covered than me” (182). However, the difference between direct force in Hima and indirect force in England is crucial. Although England has forced Salma indirectly to take off the veil, this has happened as a consequence of the direct force of wearing the veil in Hima. As England has given Salma a

new life, she seems willing to accommodate herself in the new country. While ignoring the Islamic prayers, for example, ‘she does not mind praying in a cathedral’ (177)

In a sense, this depiction of Salma seems to prove that freedom and feminism come before culture and religion. Salma’s willingness to absorb British culture is, arguably, a reaction to the freedom and feminism she receives from it. It could be inferred here that the Muslim culture cannot meet women’s expectations and needs and, thus, they look for their freedom and feminism in other cultures despite the challenges they might face in the new cultures like racism in the West, for example.

In spite of the apparently negative depiction of Islam and Muslims in the novel and in Hima in particular, the personality of Salma, as a female Muslim, in England seems quite positive. Generally speaking, when Islam is central in Hima, it is depicted negatively. However, when it becomes marginal in England it is depicted positively. Salma, who suffers in Hima because of the traditional and the Muslim society, seems quite happy to be Muslim in England.

The positive depiction of Islam in England is a celebration of Islam’s marginality. In England, Salma tries to be a good Muslim, but in her own way. She tries to be a free female first then to be a Muslim. While in Hima her freedom is marginal, and traditions and Islam are central, in England it is the opposite. As a result, the positive depiction of Salma’s Muslim identity in England could be seen as a positive point of secularism which respects Islam when it is marginal and critiques it when it becomes central in Muslim societies. Salma’s Islam in England is interesting. As long as her freedom and her feminism are secured, she is willing to practise Islam like any moderate or even conservative Muslim. It is a practice that is not demanded. She chooses when and what she practises in order to feel Muslim.

Salma practises Islam in different ways in England. She cleans the “dirty house” of

Liz cleaning “every glass, every piece of china, every utensil” and washing “the floor, the walls, the ceiling and above all the toilet seat”, justifying doing all that by saying: “I was a goddamn Muslim and had to be pure and clean” (18). She follows the Islamic rule when she becomes clean and she follows it, too, when she refuses to drink alcohol – as she says: “alcohol had never passed my lips ever. ‘I was a goddamn Muslim’” (258). Islamic prescriptions for Salma, in these two cases, must be followed and she proves her affiliation to Islam by following them. These two Islamic orders, being clean and not drinking alcohol, do not affect negatively the reception of Salma’s personality in English society.

Alienation in My Name is Salma

Salma experiences cultural alienation in Hima and England alike whereas a physical alienation occurs when she travels from her homeland Hima to the new geographical region of England, her adopted home. This study examines cultural alienation through the notion of ‘Other’ that condemns the less privileged and the less powerful to a life on the margins of the society and how it impacts identity formation for a Muslim character in a Western context. The effects of physical alienation on identity formation will also be brought into focus.

Salma’s flight from Hima is a physical dislocation from home. Upon reaching Lebanon after leaving Hima, Salma looks out of her bedroom window for the first time and sees the strange surroundings, she asks: “Where was I? How far was I from my mother? How far was I from her?” (82). Later along the journey she asks: “Where are we? How far are we from my country?” (83), to which she is answered: “We are north of Beirut, on the coast of the Mediterranean. Your country is further south, almost south-east. A number of hours drive” (84). As soon as she learns that they are far from her home country, Salma immediately shows signs of nostalgia for home when she says, “I shall go back one day” (84).

Being in new surroundings away from the familiarity of her native homeland, Salma experiences the feeling of losing home only a few hours after her departure. Later at night when the kerosene lamps in the valley in Lebanon are lit one by one, it reminds her of her village in Hima, her mother and her teacher Miss Nailah. From Lebanon Salma travels to Cyprus by boat, on to Marseilles, France, before reaching Southampton, England. She lives in Southampton for a short while with Minister Mahoney before moving to settle in Exeter.

Many years of life in England makes Salma miss her mother, she says of her: “I miss her horribly” (289). This movement from one geographical location to another, from the East to the West precisely, is a physical dislocation for Salma. She experiences a feeling of estrangement in her new surroundings which make her desire home. Salma’s journey from the Levant to England impacts the formation of her identity based on the new cultural experiences she undergoes and the new people she encounters as a result. Since her movement to England is permanent and England is her new home, Salma must adjust her identity in line with her new environment by discarding her veil in order to secure a job. Gone too are her loose clothes as she adapts to wearing skimpy clothing while working at a bar and also starts drinking alcohol. Contrary to what is expected of a Muslim, Salma goes to pray in cathedrals and churches while in England even though she is not a Christian (44).

Stuart Hall argues in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* that the transformation in modern societies is “fragmenting the cultural landscapes of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and nationality which gave us firm location as social individuals. These transformations are also shifting our personal identities, undermining our sense of ourselves as integrated subjects. This loss of a stable “sense of self” is sometimes called the dislocation or decentring of the subject” (1966, 596-597). According to Hall, a modern

society like postcolonial Britain where Salma moves to live is constantly undergoing change thereby impacting the identities of its inhabitants. This implies that a person's identity formation process is impacted by the society and one's identity cannot be fixed but undergoes transformation according to the environment one inhabits.

In her original home Hima, Salma is an outcast, while in her newly adopted home England, she considers herself an unwelcome outsider who does not belong. Salma does not understand that living in Muslim Hima, she has to fully cover herself in her clothes in order to conceal her body from men. Having failed to do this, her father prompts her: "Your breasts are like melons, cover them up!" (13). This incident shows that Salma has failed to identify with the dominant Islamic and conservative values of the society that require women to be fully covered in clothes in order to avoid attracting male attention. Lest she incurs the wrath of his brother Mahmoud, Salma begins hunching her back in order to hide her breasts. As a woman, she is powerless against the dominant male order of the society.

To avoid upsetting the sensibilities of conservative Muslim Hima, Salma and her lover Hamdan can only meet in the vine bushes away from the prying eyes of the society. She risks death by the men of the tribe for her illicit sexual liaisons with Hamdan. Her brother Mahmoud would tie each of her legs to a different horse and get them to run in different directions if he were to find her talking to strange men. The threat from Mahmoud does not deter Salma who goes ahead to involve herself in sexual relations with her lover out of wedlock. Even though she calls Hima home, Salma does not fit in its society because of its conservatism and restrictions. It is clear that Salma experiences cultural alienation in Hima. Her life in Hima degenerates into a nightmare and eventually she is forced to flee her native country for Lebanon.

Salma's cultural alienation outside Hima begins when she arrives at the convent in

Lebanon and for the first time dresses up in clothes different from the loose clothing she has been used to wearing while in Hima. She feels different in her new clothes and says: “I put on pants and a bra, which I had never worn before. I put on the pair of blue jeans and the T-shirt Françoise had given me, tied my hair into a ponytail, tied my white veil around my head and walked out of the bathroom: a new, clean, awkward woman, conscious of the tight elastic around her hips and breasts” (87). As a Muslim woman who has been used to the conservative style of dressing in loose pantaloons and wide dresses, Salma feels out of place in clothing which has tight elastic around her hips and breasts. Besides, as a Muslim woman, she is supposed to completely cover her hair whenever she goes out in public but for the first time she wears her hair in a ponytail in complete disregard of the Islamic injunction which requires all women to conceal their hair.

Her encounter with the new secular culture of England is an experience which alienates her from the conservative culture of Hima that she has been used to. She considers herself to have acquired a new identity as a result of her new style of dressing and refers to herself as “new” because she has never dressed in this manner before and “awkward” because she feels strange in her new clothes which she is not used to. At meal times with the nuns, Salma eats quickly with her hands, which makes the nuns laugh at her, Françoise says: “Nobody is chasing you with a stick in his hand, eat slowly” (92). Salma practices her Eastern culture of eating with bare hands while the nuns, who are Arab like her but have adopted Christianity and Western culture, are used to eating with crockery. As a result, the nuns find it strange to see Salma eat food with her bare hands. Salma becomes the subject of laughter for practising her Arab culture.

Life in England as an alien is difficult for Salma, this is clear when she says: “No, it was not easy living here in England as an “alien”, which was how the immigration

officer had described me” (37). Newly arrived in England from the Levant, Salma has trouble adapting to the new English cuisine, she says: “I had tasted my first fish and chips, but my mountainous Arab stomach could not digest the fat, which floated in my tummy for days. Salma resisted, but Sally must adapt” (9). Salma realises the importance of adapting to the new English food in order to have a successful life in her new country. Even though she finds the food unpalatable, she chews the still frozen food with tears in her eyes saying to the young man who bought it for her: “Yumma! It’s delicious!” (10). The young man who has bought Salma the food is most probably English and Salma would not like to offend his feelings by openly showing him that she does not enjoy the food.

In order not to alienate herself from her male friend, Salma hides her true feeling, which is that she does not fancy English food, by portraying a false outward appearance which purports to enjoy the food. Even though the smell of sage in Exeter reminds Salma of the long afternoons she spent in Hima when she used to drink sage tea and spin and weave, the difference is that now: “Instead of walking up the mountains looking for sage bushes, picking the soft green leaves, washing them then drying them, there they were: cut, squeezed and stored into little dark blue bottles for ma lady’s convenience” (12). She marvels at the conveniences modern England offers as compared to the difficult life she lived in Hima but blames herself for being so foreign when she tries to open a carton of milk and ends up spilling the milk all over the kitchen worktop. She says, “In Hima, whenever you needed milk, you would take a bowl and put it under a cow then pull its teats until your hands were sprayed with fresh warm milk” (49).

The cultural change Salma has encountered since moving to Exeter is manifest when she says: “The painful and sticky sugaring belonged to the past, together with marriage, my black Bedouin madraqa robe, money hats, all shelved there at the end of the horizon, overseas” (12). All the items she mentions symbolize the conservative life she

lived in Hima which she has quickly been forced to discard for the modern, secular life of England. This is culture shock as Salma is yet to get used to life in her new country.

One afternoon while at the backpacker's hostel, the porter enters Salma's room accompanied by Miss Parvin who inquires about where Salma comes from to which the porter responds: "Somewhere in the Middle East. Fucking A-rabic! She rode a camel all the way from Arabia to this dump in Exeter" (15). This racist incident is a chilling reminder to Salma that being Arab, she will be subject to racist stereotyping and discrimination in her adopted country. Salma can only pretend to be asleep and not to have heard when her would-be roommate Parvin says: "I am not going to share a room with an Arab" (15).

This racism is a harsh way of reminding Salma that she does not belong to English society and that she is "Other". Further isolation confronts her when she inspects the newspapers for job openings: "A sales girl required. Presentable with good command of English... I looked up presentable and command in the dictionary. I was neither presentable nor able to speak English well. Nothing that would suit a woman like me with no looks, no education, no experience and no letters of recommendation" (17). Having just arrived in England, Salma is yet to grasp the English language, the imperial language which is a necessary evil she must learn in order to successfully navigate through life in England. Being Arab, Salma is not considered presentable in a society that upholds Western standards of beauty.

Salma's Arab features do not endear her to the perfume sales girl who dismisses her by telling her that they do not have samples for the perfume called beautiful whereas Salma can clearly see the sample-size bottles of the perfume shining on the glass shelf. The perfume named beautiful is meant for those who are beautiful but since Salma is not considered beautiful by English standards, the implication is that she cannot purchase the

perfume and that is why the sales girl dismisses her.

Salma also grapples with invisibility in Britain due to her Arab identity as portrayed when she first meets Jim at the bar, he has trouble guessing her country of origin:

“Where do you come from?”

“Guess?”

The list as usual, included every country on earth except my own. “Nicaragua? France? Portugal? Greece? Surely Russia?” (68).

That Jim mentions many countries yet still fails to correctly identify Salma’s country of origin points to Salma’s invisibility. Her friend Parvin says: “You know, Salma, we are like shingles. Invisible, snake like” (28). Salma’s invisibility in England is also alluded to when she says: “In a cloud of smoke, and among the clink and clank of glasses and clatter, I became invisible to the customers” (164).

As an Arab immigrant in England, Salma is a subaltern who has been condemned by the society to a life on the fringes. Mainstream English society does not care about her, cannot see her and is therefore oblivious of her presence. For them, she does not exist. This is aptly depicted when Salma writes her university essay for Dr. Robson; her conclusion is about her experience as an alien in England: “They, and I, think I do not live here, but I do, just like all the women who were ignored in those tales” (221). As Salma is alien, English society does not care about her and so she is ignored. When Salma meets an English man who inquires about her origin, she says: “If I told him that I was a Muslim Bedouin Arab woman from the desert on the run he would spit out his tea” (30).

To conceal her true identity, Salma lies: “I am originally Spanish” (30). In order to fit into British society, she has to hide her Arab origin: “Had I told him I was Arab he probably would have run faster” (249). The English man obviously views Arabs through

an Orientalist perspective in which people from the East are considered inferior to the people from the West. Salma hides her Arab origin from him in order to avoid being the subject of this racist stereotyping. Salma objects to being called 'girl' by the postman, she would like to be called by the pet name 'chuck' as used by the postman to call her next door neighbour Bev, she says: "Every morning I was reminded of my alienness. Every morning, while mist was still enveloping us, Jack, the postman, would wave to me and call, "Hello, girl! "I would get upset, I wanted to be chuck like Bev next door" (37). The postman and Bev are most probably English so when Jack calls Bev by the pet name 'Chuck', it is a marker of their common identity as British while referring to Salma as 'girl' by Jack marks Salma as 'Other', a person different from himself who therefore does not belong. In order to fit into the society of her new country and avoid 'Othering', Salma must construct for herself a British identity.

As a Muslim woman obsessed with cleanliness, Salma describes herself: "I was a goddamn Muslim and had to be pure and clean" (18). She does not understand why Liz cannot let her wash her wooden cutlery and crockery. Living in Liz's dirty house is a strange experience for Salma and she would therefore like to clean up everything in Liz's house: "...as soon as I arrived in her dirty house I wanted to boil some water, put it in a bucket, add some washing-up liquid and walk around scrubbing clean every glass, every piece of china, every utensil. I also wanted to wash the floor, the walls, the ceiling and above all the toilet seat, which had some dry excrement stuck to the wood" (18).

After using a piece of cloth to wipe spilt milk on the kitchen worktop, Salma has to wash her hands with soap and water as she considers the piece of cloth "impure" (49) because Liz uses the piece of cloth for wiping all surfaces including the floor. Using the toilet also poses a new problem for Salma as she says that her bum is not supposed to come into contact with urine which Islam considers impure. So she either pulls up the

toilet seat and squats but makes sure not to have any contact with the toilet or washes her lower part in the tub with freezing water as hot water is only available on weekdays between seven and eight. Therefore, most days she walks to work with her private parts frozen (18).

As a Muslim woman obsessed with cleanliness, it is obvious that Salma does not belong to Liz's dirty house. When Salma invites her first guest, the postman, home for a hot cup of coffee, it is more than she bargained for as the man tries to kiss her. Her date cannot understand why Salma rejects his advances yet she is the one who invited him over. The implication, according to the man, is that in England, when a woman invites a man for coffee at her place, kissing is part of the bill, that's why he says:

“What do you mean “no”? You asked me to come”

“No, sorry”, I said, hugging myself.

“What do you mean sorry?” (24)

This is a weird encounter for Salma who apologizes but the postman cannot understand the reason for her feeling sorry for the incident. Being her first guest, this is culture shock to Salma who still has not learnt the ropes with regard to dating in English society. Her unlucky date leaves her house in exasperation, slamming the door behind him (25).

Likewise, Salma's lack of engagement with the British political system is a form of cultural alienation, she describes herself: “My knowledge of British politics began and ended with Spitting Image, where I could not tell which dummy was who in real life” (26). While watching television with Liz, it is astonishing that Salma cannot even identify the British Prime Minister. Her inability to recognise the most popular political figure in her country shows her disengagement to British politics as an outsider. In her attempt to understand British politics, Liz does not assist her but rather, she pushes her further to the margins of society:

“Foreigners ! Aliens like you”, she said and smiled.

“Like me?” I asked.

“Yes, illegal immigrants”, she said. (26)

To Liz, immigrants like Salma are unwelcome in England. Liz’s racist attitude towards Salma is apparent when she tells her: “Slaves must not breathe English air” (211).

In Muslim Hima, females are prohibited from associating with males who are not close family members and are only allowed to mingle with fellow women but in England, Salma says only men speak to her. While in the café with her date David, Salma cannot own up to her Muslim Bedouin Arab heritage, she lies that she is originally Spanish lest her date loses interest in her. She must conceal her true identity because revealing it would only result in social rejection.

Salma also encounters social isolation and meaninglessness in her new country. Walking the streets after her date with David, Salma smells and likes the aroma of cooking food which reminds her of home in Hima but this pleasant experience is ruined when the old man cooking the food on the streets mistakes her for an MI5 agent: “You come eavesdrop on us. Are you a spy or something?” (35). Given that Salma is in her newly adopted country, she is baffled as to how to react to this awkward encounter. When she was in her native home Hima, she would obviously know how to react appropriately with respect towards the old man from the East, she explains: “In the old country of the Levant I would have stood up, held his right hand, kissed it, called him jiddu, and introduced myself, “Welcome! Welcome! I am Salma Ibrahim El-Musa”, but I am in the new country now, a fugitive with a record, so I remained seated on the wooden bench pretending not to understand” (35). Eventually she walks away from the scene feeling like a “rootless, wind-blown desert weed” (35). Salma is “rootless” in England because she has no family

members in her new country; she left all of them in her home country in the Levant. As she is “desert weed”, no one wants anything to do with her.

Having grown up seeing mosque domes and minarets in Hima, Salma feels out of place in the cathedrals and churches in Exeter, she says: “Whenever I entered a cathedral or a church I would feel cold as if they had their own hidden air-cooling system circulating the smell of mould clinging to the old stones. They were always dark, hushed and lonely places” (44). This description shows that Salma detests the experience of going to church. She does not understand why people would voluntarily go to church without coercion as she finds the churches very unwelcoming.

When her friend Parvin advises her to groom herself, Salma discovers that it is difficult to find hair color that matches the original black color of her hair as “Most hair color was designed for blondes” (51). Makers of beauty products in England cater to the mainstream white woman and an Arab woman like Salma has little luck in finding products manufactured for her Arab features. Since white is considered beautiful in England, a blonde character overwhelmingly appears in the adverts for toothpaste, hairdryer and yoghurt. However, a black person like Salma is considered unattractive and capable of evil: “My hair was dark, my hands were dark and I was capable of committing dark deeds” (51).

As a Muslim Bedouin Arab, she is named Salma Ibrahim El-Musa in line with Islamic naming traditions. However, upon her adoption by Miss Asher, one of the Little Sisters from Lebanon, Salma is rechristened “Sally Asher” according to Western naming tradition which is an abnegation of her Muslim identity. People in England call her “Sal”, a shortened form of “Sally”, which she resents: “I did not like being called “Sal” which sounded like a man’s name in my native language” (83). When her university tutor calls her “Sally”, Salma does not respond, she says: “I did not answer. My name was not Sally”

(197). She also hates the name “Sal” because it estranges her from her female identity and reminds her of a man’s name in her Bedouin language. Losing her name ‘Salma’ means losing her identity because her name constitutes an important part of herself including her history and Islamic heritage, a prospect Salma cannot accept. This proves John Earl Joseph’s (2004) argument that a person’s name forms an integral part of their identity.

In Hima, Salma was a farmer and shepherdess, occupations which made her live close to nature which she loves. However, upon relocating to England, she cannot continue practising these vocations which she enjoys and is accustomed to. Her only contact with farming is the pots of African violets and wandering Jews because a garden is not permitted on the street she lives as there are too many garages and a railway line. In England, she can only admire the beauty of nature from a distance by looking outside her window. She compares her life in England to that of a “fish out of water” (288) because it has estranged her from the nature she lived close to in Hima.

As Salma fills her donor card, she is cognisant of her alien status in England, which implies that she has no family with her in her new land, she says: “My family did not know my whereabouts and I did not know the whereabouts of my daughter” (94). She counts all the people she knows in England and they’re only six: Parvin, Miss Asher, Liz, Minister Mahoney, her boss Max and her friend Gwen Clayton. Having arrived in England recently, Salma still has not had the chance to meet many people and make friendships and acquaintances. When she tries to apply for membership at the library, the librarian first rejects her: “You are an alien, we have no national insurance number for you; you cannot get in” (98). That she is initially denied membership without any concrete reason implies that the librarian is stereotypic and discriminative against Salma on the basis of her Arab appearance. It is only later when the librarian learns that Salma is a British citizen that she is allowed to enroll for membership at the library.

While in a café, Salma notices that she is sitting there alone “...without family, past or children much like a tree without roots” (111). She is living England solely without any member of her family because she was forced to leave all of them behind in her native country in the Levant when she fled to safety in Britain. She feels as if she has no child because her only child whom she gave birth to while in protective custody in Hima was taken from her immediately after birth long before she fled to Lebanon. Having changed countries and started a new life for herself in her adopted country, Salma feels like “a tree without roots” given that she has left behind her familial connections and history in her native homeland of Hima.

When Salma is taken ill and visits Dr. Spencer for treatment, the doctor is annoyed at the fact that Salma goes by the name “Miss Sally Asher”, which he considers as very “preposterous” (113). Dr. Spencer is surprised that a woman with an obviously Arab appearance and wears a veil has an English name including the English title “Miss”. He considers her a fraud, an illegal immigrant who has come to England to benefit herself at the English tax-payers’ expense. He refuses to treat her even though Salma appears to be genuinely sick. This is Salma experiencing racism in England because of being Arab and different from the native English people. In Cyprus with Miss Asher when they go to visit the Turkish castle, Salma’s veil marks her out as different. The guard at the castle points at her veil and asks whether she is Turkish to which Miss Asher responds in the affirmative. The guard then informs Salma that the veil is unacceptable in the castle but Miss Asher intervenes on her behalf (116).

Even though the guard lets Salma enter the castle wearing her veil, she notices that the guard is unhappy as a result. In Britain, Salma elicits stares from members of the public because she wears a veil. Her wearing the veil marks her as foreign and “Other” by portraying her as a Muslim in a country that is predominantly Christian. With regard to

wearing the veil, Salma says: “People look at me all time as if I disease” (123) to which her friend Parvin advises: “It will be much harder to get a job while you insist on wearing it” (123). Parvin’s advice to Salma is that if she insists on openly displaying her Arab heritage and her connection to the religion of Islam in England by wearing the veil then she can only expect ostracism and further marginalization from English society as a consequence. In order to gain acceptance by the society and integrate into it, Salma has no option but to get rid of her veil.

Aboard the ship *Hellena* from Cyprus on her way to England, Salma learns English manners and the English language from her acquaintance Rebecca whom she meets on the ship:

This was the small bread plate, this was the main course knife and fork, this was the soup spoon and this was the dessert spoon. I had learnt how to corner the green lettuce, cut it into pieces, shove it in my mouth and eat it unwillingly as if I were full. I had learnt how to butter a piece of bread, hold it with two fingers and eat it with the soup. I had learnt how to be patient and wait for others to start eating and then start after them. I had learnt how to wait for others to stop speaking before I started talking. I had learnt how to start each conversation with a comment about the weather (124).

Learning the English language and English mannerisms implies that Salma’s cultural identity is changing since this is done at the expense of her native culture.

Salma’s journey from the Levant to England is symbolic of the cultural transformation she undergoes once she gets to England in her quest to start a new life for herself away from the nightmare that was her life in Hima. On the ship to England, learning English culture serves to alienate Salma from her Islamic culture which she has hitherto practised. When Miss Asher invites her to drink wine on board the *Hellena*, Salma

declines citing her Islamic faith. She also refuses to eat pork and potatoes cooked in pork since Islam prohibits Muslims from eating pork. On being informed that there is no other food available besides what she has already been offered, Salma responds: “Can’t eat, miss home” (188). Being asked to eat pork and drink alcohol is clearly a new experience for her, something she has not previously encountered having been living in Muslim Hima. This awkward encounter makes her yearn for the familiarity of home with its halal food.

When Salma greets her friend Sadiq and follows the greeting with comments that the weather on that day is lovely, Sadiq comments that Salma has changed, he says: “Soon you will be English also” (125). Sadiq also comments that she has even forgotten to pray to Allah. Salma has started adopting English mannerisms by starting small talk with comments about the weather and is drifting away from her religion by not praying five times a day as required by Islam. She is drifting further away from her Muslim Bedouin Arab roots.

Even the mundane task of purchasing bread is an experience Salma finds difficult to accomplish because of her Arab identity. When Liz sends her to buy granary bread, Salma is too embarrassed to reject the brown loaf of bread offered to her as granary bread by the sales girl. She feels out of place in the queue and imagines that her foreignness can be noticed from the way she pronounces her ‘o’s, the way she handles money and her manner of dressing. Feeling that her thin ankles will give away the fact of her being alien, Salma quickly moves out of the queue before putting the change back in her purse. She would rather leave the shop in a hurry and knowingly take back home to Elizabeth brown bread and not the granary bread she has sent her to buy than withstand the estranging feeling of being in the shop amid other English customers.

When Salma attempts to find a job as a tailor, she is initially rejected on the grounds of being Arab. Her friend Parvin gives the reason for Salma not getting hired:

“It’s because we are black, is not it? Because she is not an English rose” (147). For Salma, racism is the reality of life in England.

Since Salma is Arab, she cannot be admitted into England by the immigration authorities whereas other passengers are freely let through with smiles on the faces of the immigration officers. The passengers freely admitted into England with smiles are most probably white British citizens who are native to the country and are therefore permitted unfettered access unlike foreign Salma who must first prove that she has permission to enter England before she can be let through. Even though her adoption papers are perfectly in order, the immigration authorities doubt their integrity and Salma is forced to spend two months in the port prison before she is cleared by the authorities to enter England. This is a form of racist profiling by British immigration to keep out the unwanted Muslim Arab out of the English shores.

After securing a job at the Royal Hotel, Salma has to act as English as possible in order for the customers not to discover her foreign origin which would make them stop patronising the establishment: “I would wear my classiest dress, keep my mouth shut, put little make-up on, tie my frizzy hair tight, and if I spoke I would speak slowly and carefully in order to sound as English as possible” (156). Salma has to suppress her Arab culture in favour of English culture in order to successfully perform her job at the hotel. Life in England compels her to abandon the conservative culture of Islam she was used to in Hima in order to earn a living in secular Exeter. Gone are the loose pantaloons, wide blouses and the veil, in is make-up and classy Western dresses. Salma little by little gets alienated from her original culture as she acquires a new Western identity.

Due to her constantly yearning for her home in the Levant, the view of the sun shining on the green hills outside Salma’s window in Exeter reminds her of the hills of Hima, she says: “I used to fondle the soil every day, but now sealed in an air bubble I lived

away from the land and the trees” (190). In Hima, Salma was living close to nature unlike in England where she can only admire nature from a distance, an experience she compares to living in an air bubble.

Sensing her failure to integrate into mainstream British society as an immigrant, Salma says: “This country was right in resisting me; it was refusing to embrace me because something in me was resisting it, and would never belong to it” (170). She is angry at her relationship with her new country and says: “I should forgive Britain for turning me into moss that grows in cracks, for giving me the freedom to roam its cities between five and seven in the evening, for confining me to the space between the sole and the heel” (171). Like unwanted moss growing in cracks on a wall or pavement, she is unwanted in Britain. Britain resists Salma, preventing her from fully assimilating into its society because of her Muslim Bedouin Arab heritage which is unwelcome in England. Feeling the constant marginalisation, she compares her life in England to that of moss growing in cracks and to being confined in the space between the sole and the heel because she of the difficulty of settling into mainstream English society. Ever conscious of her lingering outsider status, Salma says:

I was like a curse upon my head; it was my fate: my accent and the colour of my skin. I could hear it sung everywhere: in the cathedral, “WHERE DO YOU COME FROM?” Sometimes even the cows on the hills would line up, kick their legs in unison and sing, “Where do you come from, you? Go home!” (191)

To survive the awful experience of exclusion, Salma and other immigrants form alliances in order to flourish in Britain: “In the early evening the city belonged to us, the homeless, drug addicts, alcoholics and immigrants, to those who were either without family or were trying to blot out that history. In this space between five and seven we would spread and

conquer like moss that grows between cracks in the pavement” (28). Life in England for immigrant Salma remains a constant reminder that she is a foreigner who does not belong.

The doctor who declines to treat Salma because she is an immigrant is an apt example of the discrimination she has to put up with in Britain. The cleaner at her hostel says that immigrants are living off the country and the doctor says that Salma wastes the NHS’ money since she is a foreigner. Because she is an Arab immigrant, Salma cannot get a decent nine to five job like the mainstream English society. As a foreigner living on the fringes of the society, she can only secure a menial, five to seven, evening job that involves collecting dirty, used glasses from tables in a bar. This feeling of exclusion in England leaves Salma with no choice but to support Italy in the World Cup tournament at the expense of her adopted country since she feels Italy is geographically closer to her country of origin in the Levant.

Salma finds her first days at the university alienating and she therefore does not go to the institution very often. Her words point to her feeling of being an outsider in England: “What was it like to be a student? What did they teach them here in England?” (41-42). She also observes that “...they had read books I could not understand, they spoke a language I could not speak and they looked down upon me because my English was bad” (195). From the outside, Salma queries the details of the university experience for a foreign student like herself. Awestruck, she feels small against the old, large building with towers and high ceilings and trembles once she enters it. Using the university library also elicits the same feeling in her, she finds the library’s classification system too complicated and the sight of so many books reminds Salma of her ignorance and backwardness. Having been a shepherdess and farmer in Hima, higher education presents a totally new and odd experience to her.

Being a product of the conservative culture of Islam, Salma is offended by the liberal English culture she encounters inside the club: “The sight of a man and a woman French kissing, who were, up to a few minutes ago, complete strangers, was nauseating” (251). During a debate about the photos of the British princess in a bikini, Max is quick to remind Salma of the fact that she does not belong to Britain when he tells her: “Sal, you do not know anything about us, the British, do you?” (275). Salma being an Arab immigrant, and Max a native English, he feels that she cannot know what the British feel when they see their princess in a bikini in the newspaper as Salma is not British.

When Salma gives in to his reasoning merely to please him, Max adds: “I do not blame you, being foreign and all” (276). Max’s conversation pushes Salma to the margins of English society as she is not English like him, she is “Other”. After having lived many years in England, Salma still feels like a “fish out of water” (288) for she is yet to experience a sense of belonging with regard to England. Seeing a British National Party leaflet on the floor next to Max’s chair serves to remind Salma of her outsider status in England. She imagines that maybe Max’s brother-in-law, who believes “that all foreigners must be loaded in ships and dumped like the bananas they are “on the shores of Africa” (279) could have given it to him.

Even after her marriage to British John and having acquired British citizenship, Salma still remains a Muslim Bedouin Arab in the eyes of the average English person, a fact Parvin does not hesitate to remind her of when Salma imagines the British will protect her should she come into harm’s way on her return to Hima. Parvin tells her: “Look at the colour of your skin. You are a second-class citizen. They will not protect you” (311). Parvin advises Salma that being a black person; she will always be considered a second-class citizen in England unlike the white Anglo Saxon natives of England who are entitled to full citizenship and rights on the basis of their white race.

Having lived in England for many years without any contact with her family back in Hima, Salma grows nostalgic about home: “I just want to be with my family, I said like a child” (225). Salma’s landlady, Liz, represents the awful racism in England. Liz hates Salma and considers her one of the “foreigners” (26), “aliens” (26) and “illegal immigrants” (26). Also, she speaks to Salma as if Salma “were her servant in India” (48) and does not hesitate to tell her that “Slaves must never breathe English air” (211). Salma’s relationship with her boss Max is also racist as Salma says of Max: “He kept me in the background and never called me to the front of the shop while he had customers around” (277). This is Max heeding the racist stereotype of his society; he believes that he might lose business should the white customers see Arab Salma in his shop.

Parvin, just like Salma, is also alienated from her family. She finds herself a roommate of Salma’s at the hostel after fleeing from her father who wanted to force her into getting married to an “ignorant bastard” (102) from Pakistan: “She tried to dissuade him, pleaded with her mother, but no, she either went ahead with it or he would disown her in the papers” (102). Parvin runs away and ends up in a refuge run by Pakistani women but is advised by the women there to move down south for fear of being kidnapped. As a woman fleeing male oppression, Parvin finds company in Salma who has also fled male oppression from her native country.

This section has discussed the physical and cultural alienation that Salma experiences in both Hima and Exeter. Her moving from Hima to Exeter is a journey from one geographical location to another, from the East to West, and it represents a loss of both a home and homeland for Salma. Moving across disparate geographical regions: Lebanon, Cyprus, France and then to England, Salma feels lost amid the constantly changing physical and social environment. Having moved to England, she encounters a new culture greatly different from the conservative Muslim culture of Hima where she hails from.

In England, many aspects of Salma's life are transformed including food, clothes, weather and the physical environment. She has to learn a new language –English, in order to communicate and make a success of her life in England. Even though Salma has more liberty and rights in England than in Hima, life is not without its downsides and she has to contend with the racism and marginalisation she encounters. Beginning life at the bottom, Salma works her way up the social ladder. Physical dislocation from home in Hima presents many complications for her and she has to read just her life and identity in order to adapt to the changed circumstances.

The cultural alienation she encounters prompts her to construct for herself an identity that fits with life in England in order to have a successful and meaningful life. Shortly after moving to England, Salma discards some aspects of Islamic identity like wearing the veil and loose clothing, praying five times a day and abstaining from alcohol. This implies that her identity is evolving from that of a conservative Muslim into that of a semi-practising Muslim.

For Salma, England accords her the many freedoms she lacked in Hima. Embracing these freedoms inevitably leads to a change in her identity. It is no longer mandatory for her to cover her hair; she can drink alcohol, go to discos, freely talk to strange men and even have sex with them without the fear of dire consequences even though she still retains her Muslim religion.

The physical and cultural alienation Salma encounters upon moving to England impacts her identity formation given that she is forced to form for herself a new identity in order to succeed in her adopted country. In Hima where Islam is central, Salma must observe the strict Islamic injunctions whereas in England where Islam is marginal, Salma has little option but to conform to the Western secularism of her new country in order to succeed. From the conservative Muslim she was in Hima, Salma's identity in England

evolves into a semi-practicing Muslim who discards many aspects of conservative Islam and her Arab culture for the modern secularism of the West.

Salma's Swaying Identity

Salma's identity evolves with the geographical places she lives in. While in Hima, Salma appears to be a conservative Muslim, a short while after moving to England she adopts a semi-practising Muslim identity which she retains for the rest of her life in England. In Hima, even though Salma's conservative dressing in clothes which cover all her body may make her appear as a strict Muslim, she nevertheless transgresses against Islam. After having sex with her lover, she prays: "Forgive me, Allah, for I have sinned. The heat of passion had made me bend" (8). In line with Islamic injunction on women's dressing, Salma wears a veil on her head and loose clothing such as her madraqa robe but exhibits traits of rebellion by wearing red to be noticed and black for anger (8). Salma portrays an outward appearance which conforms to the requirements of the Islamic society while inwardly she remains rebellious.

When travelling to England on board the ship *Hellena*, Salma's conservatism is portrayed when just like strict Muslims should, she declines to drink alcohol and to eat pork. When Miss Asher pours her some wine and tells her that she must try it since it is good wine, Salma refuses the offer saying: "It forbidden in Islam. You lose control and make all kinds of sins" (188). When Miss Asher adamantly tells her that she does not commit any sins despite drinking alcohol, Salma insists: "No, but I different. I Muslim. I go crazy. Allah says so" (188).

Similarly, when offered pork, Salma declines saying: "Do not eat pork. Filthy animals" (188). She adds: "Cannot eat meat, I Muslim. I eat halal meat only. Slaughtered the Islamic way" (188). This shows that Salma cannot reconcile her Islamic faith to drinking alcohol and eating pork, both of which Islam forbids. When presented with

alcohol and pork, her obedience to Islamic injunction prevents her from consuming both. So strong is her faith in Islam at this point in time that Salma fears contact with a bible: “I took the Gospel and put it on the table quickly, afraid of the contact with the Christian text” (189).

In line with Islamic injunction, Salma insists on wearing her veil. When Miss Asher enquires whether she has to wear it, Salma answers: “My hair is aura. I must hide it. Just like my private parts” (189). Adamant in not taking off her veil, she adds: “I cannot take off veil, Sister. My country, my language, my daughter. No piece of cloth. Feel naked, me” (189). As a woman newly out of the Levant and still committed to her Islamic faith, Salma harbors a strong attachment to the veil and that is why she cannot contemplate getting rid of it. The veil is an important piece of clothing to her and not just a “piece of cloth”, without it she would feel “naked”. With regard to her country, language and daughter, Salma is reluctant to unveil. This implies that the veil is an integral part of her identity which she is unwilling to part with at all costs. So strong is her relationship with the veil shortly after leaving her native country, however, this attachment wanes after she has lived in England for some time.

The trip to England on the ship accords Salma her first contact with English culture. She learns the English language through Miss Asher who teaches her English lessons on the ship. Rebecca who is also travelling on the same ship also teaches Salma the English language and English table manners, Salma says of her: “From then on, she started teaching me table manners and English while her daughters giggled in the background” (122). From Rebecca, Salma learns English cutlery like the small bread plate, main knife and fork, soup spoon, dessert spoon and a lot about English table manners:

I had learnt how to corner the green lettuce, cut it into pieces, shove it in my mouth and eat unwillingly as if I were full. I had learnt how to butter a piece of

bread, hold it with two fingers and eat it with the soup. I had learnt how to be patient and wait for others to start eating and then start after them. I had learnt how to wait for others to stop speaking before I started talking. I had learnt how to start a conversation with a comment about the weather. (124)

Learning all these is important because Salma is moving to England where the culture and cuisine is much different from that of the Levant where she was born and raised. The British cuisine, table manners and culture that Salma learns implies that her identity is changing from that of an original Muslim Bedouin Arab to something akin to British.

A short while after moving to England, Salma is no longer one of the village girls of Hima but a sophisticated modern woman, she says: “I stuck a liner to my pants, pulled them up my shaved and oiled legs and realized that I was free at last. Gone were the days when I used to chase hens around in wide pantaloons and loose flowery dresses in the bright colours of my village: red to be noticed, black for anger” (8). From a provincial girl, Salma must change and adapt her identity in order to fit into modern England. Life in England gives her the freedom she could not have in Hima and she can go about without veiling her hair, she says: “...tossed my no longer braided and veiled hair on my shoulders, pulled my tummy in, straightened my posture and walked out of Swan Cottage” (8). Following her adoption, Miss Asher, the English Little Sister, changes Salma’s name to “Sally Asher”. That Salma takes up an English name before moving to England symbolises the beginning of the process of her acquiring an English identity.

It is Salma’s aim to turn into Sally, an English rose who is white, confident with an elegant English accent and a pony. This intention is the reason Salma decides to study literature, she tells her disapproving friend Parvin: “No, stories good. Teach you language and how to act like English miss” (184). Salma does not only want to learn the English language but also how to act like a young English woman. Not “Salma Ibrahim El-Musa”

anymore, she signs her name as “Sally Asher” when the postman delivers a parcel for her landlady Liz. This change in identity is also portrayed when she discards her Islamic name for her English name when filling the university application forms (184). No longer does Salma wear her loose madraqa robe which she has since forgotten and tucked away in a suitcase on top of her wardrobe (12).

Because Muslims are obsessed with cleanliness, Salma wants to sanitise everything in Liz’s dirty house as soon as she arrives in it, she says: “I was a goddamn Muslim and had to be pure and clean” (18). Using Liz’s dirty toilet also presents a big problem for Salma as her backside is not supposed to have any contact with urine which is considered najas (impure) by Islam so she has to pull the toilet seat up and squat while making sure not to have any contact with the toilet (18).

While Salma has no problem going to a bar where alcohol is served, as a Muslim she is not willing to drink alcohol at all, she says: “What he did not know was that alcohol had never passed my lips ever. I was a goddamn Muslim” (258). However, she does not want it known that she is an inflexible Muslim by not taking alcohol so she orders apple juice which looks like beer ostensibly for the people in the bar to think that she is drinking alcohol which would make her an open-minded and not an inflexible Muslim immigrant. On the surface, Salma is “an open-minded Muslim” (66) as she is willing to appear to be drinking alcohol while inwardly she remains “an inflexible Muslim” (66) as she is not willing to compromise her faith in Islam by drinking alcohol which her religion forbids.

In Hima, Salma feels guilty after her premarital sexual encounters with Hamdan but in England she feels no guilt after a night of sex with Jim, the stranger she meets in a pub. In Hima, after illicit sex with Hamdan, Salma does her ablutions and prays asking for forgiveness but in England she is content with no prayer for forgiveness, she says: “You would smile because it was supposed to be the morning after the beautiful night before”

(80). England has changed Salma so she no longer has any qualms about having casual sex with a stranger on the same day she meets him. Even though Salma used to have casual sex in Hima, it was not with a stranger but with her lover Hamdan, somebody she grew up knowing but she still felt guilty while in England she finds sex with a stranger acceptable.

While in Lebanon, the Christian life of the convent with the Sisters accords Salma the opportunity to wear trousers and a bra which she says she had never worn before. Living with the Christians makes Salma start to lose touch with the conservative dress code required for women who practise Islam. However, she feels conscious of the tight elastic around her hips and breasts since she is not used to putting on tight clothes (87). Salma's tight clothes show that the Islamic influence of Hima on her is loosening and she is beginning to liberate herself from its structures.

Sadiq notices that Salma's identity since moving to England is changing and comments: "Salma, Salma, you are becoming a memsahib, soon you will be English also" (125). Sadiq says this because he notices that Salma has started adopting English mannerisms like starting small talk with comments about the weather when Salma tells him: "Good morning, Sadiq. The weather is lovely today" (125). Sadiq also notices that even though Salma is a Muslim, she does not pray to Allah, he tells her: "Well, you have even forgotten how to pray to Allah" (125). Living in England has made Salma turn into a semi-practising Muslim who professes the Islamic faith but does not fulfil the requirement of prayer which is a key pillar of her religion. Salma notices that Sadiq too fails to observe a Muslim injunction when she retorts: "What about you? Praying all the time and selling alcohol to infidels!" (125).

This points to Sadiq's identity as a semi-practising Muslim much like Salma. While Sadiq is keen to fulfill the Islamic requirement of praying five times a day, he is unwilling to miss out on earning a living by not selling alcohol in line with Islamic

injunction. His answer to her is: “Business is business also” (125). The implication is that to Sadiq, matters of faith and his business do not mix. If he has to transgress against an Islamic injunction in order to make money then so be it. Salma’s understanding of what it means to be Muslim is further revealed in another conversation with Sadiq:

“I do not have an English boyfriend. I am a Muslim”. I said and smiled.

“All coconuts have English boyfriends. Muslims by name only”, he said. “There are Muslims and Muslims”, I said. “There are one Islamic”, he said.

I crossed the street and stood by him on the pavement of his shop. “What do you want me to do to prove to you that I am a Muslim? Pray five times on your door step?” I said (261).

This dialogue reveals that for Salma, there are true Muslims and nominal Muslims. Salma considers herself to be a real Muslim who is truly practicing Islam because she says that she does not have an English boyfriend because she is Muslim. She does not have to prove this fact to anybody and neither does she consider praying five times a day proof of being Muslim. By claiming to be Muslim yet she does not observe a key pillar of Islam by praying five times daily shows that Salma’s identity has transformed into a semi-practising Muslim.

England portrays Salma’s second relationship with the veil. Shortly after moving to England, Salma realises that she has to get rid of her veil if she is to succeed in getting a job. Her roommate Parvin advises her that it will be very difficult for her to get a job if she insists on wearing it (123). Wearing the veil in England also makes Salma the object of unwanted stares from the society: “People look at me all time as if disease” (123). A short while after arriving in England, Salma decides to get rid of her veil: “I looked again at my reflection then slowly began untying the knot of my white veil. I slid it off, folded it and placed it on the bed. I pulled my hair out of the elastic band and tossed it out” (129). From

then on she wears her hair uncovered in public which makes it visible to everyone including men which is against the dictates of Islam. Getting rid of the hijab is a key point in the transformation of Salma's identity.

The veil represents her past in Hima, which she has run away from. After discarding the veil, Salma symbolically lets her hair loosely fall down; it means that henceforth she is going to live a life free of the restrictions she faced in Hima. Discarding the veil after arriving in England implies that she is starting her life on a clean slate devoid of the restrictions of her dark past. In Hima she was an outcast and a fugitive fleeing from imminent death but England gives her the chance to start a new life with a new identity for herself.

Another moment when England impacts Salma's identity formation is the time she starts working at the Royal Hotel. In order to successfully perform her job, she has to learn English manners. Salma's friend Gwen advises her on the dos and do nots in order not to hurt English sensibilities while working at the bar. Salma describes herself at her place of work: "I would wear my classiest dress, keep my mouth shut, put little make-up on, tie my frizzy hair tight, and if I spoke I would speak slowly and carefully in order to sound as English as possible" (156). This shows that Salma is trying as much as possible to pass for an English woman in order to be accepted by the bar's clientele. In her attempt to appear English, she has to suppress her Arab features. She cannot wear her veil and has to affect an English accent while speaking to customers in order not to betray her foreign roots.

When offered alcohol by her boss Allan one night after all customers has left the bar, Salma asks for a soft drink instead. When Allan asks her whether she does not drink Salma says: "I am tired, that's all" (169). Given that Salma works in a bar, it would appear odd that she is a teetotaler. In order to balance her religion and her place of work, she conceals the fact that she does not drink by saying she is tired. Salma rejects the alcohol

offered her because she is Muslim but she is willing to conceal this part of her inner identity by affecting an outward identity that is open to drinking alcohol by not declaring outright that she will take a soft drink and not alcohol because she is Muslim.

However, after having lived many years in England, Salma drinks alcohol for the first time during her friend Parvin's wedding: "I sat on the stairs for a long time until it was pitch black then drank my first champagne ever" (265). As a semi-practising Muslim, she is riddled with guilt after having drunk alcohol; she hears her father's disapproving voice as her hand trembles while she carries the drink to her mouth: "Damned is the carrier, buyer and drinker of alcohol" (265).

So profound is the effect of living in England for many years on Salma's identity that she considers herself to have changed and become British so that when the university tutor asks her where she is from Salma answers: "I am English" (191). After the death of her landlady Elizabeth, Salma inherits her Swan Cottage and her other personal effects including her bed and journal. The first space Salma owns embodies Liz's heritage as she claims that she "...slept soundly as if Elizabeth's bed was a thick handmade mattress, stuffed with sheep wool combed with a Bedouin card, and covered with colorful handloom wool rugs made by the women of Hima in the dusk" (302-303).

As a Muslim Bedouin Arab who has severed all her familial ties by immigrating to England, Salma uses the language of inheritance and stakes a legal and familial claim by placing herself at the end of Liz's long family line. Having firmly established herself in Britain, her new space of living accords her 'hybridity' – the ability to be both Bedouin and British as one whose identity contains aspects of both these two cultures. Salma's success in acquiring a domestic space for herself brings to mind Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1989) – which is Salma's main goal upon arriving in England.

Salma forms for herself an identity that is split between two different religions, two

different nationalities and two different languages. Newly arrived in England, Salma, the village Muslim Bedouin Arab woman is on a quest to become the sophisticated English Sally. However, her personality after living many years in England shows feelings of ambivalence. Even though outwardly Salma appears to have reinvented herself by embracing the freedoms offered to women by Western society, inwardly, she is torn by the contradictions between the Western and Muslim/Arab cultures which have come to define her identity.

Salma insists on being called using her Arab name “Salma Ibrahim El-Musa”, declaring: “No, but I want Arab name” (184). However, when she is warned that she will be charged a fortune in university fees as a foreign student for not using her English name “Sally Asher” and that she also risks deportation from England if she insists on using her Arab name, she does accept to use her English name. “Salma Ibrahim El-Musa” is not only a name but also denotes a Muslim identity, belonging and a sense of understanding of self for Salma. The English “Sally” is dismayed at the unwillingness of English society to embrace her as part of itself when she declares her Englishness by saying: “I am English” (191).

However, Salma’s identity is multicultural; she is Salma, the Muslim Bedouin Arab as much as she is Sally, the English rose she becomes upon immigrating to England. Her ambivalence is clear when she says: “I begged myself to follow him, but Salma and Sally refused to budge” (251). This implies that she holds a hybrid identity which she personally acknowledges and articulates. Salma cannot authentically feel truly at home in any one place (Hima or Exeter) ; therefore, all of her ‘homes’ constitute her hybrid identities.

Salma’s fictional recreation of herself is an escape from the unbearable realities of life she underwent in Hima, she says: “Like a key witness from a Mafia crime case I

changed my name, address, past and even changed countries to erase my footsteps” (249). Her fictional, make believe identity is her performance which portrays Homi K. Bhabha’s so-called “third space”. While in England, Salma forms an understanding of herself and her place in the world by learning to create her identity.

Identities of Other Characters in the Novel

With regard to identity formation, Faqir has portrayed much about Salma who is the main character in her novel under study. However, she has written only a little about the identity of the other characters. Liz, Salma’s landlady after she moves from the public hostel, has an identity which is historic and colonial. The fact that Salma refers to her as “Queen Elizabeth I, Her Highness” (10) shows that Liz occupies a higher hierarchy of power with regard to their social relations and that Liz’s superior place is granted upon her by the historic colonial past. However, Faqir overturns the Orientalist stereotype in her portrayal of Liz –a Western subject, compared to Salma –an Eastern subject.

According to Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (2003), Orientalist discourse constructed the East and Islam as the antithesis of the West and Western civilization. Liz is a dirty alcoholic, does not have a job and lacks family and friends unlike the clean and successful Salma who is married to an English gentleman, is employed and studies at the university. Salma represents what it is to be English in the modern sense unlike Liz whose concept of being British is tied to the colonial past. This representation of Salma and Liz is postcolonial.

The semi-practicing Muslim identity is marked by a belief in Islam but having one’s own way of practicing the religion. Sadiq, the owner of Omar Khayyam off-license liquor store is a Muslim but he sells alcohol. However, he prays five times a day as required by Islam and whenever Salma walks past his shop his prayer mat is always on the floor and he would be muttering verses from the Qur’an. Sadiq is willing to earn a living

by selling alcohol even if it is forbidden by Islam.

Salma's father, Haj Ibrahim, is another semi-practicing Muslim. That he holds the title "Haj" implies that he is taken the pilgrimage to Mecca which is a fulfillment of one of the key pillars of Islam. Even though he practices Islam, he does not pray regularly but only when he encounters a problem in his life, Salma says of him: "My father Haj Ibrahim did not pray regularly. The (prayer) mat was out whenever a goat was stolen or we were having a long spell of drought" (19). Haj Ibrahim cannot sell his olives before getting a fatwa from the imam so his boxes of olives rot in the store. He insists on earning his money the right way as a Muslim even though he rarely prays to Allah.

Salma's prison friend Noura is a semi-practicing Muslim as she never prays. Only when her son is critically ill does she pray for the first time (197). However, Noura represents conservative Islam when she prays: "God of the universe, God of humans and jinn, God of earth and limitless skies, have mercy on this child and deliver him. Please God, if you cure him I will wear the veil, pray five times a day, fast, give the zakat to the poor and go to Mecca to do the pilgrimage" (197). All the things Noura promises to do in her prayer if her son is cured represent conservative Islam. Noura's prayer includes all the five pillars of Islam. It begins with a declaration of faith in God and mentions praying five times a day, fasting, giving alms to the poor and going on a pilgrimage to Mecca which is all key pillars of Islam. Noura has no problem with practicing Islam and working in a brothel at the same time: "...instead of wearing the veil as I vowed I began taking off my clothes" (198).

All the promises she makes to Allah in her prayer she breaks. Noura's portrayal shows that one can fail to practice all of the key pillars of Islam yet still claim to be Muslim. For Noura and Haj Ibrahim, Islam only becomes important whenever they are faced with a problem in their lives.

Other characters like John and Mark are nominal Muslims –they are Muslims by name only (290). They convert to Islam in order to get married to Muslim characters, Mark to Parvin and John to Salma. Their conversion to Islam is solely to attain the desired objective of marriage and they do not practice the religion at all. Parvin says of Mark: “Although he agreed to convert to Islam to put my mind at rest he is still a white English man” (255). She adds: “Once a Christian, always a Christian” (255). This shows that Mark’s conversion to Islam is only to meet the Islamic requirement that Muslims can only get married to fellow Muslims and not to people who have faith in other religions. Mark therefore remains a Christian in practice but a Muslim by name only. With regard to John, Salma says: “He now believes in God, but it will be nominal” (290). John is Muslim by name only given that he has no faith in Allah.

Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed Salma’s identity formation by exploring the multiple identities she adopts in the course of her life. Salma’s Islam identity in Hima is imposed upon her by the society while in England it is the product of her own free choice. Outwardly, she appears conservative in Hima wearing the veil and loose clothes but inwardly, she does not see the need to dress in this manner. She has sex with her boyfriend Hamdan many times in Hima but in England she says she cannot have a boyfriend because she is Muslim yet she is Muslim in both places.

Salma’s first few months in England are quite difficult but she later successfully adapts to the complications and problems posed by her new country. Faced with the centrality of Islam in Hima, Salma’s life was under threat but when Islam is marginal in England, she achieves success. The secular English society accords Salma the freedom to make her own decisions unlike in conservative Muslim Hima where everything is imposed upon the individual. This enables her to reconstruct her life and her identity to

her liking.

After her marriage to John, Salma acquires a family in England unlike before when she was drifting without roots. Through this marriage she becomes British, however, Salma is not fully English as her Englishness is moderated by her Muslim Bedouin Arab heritage. Her identity is the product of her multicultural heritage which makes her a 'hybrid'. Her performance at creating her identity embodying both East/Muslim and Western cultures portrays Homi K. Bhaba's concept of 'the third space' while her attempt to reconstruct her life in a chaotic environment ends up in 'mimicry' as we can see the gap between her and the native British. Salma's Western name 'Sally' or its contraction 'Sal' is hollow because one cannot attain a Western identity simply by possessing a Western name. In contrast, adopting a Western name and discarding her Arab name only symbolizes the loss of her original culture because her position in England is still marginal as she remains excluded from Western 'space'.

Muslims in the novel selectively deal with Islamic laws. They observe Islamic injunctions at their own convenience and for their personal purposes and not because these injunctions deserve following. Each person's level of belonging to Islam depends on the benefits or disadvantages they stand to gain in return, hence, if following Islam brings some advantages, they follow it while they reject it if it takes away some benefits.

III.1. Introduction

It is no surprise to claim that the fin de siècle is the time when the whole world witnessed a moment of fluid transition in which space and time seem to constitute essential factors that directly affect the ability to cross or to produce a complex combination of difference and identity, belonging and non-belonging, origins and outcomes.

However what has remained unsolved and sometimes marginalized in the controversial issue that surrounds culture. To this end, this chapter provides an analysis of diasporants characters that have gone through a movement of displacement. It is only amid the emergence of the overlaps of displacement that issues of nationalism, belonging, and cultural values became negotiated.

Hence, understanding how immigrants are culturally located and formed in a space of in betweenness , where there exists an excess of difference usually built upon race, class, and gender , depends on how they come to manage their own strategies of representation and empowerment . Likewise, the aim of this chapter is to investigate how the characters depicted in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* tend to dislocate themselves from their original cultures. It also provides a closer examination of their ability to culturally relocate themselves and develop a hybrid persona. Likely, cultural engagement may be both antagonistic and affinitive, depending on social articulation of difference that demands an ongoing process of negotiation. This latter aims at creating an authorized platform for cultural hybridity; that is the outcome of either a historical's transition or a movement of displacement of dislocation.

III. 2. Hanif Kureishi as an exile novelist

Born in 1954 in a suburb of London to an Indo-Pakistani father and an English mother, Kureishi was from the beginning subjected to racism and was considered a

Pakistani. London with its different cultures, philosophies, religions and races provides the setting and major themes for almost all his works. It could be argued that, within this hybrid city, Kureishi has attempted to prove his Britishness by writing in favor of white culture until he has become, in Ahmed's words, "more English than the English" (Ahmed 168). Kureishi himself believes that "some people turn to writing in order to locate an identity" (204). We intend to demonstrate how apt this definition is if applied to his own work. Writing is his way of proving his Britishness.

Ruvani Ranasinha notices that though Kureishi was once categorized as Asian, "nowadays the media describe [him] as a British writer" (232). Another critic writes of the "increasingly obvious uniqueness of Kureishi's cultural and political position as fully westernized child of an immigrant father" (Buchanan 13). Perhaps inevitably, Kureishi's success has come at a price and has cost victims. The price is his rejection of his Pakistani and Muslim identity; the victims are some of those Pakistani (or Asian) Muslims who are imaged stereotypically in his works. To avoid being described as Muslim, he proclaims atheism, and to get rid of his Pakistani side he "exploits and resists his ethnic identity" (Ranasinha 222). Through his writing then, Kureishi has succeeded in changing his image and in inventing for himself a British identity in the teeth of racism.

The relationship between Kureishi and the South Asian community in Britain is problematic. Bart Moore-Gilbert believes that "Kureishi, more than any other single artist, has helped to render Asian Britain visible as a subject of cultural representation" (216). However, Kureishi seems to focus on the visibility of Asian British color not its culture. For him, Britain should accept the diverse colors of its citizens not their diverse cultures - that is why he "has a limited interest in 'hybridity'" (200). Ranasinha writes that Kureishi "is influenced by Asian culture" (231) and she describes him as a "cultural translator" (221); but Kureishi himself does not seem satisfied with these connections. He says:

“people like Caz and Derek Walcott feel a connection with the Caribbean that I never felt with Pakistan or even India” (13).

It is important to note that Kureishi’s treatment of racism is primarily related to color. As a boy, Kureishi was brought up to be English. However, because of his color, he was subjected to racism. Therefore, racism is a color issue only. This limited meaning of racism affects Kureishi’s perspective. “Kureishi’s vision of Asian Britain is ‘assimilated’ to the extent that it is indistinguishable from the dominant gaze of the dominant ethnicity” (Moore-Gilbert 209- 210). Even if he were to be considered a cultural translator, for him the South Asian cultures are not as significant as the British. Esterino Adami points out that although on a visit to Pakistan he “tries to track down the fine culture of the Asian country...little of the Indo-Pakistani heritage emerges from his oeuvre” (129).

Nevertheless, Kureishi’s writing is important for both the mainstream the British and the Asian British community. As a hybrid writer, Kureishi seems in a more appropriate position than white British writers to address his “own people”. The colonial experience with all its images and conflicts between Islam and the West, the inferior and the superior, makes the Asian British community a suspicious object for a white British writer to critique. When Kureishi writes, however, racism and Islamophobia are less noticed in comparison to his British white counterpart. He might critique or attack the Asian community or Islam and Muslims in the same way as any white racist, but under the guise of the conversations that should be carried on within that community. On the other hand, the importance Kureishi’s writing holds for the Muslim community comes from its ability to raise some of the salient controversial issues in relation to Islam and Muslims⁵⁸

⁵⁸ In his book *London Calling*, Sukhdev Sandhu sheds a light on Kureishi’s role in presenting Asian lives – and Muslims among them - to mainstream audiences. From the end of the 1970s to the present day, Kureishi, according to Sandhu, is the one “responsible for dragging Asians in England into the spotlight” (Sandhu, 2003, p. 230). In addition, Kureishi “inspired second-generation Asians to look at the world anew” (p. 231). For Sandhu, change is important for Kureishi and he presents his characters and London itself in transformation. Like “most of Kureishi’s characters [who] feel the need for change” (p. 248), “London isn’t

This public dialogue in itself is an important opportunity for Muslims to present their hopes and fears, their ideas and criticism, and to speak out as a united Muslim community. Nonetheless, it remains the case that Kureishi has the license to write what a white writer hesitates to write, showing Muslims the images others construct of them, and to what extent they are involved in the creation of these images.

It could be argued that three factors were crucial in the formation of Kureishi the writer: his personal experience of racism; his father's influence⁵⁹; and Salman Rushdie. Writing about his reading when he was young, Kureishi states: "most of the English writers I grew up reading were fascinated by the British Empire and the colonial idea" (3). But this was not the topic he wanted to write about. "I wanted to read works set in England, works that might help make sense of my own situation. Racism was real to me; the Empire was not" (3). Kureishi's situation is quite similar to the situation of the Arab mentioned by Said in *Orientalism*: "What the Arab cannot achieve himself is to be found in the writing about him" (311). Racism seems to have harmed Kureishi a lot; the experience was too difficult to hide. He became a writer because he "did want to bring people's attention [...] to race and racism" (Kureishi 50). Thus, he started writing to "make sense" of his own situation and that is probably why, as he mentions, "The Buddha

an organic community. On the contrary, it's a restless clamorous agglomeration of exiles, migrants and refugees" (p.259). Kureishi's ideas about transformational London and changing people and characters provide Asians and Muslims with the environment they need to express themselves.

⁵⁹ In England, which Kureishi describes as "racist" (Kureishi, 1999, p. 53), unlike his English mother, his Pakistani father needs clarification. Kureishi's focus on his father serves to purify Kureishi himself from the negative assumptions and stereotypes which usually attach to Pakistani identity. Kureishi intends to present his father as completely different from other Pakistanis. For Kureishi, there are "differences between a 'Paki' and being an Indian. Indian was a rather aristocratic term. [...] whereas when you were called 'Paki', you were really scum" (p. 53). For this reason, arguably, Kureishi "uses the two geographical terms confusingly" (Adami, 2006, p. 90) when talking about his roots. In spite of the Pakistani identity of his father, he writes: "my father [...] never lived in Pakistan. But, like a lot of middle-class Indians, he was educated by both mullahs and nuns" (Kureishi, 2005f, p. 86). His father is like the "aristocratic" Indians, not the Pakistani "scum". In addition to his similarity to the Indians, Kureishi's father, as depicted by his son, is different from the immigrants in general because of his ambition to be a novelist. "For immigrants and their families, disorder and strangeness is the condition of their existence [...] culture and art was for other people, usually wealthy, self-sufficient people who were safe and established" (Kureishi, 2002c, p. 3). This uniqueness of the father is very important because it fed into his willingness and efforts to be considered as English, especially that he "liked England and he wanted to be English and he liked English people" (Kureishi, 1999, p. 55).

of *Suburbia* was written close to myself' (Kureishi 19). Racism, it could be argued, is a spark to Kureishi's creativity, a challenge to compete.

Reading Forster and Orwell, for example, he notices that "the 'colored' man is always inferior to the Englishman. He is not worth as much; he never will be" (Kureishi5). It could be said that his ambition to become a writer was in part his response to assumed inferiority. Moreover, Kureishi's father plays his own role as well. "My father came from a literary background and wanted me to be a writer" (55). In fact, the father's failure as a writer might have acted as a further catalyst in determining his son's career: by becoming a successful writer, he achieves both his own and his father's goals. In addition to his father, Rushdie valorized his aim of being a writer as well. In his interview with MacCabe, Kureishi says: "I remember Rushdie saying to me this really cutting thing. 'We take you seriously as a writer, Hanif,' he said, 'but you only write screen plays.' And I remember being really hurt by this, and provoked by it. And I thought, well, I'll write a novel then, and then I'll be a proper writer ... that's what being a proper writer was" (42).

Cultural Dislocation in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*

Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* is a modern bildungsroman that depicts young Karim's journey towards self discovery. His dual heritage (Indian and English), results in his inability to identify with Englishness which makes him restless and dislocated. The fact of being unable to categorize himself or to relate fully to the place where he has been born and bred makes him susceptible to a number of changes; notably, seeking ventures that mess up more with his identitarian definition.

The novel's events are set in the seventies and the eighties London, a period that was described by being the hardest times for immigrants as racism, discrimination and Xenophobia⁶⁰ were rife and vastly spread. Hanif's work portrays characters from different

⁶⁰ Xenophobia is the dislike of that which is perceived to be foreign or strange. Xenophobia can manifest itself in many ways involving the relations and perceptions of an in-group towards an out-group, including a

ethnic backgrounds that experience hardships as a result of their differences. These racist orientations of the host country the center resulted in most of the novel's characters feeling disjoined and unable to cope as they cannot identify with any of their white co-inhabitants.

Kureishi's own reflections of cultural location on his work

In fact, Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* contains so many similarities with his own life which pushed readers to consider it autobiographical to some extent. Hanif Kureishi as Karim, the protagonist of the novel, was born in Bromley in 1954. His father, who is the descendant of an aristocratic Indian family, was employed by the Pakistani Embassy in London whereas his English mother worked in a shoe shop. At a young age, Kureishi moved to west London in order to study philosophy at King's college. Meanwhile, he had his early plays performed at the Royal Court theatre in Sloane Square.

Kureishi is very multi-talented author, a playwright, a novelist, a screenwriter, and a film maker . His 1984 screenplay for the film *My Beautiful Launderette* was elected for an oscar. He also wrote the screenplays of *Sammy* and *Rosie Get Laid* (1987) and *London Kills Me* (1991). He is best known by the cinematic adaptation of his works, among them his short story '*My Son the Fanatic*' which was adapted as a film by the year (1998). Furthermore, Kureishi's screenplays for *The Mother* in (2003) and *Venus* (2006) were both directed by Roger Mitchell, a talented theater, television and film director.

However, his famous novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) won the Whitbread Prize ⁶¹ for Best First Novel and was produced as a four-part drama for the BBC in 1993. Its events tackles issues of shifts from periphery to center which is the core of the city of

fear of losing identity ,suspicion of its activities, aggression, and desire to eliminate its presence to secure a presumed purity . Xenophobia can also be exhibited in the form of an « uncritical exaltation of another culture » in which a culture is ascribed as « an unreal , stereotyped and exotic quality »

⁶¹ The Whitbread Awards (1971-2005), called Costa Book Awards since 2006, are literary awards in the United Kingdom , awarded both for high literary merit and for works considered enjoyable reading. The Costa Book Awards are a set of annual literary awards recognizing English Language books by writers based in Britain and Ireland.They were inaugurated for 1971 publications and known as the Whitbread Book Awards until 2006 when Costa Coffee, a subsidiary of Whitbread , took over sponsorship. The companion Costa Short Story Award was established in 2012.

London, as Karim engages in a journey of self-discovery: no place seems to be quite what either he, or the reader, expects and that is what makes his novel unique. The novel that he released right after *The Buddha of Suburbia* was the *Black Album* (1995). This latter was followed by a third one entitled *Intimacy* (1998), it was also adapted as a film in 2001 and won the Golden Bear Award at the Berlin Film Festival. *Gabriel's Gift* was published in 2001, *Something to Tell You* in 2008. His most recent work in the *Last Word* published in 2014.

Aside from writing screenplays and novels, he also crafts short story writing. His first collection of short stories, *Love in a Blue Time*, was revealed in 1997, followed by *Midnight All Day* (1999) and *The Body* (2002). All of these collections were gathered in his *Collected Stories* (2010), along with eight new stories.

He is also known by writing non-fiction works such as the essay collections *Dreaming and Scheming: Reflections on Writing and Politics* (2002) and *The Word and The Bomb* (2005). Furthermore, a memoir entitled *My Ear at his Heart: Reading my father* which was published in 2004.

Hanif Kureishi, along the course of his life as a writer, won a number of considerable literary prizes. He was awarded the C.B.E. for his services to literature, and the Chevalier de L'Ordre des Arts des Lettres in France. His works have been translated into 36 languages which made him famous worldwide.

The Buddha of Suburbia: A dislocation experience

The Buddha of Suburbia is written in the first person narrative where Karim, the protagonist, is the narrator of the book's events. Kureishi's use of the first person narration aims at attracting reader's attention towards identifying with Karim. Nevertheless, Kureishi exposes the complexity that lies in Karim's ethnic, national, class and sexual identity. The opening lines of the book forecast Karim's self presentation to the readers as:

“I am an English Man born and bred, almost. A new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories...perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood of here and there belonging and not” (Kureishi 5). Karim’s sense of here and there, a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction in the beyond, a restless movement au delà of his borders of identity which is a common problem that children of immigrants face.

This problem happens because their immigrant parents also find difficulties to relate to the English culture so they find relief in the memories of home that comfort them. McLeod elaborates on this by arguing: “to the children of immigrants, the interior knowledge of a distant place is unavailable. Thus their reflections about these places in terms of home are often differently constructed” (McLeod 213). Karim’s detachment from his origins is due to an identity crisis. Britain during the seventies and the eighties was not as welcoming as the present times. Diaspora of the generation of Haroon, Karim’s Father, resulted in a cultural hybridity in Britain that British people did not accept.

Cultural Dislocation’s experiences in *The Buddha of Suburbia*

The fear from these ethnic cultures that were infusing in Britain progressed to become a sense of parochialism⁶² and xenophobia. Being in a “center” and holding an imperialist past still lingers among the British population who looked at these immigrants who come from Britain’s peripheral ex-colonies, which distain and superiority. Moreover, there was a strong sense of nationalism among Britons against “the other”. Both, Karim and his father epitomize the conception of hybridity in postcolonial Britain. Karim is a mixed race character who is caught between two homes, two cultures and cannot wholly identify or relate to the Indian culture nor can he be accepted as a “white” descendant. His mother summarizes this idea by saying: “But you are not an Indian, you’ve never been in

⁶² Parochialism is the state of mind, whereby one focuses on small sections of an issue rather than considering its wider context. More generally, it consists of being narrow in scope.

India...What about me? Who gave birth to you? You are an English man I'm glad to say". (Kureishi 232) This fragmentation of nationalities results in an obvious identity struggle.

Despite the fact that Karim does look up to his father and respects his ideologies and principles, his own values often clash with his father's stereotypical embrace of "Indianness". He preserves the persona of an Indian spiritual "Guru" as he wears: "a scarlet Indian waist coat with gold stitching around the edges" (Kureishi 232) that he puts on when he organizes his spiritual seminars to English people. If this has to show something, then undoubtedly, it hints at Haroon's conflict between his Indian upbringing and English adaptation that makes him unable to "locate" himself.

Perhaps the first "dislocating" step conducted by one of the major character of *The Buddha of Suburbia* is seen in Haroon's marriage to Karim's mother who is white and also in his well in the abandonment of that marriage. Eva's character also does not have a strong sense of identity. She personifies the trendy person that is continuously adapting and evolving to fit into different trends basically to please her surroundings. However, regardless to how superficial she may seem, she has an extreme self-esteem and a strong sense of "self". Her changing identities which satisfy her thirst for popularity and public admiration consists the basic stone on which her sense of self is founded.

Anwar, Haroon's childhood friend was originally an Indian character that was his source of inspiration. Nevertheless, with evolution of events in the novel, Anwar's character constantly transgresses to become more patriarchal and extreme in his traditional Indian beliefs which lead ultimately to his final doom. Anwar's inner struggle to be true to his origins is illustrated in his strong desire to send his daughter for an arranged marriage, in his refusal to modernize his corner shop, his careless attitude towards his marriage, his patriarchal relationship between himself and the women of the family and most notably in his yearning to return home to India.

Anwar's character highlights the problems of being "located" in different culture but trying to dislocate from it in order to preserve his original one. In this regard, McLeod suggests that: "Migrants envision their home in fragments and fissures... the transformation wrought by the experience of migration make impossible the recovery of platitudinous sense of home. Reflections of home seize in pieces only; a sense of displacement always remains" (McLeod 213). Anwar has a tighter grasp on his Indian roots and seems to be fearful to lose them. He accuses everyone around him who tries to adapt to Britain by being "seduced by the west" (Kureishi 3).

Karim on the other hand, finds that his father and Anwar are two extremes of expression of culture, he acknowledges both of them but still tottering between between the two due to Karim's mixed parentage that exposed him to a dual heritage. He constantly struggles to identify or relate to the other characters. Despite Karim is half white, the English do not consider him to be white enough to let him play with their children, "Harry back" for example tells Karim that his daughter doesn't go out with wags and that however many niggers there are, we don't like it" (Kureishi 3). Harry back's stereotypical judgment reflects his ignorance of the fact of being half white. This inability to identify Karim's ethnicity and inability to accept Karim as an English man is one among other examples of racism that contributes to Karim's ambivalence and cultural dislocation.

Karim's fragmented culture and hyphenated identity

Questions of who I am and where I come from are underlying in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*. As Hall suggests "identities are constituted within and not outside representation" he alleges that identities: "relate to the intervention of tradition as much as to tradition itself which they oblige us to read as an endless reiteration but as the "changing same" "[...] not the so-called return to roots but a coming to terms with your own roots" (Hall 25)

Thus one of the most problematic issues that face diasporants, who achieve moves from their peripheral lands to central ones, is how to culturally locate themselves, most of the signs of dislocation that they exhibit have a lot to do with their cultural identity that is hyphenated. Hanif Kureishi in his book shows a number of characters that are struggling to identify with their cultures, seeking at the same time approval and acceptance from both, their culture of origin and the culture of the host country. For them London represents a transitional spot where they express their multifarious interconnections with a culture that is different from theirs. The heterogeneous nature of London with its diasporic communities and hybrid cultural forms stimulates a dialogue between one's origin and what they have to be in order to cope perfectly with a new culture.

As diasporic populations, they tend to negotiate their cultural identities through what Paul Gilroy terms "the tension between the roots and the routes" (133). Perceptions of the concepts of home, nation, and homeland should be constantly revisited as the encounters of diverse ethnic groups of people imply a varied and impure shape of London. This heterogenic nature of the metropolitan city of London results in the creation of diverse cultural identities that are caught between states of restlessness; they are continuously in a process of transformation and never complete.

The Buddha of Suburbia also sheds light on the multicultural side of the contemporary Britain. It portrays a collage of diasporic communities living in London using references to British imperial past and its ultimate results of immigration. The whole concept of immigration as highlighted by Williams: "Violates Britain's sense of its secure national borders" . Williams claims that the presence of these diasporic subjects in Britain challenge the purity of white Englishman's cultural identity as being: "homogenous and unitary" (22). However Stuart Hall in his essay: *The Local and Global: globalization and ethnicity*, suggests that: "the dominant culture's perception of the immigrant subject is

nothing but a mere example of a defensiveness of a narrow, national definition of Englishness, of cultural identity” (177). As such, *The Buddha of Suburbia* addresses the realities of contemporary diasporic communities in London, a city that serves as a site of transition that constructs fluid and unstable cultural identities. Hanif Kureishi deals with what Steven Connor calls: “the condition of divided or ambivalent ethnic belonging in Britain” (94). He also tries to emphasize on the side of London that is being hybridized. In this respect, critic Yousaf suggests that: “The Buddha of Suburbia unveils many of the ironies that underlie the British people’s “recognition of Britain” as a multicultural society and of Britain as racially diverse and culturally heterogeneous citizens” (27). Thus, Yousaf suggests that this novel provides a vivid picture reworks Disraeli’s : “two nations” of “Victorian rich and poor as center and margin, metropolitan and suburban”(27).

Perhaps the character that personifies cultural fragmentation and hyphenated identity most in the character of Karim. It is no surprise that the feature of belonging to definite culture or place affects one’s style of living because he is often inclined to organize his life according to the norms and expectations of the same culture, this can be done by detaching himself from his original culture, the one that he supposedly belongs to. From this point of view, cultural costumes and traditions become extremely important because they connect the person with his/her roots.

However, sometimes the ethnicity and the conditions of the up-bringing tend to “clash” and thus create a situation of problematic ambivalence with reference to one’s identity. The feeling of belonging to certain place and consequently to a definite culture is underlying since the understanding of this fact gives them a kind of support. Immigrants of the second generation face a number of difficulties such as being brought up in the principles of their original culture inside their homes and face the culture of the host

country outside. This results in a kind of cultural dislocation and ambivalence that could develop sometimes to be a state of alienation.

Is it possible to identify Karim by belonging to the culture of his father Haroon? The answer is no in this case. Karim does not consider himself to be fully Indian; he identifies himself as “a new kind of Englishman” without mentioning his Indian origins. In addition, he also does not identify himself by religion as he is not acknowledging the fact that he is a Muslim. Nevertheless, there are a few similarities that he shares with his father’s cultural and ethnic identity; both of Karim and Haroon try to make benefits from their exotic culture as they use to earn money and win a position in the society, but when analyzing deeply the character of Karim, it becomes clear that he is not that comfortable with the way he looks as it hinders him from assimilating successfully in the British society due to his “Indian tan looks”.

Furthermore, when trying to culturally locate Karim in one of these two cultures, we find out that Karim most of the time refers to his belonging as belonging to the “suburbs” where he grew up rather than to any definite culture or ethnicity. The peculiar characteristics of the suburban life influenced his visions more than any of the aspects of his parental cultures, this is the reason why he tends to dislocate himself from his original culture and detaches himself from his actual identity.

However, his perceptions about himself as an Indian are being challenged by certain crucial events that pushed him to think twice about his belonging. After the death of Anwar, Karim started to think over his non Englishness and reminded him of his Indian roots but Karim remained uncertain about his identity. The only stable truth realized by Karim is the fact that his belonging is being challenged by a number of problematic situations. Karim once said that: “I wanted to run out of the room, back to South London, where I belonged, out of which I had wrongly and arrogantly stepped” (148). Thus, Karim

is only sure about his belonging to the suburbs since the other sides of his identity remained uncertain.

Moreover, the cultural fragmentation of being an Indian and a British, taking into account the amount of differences between both cultures, causes Karim to develop a hyphenated identity. Especially when Karim's feelings of identity denote a complex combination of his roots, origins and attitudes. Furthermore, this young man's personal identity and cultural belonging is being further challenged by his sexual orientation since his sexual identity is also unstable. He cannot determine himself as a homosexual or heterosexual⁶³.

In addition, in the process of making shifts from lower middle class to upper class, from London to New York, Karim finds himself frustrated. This frustration is due to the difficult situation he goes through because of the color of his skin, by which he is discriminated against. Karim tends to identify with Englishness and locate himself within the British culture. Although he is aware of the impurity of his Englishness, he insists on adopting the English culture in order to be accepted and perceived as an Englishman. This causes a severe problem in his identity which is not strictly determined since it depends on various aspects of his origins, up-bringing and also surroundings.

Karim as an exile/hybrid character

⁶³ Similar to his ethnic identification, Karim's sexuality is intricate too. He alleges that he has no preference and will sleep with anyone, male or female, in spite of the fact that his first really serious and crucial sexual experience is with Charlie. Karim's fluid sexuality situates him in a liminal role, particularly because he does not claim a homosexual or heterosexual identity nor an Indian/British identity exclusively, always caught in a state of in-betweenness; thus, he is continuously forced to negotiate between such binaries. Karim's early sexual experiences extend from diverse encounters with Charlie to another, quasi-steady relationship with Jamila, his childhood friend. But their sex seems mechanical, to be more about satisfying carnal impulses and, perhaps, simple friendship than anything romantic, without any emotional commitment. Later, as Karim becomes involved in an increasingly upwardly mobile social circle, associating with the arts community and participating in theater, he begins a complicated sexual relationship with Eleanor, an actress that he met lately. Karim truly loves her and describes their relationship as follows: « I'd never had such a strong emotional and physical feeling before » (187). Thus, it was with Eleanor, sex gains (for the first time) an emotional component, a marked difference from his previous sexual relationships.

Karim is probably one of the best portrayals of a hybrid character among post-colonial writings. Although in the post-colonial context, hybridity is generally seen as a cultural matter, in this case he is a genetic hybrid as well as a cultural one. Despite the way he looks, he feels more English than Indian and he is aware of his mixed situation. It is not difficult for him to switch from one side of his identity to the next. He is English while cycling and enjoying his tea or acting like a hooligan after watching a football match with Uncle Ted and an Indian while savouring the delicious food cooked by his aunt Jeeta or imagining “to be the first Indian centre-forward to play for England. . .” (43).

As a result of his skin colour and his Indian name, he is different from the other people around him. His mother’s sister Jean and her husband Ted call Karim’s father Haroon, ‘Harry’ to avoid questions asked by people outside the family and avoid discrimination. His little brother Amar “four years younger . . . called himself Allie to avoid racial trouble” (19). Allie probably learns this method from his aunt and uncle. The imitation here occurs by changing the Indian names, to sound more English. Karim is a good and suitable example for the description of hybridity which is, in the post-colonial literary context usually described as strength, rather than something to be ashamed of or a defect (Ashcroft et al. 183). Thus, Karim is a typical “hybrid insider” as described by Ruvani Ranasinha, and he observes that all Kureishi’s “. . . British-born generation occupies a different position on the insider/outsider spectrum. . .” and “. . . his British Asian and ‘mixed race’ protagonists are described as ‘in-betweens’” (13).

Karim is happy to be half Indian and half English as well as a bisexual, going between girls and boys. But, of course, it is not always easy to be an Indian in England. However, he does not completely belong to England. Only half of him can legitimately claim to be Indian. Apart from Karim’s self image, we know how he is seen by his family, especially his mother’s side.

Unlike his father and brother, he keeps his given name. But still his Uncle Ted or Aunt Jean, for example never see him, or the other members of the Amir family for that matter, as Indians. After seeing a football match together and acting like hooligans, Ted shows Karim the ugly and old Victorian houses through the window of the train and says “That’s where the niggers live. Them blacks” (43), not thinking one minute that Karim is also half black, the son of an immigrant. His mother also sees him as English, ignoring his Indian genes he had inherited from his father. During a conversation that takes place between Karim and his mother Margaret; at the foyer of the theatre where he acts and impersonates an Indian immigrant, his mother tries to convince him that he is an Englishman more than anything else.

But you are not Indian. You’ve never been to India. . .

’ . . . ‘What about me?’ Mum said. ‘Who gave birth to you? You’re an Englishman, I’m glad to say.’ (232)

Other than these few instances, almost always he is seen as an Indian, sometimes mistakenly a Paki or for the racist eye simply a ‘black’. When he is a part of the crowd and people around him do not know him personally, his Indianness seems to be working against him. In the earlier chapter we have seen how his girlfriend Helen’s father treated him just because he was ‘black’ (40). In a society where racial discrimination was probably at its heights in the seventies, a racially mixed person is usually at a disadvantageous position. Starting from his days in the suburbs, he realizes how people are attracted to the ‘Oriental’, ‘Authentic’.

When his father receives all that attention from such important people just because he is Indian, he also decides to use his identity to achieve things. The first night he follows his father to Eva’s for one of his appearances, where Haroon shares his wisdom and does yoga and chanting with people, Karim is dressed quite hippie like, but he also wears an

Indian waistcoat. And when Eva, who is wearing a kaftan and “pumping out a plume of Oriental aroma”, meets him at the door and says “Karim Amir, You are so exotic, so original! It is such a contribution” (9), Karim is once more justified in believing that it is good to be ‘authentic’. But Karim is not ‘authentic’ or ‘original’; he simply mimics to be so. He is simply ‘repeating’ the oriental stereotype rather than ‘representing’ it (Bhabha 88). Charlie is another person fascinated by Karim’s father’s meditation, chanting and his wisdom, and when he asks Karim if he does those things too, Karim lies and says ‘yes’ to impress Charlie (14). So, we see him deliberately using his Indian side to attract people, draw attention and achieve things.

During his days in the suburbs, he uses his Indianness very naively to achieve things like attaining Charlie’s love. But when he is in London, things change dramatically. Away from his family, who always saw him as an Englishman and denied his Indianness, he is seen as an Indian and in a way denied his Englishness. However, he is not Indian enough to begin with and strangely, he has to mimic an Indian. As discussed in the previous chapter, he was included in Shadwell’s cast for *The Jungle Book* because of his “authenticity and not for experience” (147).

Thus, his ‘authenticity’ opens new doors for him. Shadwell makes it clear that there is no way he would be there if it weren’t for his skin colour and his (non-existent) Indian accent. He has to work on his Indian accent, mimic/imitate the way an Indian immigrant would speak and wipe out the suburban accent. He finds it difficult and insulting in a way and says that “it is a political matter” (147) for him. At this point, we see that it is a political matter for Shadwell as well. As Moore-Gilbert notes “It is Shadwell, not Kipling, who is responsible for Karim’s demeaning mock-Indian accent and the director’s choice that Karim go on stage looking ‘like a Black and White Minstrel’” (125). In the end he has

to give up and do the accent and wear the muck which makes his father and Jamila angry. This is not the only time his seeming ‘authenticity’ draws attention.

A very important director, Matthew Pyke watches him as Mowgli in *The Jungle Book* and offers him a job at his own company. Now that he has experience, one might think he gets this offer for his talent or experience as an actor. The first person to point out that it is not so is Boyd, another actor from Shadwell’s company. Boyd unravels the situation and says “If I weren’t white and middle class, I’d have been in Pyke’s show now. Obviously mere talent gets you nowhere these days. Only the disadvantaged will succeed in the seventies’ England” (165). Here Boyd sees Karim as the marginalized, outcast immigrant at a disadvantageous position; he is the Other and actually does not deserve what he is offered. It is exactly what is happening, Karim is simply seen as an Indian immigrant from India who knows the streets of Calcutta, whose favourite dish is a kebab made by his Indian aunt back in India. His Englishness disappears. He becomes the “oriental stereotype” and like any other immigrant “confronted with its difference, its Other” (Bhabha 46).

When at Pyke’s theatre, everyone in the cast is asked to choose a character among people they know and present it to Pyke and to the others in the cast, Karim opts for Charlie. However Pyke discourages him immediately saying, “We need someone from your own background. Someone Black” (170). His background instantly becomes that of an Indian, with no credit for his Englishness. Just like Shadwell before him, Pyke also sees the Indian in Karim and wants to advertise that, knowing authenticity pays, not his acting. Hence, Karim has his second role for being an Indian as he is seen as “The racial ‘Other’” and becomes “one more niche object of consumption by the liberal centre” (Moore-Gilbert 138).

Although Karim is “notoriously unconcerned about his ethnic background” as argued by Jörg Helbig (quoted in Moore-Gilbert 2001), his career seems to develop around his being black and coming from a marginalized group of people. The part he is offered in a soap opera TV series, is acting the “rebellious student son of an Indian shopkeeper” (259). Once again he gets the part for his Indianness. In all these instances, he is caged in his skin colour and not allowed to come out as himself, a hybrid. As Chambers discusses “Subordinate subjects have invariably been ordained to the stereotyped immobilism of an essential ‘authenticity’, in which they are expected to play out roles, designated for them by others . . . forever” (38). Karim’s designated role is to be the ‘authentic Indian’ as inscribed in the minds of the Westerners. He is continuously asked to mimic an authentic Indian, as if reminding him of his true place within the society. Ranasinha observes that “Karim’s ethnic identity is also partly constructed for him [to] mirror the way society attempts to define racialized minorities in terms of reductive identities” (70).

In all these instances mentioned above, Karim is requested to switch from being one thing to the next. Within the colonial and post-colonial culture, natives are almost always encouraged to be like the authority, to mimic it, which is usually the West. Here, Karim is inspired to mimic his so far devalued part. Genetically or culturally, hybridization is always seen as bringing two different parts together to make something new. But as Young illustrates it in *Colonial Desire*:

Hybridization can also consist of forcing of a single entity into two or more parts, a severing of a single object into two, turning sameness into difference Hybridity thus makes sameness into difference, but in a way it makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply the different. (24-25)

Thus, Karim is simply suffering a conflictual problem, ambivalence, a “bizarre binate operation” (Young 25) which arises from his hybridity. Although this bizarre situation is

granting him an advance in his acting career, he is actually being torn in two in an agonizing way. He finds himself a place in the great London of his dreams not for being Karim Amir “the odd mixture of continents and blood” (3) half English and half Indian, a hybrid, something in between, but for being an Indian man with a dark skin and a genetic predisposition to mimic Indian accent. No one yet sees him as a whole: he is either an Englishman, his genetic inheritance disregarded or an Indian, to fulfill the colonialist image of the immigrant

The end of Karim’s journey: hybridity

Some critics have considered *The Buddha of Suburbia* as a Bildungsroman, some as a picaresque and some as a formation novel “which follows the development of the hero or heroine from childhood or adolescence into adulthood, in a troubled quest for identity” (Thomas 86). Moore-Gilbert located the novel in “‘the condition of England’ genre” (110) while mentioning other genres, i.e. “Great Immigrant Novel” (108). Whatever genre Kureishi might have had in mind while writing Karim’s story, *The Buddha of Suburbia* is a novel about a 17 year old boy’s struggle to establish his unique identity in the world of the white man.

We read Karim Amir’s story starting from his teenage years in the suburbs of London, then we cross the Atlantic with him to the U.S and follow him back to London when he is in his early twenties. All the events that he experience make him what he is, shape his identity, whether he is aware of this or not. His unease, his desire to go out and do things is “because things were so gloomy, so slow and heavy” (3) where he lived all his life, as he puts it. But this “funny kind of Englishman” (3) is looking for himself. Thus he sets sail.

Karim spends all his teenage years in the suburbs of London, living mostly an English way of life. His father Haroon has not much to do with his roots, other than his

Indian dinners which he brings home on the way from work (3). Even Haroon's name is changed to 'Harry' for the convenience of the people around them. Karim's little brother Amar is Allie, who does his best to erase anything Indian in him, starting with his name. Thus the lack of what should be a part of him; his Indian side is probably causing the restlessness in him. He is looking for his other part to be a whole. He is searching for his true identity. Bhabha says in 'Interrogating Identity' "For identification, identity is never a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality" (51). Though Karim sees himself an Englishman, he is still aware that there is another piece of him that he has to know better. There must be more than eating chapattis, looking darker than the regular Englishman and having an oriental name to be an Indian. He probably feels this strongest at Anwar's funeral:

But 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 was missing, and as if I'd been colluding with my enemies, those whites who wanted Indians to be like them. Partly I blamed dad for this. . . . So, if I wanted the additional personality bonus of an Indian past, I would have to invent it. (213)

The realization of this 'lack' and acknowledging it to himself is very important for Karim's identity journey. Loomba claims that "Colonial identities- on both sides of the divide-[meaning both the colonized and the colonizer] are unstable, agonized and in constant flux" (178). The unstablility and constant fluxation are certainly true for Karim. However he feels no obvious agony while moving from one side of him to the next, and also moving from one place to the other in physical sense. On the contrary, he is content with the situation:

I was not too unhappy criss-crossing South London and the suburbs by bus, no one knowing where I was. Whenever someone- mum, dad, Ted- tried to locate me, I was always somewhere else, occasionally going to a lecture and then heading out to see Changez and Jamila. (94)

His agony is buried within, making him feel uneasy but what we see at the surface is that, his go betweens are without feeling any discomfort. Yet, it is true that his life is not fixed but fluid, just like his personality, his hybrid identity.

Towards the end of his story, thus his journey, while staying with Charlie in the U.S., Karim sees and makes us see what Charlie is made of. It is a point worth noting here because when Karim realizes what Charlie is all about, he makes a decision about the route he wants to follow. Thomas explains this awakening as follows; “Once Karim stops hating himself, he falls out of love [with Charlie] fast and completely” (79). After he breaks up with Pyke’s company in New York, he decides to stay with Charlie for a while, until he makes a decision about his life. Charlie tries to convince him to stay in New York. Karim cannot make up his mind. He is in between staying with Charlie and going back to England. Eventually after witnessing Charlie’s ‘evening of sadomasochist sexual experience’, Karim decides to leave for England. He sees that Charlie is all about degeneration. He realizes he had exaggerated Charlie in his head and finally finds the courage to walk away from him, even though Charlie offers him a job, a fat salary, travelling around the world and mixing “business with pleasure” (256).

This awakening is similar to Haroon’s shock when he comes to England and sees that the English are nothing like he has been told. Thus, finally the invader’s mask falls off and the colonized finds himself brave enough to take off his own mask to reveal his true self; to meet his true self. The invaded, colonized self finds the true liberty when he sees the colonizer’s true colours and not the truth he wanted the colonized to see.

When Karim goes back to London, he has “an important audition” (256) to take. His role will be the rebellious son of an Indian immigrant in the suburbs in a drama series “which would tangle the latest contemporary issues: they meant abortions and racist attacks, the stuff that people lived through but that never got on TV. Millions watched those things” (259). So far, in his acting career Karim had to mimic the Indian he was not, basically to entertain. Both of the roles he acted so far actually make the audience laugh. Other than his dark skin, dark hair and his Indian name, he is an ordinary teenager from the suburbs. The directors he works with, both Shadwell and Pyke want to turn this authenticity into cash, reinforce the already existing racial stereotypes in people’s minds. That is why they urge Karim to be more ‘authentic’. Different from his other roles as Indians, this new role will enable Karim to picture what really exists, not what the white men want to see and probably erase the fetishes the history has created in their ‘invader’ culture. With this role, he does not need to mimic but simply portray an immigrant as it is, neither as a victim, nor as a fetish object.

Throughout the novel Karim keeps commuting between the city and the suburbs. But when he comes back from the U.S. he has made up his mind about his place, his identity. At Anwar’s funeral when he realizes that some part of him is missing, he is one step closer to finding his other part and as he embraces his Indianness and comes to terms with it, he becomes himself, a hybrid; he is neither the Englishman his mother and his aunt encourage him to be or the English people force him to be, nor the Indian man as Changez and Jamila want him to be. Schoene explains the problematic of Karim’s hybrid identity as ‘a radically deconstructive presence in a world obsessed with clear cut definitions of cultural or ethnic identity’ (quoted in Moore-Gilbert 198).

YuCheng Lee again, agrees with this saying that Karim’s hybridity gives him a chance to go beyond ‘forces that endeavour to confine him within the policed borders of

definition of his ethnic and cultural belonging [which are] carefully mapped out for him'(quoted in Moore-Gilbert 198). Although Moore-Gilbert considers the novel "open ended" (144) and Buchannan sees Karim's situation at the end of the novel "no clearer" (54), among all these 'borders' and 'definitions' provided for him by the society in general and his friends and family, Karim manages to find his own "Third Space" somewhere in between the identities he is being imposed to assume and embraces his hybridity.

Other exiled/hybrid characters in the novel

III.5.3.a. Haroon Amir as a hybrid character

Haroon Amir, the Buddha of suburbia himself and the namesake of the novel, is Karim's father. He is a middle aged, first generation Indian immigrant coming from a rich Bombay family. Haroon is the son of a doctor, one of the twelve children in the Amir household, and he is "sent to England by his family to be educated" (24).

Although the narrator of the novel, Karim does not talk much about his father's life in his country of origin, it is not very difficult to imagine Haroon's experiences in the colonial India. From the few things he relates to the reader we can conclude that Haroon's first encounter with the English was not in England but in India, during the colonial era. Haroon, like any other prosperous Indian in the colonial India, is probably educated in English literature better than any English person would be. And when Haroon arrives in England as a student, he frequents the pubs and there tries to discuss Lord Byron with the English, wrongly assuming that all the English would certainly have read him and be educated enough to discuss his work (24).

As Boehmer explains "By the early twentieth century, students across the empire were being instructed as to the world- excellence of English literature and Western systems of rationality, and the deficiencies of their own" (170). So, Haroon thinks, if an ordinary Indian from a colony reads and understands Byron, so would Byron's fellow countrymen in England. The literary ignorance of the ordinary English is only one of the things Haroon

is shocked about. It does not take him long to see that the British or the British way of life that they were told and required to mimic (even in India), had nothing to do with the real life in Britain and the “deficiencies” they were attributed as Indians applied to the British as well. In the following paragraph, Karim gives us a summary of Haroon’s disappointment and shock when he encounters life in Britain:

London, the old Kent Road, was a freezing shock to both of them [Haroon and Anwar]. It was wet and foggy; people called you ‘sunny Jim’; there was never enough to eat, and dad never took to dripping on toast. ‘Nose drippings more like,’ he’d say, pushing away the staple diet of the working class. ‘I thought it would be roast beef and Yorkshire pudding all the way.’ . . . Dad was amazed and heartened by the sight of the British in England, though. He’d never seen the English in poverty, as roadsweepers, dustmen, shopkeepers and barmen. He’d never seen an Englishman stuffing bread into his mouth with his fingers, and no one had told him the English didn’t wash regularly because the water was so cold- if they had water at all. (24)

When Haroon sees how the ordinary British live; sweeping streets and eating a poor diet with their fingers, he is “amazed and heartened”. It is almost possible to see him smile at the way the English live. The mimicry he was imposed back in India, actually turns out to be a mockery, Bhabha explains in his theory of mimicry (86), as the authority “repeatedly exercises its authority through the figures of farce” (85).

After an “aristocratic” (24) life in India, Haroon ends up in the suburbs, without a university diploma, married to a working class Englishwoman, with two sons and working as a civil servant for 3 £ a week, commuting on the train like any other lower middle class English person (26). No matter how English he tries to be, or how English he leads his life, and despite the briefcase and umbrella he carries to work (29), he is not English enough to

receive a promotion at work. Buchannan sees this situation as an example of “England’s failure to change its very narrow definitions of national identity” not as Haroon’s failure to assimilate (66). Haroon hopelessly admits this situation to his childhood friend Anwar: “The whites will never promote us . . . Not an Indian while there is a white man on the earth” (27). While trying to fit in and mimicking those establishing the rules, Haroon becomes a hybrid character, a small Indian man wearing a tie and polished shoes. Karim gives us a detailed account of Haroon’s meticulous preparations for the working week ahead:

Dad polished his shoes, about ten pairs, with patience and care, every Sunday morning. Then he brushed his suits, chose his shirts for the week- one day pink, the next blue, the next lilac and so on- selected his cufflinks, and arranged his ties, of which there were at least a hundred. (47)

This is quite impressive for a man who had never cleaned a shoe in his life back in India. It is a good example to show us what an effort he makes to blend in with the West. Yet, none of these seem to work to bring him a promotion and he is still seen simply as an immigrant, with a “camel parked outside” (12).

Haroon’s private life has very hybrid qualities as well. Although he is married to an Englishwoman, Margaret, leading a very typical lower middle class English life in the suburbs and working as a civil servant for the ‘empire’, as Karim tells us, this little Indian man has strict rules at home:

Dad had firm ideas about the division of labour between men and women. Both my parents worked: Mum had got a job in a shoe shop in the High Street to finance Allie, who had decided to become a ballet dancer and had to go to an expensive private school. But mum did all the housework and the cooking. At lunchtime she

shopped and every evening she prepared the meal. After this she watched television until ten-thirty. (19-20)

Haroon accepts Englishness where it suits him but where things obligate him to do more than what he is used to or prepared to do, he sets his boundaries and reverts back to being an Indian. We know that during his days in India Haroon “never cooked. . . never washed up, never cleaned his own shoes or made a bed. Servants did that” (23). He stays loyal to Indian cuisine as well. Though Margaret cooks every day after work, probably for her two sons and herself, Haroon brings his own Indian dinner “a packet of kebabs and chapattis so greasy their paper wrapper had disintegrated” (3).

Stuck in this unforeseen life forever Haroon Amir looks away from home to enhance his ordinary life and meets Eva “at a ‘writing for pleasure’ class in an upstairs room at the King’s Head in Bromley High Street. . .” (7). so, he is not a typical Indian presumed by the Western mind, someone who comes to England for money. He is more intellectual, trying to develop himself. He is interested in Eastern philosophy (26) and wishes to share his ideas with likeminded people. Or it might be simply another attempt to mimic the English and find his proper position in the society.

Eva convinces Haroon to do yoga and share his knowledge with her circle of friends. It is true that Haroon is interested in Eastern philosophy, yoga, etc. but Eva is aware of the fact that his being an Indian would make him more reliable and more plausible while sharing his self-taught wisdom. After all, do not Indians do yoga and have their centuries old Eastern wisdom; don’t they chant and say wise things? But ironically, Haroon comes from a Muslim family and most probably he was taught the Muslim way of praying instead of the Buddhist way of chanting. However, the Westerners are used to stereotype identities, readily fetishize and accept Haroon’s self-created Buddhism as ‘authentic’. Schoene contends that “Haroon’s Indianness is as inauthentic as Charlie’s working-class

stereotype. Haroon starts off as the mimic Englishman and, when this fails, he becomes a mimic Indian” (quoted in Buchannan 66). Another ironical point here is that, he is into Chinese philosophy reading Lieh Tzu, Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu (26). He is a Muslim Indian practicing Chinese Buddhism. This is a very hybrid quality of Haroon as well.

When going to Eva’s for the first of his appearances, Haroon wears “a black polonecked sweater, a black imitation leather jacket and grey Marks and Spencer cords” (6). Eva lives in a better area of the town, and Haroon anticipates that people of some importance will be there to watch and judge him, not only regarding his performance they came to watch but also other things; from his accent to the way he is dressed. Thus, he chooses casual, neutral and inevitably Western clothes. But later on, we see Haroon wearing more Oriental clothes, like a “long silk shirt embroidered around the neck with dragons. . . . baggy trousers and sandals” (29). This happens as a result of gaining confidence in himself and the encouragement of Eva in an attempt to make him look more ‘authentic’.

Ball sees this ethnicity occurring at “the level not of identity but of artifice and image” thus making Haroon a “faux Indian” (quoted in Buchannan 66). Eventually Haroon, with the help of Eva, manages to create a circle of believers and followers among his “white admirers”, with his wisdom and “authenticity” but as Moore-Gilbert reflects, these are actually the only people to follow him. People who have known him for a long time, i.e. “. . . Karim and Jamila both see Haroon as a fake and his teaching as a stratagem for the possession of Eva, domination of Uncle Ted and escape from work and family responsibilities” (123). While Haroon’s fake authenticity captivates some, he cannot manage to take hold of everybody around him, especially people who know him before he was the Buddha.

No matter how good he speaks English or how well he is dressed, that is; how good he mimics the colonizer, Haroon is not good enough and he cannot escape the sharp criticism of his spectators. The white people around him still see only the immigrant. While talking to a woman about philosophy at the meeting at Eva's house, Karim hears two men talk about his father:

'Why has our Eva brought this brown Indian here? Aren't we going to get pissed?

'He is going to give us a demonstration of the mystic arts!' 'And has he got his camel parked outside?' 'No, he came on a magic carpet.' 'Cyril Lord or

Debenhams ?' (12)

Haroon spends years to be like the English, to impress them. While a student, spending most of his time and money drinking, he wears a "silk bow tie and a green waistcoat" (26) to the pub. Probably, almost all the English at the pub are dressed casually and they look at him as if he were mad. But he wears those probably because; this is what he is told that the English wore to the pubs. Haroon also carries a tiny dictionary in his pocket and makes an effort to learn an English word every day. He explains this to Karim saying; "You never know when you might need a heavyweight word to impress an Englishman" (28). He also spends years to sound like the English, to erase his Indian accent, until one day he realizes that his Indian accent would be more of use while preaching the prominent suburbanites the Eastern wisdom and he starts "exaggerating his Indian accent" (21). Haroon basically makes use of "the middle class taste for India and exoticism" that marks the seventies England (Ranasinha 63), with Eva's encouragement.

When Karim catches his father making love to Eva and screaming "Oh God, oh my God, oh my God" he thinks of these as "the wailing of Christian curses from the mouth of a renegade Muslim masquerading as a Buddhist" (16). This shows how mixed up Haroon is, or seems. Haroon's religious identity is as mixed up as his personality. His hybridity is

obvious here as well. Thus we see a man with a Muslim upbringing, married to a Christian woman from the suburbs and cursing like a Christian while making love to his lover, after yoga and talks on Buddhism.

When he meets Eva, the woman who helps him to escape the suburban trap, Haroon begins his transformation. Since his arrival in Britain, and probably even before that, he continuously tries to mimic the white people around him. Fanon says: “The black person attempts to cope by adopting white masks that will somehow make the fact of his blackness vanish. This is a precarious process” (quoted in Loomba 145). On the one hand he takes care of the way he is dressed, tries to improve his English and his accent, commutes to work just like the other English and hopes for a promotion and on the other, he still refuses to participate in any household chores and although his wife Margaret cooks every night he continues to eat his Indian kebabs. Although he sounds sure when he says “I have lived in the West for most of my life and I will die here, yet I remain to all intent and purposes an Indian man. I will never be anything but an Indian” (263), to some journalists who come to have an interview with Eva, he can neither be completely English nor completely Indian. The life he leads, the situations he encounters make him what he is. Eventually neither his efforts to become a proper Englishman nor his reversal to his Indian self pay off and all in all, Haroon Amir becomes a man in between things, a hybrid identity

III.5.3.b. Jamila and Changez as exile/hybrid characters

Jamila is one of the main characters in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. She is however the most important female character as she has so much to say to the reader about the situation of the second generation female immigrants in England in the seventies. Jamila is the same age as Karim, and they are childhood friends. She is the only child and daughter of Anwar, Haroon’s childhood friend from Bombay, and Jeeta, a princess from India.

Jamila comes from a typical immigrant Indian family and with the way she looks she is just a typical Indian girl. Karim gives us a physical description of her:

. . . she was small and thin with large brown eyes, a tiny nose and little wire glasses. Her hair was dark and long again. . . . She was forceful and enthusiastic, Jamila. She always seemed to be leaning forward, arguing, persuading. She had a dark moustache, too, which for a long time was more impressive than my own. (53)

So, physically she is very Indian. Just like Karim, she is mistaken for a ‘Paki’ (53) but unlike Karim she does not put up with insults to her heritage. On one occasion she attacks a cyclist abusing her and Karim for their race in the middle of the street (53). Ranasinha describes her as “a committed feminist and anti-racist” (61). This Indian girl with a Muslim family background is very different from the other second generation immigrants, with the liberties she has. Karim and Jamila are not only childhood friends but they are also lovers. They casually make love wherever suitable, even “in public toilets” (52) but only when Jamila initiates it. In sexual matters she is probably as liberated as a white English girl, i.e. Helen or Eleanor, if not more.

She is different from her peers, in general. This is due to the outstanding education she receives in the hands of a missionary, in the middle of London. While her parents are busy making their fortune at the Paradise Stores “a dusty place with a high, ornate and flaking ceiling” (50), a grocery store under their house, a certain Miss Cutmore, a librarian at the library next door to the shop and once a missionary in Africa, takes care of Jamila after school; offers her tea and encourages her to read French writers like Baudelaire, Colette and Radiguet, listen to classical music and Billie Holliday (52).

Although the word ‘mission’ might recall going to foreign countries to spread a certain religion and is most commonly used for Christian missions, according to Cambridge Dictionaries Online it is also “any work that someone believes it is their duty to

do". Moore-Gilbert sees Miss Cutmore as a representative of "the mission of social inclusiveness" (119). With her encouragement and help, Jamila becomes a distinct person. One day Miss Cutmore leaves South London and this makes Jamila feel like an orphan. She now thinks Miss Cutmore "really wanted to eradicate everything that was foreign in her" (53), just like a missionary would do, by teaching her how to be more European. Here we see that Jamila is aware of her strange position, that she is different in her environment, she is foreign. She has all these European ideas in her head and Ravel echoing in her ears and she is still seen as a 'Paki', in the eyes of the white people.

The European education she receives with the help of Miss Cutmore, takes her further than her peers, but without her guide she feels lost. In her guide's absence she remembers who she is, an Indian, and feels anger towards Miss Cutmore saying she has colonized her (53). Here we see a direct reference to the colonization of indigenous people, what the 'well meaning' missionaries did to them and how they eventually created hybrid identities. The aim of a missionary is to completely assimilate. Missionaries, no matter what they preached or whatever religion, thought their ways were the best and tried to erase and diminish what their target people believed in. So, in certain cases the resulting hybridity makes the lives of the indigenous people even more difficult, as the set of values they have to live with are different from what they are taught by the missionaries.

However, this is not the case for Jamila. Later in the novel we see how she sheds this feeling of 'being colonized' and how her hybridity becomes her strength. Töngür argues that Jamila differs from the other characters in the novel with her "struggle against patriarchal and social challenges" and she neither refuses British or Pakistani cultures nor aims to acculturate; finally reaching equilibrium between her own "cultural values and those of the British society" (101).

Her father Anwar one day realizes his daughter's strangeness and thinking that she is "meeting boys at the karate classes and long runs through the city" (57), decides that it is time for Jamila to get married. Until this, she has a very quiet life; she helps her parents at the shop, reads extensively, exercises every morning, makes love to Karim here and there (55), not once thinking of getting married. Anwar contacts his brother in India, asking him to find a suitable husband for his only daughter. The candidate is a thirty year old man asking for books and an overcoat for his dowry (57). Jamila refuses this and her father goes mad and starts a hunger strike until Jamila accepts to marry the man he had chosen for her. Jamila is helpless and asks Karim to try and help her. The two go to visit Anwar on his 'death bed' and Karim tries to persuade him to give up the strike:

'... You'll cop it boss, if you don't eat your grub like everyone else.' 'I won't eat. I will die. If Gandhi could shove out the English from India by not eating, I can get my family to obey me by exactly the same.' 'What do you want her to do?' 'To marry the boy I have selected with my brother.' 'But it's old fashioned, Uncle, out of date.'... 'No one does that kind of thing now. They just marry the person they're into, if they bother to get married at all.'

'That is not our way, boy. Our way is firm. She must do what I say or I will die. She will kill me.'(60)

Having read so much and with a head full of ideas ahead of her time, let alone the ideas of an ageing Muslim Indian immigrant for a father, Jamila suffers greatly. Nahem Yousaf argues that "This imposition of male power compromises Jamila's integrity" (quoted in Buchanan 43). She loves her parents but cannot get herself to marry an Indian man she had never seen in her life. At this point we also learn that her father Anwar hurts his wife Jeeta as well (58). Because of this domestic violence issue, Jamila thinks her father might hurt Jeeta, for Jamila's insubordination. This is not a simple situation that can be explained

by Anwar's Muslim identity or his being an Indian. All of a sudden, Anwar sees his daughter, this girl that has turned into a stranger, as an image of "national values" and a guardian of his legacy (Boehmer 225).

As Anwar realizes that his wife is capable of running the house and the store practically by herself, ignoring his advice and turning Paradise Stores from a derelict place into a 'thriving business' and that her 'energy and determination' is physically evident (Thomas 78) and that his only daughter is leading her own life under his roof, he goes hysterical and takes extreme measures to exercise his authority on the womenfolk of his territory. In the part of the novel with Anwar's hysterical attitude, we find Jeeta and Jamila silently communicating. Yousaf further argues that "In Jamila and her mother we have two very strong women who are conscious of the roles assigned to them within a traditional working class family unit. . . they choose to uphold a patriarchal structure that they know to be crumbling" (quoted in Buchannan 43). Ania Loomba shows us the colonial connections of patriarchal pressure in the domestic life:

Colonialism intensified patriarchal relations in colonized lands, often because native men, increasingly disenfranchised and excluded from the public sphere, became more tyrannical at home. They seized upon the home and the women as emblems of their culture and nationality. The outside world could be Westernized but all was not lost if the domestic space retained its cultural purity. (168)

Although Anwar and Jamila's fight does not take place on the 'colonized lands', i.e. in India, we know that he lives according to the 'ways' of his ancestral land. He is physically in England and won't go back to India, no matter how much he misses his home country but as Haroon says at one point for himself and his friend Anwar, they "return to an imagined India" and hold on to the old ways as if they are actually there. Finally, Jamila agrees to marry Changez to save her mother Jeeta from Anwar's revenge. Thomas explains

Jamila's submission to her father's will as follows; "Jamila outwits her father's attempt at patriarchal control, with her 'rebellion against rebellion' and arranges the marriage to suit her" (78). This dark haired, dark skinned Indian girl who reads Baudelaire and listens to classical music has to marry an Indian Muslim she knows nothing about.

The marriages of Jamila and Changez, from the way things look to an outsider, conform to what is expected from a Muslim, Indian couple. Their marriage is arranged between families, Jamila pays a dowry to her husband (books and an overcoat), and the couple works at their parent's store. Next there will be grandchildren and the son in law will take over the running of the shop. However, when we consider her hybrid identity, we easily see that Jamila's marriage will not be a typical one either. It could only be as hybrid as herself. Anwar rents a flat nearby for the newly-wed couple. They decorate it with basic second hand furniture (95). From the first day on Jamila refuses to sleep with Changez. They have separate rooms and she never cooks, she supports Changez with the money she makes working at Paradise Stores (98). She continues to read her books in her own room on her own bed, under the envious gaze of her Indian husband who spends his whole time on his camp bed, reading and dreaming of their corporal reunion as a married couple (97). Thus Jamila's marriage is as fluid as herself, in between cultures and continents. As a result of her intellectual capacity and the discrimination she has to put up with all her life, Jamila becomes politically active as well and moves into a commune somewhere in Peckham, following the death of her father (214).

Alongside the fore mentioned French ones, Jamila, after Miss Cutmore leaves, starts reading writers from America and Africa, which cause her to be politically –not sexually- more active, and Gilroy argues that black British "culture does not develop along ethnically absolute lines but in complex, dynamic patterns of syncretism in which new definitions of what it means to be black emerge from raw materials provided by black

populations elsewhere in the diaspora” (quoted in Ranasinha 68). Thus, as a result, at this commune Jamila is “immersed in all aspects of life and political struggles in contemporary Britain” (Ranasinha 69). The commune life becomes more than growing vegetables in the garden. Moore-Gilbert calls it a “rainbow coalition” bringing people with different interests together (133).

They participate in social and political activities, join marches against racism (225). However, we know that Jamila does not start these activities at the commune; as Susie Thomas notes she is “a woman who seeks political solutions” (78) and she is politically active and conscious. She takes notice of the racist events taking place in her neighborhood (56), wants to take action and helps at a Black Women’s Centre (182). Where Bhabha explains Fanon’s views about the Algerian revolution and the hybridity of Algerian people, he says: “the liberatory ‘people’ who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change are themselves the bearers of a hybrid identity” (38). Here we see Jamila as a representative of the black community, trying to instill a change through political activities, thus illuminating once more the hybridity of her identity.

The commune life becomes a larger place of manifestation of Jamila’s ‘Third Space’ where she has to confirm neither to Indianness nor to Englishness. According to Thomas, she is a woman who “does not want to ditch her ethnic identity altogether” and is described as “an Indian women’ living ‘a useful life in white England’” (72). Her ethnicity has a different meaning altogether. About this issue Moore-Gilbert thinks that “. . . for Jamila, ethnicity is not an absolute and indivisible attribute to be defended at all costs, but constitutes the basis of mobilisation towards determinate ends, the achievement of which will , by inference, depoliticise ethnicity altogether” (133).

At this commune, Jamila starts sleeping with a white man, Simon and she gets pregnant by him. This baby is a communal baby, as Changez puts it, “Belonging to the

entire family of friends” (231). Later when Simon goes away to America for a long visit, a woman called Joanna moves in and as Changez tells Karim, Jamila and Joanna get very intimate during Simon’s absence (273). So, just like Karim, Jamila’s love and sexuality are also in between, she is neither this nor that. She is sometimes a heterosexual, sometimes a lesbian. She feels comfortable with both. Changez says: “Jammie loves two people. It’s simple to grasp. She loves Simon, but he’s not here. She loves Joanna, and Joanna is here” (273).

Almost at the same time the narrator introduces us to Jamila, we meet Changez as well. Changez, the man to marry Jamila, comes all the way from India. He is chosen for Jamila, by her uncle in India. Changez comes from a wealthy family in Bombay where “there are servants, chauffeurs” (215). For a dowry Changez asks for “a warm winter overcoat from Moss Bros., a colour television and an edition of the complete works of Conan Doyle” (57). So, Changez is not an illiterate Indian villager. He is probably educated in English schools and heard many stories about England. He knows, either from books or from people who have been to London that London is very cold, hence the demand for an overcoat. Obviously Changez is well read and considers books to be very valuable, so he demands books as part of his dowry. He is especially fond of detective stories.

Changez also knows about the book shops in Charing Cross and wants Karim to take him there. Thus, we can see that his first experience with the English culture has taken place in India, long before he set foot in England. From Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin’s illustration of the occurrence of hybridization in post colonial societies, we can have a better grasp of Changez’s stance:

Hybridity occurs in the post-colonial societies both as a result of conscious moments of cultural suppression, as when the colonial power invades to

consolidate political and economic control, or when settler-invaders disposes indigenous peoples and force them to ‘assimilate’ to new social patterns. It may also occur in later periods when patterns of immigration from the metropolitan societies and from other imperial areas of influence (e.g. indentured labourers from India and China) continue to produce complex cultural palimpsest with the post-colonized world. (183)

In the case of Changez, his hybridity starts back in India-just like Haroon- and he becomes more mixed and hybrid throughout his life in England. Changez is chosen as the ‘authentic’ Muslim husband for Jamila. But he is not Anwar’s ‘authentic’ dream groom; young and strong enough to take care of Paradise Stores and give Anwar many grandchildren. With his love for detective stories, laziness and the crippled arm, which no one knew of before his arrival, Changez cripples Anwar’s dreams as well. To begin with, Changez is a very naïve character, he only thinks of sleeping with his own wife, unlike the black man stereotyped by the West, who dreams of sleeping with many white women.

Unlike Haroon, who one day at a party, drunkenly admits to the Mayor that “We little Indians love plump white women with fleshy thighs” (207), Changez has no such fantasies about Western, white women. Changez does not comply with the typical Oriental image, full of “sexual promiscuity” (Loomba 107) drawn by the West. When he meets Jamila, he instantly falls in love with her and although he makes love to a prostitute from time to time, he remains in love with her. Later on when Changez finds out about Haroon’s betrayal to his wife and his wife Jamila continues to refuse his conjugal rights, he thinks that whole England has become “sexually insane”.

He suggests that both Haroon and Karim spend some time in a remote village in India (97). He also hopes that one day Jamila will sleep with him and they will be husband and wife. What turns this otherwise innocent Muslim man into a sex hungry man, all of a

sudden, is the books of Harold Robins brought to him by Karim. He starts looking for sexual opportunities and ends up sleeping with an Asian prostitute, Shinko, trying new positions with her each time they meet (106). He finds this arrangement normal, and does not think he is betraying his wife. After all he is a man and he needs things. He says to Karim, “Karim, all my entire problems are solved! I can love my wife in the usual way and I can love Shinko in the unusual way!” (101).

Hence we see here that Changez is aware of the ‘unusualness’ of the situation. Yet he feels the necessity of justifying himself to Karim, who is the only person in the know of Changez’s adultery. Here, he is actually mimicking the life in Robins’ books he is reading. The characters in the Harold Robins novels that Changez reads and the people around him, i.e. Haroon, and probably the rest of England get away with such things. And this becomes an excuse for Changez to fulfill his sexual needs and ‘solve his problems’ without feeling any remorse and thinking he is committing a sin. His betrayal goes unmentioned. He does not feel guilty about it. But when he sees Karim and Jamila on her bed sleeping naked next to each other, he accuses Jamila of “adultery, incest, betrayal, whoredom, deceit, lesbianism, husband-hatred, frigidity, lying and callousness as well as the usual things” (134). All these things are too much too confusing for a traditional Muslim at heart (134).

In Changez’s Muslim heart, betrayal is not acceptable although he is betraying his wife. Whoredom is despicable but he loves a whore “in the unusual way”. Or lying is also a sin but he is lying to everyone while going out to meet Shinko. He is in between the teachings of the Koran and the newly discovered liberties and pleasures of the West. Despite his Muslim heart, which makes him guilty for causing, though indirectly, Anwar’s death, he drinks beer on Anwar’s funeral day (214). He can neither erase these things nor let himself indulge in these pleasures of the West, nor remain true to his upbringing and turn his back to this ‘insanity’. As Changez’s name suggests (the name ironically resonates

'changes'), he becomes "increasingly open to the new roles and identities which are thrust upon him" (Moore-Gilbert 128). As a result of the mimicry or the hybridity of his situation, Changez finds himself in a very ambivalent situation. He is in between two cultures and he promptly becomes another hybrid created by the colonizer's norms.

Although most of Changez's confusion revolves around his "sexual life", as we have seen above, his national identity is another point he seems to be struggling about. Changez does not reject his roots. But he seems to be confused, or in between two cultures, between Englishness and Indianness. When, after her father's death, Jamila decides to leave the flat and her job at the Paradise Stores, to live in a commune, Changez has two options; he can stay at the flat and pay the rent, make his own living or go back to India, to his family in Bombay. He finds this solution "too Western" (215) and wants to stay with Jamila wherever she goes. So once again we see him somewhere in between, and confused about all these Western things. He is all for the West, likes the liberties, enjoys the plenty, urges his own people to assimilate but when things get rough, he moves back into his Indianness where things are more stable and secure and always on his side.

Here as well his hybridity is obvious and it obviously confuses him to a great extent, accentuating his ambivalence. Another instance in the novel where we see Changez going between places is when, after a long time Karim and Changez meet and Changez tells Karim about the things that have been happening with his in-laws. Changez blames Karim for deserting them and requests him not to leave his "own people behind"(136). Here, he feels a connectedness, a special link with Karim, Anwar, Jeeta and the rest of the people. There is a common history between them, not dating back to their arrival in England but even further, all the way to India. However, later we see Changez talking about his own people in England and here he has a different tone:

‘Look at that low-class person’ he’d say, in a loud voice, stopping and pointing out one of his fellow countrymen- perhaps a waiter hurrying to work or an old man ambling to the day centre, or especially a group of Sikhs going to visit their accountant. ‘Yes, they have souls, but the reason there is this bad racialism is because they are so dirty, so rough looking, so bad mannered. And they are wearing such strange clothes for the Englishman, turbans and all. To be accepted, they must take up the English ways and forget their filthy villages! They must decide to be either here or there. Look how much here I am! And why doesn’t that bugger over there look the Englishman in the eye! No wonder the Englishman will hit him!’ (210)

Ranasinha says that with Changez’s attitude Kureishi “shows that upper-class Indians, like Changez, can feel little solidarity with poor immigrants from India. . .” (74). He urges his fellow countrymen to look like the English, embrace their ways and lose their authenticity, in other words to imitate the ways of the English by mimicry. He blames them for being both ‘here and there’, half Indian or Paki and half English, that is for being ‘hybrids’. He sees himself completely ‘Anglicized’. After watching Pyke’s play where Karim impersonates a newly arrived Indian immigrant Tariq, a character actually based on Changez himself, he fails to recognize the characteristics of himself in Tariq.

This could be read as Changez’s complete Anglicanization. This process of ‘Anglicization’ has obviously started much earlier than his arrival in the West, in India where he received a Western education which belittled his own culture and values and praised and glorified the Western values (Boehmer 170). However Changez is not aware as yet, that it is impossible to be ‘English’. Unlike Jamila, Changez is not able to or capable of finding his own voice and creating his third space. Thus he remains to be only a

‘mimic man’ and the best he will be is a ‘hybrid’, just like all others that have arrived there before him.

Islam and Muslims in Kureishi’s Writing

Islam for Kureishi is a backward religion. It is “a very, very unpleasant religion in all sorts of ways” (51), and its ideology “is deeply abhorrent” (7). To begin with, “Islam is a pretty old religion [and] one can’t make it compatible with what goes on now” (51). In addition, it is “clearly not compatible with liberalism” (51) and is a “rejection of the Enlightenment and of modernity” (8). Also it is “neo-fascist” (51) and one of the “closed system[s], like [...] Nazism [and] versions of Marxism” (36). Islam is “strict and frequently authoritarian” (Kureishi 54) and it is “a particularly firm way of saying ‘no’ to all sorts of things” (53).

Turning to Islam is, for Kureishi, “a future in illusion” (53). Because of Islam, “Pakistan was becoming a theocracy” and “older people [were] wishing that Britain still ruled” (6). Islam is a threatening religion: “Open the Koran on almost any page and there is a threat” (56). Finally, “if Islam is incapable of making any significant contribution to culture and knowledge, it is because extreme Puritanism and censoriousness can only lead to a paranoia which will cause it to become more violent and unable to speak for those it is intended to serve” (11).

Kureishi argues that there are two types of Muslims. “We need the distinction between being an Islamist and being a Muslim; it’s an important distinction” (14). In Britain, for example, the Islamists – whom he sometimes describes as fundamentalists or religious radicals – are not “representative of anything like the majority of Muslims in Britain” (8). Generally speaking, then, Kureishi believes that fundamentalists are a minority group among the majority of non-fundamental Muslims in Britain. The question here is who the fundamentalists in Kureishi’s view are and what are the main differences

between them and other Muslims? In his non-fiction writings, Kureishi writes extensively about the fundamentalists without paying a similar attention to the non-fundamentalist Muslims.

However, he writes about his father who could be seen as the example of the non-fundamentalist Muslim. He writes: “my father was an Indian Muslim who didn’t care for Islam ... towards the end of his life he preferred Buddhism to Islam” (Kureishi 97-98). For Kureishi, then, the non-fundamentalist Muslim is the one who “doesn’t care for Islam.” He portrays the two types and the conflicts between them in more detail in his story “My Son the Fanatic”.

The story sheds light on the conflict between a non-fundamentalist Muslim father, Parvez, and his fundamentalist Muslim son, Ali. The conflict is between two generations and the story portrays the opposition between two notions of being Muslim in England. Ali, who has a beard, prays five times a day and does not have a girlfriend; he describes the Jews and the Christians as “infidels” and the West as “a sink of hypocrites” (Kureishi 69) and declares his willingness for jihad. Ali deals harshly with his father and challenges him: “you are too implicated in western civilization ... the western materialists hate us ... papa, how can you love something which hates you?” (69) In contrast to Ali’s strict Muslim affiliation, Parvez is quite the opposite. He is not religious having “avoided all religions” since he was a boy. (67). He drinks alcohol, eats pork and has a friendship with a prostitute. He does all this because, as he says, “this is England. We have to fit in!” (69)

In this story, Kureishi draws the image of the non-fundamentalist Muslim who can accommodate himself to living in England. He is, in other words, a nominal Muslim who is willing to ignore the ordinances of Islam in order to be able to live in harmony with English culture. For Kureishi, this nominal affiliation to Islam seems the only moderate one and all the other types are Islamists, religious radicals or fundamentalists are in some

ways similar: “Like the racist, the fundamentalist works only with fantasy ... The fundamentalist’s idea of the West, like the racist’s idea of his victim, is immune to argument or contact with reality” (87). In addition, for the fundamentalists and the racists, “mixing [is] terrifying” (50). Fundamentalism is “an attempt to create a purity” (50) and the fundamentalists despise any “moderation and desire to ‘compromise’ with Britain. To them this seemed weak” (97). For Kureishi there is a difference between the Muslim fundamentalists who bombed London in 7 July and the Irish fundamentalists of the IRA. He explains: “the IRA just wanted independence whereas with Islam there’s a whole ideology of truth, and the Quran, and everything that follows from that. It’s a completely different form of discourse”. (15)

In his essay “The Road Exactly”, Kureishi attempts to understand fundamentalism and the reasons behind its ability to attract young Asian Muslims in Britain. He finds that colonialism in the past and racism now are two influential reasons that lead to a Muslim “being made to feel inferior in your own country” (Kureishi 57). Fundamentalism, then, is the refuge by which these young Muslims try to avoid their sense of feeling inferior. In addition, fundamentalism provides the certainty and security that result from gaining the truth. It provides, also, “spiritual comfort or community or solidarity” (58). In spite of his extreme opposition to fundamentalism, which he describes as “profoundly wrong, unnecessarily restrictive and frequently cruel”, Kureishi seems well aware that “there are reasons for its revival that are comprehensible” (59). However, in another essay, “The Arduous Conversation Will Continue”, Kureishi declares that fundamentalists “are terrifying to us and almost incomprehensible. To us ‘belief’ is dangerous and we don’t like to think we have much of it” (91). It could be argued that Kureishi understands the reasons

(colonialism and the experience of racism) but he does not justify the results (fundamentalism)⁶⁴

Despite his efforts to show himself as highly critical of fundamentalists alone, Kureishi occasionally appears to critique all Muslims regardless of their differences. Writing against Muslim faith schools, for example, Kureishi blames Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister at the time, for giving permission for such schools to be set up “as though a ‘moderate’ closed system is completely different to an ‘extreme’ one. This might suit Blair and Bush. A benighted, ignorant enemy, riddled with superstition, incapable of independent thought, and terrified of criticism, is easily patronized” (Kureishi 99).

In this extract, Kureishi does not seem to accept the differences between moderate and extreme Muslims: for him all of them deserve the same negative depiction. In two different instances Kureishi has branded all Muslims, not only fundamentalists, as “horrible”. In an interview, he reports: “my little boy said, ‘Am I a Muslim?’ I said, ‘Yeah. You’ve got a Muslim name anyway; Kureishi is a Muslim name’. And he goes, ‘Urgh, but they’re horrible’” (Kureishi 13). In a seminar, he states: “one of my sons, who is blond and has blue eyes, asks me if we are Muslims. Indeed, he’s rather afraid of Muslims. If he sees a man with a beard, he’ll say, is that man a Muslim? And he thinks that Muslims are chasing him on the street” (Kureishi 6).

From this evidence Kureishi’s concern about the challenge of Islam and the best way of dealing with it in Britain amounts to an obsession. For him, Muslims are “so different” – too different to be respected. He writes: “how could we begin to deal with it? You respect people who are different, but how do you live with people who are so different that – among other things – they lock up their wives?” (Kureishi 8) Islamic ideology is at the centre of his questionings. He asks: “how can we come to terms with an

⁶⁴ The mere act of returning to Islam is strange for Kureishi. “It perplexed me that young people, brought up in secular Britain, would turn to a form of belief that denied them the pleasures of the society in which they lived. Islam was a particularly firm way of saying ‘no’ to all sorts of things” (Kureishi, 2005e, p.53).

ideology, as written in the Koran that is deeply abhorrent to most of us. And how can we make a multicultural society which includes an ideology that we don't like?" (7) This "anti-liberal", "so different" and "disliked" religion has many followers in Britain and there should be a way of dealing with them, but Islam is incompatible with the belief that "the basis of our living in England together is liberalism and liberalism and certain parts of Islam don't go together at all" (51).

Kureishi insists that Islam, as an old religion, needs to evolve; this could be achieved through Muslims themselves engaging with an active multicultural society. In his interview with MacCabe, Kureishi advises the Muslim community in Britain to carry on a conversation in which they discuss how to strike a compromise between their Islam and British culture. Religion, he thinks, is "a pick and choose thing" and there are parts which are "redundant" and could be rejected because "an old religion in the modern world is a strange thing" (51). In his essay "The Carnival of Culture", Kureishi expresses another idea about how to "modify" Islam. He writes: "you can't ask people to give up their religion; that would be absurd ... but [religions] will modify as they come into contact with other ideas. This is what an effective multiculturalism is: not a superficial exchange of festivals and food, but a robust and committed exchange of ideas – a conflict which is worth enduring, rather than a war" (100). This 'effective multiculturalism' that Kureishi calls for is needed. However, mutual respect and understanding between the different cultures is essential in order to successfully implement this multiculturalism. If, as Kuresishi states above, Muslims are 'so different' that they cannot be respected (8) and Islam "is an ideology that we don't like" (7), multiculturalism will be only the "superficial exchange of festivals and food" which he criticizes.

Conclusion

To conclude with, both writers: Kureishi paints a colorful and panoramic portrait of the immigrant's experience in Britain. This portrait is framed by crisis of cultural identity and clash of cultures. He tackles painstakingly the themes related to generation's gap on all canvas of Britain in the 1970's and the early two thousands. Despite the fact that the historical context of both novels plays a crucial role in the making up of the novels plots. The problematic issues of culture posed by him seem to be timeless and universal. As such, Kureishi tends to portray characters that have gone through a movement of displacement. These characters are meant to either choosing to be loyal to their original cultures or to open up the host cultures that are totally different from theirs.

The process of cultural location demanded physical displacement from their original homelands. Most of the characters in the novels dealt with, wanted culture of the host country. For instance, Karim of *The Buddha of Suburbia* embodies the major character of the novel in the sense that he feels that his original culture and the way he looks (i.e. brown skin and Bengali/Indian accent) prevents him from being accepted within the English culture and community.

Finally, color prejudices, ethnic accents, clash of cultures along with religion intolerance shaped solid pillars upon which racism was built. Likely, most of the characters which represent South Asian diasporants suffered from being excluded and relegated to marginal spaces because of their inability to adapt to the English culture on the one hand, and their physical appearance on the other. Finally, it is important to mention that the obstacles that they face when trying to culturally relocate themselves in Britain have a notable effect on space production.

IV. 1. Introduction

Moving from one place to another plays an important role in the construction of identity. Movement and mobility, though appearing to have slight differences in meaning, they are interdependently connected categories. Contemporary British novels direct a notable attention to the issues of space, location and mobility within the process of understanding the characters' sensual experience of the city and its concrete bearings on their actions. Meanwhile, by taking into account the fact that the spatial structure of a text is tightly linked to general culture models of space and spatial relations (center-periphery), it has also a notable effect of non-spatial relations i.e.: gender, class, race and ethnicity. In the course of the special turn, and with regard to diasporic population that are making shifts from their peripheral countries to central ones, the process of producing a space in the center became done through different stages and different places.

This chapter aims at investigating the way the protagonist produces different space in an attempt to cope with her changing place. Furthermore, it also highlights the effects of cultural/religious backgrounds of individuals on the way they engage in their daily lives.

Exiles as an Ethnic Minority in Monica Ali's Brick Lane

Exile in Brick Lane is represented as an experience that helps in the process of identity formation. If we take into consideration the fact that *Brick Lane* is a bildungsroman, then, exile becomes a phase in life similar to childhood and adolescence that Nazneen's had to go through in order to discover who she really was and to clarify her notions of belonging.

Monica Ali belongs to a generation of British writers of Bangladeshi origins who, according to Rivero, "are in the midst of effecting the transition from émigré/exile categories to that of ethnic minority members" ("From Immigrants to Ethnic" 191).

Similarly, Borland argues that Ali “leads a third generation of Bangladeshi British writers as they walk the path from exile to ethnicity” (48). This section is devoted to the examination of the transition from exile to ethnicity in Brick Lane throughout Ali's alter-ego Nazneen.

Indeed, being a punk artist, Nazneen has no chance to survive in Bangladesh. This impossibility to live in Bangladesh as an artist justifies her representation of exile as an ethnic category that does not necessarily damage the self. It thus becomes clear that Monica Ali redefines concepts of exile through globalization⁸⁸ Instead of separating two worlds whose differences seem irreconcilable from a nationalistic restricted point of view; Ali offers a new understanding of exile in a globalized age. She explains her reconfiguration of the concept of exile in this epoch through the possibility to transplant the culture of the homeland into a multicultural hostland. This deterritorialization of one's culture redefines many notions related to the state of exile. Nostalgia, for instance, is not as deadly as it used to be during times when the discourse of nationalism reached its apogee. Globalization and transculturation also challenge the validity of nationalism in geographically drawing the borderlines of its members. Nazneen's final decision not to stay in Bangladesh because she belongs more in England is illuminating as it challenges the notion of belonging in a nation as being geographically limited by its borderline. Thus, Nazneen could belong in Bangladesh even if she lived in England. Rather than conceived as dichotomies, the here and there in Monica Ali harmoniously combine into “t-here” that gathers both worlds while at the same time respecting their differences by establishing a hyphen that forbids one from the domination of the other. In fact, this is how Nazneen has constructed her identity.

⁸⁸ Globalization is defined here as a heightened form of capitalism that altogether with the development of new technologies has engendered an intensified and uneven global flow of products and culture. This definition is particularly influenced by Hardt's and Negri's works on globalization.

Although, at the beginning of the novel, Nazneen manifests the same nostalgia as people holding nationalistic black and white vision of the world; her return to Bangladesh disillusioned her and unloads the concept of exile of its semantic charge when she finally decides to settle in England making of it her “adopted homeland”. The absence of choice that marked Nazneen’s life; as she developed qualms about whether her parents’ decision to self-exile was right or wrong, is reversed at the end of the novel when Nazneen herself chooses to quit Bangladesh at all costs. Her choice to leave Bangladesh altogether with her realization that it cannot be a safe home for her motivates Nazneen’s decision to ethnicize her conception of exile. Nazneen’s choice to return to the England is deemed necessary for she has filled the historical gap in her story and it was time to leave. In order for Nazneen to create her new ethnicized identity, it was important that her mother dies at the end of the novel providing Nazneen with more independence from Bangladesh. O’Reilly suggests in “Women and the Revolution in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* that her mother’s death represents rebirth and regeneration” rather than “an act of despair” (90).

Monica Ali’s literary profile

Monica Ali (born on 20 October 1967) tends to introduce new subjects to the English literature by discussing the Bangladeshi community’s issues in Britain. Ali, as a writer, belongs to the second generation immigrants. Being a British-born writer situates her at the core of the British society and its literary production. *Brick Lane*, Ali’s first novel credited her fame because when it was first published, it drew a huge amount of attention due to the author’s mixed race and ethnic background as well as its theme.

Ali published her debut novel in 2003. It made a new piece of art to be added to the contemporary British panorama of literature. It was short listed for the man Booker prize in 2004 and Monica Ali was included in the *Granta* list of novelists. The novel was seen to be a literary success which brought Ali to one of the forthcoming major figures in the

literary scene. However, the reception of the novel gained critics as much as it gained praises. Chief criticism was held on the ground of Ali's presentation of the Bangladeshi immigrants in a good manner and that is because she is not one of them (as they claim).

IV.3.a Brick Lane : Cultural relocation between fact and fiction

The novel focuses on the life of Nazneen; a Bangladeshi woman who comes to London after an arranged marriage to a man who is twice her age. Broadly speaking, Brick Lane tackles issues related to discrimination, integration as well as the notion of belonging and that of exclusion. It also brings to the fore the sufferings of the ethnic minorities and their struggle for visibility and recognition. The novel can be labeled as bildungsroman since it concentrates on the personal development of a Bangladeshi woman, Nazneen, in England. The title of the novel itself refers to an area in the East London that is mainly inhabited by Bangladeshi. In this respect, Yassmin Hussain suggests that *Brick Lane* is the representation of transitional space where people are caught between success of surmounting their problems and stay in their newly established homes in Britain or failure in achieving that, and leave back to their original homelands".(232)

Furthermore, Ali's novel tends to explore the vast theme of immigration providing vivid pictures of the shock of arrival, the process of settlement and the eventual problems resulted in the process of displacement from one country to another, especially when the country left is considered peripheral and marginalized.

The process of displacement involves also a process of dislocation from one's own culture which will later result in an attempt of relocation. Nazneen is forced to come to London due to an arranged marriage whereas her younger, beautiful sister Hasina has eloped with her lover for a love marriage without her father's consent. This has pushed her father to send his elder daughter Nazneen away with Chanu to avoid another scandal.

When Nazneen lands in Britain, she encounters many problems atop of which communication. Nazneen is unable to establish dialogues or start a conversation with her surroundings due to her ignorance of the English Language .She also finds out that Brick Lane community is so conservative that she is even banned from going out alone.

Another problem is homesick. The constant feeling of homesick hinders the process of assimilation and “guetting-used” to the new home. She first loses first baby “Raqib” but later she gives birth to two daughters Shahana and Bibi who later helps her to learn English. However her life changes when she starts a Romantic relationship with young British-born Bangladeshi, Karim. She develops an affair with him because she feels that he is the only one who cares for her. This relationship makes her excited but at the same time guilty. Throughout the course of events, she realizes that Karim resembles her husband Chanu in the sense that they both try to dominate her and control her life. So, she eventually decides to leave him and also settle on not going back to Bangladesh with her husband Chanu.

Indeed, the novel was remarkably controversial surrounding the fact that Ali was seen as westernized writer who writes about a community she does not belong to. In addition, she has been a subject for a heated debate due to her multi-faceted views that gathered both: political and racial exploration of an ethnic minority that has been long marginalized in Britain. Part of the criticism directed to Ali was on her choice of characters and the way she treats them. She has been accused by portraying them in negative and stereotyped way.

Nazneen has been the protagonist and the focal character of the novel. The journey of her self-actualization and resilience to accept her new life in a new society has been traced since her childhood making the novel a bildungsroman . Nazneen lives in an isolated world of her own; a world that is affected and not influenced by what is going out

of the Tower Hamlets in East London where she lives. She spends her life in a small apartment surrounded by her neighbors whom she has not established any kind of relationship with them yet. What stimulates her isolation, aside from being homesick, is her lack of knowledge of the English Language: "Nazneen could say two things in English: sorry and thank you. She could spend another day alone. It was only another day" (7). If this quote taken from the novel has to highlight something, it would arguably emphasize on the importance of language as a basic tool through which immigrants can assimilate and co-exist with the host society. The feeling of non-belonging and isolation is an ultimate result of the absence of communication and an obvious obstacle that encumbers the process of relocation in the culture of the host country. Nazneen finds relief in reading Quran, hinting at the fact of religion is a surrogate for her lack of language, offering Nazneen comfort within the boundaries of her social and cultural isolation.

Moreover, Monica Ali portrays her protagonist not as a flat character but rather as a complex one that has the will to change and find a way to overcome the drawbacks of the cultural dislocation it goes through. Nazneen's character manifests signs of acceptance of the culture of the "other" and the possibilities of new cultural affiliations and consequently new chances to assimilate and adapt with new values of the English culture. That is when she starts to break the boundaries that stand between her and her surroundings as well as the external world. Nazneen is the representation of any humble eastern woman who comes from a traditional family makes her unable to rebel or even to speak up her mind.

Nazneen believes that all what is happening to her is her fate, and it is pointless to "kick against fate" (10). She appears to conform to the teachings of her mother, who instructs Nazneen that is a woman's duty to "accept her sufferings with indifference" (10) So the troubles that face Nazneen are, above all, related to her status as an immigrant from

a different “ethnic group”, and also as a woman which makes her doubly alienated and culturally confused.

IV.3.b. Alienation of the liminal self

The fact of being constantly seen as “the other” in the host society is a significant factor that causes alienation. Even though immigrants coming from British ex-colonies view Britain as their mother country to which they belong by roots, British kept their imperialistic view towards them and regarded them as colonial subjects rather than genuine inhabitants.

Their point of view as masters remained the same. In this respect, Tan suggests that : “ [in the novel] the deliberating feeling of being an outsider, not quite being a part of the culture that one is surrounded by, is also embodied by the character of Nazneen’s husband, Chanu” (229). Chanu as an intellectual character is aware of the fact that the colonial process of England is still valid and the imperialistic perspective of The British is still present as they continue to look down at immigrants. In this regard, Chanu states:

All these people here who look down at us as peasants know nothing about history...in the sixteenth century Bengal was called the paradise of nations. These are our roots. Do they teach you things like this in school? Does Shahana know about the paradise of nations? All she knows about is flood and famine. Whole bloody country is just a bloody basket case to her (7).

Chanu in this passage is emphasizing on the fact process through which the British tend to represent immigrants and ethnic minorities as their inferiors. He points out that the fact that Britain tends to provide a negative image of these communities in order to reinforce their status and feelings of inferiority.

Shahana , Nazneen and Chanu’s daughter , represents second immigrant generation. She doesn’t know anything about her original country except what is being

taught to her by friends or in school. By developing a westernized way of thinking, she rejects her identity and despises her original culture. She dislocates herself fully from any potential ties that would lead her to accept her actual identity and celebrate her original culture. She starts wearing miniskirts and jeans, challenging her father who completely disapproves the way his own offspring dresses.

However, Chanu himself consists a self-contradict character, even though he rejects the British culture, he seems to praise it at many points especially when he tends to distant himself from the Bangladeshi immigrants as well as his constant use of Shakespearean lines which proves that he is caught in a status of imbetweeness (in the middle of two cultures). In this regard, Catriona Mackenzie states that: “ Nazneen ‘s husband Chanu is similarly caught between two states. The more his desire for recognitions is frustrated, the more he feels alienated both, from the East London Bangladeshi community, which is driven by internal dissensions, intergenerational conflict and hostility towards the dominant culture” (30)

What strengthens the feelings of alienation, aside from dilemmas of non-belonging , is the act of being “othered”, not only on the basis of being originated from an ex-colony but rather as being “of color” since this ideology was inherited within the British. Also, another aspect that leads to alienation is preserving one’s original culture. When Nazneen goes out with her husband Chanu, wearing her Sari, the difference between her and the English women is explicitly revealed. Ali describes such scene as follows: “A pair went by who were differently dressed in short dark skirts looking and whispered together. They walked and laughed, and looked at her over their puffy shoulders” (28). Thus, what stimulates feelings of alienation is being culturally rejected by the host country or at worst situation; they might be considered an exotic foreigners. This undoubtedly results in a feeling of non-belonging in her essay “Where I am coming from” by these words:

“Growing up with an English mother and Bengali father means never being an insider...standing, neither behind a closed door, nor in the tic of things, but in the shadow of doorway”. <http://books.guardian.co.uk/news/articles/0,,979007,00.html>

Transformations of the liminal self: Nazneen's assimilation & cultural relocation

Nazneen, the novel's central character, symbolizes a typical Bangladeshi woman. She manages to raise her two daughters Shahana and Bibi in London suburbs. She lives in a world of her own where she escapes to her memories of early childhood in Bangladesh. In a way, she still lives in the fantasy of the past. Unlike her husband Chanu who tends to paradoxically embrace the Western Culture and her teenage daughter who is typically rebellious British girl.

Nazneen wraps herself in her memories and refuses to get out of the shell of her old country customs. She barely interacts with her surroundings or familiarize with the life inside the chattered apartment. *Brick Lane* follows the struggle of Nazneen to overcome her situation of helplessness and non-visibility. She is doubly subdued by edifices of sexism on the one hand and racism on the other. Nazneen grows up believing totally in fate. She believes that no one can change fate they just follow it. Her main principle is: “Since nothing can be changed, everything has to be borne and fate will decide everything in the end, whatever route you follow” (14).

Nazneen develops such concepts as a result of growing up in Bangladesh. Her mother believes to a great extent in fate which caused Nazneen to follow her steps. She suffers from the death of her mother first and later her son. Her life in London was also at stake sometimes. She is married unhappily and without love, leading a tough life. She misses her sister Hasina and worries about her very much but she is unable to go back to Bangladesh to see her or even bring her to London. She suffers a lot from missing her but

she bears it due to the belief in fate. She reckons that it is her fate that determines this and she should surrender to it, accept and live with it. However, when she meets “Karim” her fated lover, she begins to question everything including fate. She eventually learns that fate is changeable and finally realizes that she is the only one that can change fate.

Nazneen, as a traditional Bangladeshi woman, finds difficulties in establishing in establishing herself in the British society due to the difference in culture. Life in London is tough to her; she has no friends and unable to communicate in English, back in her first years before she became brave enough to intermingle with the British society. Her sister and her daughter affect her to a notable extent. Nazneen always writes letters to her sister to tell her about her new life and to learn about Hasina's life which worries Nazneen. She blames her sister for what is happening to her because she thinks that she is “kicking against her fate”. (10)

Hasina, unlike Nazneen, is a rebellious girl who is not obedient and submissive to Bangladeshi traditional norms. She manages to choose to choose her own life and refuses to let others control her. In the letter, Hasina tells her sister about her happiness about she eloped with a man whom she fell in love with. Nazneen starts to question if Hasina was following the plan of fate or she was deviating from it. Meanwhile, she admires the fact that her sister could know the taste of love. However, Hasina in other letters tells her that she is being beaten by her husband and tells her about the decision of running away one more time. Nazneen again, admires her decision and bravery to stand against fate and change it. She is fascinated by her sister's strength and starts to think about her life.

Being dislocated from her original country and her own culture does not free her but rather, it tends to tie her more with herself. Nevertheless, Nazneen manages to reconstruct a hybrid identity and be able to culturally accommodate with the British

society. She is still wearing Sari while “skating” and still being a housewife, cooking rice and dhal”⁸⁹

Nazneen embodies what Bhabha terms: “the reinvention of the subject” (311) within the new “international space”, in which the subsequent recreating of the self is incorporated by “unexpected juxtaposition” and disorientation.” (311) Nazneen starts to relocate herself in the British society and learning the English language. Without fail, language is essential to establish a successful communication. Knowing the language would make it easier to open the doors of the host culture; However, Chanu, doesn't approve the idea. He claims that Nazneen is here to be a mother and she doesn't need English anyways. Nevertheless, she gradually learns English especially after her daughters were born.

The situation of Nazneen resembles the situation of most women who are denied the chance to learn and work. In addition, being able to establish conversations in English gives women chance to find jobs and make their own income which is against the principles of the Bangladeshi culture. When Nazneen wanted to work her husband replied: “why should you go out? If you go out, then people will say, “I saw her walking on the street. And I will look a fool. Personally, I don't mind if you go out, but these people are ignorant. What can you do?” (45) This shows that even after leaving Bangladesh, Bangladeshi immigrants carry with them their way of thinking. For instance, Razia is isolated because she started to wear westernized clothes and learn English.

Chanu's cultural dislocation on the light of postcolonial theory

Ali, aside from portraying second generation immigrant characters that are culturally confused, she also depicts characters that belong to the first generation immigrants. These characters, as portrayed in the novel have left their homelands heading

⁸⁹ An Indian food

to Britain, holding dreams and hopes of success and well being. Nazneen 's husband Chanu is one of the characters that serve as the epitomes of a typical first generation immigrant that is appeased with the traditional norms of his mother country's culture. The shift that he has achieved, from a peripheral place that is characterized by specific culture, caused him to feel culturally troubled and unable to cope flexibly in his newly established home in Britain. In fact, this was the case of most of the immigrants who came to settle in Britain in 1970's. In an attempt to explain how immigrant characters are portrayed in English literature. Kirpal claims that:

“Characters in expatriate writing are racial/national types: Negroes, Africans, West Indians, and Indians. They are their racial, national identity rather than their provincial selves. This is a very interesting feature of Third World expatriate literature, because in stay-at-home writing, the national/racial identity gets submerged in the regional, tribal, communal identity. Living on at home, novelists tend to depict society through particulars of caste/kin group, tribe, region, etc. But in expatriate writing, the concept of nationality/race is rather strong” (120)

Indeed, Chanu confirms what is stated in the quote above. In this novel, he is portrayed as a forty years old man who spent sixteen years in Britain. He first returned home to find a suitable bride and it was then when he married Nazneen. The reason that led Chanu to depart to Britain was his lust for wealth and success. His commitment to: “ the simulacrum of England as the promised land is characteristic of south Asians immigrating in hope of financial gain and not being able to return home as a success” (11). Indeed, in his first days in Britain, Chanu suffered from poverty and hunger. He says that:

When I came I was a young man, I had ambitions .Big dreams. When I got off the aeroplane I had my degree certificate in my suitcase and a few pounds in my pocket. I thought there would be a red carpet laid out for me. I was going to join

the civil service and Private Secretary to the Prime Minister ...That was my plan”(374).

The high expectations he held and the glittery image of Britain at the Promised Land was destroyed by the harsh reality. Chanu did his best to become a part of the English culture. He had his first degree in English literature in his mother country to prepare himself for a smooth integration in the British culture. As Kripal believes, there are three main factors that facilitate the adjustment of an expatriate: “the immigrant’s reason for emigration: has own ability to adapt to the new environment, and his experience to the host country” (52). Chanu, throughout the course of the novel is depicted as having many troubles that repress his social integration and professional development. He justifies these obstacles at the result of the division that they make between them and “us”.

Chanu has come to a conclusion that a fantasy he had about England doesn't exist. He also comes to believe that there exists discrimination in Britain. He says: “if he painted his skin pink and white then there would be no problem...He warned Nazneen about developing relationships with “them”, he says: “all the time they are polite, they smile, they say ‘please’ this and ‘thank you’ that. Make no mistake about it, they shake your hand, and with the left they stab you in the back” (53) Indeed, when reviewing the whole novel of Brick Lane, we find out that the novel itself is populated by Bangladeshi characters who came to Britain as immigrants and settled in the Towel Hamlets street which specifically inhabited By Bangladeshi people . As a matter of fact, this town has been transformed into a Bangladeshi area, and hardly ever a British descendant can be found. Even in Chanu’s office, where he works, the only British characters who are given names are Willkie and Mrs. Dalloway. All the other characters, especially when they are unnamed, are portrayed either as threatening their lives, spitting on them, causing harm to

their properties or discriminating against them by uncovering veiling girls and removing their Hijabs in an attempt to make them feel worthless and degraded.

Likewise, in order to follow the progress of Chanu's cultural dislocation in Britain and judge whether his attempt of cultural relocation and assimilation is a success or failure, we must investigate the complexity of this process. To this end, Chanu's character is going to be studied in the light of the postcolonial theory precisely the concepts of hybridity, mimicry, double consciousness and in-betweenness. Correspondingly, Chanu's experience of being alienated will be studied in the context of exclusion, failure and racism.

Firstly, Chanu represents a stubborn Bangladeshi immigrant who tends to justify his failure to assimilate and cope with the British culture by assuming that his original culture is the best. Cormack points this out by stating: "[Chanu] constructs a mythic Bangladesh to compensate for his failure to succeed in the English culture" (698). Indeed, this information about Chanu is confirmed in the scene where he asks his daughters to recite Bangladeshi poems. Tagore, to make them familiar with their roots⁹⁰.

Cormack, again, comments on this by saying that Chanu is trying to deny the discrepancy between: the utopian Bangladesh and the one that Hasina keeps talking about in the letters sent to her sister Nazneen. Perhaps his attempt to preserve the Bangladeshi roots to his daughters is due to his own sense of rootlessness and failure to assimilate and to be accepted in the British culture.

Contrarily, he refuses to be compared to any of his peers from the Bangladeshi community, simply because he sees himself better. Chanu's pride is being able to pursue

⁹⁰ Rabindranath Tagore (7 May 1861- 7 August 1941), was a Bengali polymath who reshaped Bengali literature and music, as well as Indian art with Contextual Modernism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Author of *Gitanjali* and its « profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse », he became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913. In translation his poetry was viewed as spiritual and mercurial; however, his « elegant prose and magical poetry » remain largely unknown outside Bengal. Tagore introduced new prose and verse forms and the use of colloquial language into Bengali literature, thereby, freeing it from traditional models based on classical Sanskrit. He was highly influential in introducing the best of Indian culture to the West and vice versa, and he is generally regarded as the outstanding creative artist of the modern Indian sub-continent.

his studies and attain to degree makes him feel superior to his Bangladeshi peers. He tends to distance himself from the peasants by highlighting the fact that he is an educated man. Chanu, without paying attention, is falling into mimicry. In this respect, Tyson suggests that: "It is common among the colonial subjects who desire to imitate the colonizing culture in order to, on the one hand achieve acceptance from the colonizer and, on the other, avoid the shame of being regarded as inferior due to their different cultural origins" (421). Indeed, Chanu's belief in the superiority of the English culture over any other one is manifested in his own sense of superiority. He supposes that by owning a degree in English Literature, he can be considered as an equal to any English man. However, the degree he has got from Dhaka University has absolutely no value in Britain.

Furthermore, what hinders his cultural relocation in Britain is racism. Chanu has come to a conclusion that no matter how hard he tries to look like an English man, he will not attain the respect and acceptance that he thinks he deserves. As Bhabha defines mimicry: "the process by which the colonized subject is reproduced as "almost the same" but not quite" (122) and that explains what has been said above. Moreover, not being accepted by the English culture, resulting in a feeling of exclusion. Chanu's sensation of exclusion is closely tied to how immigrants who come to settle in Britain tend to inhabit deprived areas that hardly witness progress. By projecting this view on Chanu's status, it becomes reasonable to assume that living in Brick Lane contributes in Chanu's experience of exclusion. Moreover, the resistance of the native British to the flood of immigrants has resulted in discrimination against them, especially when it comes to work. Chanu's skills are not valued and this is due to his skin color and Bangladeshi accent.

In addition to that, the fact of being located in between two cultures, an original one and an adopted one causes Chanu to feel culturally dislocated. It pushes the character

of Chanu to fall into dual consciousness.⁹¹. As it is the case with the colonization that asserts the superiority of the colonizer over the colonized and the urgent need for the colonized to be uplifted through the colonial contact, Chanu feels superior to his countrymen. He tends to look down to them because they have nothing and came to Britain by “jumping off a boat” possessing only “the lice in their heads” (122) While he came to Britain possessing a respected educational degree. He actually finds it unfair to be discriminated against and treated the same way as them.

All in all, Chanu's contradictory views of both his own culture and the English one have resulted in his cultural dislocation. After the movement of displacement that he went through, he became culturally confused because he failed to gather the values of both cultures and became a hybrid character. In addition, by falling into double consciousness, Chanu could not consider himself either belonging to the British culture (due to the discrimination and racism) nor to the Bangladeshi one because he considers himself as superior than his fellows Bangladeshi countrymen which further contributes into his feelings of failure and unhomeliness.

Karim's confused cultural inclinations

Karim, Nazneen's lover at one point in the novel Brick lane, represents one of the second generation immigrants. Karim, a character that is Bangladeshi by origins was born and bred in London. He is the chairperson and one of the spokesmen of a racist group called “Bengali Tigers”. This latter is responsible for fighting for Muslims 'rights and defending their culture against all sorts of racism and discrimination. In spite of Karim's adherence to his original culture (the Bengali and the Muslim one), he still looks like a

⁹¹ Dual consciousness is a concept developed by Frantz Fanon in his book *Black Skins, White Masks*. It deals with the nature of the colonizer subject, and the way in which they must simultaneously embrace two different cultural identities. It is mostly used in discussions of post-colonialism, but is also important to other fields within critical theory. For a more understanding of this notion, the original concept « double consciousness » as a term, was first coined by W.E.B. Du Bois to refer to his famous theory of African American 'Double Consciousness'. The term originally referred to the psychological challenge of reconsidering an African heritage with a European upbringing in slavery and education.

person who is appeased with the English culture. Nazneen notices this. She says: "when he spoke in Bengali he stammered (34) .However when he used to talk in English he was very fluent. Karim's aim behind establishing the "Bengali Tigers was to feel that he belongs to a group, to a culture that he believes to be his original one.

Nonetheless, Karim is still unable to culturally locate himself. He is caught in between two cultures and unable to identify with any. In one passage, he is described: "he had a new style. The gold necklace banished; the jeans, shirt and trainers attire went as well...Karim put on Punjabi pijama and skullcap. He wore a sleeveless fleece and big boots with the laces left undone at the top" (409). The quote taken from the novel shows that adopting two different cultures at different times and sometimes making fusion between them is a sign of cultural confusion .Karim is not firm about which culture he wants to be identified with. Perhaps it is his hyphenated identity him from belonging to one precise culture. For instance, when Karim has been involved in a physical (sexual) relationship with Nazneen, he knew deep inside that it is forbidden in Islam and it defies the values of his original culture, but he couldn't secede from it .If this has to show something, then it is definitely his inability neither to dislocate himself from his original culture nor to relocate himself in the British culture.

Second Generation Migrants: Rebellious offspring

Young characters are portrayed in the novel as being caught in between denial and acceptance of two different cultures and their native one. For instance, Chanu believes that if his daughters Shahana and Bibi adopt the Western culture; he will have no power over them. Fearing this to happen, he decides to educate them more about their Bangladeshi origins. He starts telling them stories about the glorious past of Bangladesh in order to make them feel proud of their origins. He teaches them about Bangladeshi culture and literature and forces them to speak Bengali when they are home. He keeps teaching them

history because he is aware that history constitutes a major part of flourished cultures. In this regard, Cabral here emphasizes that “culture is the vigorous manifestation on the ideological or idealist plane of physical reality of the society that is dominated or be to be dominated” (21).Cabral here emphasizes on the fact that history is part of culture that needs to be celebrated.

Second generation immigrants are born and bred in Britain. They believe that their original roots are in an alien land. A mysterious place, on which, they do not know anything except what is being said about it by their parents, or the media. In this passage, Ali portrays Shahana, Chanu and Nazneen's daughters, in a way that expresses her denial of her own original culture:

“ Shahana did not want to listen to Bengali classical music...she wanted to wear jeans. She hated her Kameez and spoiled her entire wardrobe by pouring paint on them. If she could choose between backed beans and dhal, it was no context. When Bangladesh was mentioned she pulled her face, she did not know and would not learn that Tagore was poet and Nobel Prize Laureate and no less than true father of her nation”(189)

This passage shows the extent to which the tension of being located in the middle of two cultures can reach the degree of hate and contempt towards one's original culture. Shahana feels angry about belonging to an 'inferior' culture and tries hard to fully dislocate herself from it by convincing her father that; by being born in Britain, she becomes culturally and intellectually British. As Homi Bhabha suggests: “the powerful influence of a different culture will cause a tension between the demand of identity states and the demand for a change in identity and mimicry represents compromise to this tension” (86)

Furthermore, not only Shahana that is going through such denial, also Jorina's son became an alcohol addict. Dr.Azad's daughter has adopted the habit of going to pubs; even

Shahana is drawn to the Western lifestyle. She buys English products that are for skin moisturizing and hair care asked for piercing and tattoos. In addition when her father Chanu proposed the idea of getting back home, she called it 'kidnap' and totally refused the idea telling him: "I didn't ask to be born here" (189). Moreover Tariq, Razia's son is also troubled in his identity and cultural belonging. He escapes from his reality by addicting drugs and becoming rebellious. When Razia finds out that he has sold some of the house's furniture to provide money to buy drugs, she does not go furious about it. She rather, understands that is the ultimate result of being raised upon the values of two different cultures. She states: "how would he know what he wants, how can he know anything now" (198).

All in all, Ali's depictions of troubled teenagers that are defined as the offspring of the first generation immigrants, born and bred in Britain, emphasizes the notion of cultural dislocation as the ultimate result of displacement. Moreover, the fact of being culturally located in the middle of two cultures and living in a multicultural society such as Britain, causes severe crises on identity and consequently on cultural belonging.

Islam and Muslim Identities in Ali's Brick Lane

Brick Lane is an important novel about Muslims in Britain. Published in 2003, the novel was welcomed by the British media and readers who found it humorous, cleverly-written, and incorporating large themes like identity and the meaning of Britishness. One of its main successful features is its focusing on Muslims in London at a time when the relationship between Islam and the West had become a hugely debated issue. In addition to the important topic and time, the choice of Brick Lane as a setting for the novel makes such issues more specific⁹². Brick Lane is a street in London full of Bangladeshi Muslim

⁹² Sinha writes: "a new exciting voice of post-colonial Britain, Ali opens up the experience of minority groups to a much wider readership" (Sinha, 2008, p. 230). This in itself is a success for Ali and the minority she writes about which needs to be voiced and understood. However, if the novel in fact depicts the Bangladeshi Muslims in Brick Lane negatively, then the expected success instead becomes a disappointment.

inhabitants. For the Bangladeshis, it is something like an imaginary Bangladesh, or, in Rushdie's words, their "imaginary homeland", but for the British people, it is "a community all but invisible to the rest of London" (Ali 18). The novel tries to give a fictional image to life in Brick Lane as the writer observes it. Generally speaking, this fictional image has been welcomed by British people, whilst the Bangladeshi Muslims have not accepted it. Nevertheless, the public controversy aroused by the novel has raised its profile and reminded some of the controversy over *The Satanic Verses*⁹³.

Brick Lane narrates the story of Nazneen the Bangladeshi girl who comes to London as the new wife of Chanu, a Bangladeshi immigrant. When she is in Bangladesh, she believes strongly in Fate and the inability of human beings to change it. Consequently, she accepts Chanu without even seeing him following her father's suggestion and, of course, her Fate. However, in London, her belief in Fate begins to shake gradually. From being the "unspoilt girl from the village", as Chanu loves to say, she begins to realize that she can make her own decisions about how she would like to live. London offers her quite different challenges in addition to different solutions to those she was used to back home. It is when her personal belief in Fate does not seem appropriate to explain and to justify the new challenges that the foundation of her life becomes a new belief in her own power. Her only sister, Hasina, who lives in Bangladesh and suffers from the difficulties facing women there, keeps sending letters to Nazneen. These letters, in addition to the new challenges and solutions in London, help Nazneen to discover an ability to play a role in shaping her own destiny. Brick Lane is therefore a story of a Bangladeshi girl brought to London to live her life as an "unspoilt" woman, but who succeeds in becoming "spoilt" by choosing for herself the type of life she aspires to live.

⁹³Matthew Taylor writes: "In the letter [written by some Muslim Bangladeshis] to *The Guardian* Brick Lane is compared to Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*: 'what mischievous sarcasm! It painfully reminds us of the insulting name of Prophet Mohammed as 'Mahound' given by Salman Rushdie in his controversial *Satanic Verses*'" (Taylor, 2003).

Brick Lane could be read from a number of different perspectives such as the feminist and the postcolonial. As a first novel written by a young female writer, it is an attractive work because the characters seem real, the story is interesting and the themes discussed are current and important. Ali deserves her reputation as a well known author and the novel deserves its huge readership. From a feminist perspective, Brick Lane presents a successful female transformation from oppression to freedom.

Despite all her sufferings and difficulties, Nazneen by the end of the novel is the opposite of Nazneen in the beginning. In Bangladesh and even in her first years in London, she is quite passive and unwilling to change her life. But this Nazneen gradually changes and becomes different, especially after refusing to go back to Bangladesh with her husband. This is the type of independent behavior which might be expected to appeal to readers of feminist orientation. Ali has made it possible for the hidden to be revealed and seen to be dealt with. In short, the novel, from feminist and other western perspectives, is important and positive.

However, Brick Lane, from British Muslims' perspective, needs to be discussed extensively. Muslims in Britain and in Brick Lane in particular still feel neglected and marginalized. Ajmal Masroor who has "lived and worked in and around Brick Lane for most of [his] life" describes Brick Lane as the "cultural home" for Bangladeshis (66). He adds: "In spite of the discrimination, disadvantage and social exclusion they have faced, they have worked hard to create a comfortable home for themselves here in Brick Lane" (67). Although they are British, they are still proud of their origin and religion. Brick Lane, for them, might be in London in reality, but it is something more, too. It is an "imaginary part" of their original home: Bangladesh. They are Bangladeshi and British at the same time, and racism and marginalization do play a role. Islam complicates the issue more.

Especially after 9/11, Muslims are always under scrutiny as representatives of a “threat” which is inside the country (Said 344)

The British government backed the United States in its war against “terrorism” in Afghanistan and then in Iraq. The first two countries (Britain and the United States) seem to represent the West while the second two (Afghanistan and Iraq) represent Islam. Within this context, Muslims in Britain – particularly those who look conservative – have become possible threats. In addition to racism and marginalization, Islamophobia was born. For Chris Allen, “post-9/11 reificatory processes have therefore both re-established and newly established Muslims as chimerical, monstrous others, drawing upon the legacy of anti-Muslimism endemic to the European mindset” (50). Nevertheless, at this critical moment, many Muslims announce that Al-Qaeda fighters represent themselves only and that Muslims are against terrorism (Modood 47). They try to make their voice heard seeking a better and more real understanding of their belief. Like all the rest of British people, they are peaceful citizens who are against Al-Qaeda and they do not deserve being accused of “not belonging” all the time (47). Conducting a research study under the title of Attitudes to Jihad, Martyrdom and Terrorism among British Muslims, Humayan Ansari found that “it was clear that the overwhelming view among [British] Muslims was that the events of September 11 were terrorist acts and wrong” (159).

While many British Muslims were trying to bridge the gap, suddenly, Brick Lane was published and received a huge welcome from British readers. Having been written by a writer with a Bangladeshi name, Brick Lane appears to show the “reality” that the British reader is hungry for. (Trivedi 156) The negative portrayal of the Bangladeshi Muslims meets the expectations of many of the British readers focusing specifically on the “strangeness” of a given Muslim ethnic community within British society. However, the

depiction of the Bangladeshi Muslims as strangers and different does not help Muslims' struggle for equality. (Modood 52).

For their part, the Bangladeshi Muslims were outraged at their negative depiction in the novel and the huge welcome it has received owing to the Bangladeshi identity of the writer. They had hoped that writers of Bangladeshi-origin might be the bridge by which their voice might be heard properly by British readers. Mahmoud Rauf, chairman of the Brick Lane Business Association stated: "she is definitely a good writer," referring to Ali, "but she didn't use her skill to the benefit of the community" (Qtd. in Lea and Lewis 46). Such writers, the Bangladeshi Muslims assume, will carry the burden of their problems and sufferings, their demands and aims for a better life and understanding. Of course, Ali has the right to write whatever she wants, but the community has the right to expect and the right to become disappointed.

Although *Brick Lane* is not the first novel about the Bangladeshis in London, it could be considered as the first one to focus on the experience of Bangladeshi women in London (Sinha 233). Putting to one side whether it is a positive representation or not, the mere focusing on the Bangladeshi women in particular and the Bangladeshi community in general might in itself have been used to advantage. Such novels shed light on the issues that the minorities face and spark a debate which might lead to better understanding.

Although Pakistani British Muslims "are the largest and dominant individual group" (Peach 20) among Muslims in the UK, "Tower Hamlets in the East End of London [which is the centre of the Bangladeshi population in Britain] has the highest percentage of Muslim population of all the local authorities in the UK" (28). Consequently, Tower Hamlets and its Bangladeshi Muslim inhabitants, in a quite specific way, represent Islam and Muslims in the UK. *Brick Lane* does raise some important issues about Muslims in London, such as: identity, racism, home, terrorism and the position of women in Islam.

Raising these issues in a hugely readable novel could open the door to the exchange of different ideas between Muslim and non-Muslim readers. This public discussion could provide an important opportunity for Muslims to try to show their own ideas and beliefs.

Indeed, the depiction of the Bangladeshi women in the novel is not always negative. In spite of the terrible life of Hasina, for example, she seems quite strong when fleeing from home. To flee from home in such a way means rejecting the father's way of controlling the house and being willing to pay the price of freedom. The society forces her to work as a servant or to become a prostitute; in both she is the loser, but the very fact of continuing to fight to change her life provides an inspiration for Nazneen. After the death of her baby son, Nazneen follows a similar path of struggle as her sister but via a different route. While Hasina fights directly and immediately, Nazneen fights indirectly and gradually. Both sisters flee from home; Hasina openly and Nazneen more covertly by marrying Chanu. The father's home does not seem comfortable for the three women – the mother and the two sisters – because the mother kills herself, Hasina flees, and Nazneen chooses escape through marriage to Chanu. Though the two sisters do not accept their condition in their husbands' homes, they respond differently, with different results. Hasina leaves the husband she had loved, but who hits her, only to face greater trials; whereas Nazneen leaves her arranged husband only in the end, and to achieve independence.

This might confirm that husbands, whether loved or arranged, are always the same in harming women and, at the same time, women are always the same in fighting back. If Hasina and Nazneen represent Bangladeshi women's conditions at present, Shahana, the rebellious elder daughter of Nazneen, could represent the better future. Supported by her mother, Shahana seems stronger than her mother and aunt and she succeeds in achieving her main goal which is to stay in England and to live free from the control of Bangladeshi society and her father. Hasina, Nazneen and Shahana can therefore be seen as three

positive examples of women who contradict the negative images of Muslim women in the West.

In this respect, the novel “offers a finely textured corrective to those accounts which portray them [the Bangladeshi women] as elective mutes, unthinking purveyors of Third World Tradition” (Sinha 233). Another positive aspect of the novel is Ali's depiction of the meetings of the Bengali Tigers which is supposed to consist of a group of radical Muslims. These meetings are full of different, and sometimes opposite, ideas relating to Muslims' problems in London or outside. The diverse, often conflicting, ideas mean that Muslims, in spite of having the same religion, are different and free to express their ideas.

Islam here does not force its followers to stop thinking individually or to stop expressing their ideas. Therefore, to be Muslim does not mean to be just another copy of another Muslim which led to total ignorance of the sense of individuality. (Halliday 137). In addition, when Muslims discuss the problems of Muslims in London or abroad and think of the best way to deal with them, they often react to the situations and the problems they face. Muslims here are not against the West, but against the problems that Muslims face in the West. This is something crucial in understanding the mentality of Muslims in the West. For Muslims, and especially those who live in the West, there are some popular images of a fixed set of tenets, promoting oppression and violence, at odds with principles of freedom and equality. Ali confronts these stereotypes, and presents the characters' anger not as a mythical, incomprehensible hatred of the West but as a desperate reaction to their unequal status in that society (Hiddleston 66).

Nonetheless, apart from these few apparently positive points, the novel can be said to provide a stereotypical image of Brick Lane. According to the novel, the reasons behind Nazneen's sufferings are Islam and the Bangladeshi culture which empowers males over the females. Because of these reasons, whenever there is a man in control, the woman is

oppressed whether she lives in Bangladesh or in London. Therefore, to empower the woman, Islam and Bangladeshi culture should be superseded by western culture.

Nazneen lives in London, but her life is as miserable as when she lived in Bangladesh. Changing the places without changing the cultures cannot make a difference. Nazneen's mentality is shaped by the Bangladeshi culture represented by the relationship between her parents, and by Islam which is represented by the Quran. Hamid, Nazneen's father, describes his wife to Nazneen as "naturally a saint. She comes from a family of saints" (Ali 15). This saying is very significant. As repeated by Nazneen's father, who is a male, describing his wife, who is a female, it could be assumed that this saying represents how males see females in the Bangladeshi society. Repetition of this saying frequently seems, in one way or another, to be used as a justification of all male behaviour, whether good or bad, towards the females.

Hamid does not describe himself as a saint and that is why he is free in doing whatever he wants in his dealing with his wife. He is not a saint; so he may perform good or bad deeds. Rupbad, Nazneen's mother, however, is a saint. She should only perform good deeds. Male action can be good or bad, but the female reaction must always be good. Therefore, whatever he does, she must always accept and stay calm because she is a saint. It is essential to notice that she believes that her sufferings and difficulties in life are related to God, not to herself or the people around her, and that is why she must accept everything. She said: "I have been put on this earth to suffer" (398). From this Bangladeshi culture Nazneen has learned to accept sufferings calmly without displaying any intention to change them.

In addition to this culture, Islam, represented by the Quran, also plays a crucial role. Sometimes, when she becomes fed up with her life, Nazneen reads the Quran "seeking refuge from Satan" (19). For her, within the context of her miserable life, to wish

to change means to follow Satan whilst the Quran, on the other hand, helps her to ignore the “Satanic wishes” and to suffer calmly without any intention to change. “The words [of the Quran] calmed her stomach and she was pleased” (20). The Quran in this context is depicted as a book that does not seem to be able to stop her sufferings, but it tries, however, to convince her to be as patient as possible. The Quran tries to stop her from thinking of fighting her pain without stopping the pain itself. There is a clash between the holy book and Nazneen’s pain. “She recited in her head her favourite sura but the pain in her knee and her hands and her ankle destroyed the verses” (57). The pain supersedes the Quran because it is not able, it is assumed, to solve women’s problems and to understand their needs and pain.

The depiction of the imam in the novel is also quite significant. Bearing in mind that he is the spiritual leader of the Bengali Tigers which is a group consisting of some young Muslims in London, the imam, an old man wearing women’s shoes, “had only recently been imported ... he had not the slightest idea what was going on” (242). The imam, through this depiction, does not seem to fit the leadership position of this young group. He is old and they are young; he is “imported” and they live in London; he does not know “what was going on”, but they need him to lead and to show them what to do.

Moreover, the women’s shoes that he wears might signal the real position of women’s issues in his belief. Like the women’s shoes which are under his feet, the women issues, it might be implied, are the last of his priorities. The imam in the novel, in general, does not seem to concern himself with women’s issues in spite of the clear and diverse sufferings of women in the novel. One of the main reasons for the imam’s lack of understanding of women’s problems, according to the novel, is his masculinity. The man cannot understand fully woman’s needs. While she was pregnant and while she was thinking of the difficulty of praying as such, Nazneen thought: “if any imam had ever been

pregnant, would they not have made it compulsory to sit?" (69) Like the young Bengali Tigers, the woman in Islam should follow the imam who does not understand her. The imam in the novel is depicted in a way that does not make him worth following. He positively should not be followed because, as Chanu tells Nazneen: "When the imam speaks, it is not the word of God" (422).

The mosque in the novel has negative connotations too. Firstly, mosques can be built by good or bad people. Razia's husband, who began building a mosque, "is not God conscious" but "mean" (124). The point here is that to build a mosque, in itself, does not mean that the builder is a good Muslim. In fact, building mosques might become negative especially if it comes at the expense of spending money on something more important. He built a mosque but allows his children to go hungry. Razia sarcastically describes her husband, who is "building mosques and killing [his] own children", as a "Holy man" (125). Secondly, mosque schools that teach the Quran are in fact useless, as implied by Chanu's rhetorical question: "Do they call it education? Rocking around like little parrots on a perch, reciting words they do not understand" (197). Thirdly, we are told that the police questioned the imam of the mosque and this might lead us to imagine a relationship between the mosque and law breaking (206). Overall the depiction of the mosque in the novel suggests it does not seem to play any positive role in society. Building mosques costs a lot and they do not give society anything valuable.

Chanu, Nazneen's husband, represents the male "westernised" Muslim intellectual in London. When he first arrived in London, he was full of dreams and he worked hard to be successful. He reads a lot, has different degrees and certificates, and he seems to be a hard worker. However, in spite of all his efforts, he is unable to achieve his main aim: to be respected. "He worked hard for respect but he could not find it" (203). In order to be respected in London, Chanu's strategy is to be as westernised as possible and this led him

to humiliate the Bengali Muslims in Brick Lane to prove his unique willingness to be respected by the English.

He describes the Bengali Muslims negatively so as to be seen positively by the English. He is disappointed because “these people here didn’t know the difference between me, who stepped off an aeroplane with a degree certificate, and the peasants who jumped off the boat possessing only the lice on their heads” (34). Chanu, the Bengali Muslim intellectual, drinks alcohol, does not pray, does not read the Quran or allow his daughter to study it in the mosque school, and does not respect his “brothers”, either on account of their shared nationality or their belief in Islam. It seems all this is done to prove that, as he declares, “I am westernized now” (45). Chanu, then, in one of his life stages, represents those Muslim intellectuals who try to be English at the expense of their Muslim “brothers”. But the more he humiliates the Bengali Muslims, the more he feels humiliated by the English.

Chanu, especially in his relationship with Nazneen, has two personalities. While the apparent personality is western, the hidden one is Bengali. As a person, he seems western, but as a husband, he seems Bengali. Without Nazneen, the traditional Bengali side of his personality would not appear. From the beginning, he chose Nazneen as a wife because she was “a girl from the village: totally unspoilt” (23). If “western” London is the imaginary country of his first personality, the Bengali “village” is the imaginary country of his second personality. Nazneen, then, could be considered as the mirror by which we see the hidden side of Chanu.

The representative Islamic radical in the novel is Karim. England is his country and he speaks English like a native. However, Islam is his main identity. He is well aware of his Islamic responsibility to help his Muslim brothers all over the world, but he believes in the idea of thinking globally but working locally. For these reasons he establishes the

Bengali Tigers and becomes their main active member. Karim has his own reading of Islam and the personality of the Prophet Muhammad. He blames his father because “he never made any trouble for anyone ... he thinks he is Mahatma Gandhi. He thinks he is Jesus Christ. Turn the cheek”. But “what about Muhammad? Peace be upon him, he was a warrior” (233). He sees the Prophet as a warrior and believes that he should follow him. Here, in imaging the Muslim activists as violent, Ali invokes an old stereotypical image of Muslims (Said, 26). Islam, it could be implied, unlike Christianity (Jesus) and Hinduism (Gandhi), is the main source of violence.

Despite apparently being the most conservative and active Muslim in the novel, Karim is, in fact, corrupted due to his relationship with Nazneen. (It is striking that Karim's beard becomes bigger after he has slept with Nazneen). The more he gets corrupted, the more he displays his conservatism. He shows that conservative Muslims are corrupted and represent a threat to Muslim and the British societies alike. When Karim left England looking for “a war” to fight in, he followed, again, his Prophet “the warrior”. His departure was the beginning of a peaceful life in Brick Lane thus indicating that Islamic conservatism was the reason behind all the violence in the first place.

It is interesting to notice that Karim and Chanu, in spite of their differences, are similar in leaving Britain and in failing to bring happiness to Nazneen. Chanu, the westernised Bengali, and Karim, the conservative Muslim, are from Nazneen's point of view the same. She left them because they represent the two “enemies” of her freedom: Bangladeshi culture and conservative Islam. Nazneen stays in London because she seeks freedom, and they leave London because their ideas do not suit London. Those who live in Brick Lane, then, should leave their Bangladeshi culture and conservative Islam if they want to live peacefully and happily in London, otherwise, their country of origin would be better for them and the British, too. Karim and Chanu's leaving reminds us of the advice

that Changez gives to the Pakistanis and the Indians in London in Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*. He revealed that "to be accepted they must take up the English ways and forget their filthy villages! They must decide to be either here or there" (Kureishi, 210). Because Karim and Chanu could not "take up the English ways and forget their filthy villages", they prefer to be "there".

The negative depiction of Muslims in the novel might be understandable if we consider the position of Bangladesh in Ali's life. Born in Bangladesh, she moved to Britain at the age of three. When she was a child, she stopped speaking and understanding Bengali after coming to Britain. She studied at British schools and universities and she is now a well-known British novelist. From her name, Monica Ali (Monica English, Ali Bangladeshi), she seems one of those writers who tries to write their own hybrid identity crisis through fiction. Like Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi, Ali is Muslim in the eyes of the British people because of her name, and British in the eyes of the Bangladeshi people because of her ideas. Ali's complicated identity is similar to Karim's, the protagonist in Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*, who notices: "to the English we were always ... Pakis" (53), but his Indian mother told him once: "you're not an Indian. You've never been to India ... you're an Englishman, I'm glad to say" (232). As a result, he describes himself as "an Englishman born and bred, almost" (3). Like Karim, Ali has tried to find her own identity, to create harmony between her inside and her outside which, arguably, are opposites. Fiction for such writers is an "identity card" by which readers may recognise the identity that the writer prefers.

Ali has the right to write about her identity experience, but this might come at the cost of the Bangladeshi identity. Brick Lane inhabitants are well aware of the complicated relationship between the individual and the community in such matters. For example, one of them accused Ali of wanting "to be famous at the cost of a community" (Lea and Lewis,

30). In the novel, there are two countries: Bangladesh and Britain, and two ways of life: the Bangladeshi and the British. Nazneen, the protagonist, is offered these two countries and ways of life. As the first is depicted negatively and the second positively, she chooses to live in Britain and to let her daughters live the British way of life. From the perspective of Brick Lane inhabitants and by generalizing the idea of “at the cost of a community”, it could be argued that in order to justify her choice of the British identity, as a reason in addition to others, Ali imaged Bangladesh and the Bangladeshi in Brick Lane negatively.

The Bangladeshi people, then, are, in a sense, used by Ali to show the uncivilized identity that she abandoned in comparison to the civilized one that she embraced. Although she does not live in Brick Lane, Ali's childhood seems to participate in creating a special image of this “Bangladeshi” street in London. In fact, Brick Lane, as a street in London, in itself is meaningless unless it is used as a way to reach its inhabitants: the Bangladeshis. For Monica Ali, “Brick Lane is in many ways a typical first novel, drawing on concerns and ideas that shaped [her] childhood” (38).

Therefore, to understand the novel, it is worthwhile to try to scrutinize these “concerns and ideas” that caused her to image Bangladesh in such a way. Because of the war, Monica's mother with her two children (Monica and her brother) went to Britain and waited for the father to flee. Nobody received the mother and her children in Britain and she decided to go back to Dhaka, but her husband wrote “are you mad? Have you forgotten the small matter of the war?” (Ali 29) Because of the war the mother would be “mad”, according to the father, if she returned to Bangladesh. Later on, as Monica mentioned, “my father escaped from East Pakistan, over the border to India” (Ali, 98) then to Britain.

For Monica, aged three, Bangladesh was the country of war and fear in comparison to Britain the country of peace. To live peacefully, even after the war, the family decided to stay in Britain forever. For the father, Britain is better, especially since he was about to

be killed when he was in Bangladesh. He cancelled all plans to go home, saying "I just got stuck here, that's all" (Ali 76). For the mother, Britain is better because it is her original home and when she was in Bangladesh, she suffered from the "experience of utter social and cultural dislocation" (Ali 26). For Monica and her brother, she declared "we stopped speaking to him [her father] in Bengali and then we stopped even understanding" (28). Like many other migrants, although the family was forced to leave Bangladesh, it has made its own decision to leave Bangladesh forever and to exchange the Bengali language for the English one to be used at home at least.

After leaving Bangladesh and the Bengali language, Ali tried to "rebel" against Bangladeshi culture. She revealed: "when I grew up in an Asian part of Bolton, what we would do when we were out of sight of our parents was to get on the tight jeans or mini-skirts or whatever, and that was our way of rebelling" (18). She does not seem to have rebelled against the way of dressing only, but against the Bangladeshi culture which is represented by its rules and norms. It is interesting to notice that Ali, at her different ages, found it necessary to rebel against something related to Bangladesh. When she was a child, she rebelled against the Bengali language.

When she was a teenager, she rebelled against the Bangladeshi dress and culture. Writing *Brick Lane*, arguably, is her more recent action of rebellion. This rebellious personality of Ali reminds us of the rebellious Shahana, the first daughter of Nazneen, and her continuous disagreement with her father, Chanu. Shahana wears miniskirts, does not like speaking Bengali at home, and flees from home when she is about to be forced to go to Bangladesh. Ali has said: "there's a lot of me in Shahana, the rebellious teenage daughter, and maybe a bit of her still left in me" (Ali 97).

In addition to Ali, her English mother can be traced in the life of Nazneen in the novel but in an opposite way. Ali asks:

Why did I write about Nazneen? I think, but I cannot be sure, that the source was my mother, who is white and grew up in England. She made the opposite journey to Nazneen's, moving to Bangladesh (East Pakistan as it was then) to marry, knowing little of the culture and religion, speaking not a word of the language. When I was a child she often told me about that experience of utter social and cultural dislocation. I thought about it a lot (Ali 57).

Moreover, her father plays a role because one of her sources is "the stories that my father used to tell about village life" (29). Therefore, Ali's imaginary Bangladesh is created by her "rebellious" personality, the "utter social and cultural dislocation" of her mother that Ali "thought about it a lot", and the stories of her father, in addition, of course, to the relationship between Bangladesh and war when she was three.

In spite of her negative point of view towards Bangladeshis, she attempts to present herself as not fully Bangladeshi and not fully English. She writes: "growing up with an English mother and a Bengali father means never being an insider" (30). She is generally right, but specifically wrong. Generally speaking, the English will consider her Bangladeshi because of her father and the Bangladeshi people will consider her English because of her mother. However, her point of view is clearly English. Forgetting her surname and the colour of her skin, Monica Ali is an English "insider". Germaine Greer states of Ali: "she writes in English and her point of view is, whether she allows herself to impersonate a village Bangladeshi woman or not, British. She has forgotten her Bengali, which she would not have done if she had wanted to remember it. When it comes to writing a novel, however, she becomes the pledge of our multi-ethnicity" (98).

Striving to be more English and less Bangladeshi, Ali has her own perspective by which she makes observations on and compares Britain and Bangladesh, or the British and the Bangladeshis. This perspective depends apparently upon her personal experience more

than the “reality” that she claims to seek for. A striking example of how her personal perspective affects the reality is her reading of Naila Kabeer’s book *The Power to Choose*. At the end of *Brick Lane*, Ali writes in her acknowledgements: “I am deeply grateful to Naila Kabeer, from whose study of Bangladeshi women garment workers in London and Dhaka (*The Power to Choose*) I drew inspiration” (493). In the preface of this study, Kabeer states a crucial observation which she describes as “puzzling”

Bangladesh, a country where strong norms of purdah, or female seclusion, had always confined women to the precincts of the home and where female participation in public forms of employment had historically been low, the apparent ease with which women appeared to have abandoned old norms in response to new opportunities went against the grain of what has been presented in the development literature as one of the least negotiable patriarchies in the world. By contrast, in Britain, a secular country accustomed to the presence of women in the public arena, and with a tradition of female factory employment going back over a hundred years, particularly in the clothing industry, Bangladeshi women were largely found working from home, in apparent conformity with purdah norms (viii).

Reading this extract neutrally, it could be inferred that the condition of the Bangladeshi women garment workers in Bangladesh is better than in Britain. However, what Ali understands from this book seems completely the opposite. Michael Perfect in his article “The Multicultural Bildungsroman: Stereotypes in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*” mentions this point:

In Kabeer’s account, then, it is the women in Dhaka rather than London who are experiencing an increase in personal agency; indeed, in their ‘power to choose’. Crucially, Ali’s novel seems to invert rather than replicate this finding. During the course of *Brick Lane*, Hasina becomes increasingly powerless and socially

excluded, while Nazneen undergoes such a powerful emancipation that she is finally 'startled by her own agency' (118).

Not only does Ali "invert rather than replicate" the finding of the book, according to some Bangladeshi Muslims living in Brick Lane she also does the same with their "reality". Their opposition to Brick Lane, the novel and the film, was expressed in different ways. They marched against the film and sent letters to the author and the newspapers when the novel was firstly published in 2003. Through the marches and the letters, they succeeded in making their voice heard. According to different newspapers articles, some of the Bangladeshi Muslims were furious at having been depicted negatively by Monica Ali in Brick Lane. The novel, they claimed, is insulting for being named after the street, (Cacciottolo, 2006), full of lies (Lea and Lewis, 2006b) and racist (Lea and Lewis, 2006a). They argued Ali was influenced by her non-Sylheti father (Lewis, 2006); she knew nothing about them, and she wanted to be famous at the cost of the community (Lea and Lewis, 2006b).

In spite of the Bangladeshi Muslims' outrage at their misrepresentation, Monica Ali insists on the "authenticity" of her novel. She states: "a writer from a minority does carry an extra expectation of being a cheerleader for that minority. That's understandable. But I feel my duty is to tell the truth as I see it, not to be a mouthpiece or write a sociological study" (Ali 89). She is telling "the truth" about some people who do not recognize themselves in the novel. Ali's insistence on the authenticity of the novel is due to its importance in making the novel valuable and readable. For many readers, authentic Brick Lane explores a community they do not have much knowledge about. One commentator writes: "Brick Lane has everything: richly complex characters, a gripping story and an exploration of a community that is so quintessentially British that it has given us our national dish, but of which most of us are entirely ignorant" (Bedell 56).

Moreover, in 2003 Ali was named by Granta Magazine as one of twenty “Best of Young British Novelists” partly, at least, because of her authentic novel. Ian Jack, the editor of the magazine and member of the committee who voted for Ali, wrote: “we liked the book because we (none of us Bengalis from east London) felt that it showed us a glimpse of what life might be like among one of the largest and least described non-white communities in Britain” (Jack 26). The claim of authenticity, then, has been very important for the novel in gaining it attention and praise. (Huggan 29)

However, in addition to Yasmin Hussain who thinks, in her book *Writing Diaspora*, that the novel's authenticity is “a marketing myth” as it “provides an outsider's view of the Bangladeshi community and a rather negative one at that” (92), Germaine Greer strongly criticized the claimed authenticity of *Brick Lane* foregrounding the highly positive reception of the novel: “none of this would have happened if Ali had not created her own version of Bengelines. (45)

As a British writer, she is very aware of what will appear odd but plausible to a British audience” (Greer34). Greer's criticism is that Ali “creates” an imaginary *Brick Lane* to meet the expectations of the British who believe that Ali is an authentic Bangladeshi novelist because of her name. Greer explains that “the fact that Ali's father is Bangladeshi was enough to give her authority in the eyes of the non-Asian British, but not in the eyes of British Bangladeshis” (35). I think that Greer's article is very important for two reasons. Firstly, she justifies the Bangladeshi Muslims' declared intention to stop the filming of *Brick Lane* – which in fact strengthened their position toward the novel and its filming. Secondly and more importantly, Greer's position played a crucial role in empowering Muslims' position in their long-term conflict with some literary scholars and novelists.

A conflict has been imaged as being between the “ignorant” Muslims and the “brilliant” artists Muslims are always advised to learn the distinction between fact and fiction and the meaning of freedom of speech. In such debates, Muslims are imaged as standing against fiction or the freedom of speech; they are the uncivilized in conflict with the civilized. Within this context, Greer concludes, however, that “the community has the moral right to keep the film-makers out” (20) and states clearly that “Bengali Muslims smart under an Islamic prejudice that they are irreligious and disorderly, the impure among the pure, and here was a proto-Bengali writer with a Muslim name, portraying them as all of that and more” (26).

Authenticity is a contested term which is read according to the different contexts and perspectives of those that use it. Ana Maria Sanchez-Arce, for example, individualizes authenticity and limits its representation to the individual. “Being authentic now” she writes “is related to staying true to our inner selves rather than to accepting the social position into which we are born. This is a more individualistic definition of authenticity” (37). In contrast to this individualistic authenticity, Charles Lindholm in his book *Culture and Authenticity* reminds us of the function of authenticity in uniting the people of a society. He states: “authenticity gathers people together in collectives that are felt to be real, essential, and vital, providing participants with meaning, unity, and a surpassing sense of belonging” (1). Authenticity can therefore represent an individual or a society; the representation is embedded in authenticity itself according to whether it is narrowly or more widely conceived.

The importance of representation in postcolonial discourse is closely connected to the issue of authenticity. Authenticity can be linked with “the demand for a rejection of the influence of the colonial period in programs of decolonization” (Ashcroft 21). Authenticity within the postcolonial context is strongly linked with the broader need for postcolonial

discourse to represent the values and ways of thinking of colonized peoples; postcolonial writing achieves its authentic purpose by challenging colonial discourse and encapsulating

the voice of the once-colonized. Postcolonial writers may be read as authentic writers either by the people they write about or by the people they write for. While some Muslim readers consider Ali, for example, inauthentic, some British readers consider her authentic.

From the perspective of the formerly colonized, authenticity is a vital issue; in societies targeted by colonial discourse the postcolonial writer restores authentic values and becomes “the voice of the people” (Gordimer 11). Through their “committed literature” (7), the authentic writers participate in creating the cultural authenticity in which societies “set agendas that reflect not the theories of international planning agencies but the cultural heritage of their own peoples” (Lee 1).

From an Islamic postcolonial perspective, the literature produced by writers of Muslim heritage is not to be automatically classified as authentic writing about Islam and Muslims. This question of authenticity is global and can be related to different groups of people. Nadine Gordimer, for example, in her book *The Black Interpreters*, defines the authentic African literature as the one which is “done in any language by Africans themselves and by others of whatever skin color who share with Africans the experience of having been shaped, mentally and spiritually, by Africa rather than anywhere else in the world. One must look at the world from Africa, to be an African writer, not look upon Africa, from the world” (5). For Gordimer, the important thing is to be “shaped” by Africa and to see the world through African eyes. Names, nationalities, skin colours and languages are marginal here in comparison to the centrality of Africa in the personality of the writer. By the same token, the name and the nationality of Ali are not as important as the centrality of Islam in her writing.

According to Virginia Richter, readers of *Brick Lane* could be classified into three groups: all the readers that have no connection with the Bangladeshi community in London; middle-class British Bangladeshis who have only a little knowledge about *Brick Lane*; and the last consisting of those Bangladeshi Muslims who live in *Brick Lane* and who are mostly lower-class. It seems that “the book was primarily written for the first two groups of readers, for whom it functions as a kind of fictional guidebook. The immediate success of the novel indicates that Ali met the expectations of these readers, whereas the public reactions of parts of the Bangladeshi East Enders are more troubled” (Richter, 70).

This classification is important in explaining the different reactions towards the novel. Those who marched and sent letters to the newspapers are those about whom the novel is written or some readers who understand their position. In contrast, those who welcomed the novel are just readers; they are not “inside” the novel so as to feel angry or confused. In fact, the second group could consider the novel as a mirror that reflects their goodness by observing the evil of the inhabitants of *Brick Lane*. Ali said: “I have, over several years, had an overwhelmingly positive response from people of Bangladeshi descent who have read *Brick Lane*, both in London and around the world” (Ali 98). These people could be similar to Ali, that is, Bangladeshi in name only as Greer indicated earlier. Some of the inhabitants of *Brick Lane* might like the novel too, but this does not mean that the Bangladeshi Muslims’ critique is not valid. If Ali has the right to tell “the truth”, as she claims, although she lives “outside” *Brick Lane*, the Bangladeshi Muslims, who live “inside” *Brick Lane*, have, at least, the same right to say that the novel does not tell the truth.

If this is the case, which group of readers could decide the authenticity of the novel: the readers who have the “expectations” or the readers who live there? This

question, I think, is very much related to the position of Muslims in the British society as a whole. Muslims, in general, are subjected to different kinds of images and judgments created and discussed by others or by some Muslims who do not “properly” represent Muslims. There is a kind of “unseen” system which creates Muslims’ images and decides on their behalf. If Brick Lane is “authentic”, this means that Muslims in Brick Lane are backward, uncivilized, against the freedom of women, full of drugs and alcohol and the like. These images of Muslims are created by the same system that believes in the authenticity of Brick Lane.

The images are already there and Ali just puts them in one basket called Brick Lane. It is clear then that the Bangladeshi Muslims’ anger is not because of the novel only: their anger is against these images which are reproduced frequently. It could be argued that the Bangladeshi Muslims were filled with an overwhelming sense of outrage because Bangladeshi ethnicity “is largely undescribed except as a problem (poor, uneducated and possibly terrorist)” (Leader 2007). Some writers think that Ali’s Brick Lane is, in one way or another, Dickensian. Harriet Lane in an article in *The Guardian* comments that Ali’s characterization “occasionally verges on the Dickensian without ever resorting to caricature” (Lane 2003). In another article in the same newspaper, Ian Jack believes that Brick Lane, by shedding the light on the life of the Bangladeshi Muslims in Brick Lane, is similar to Dickens’ fiction by which the life in early Victorian London is known (Jack 2003). In addition to these two similarities, Brick Lane and Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* are alike in writing about two religious minorities in British society – Muslims and the Jews respectively – and in having been accused of their misrepresentation. In *Oliver Twist* Fagin is a Jewish character. Fagin’s negative depiction was a good enough reason for some writers, like Norman Lebrecht in his article “How Racist is *Oliver Twist*?” , to describe Dickens as anti-Semitic (11).

However, Dickens and Ali are strikingly different in their reactions towards the criticism from Jews and Muslims. After writing *Oliver Twist*, a Jewish woman sent Dickens a letter criticizing his negative depiction of Fagin. Although Dickens was “defensive” at first, he eventually “halted the reprinting of *Oliver Twist* - which was halfway through - and altered the text which had not yet been set ... and in his next, and what proved to be his final novel, *Our Mutual Friend*, he includes a major character, Riah (the word means ‘friend’ in Hebrew) whose goodness is almost as complete as is Fagin’s evil.” Because of that, the lady “sent Dickens a copy of Benisch’s Hebrew and English Bible, in gratitude for his atonement” (Vallely 285). In contrast, Ali dismissed the Bangladeshi Muslims’ criticism by saying it was “too silly to comment on” (Ali 46). Then when the issue becomes bigger, she insists on her right to be free in her writing. The crucial difference between Dickens and Ali’s reactions is respect. Both are free to write about the minorities, but Dickens seems more committed to showing his respect to the different other. In addition, the negative image and limited influence of Muslims in the West might play a role.

One of the first British novels that focus on the identity question for the Asian Muslims in Britain is *The Buddha of Suburbia*, which was written by Hanif Kureishi in 1990. Interestingly, in spite of the thirteen years gap between Kureishi’s novel and *Brick Lane*, Ali’s novel seems to repeat some of the main themes. Like *Brick Lane*, *The Buddha of Suburbia* is about an Asian family that lives in London and tries to find its answer to the identity question. The mother of the main protagonist, Karim, is quite similar to Nazneen. She is weak and unhappy. Her life is “terrible” (Kureishi 19) and she accuses her husband and two sons of being “selfish” (20) and all the Asian men of being “torturers” (20). Once again, the implication is that women are oppressed by Asian men – similar to the condition of Nazneen.

In addition, Karim's mother, Margaret, seems as passive as Nazneen when saying "no one loves me ... no one helps me. No one does anything to help me" (105). While Nazneen waits for God to change her life, Margaret waits for her husband and sons to change her life. Both of them just wait passively, thus intensifying a negative image of women in the Asian families. Islam and Muslims in Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*.

Islam and Muslims in Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* are, as I argued above, always criticised. Muslims do not appear peaceful in a saying like this: "why go out with these Muslims? ... Too many problems" (73) . In fact, the novel has a strong view against all the religions including Islam. They are described as "irrelevant" (76), "childish and inexplicable" (212). In addition, the novel is clear in blaming the Prophet Muhammad himself of giving "rise to absolutism" and it claims that one of the Muslim characters is similar to the Prophet because he "thought he was right about everything. No doubt on any subject ever entered his head" (172). This depiction of Islam and Muslims resembles, in certain ways, their depiction in *Brick Lane*. Muslims are violent, unable to cope with the British values, and refuse to change their minds.

If the depiction of Islam and Muslims is quite the same in *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *Brick Lane*, why do Muslims react more firmly against the later? It could be said that there are different reasons for this. Firstly, Kureishi's novel criticizes all the "old religions" and not only Islam, while Ali's is about Islam and Muslims only and in some situations it seems to prefer Christianity over Islam. In *Brick Lane*, for example, Karim is different from his father. The father is peaceful like Jesus but Karim is willing to fight because the Prophet was a warrior. Secondly, while Kureishi's novel is about the Pakistanis and the Indians together, Ali's is about the Bangladeshis only. Thirdly and more importantly, Kureishi's is about Asians in London in general, but Ali's is specifically about *Brick Lane*. While Kureishi criticizes all the followers of the old religions (the Jews, the Christians and

Muslims) in addition to the Pakistanis and Indians in London, Ali criticises the majority of the inhabitants in Brick Lane who are Bangladeshis and Muslims. Ali, in Greer's words, "creates them" once again and that is the problem: "what hurts is precisely that: she Ali has dared to create them" (56).

Significantly, Greer's position against *Brick Lane* caused Salman Rushdie to attack her describing her position as "philistine, sanctimonious, and disgraceful, but it is not unexpected" (90) and claiming that Greer supported censorship. In addition, Rushdie writes that Greer did the same with him when *The Satanic Verses* was published by refusing to sign petitions for the novel. It could be argued that this dispute between Greer and Rushdie represents, in a sense, the ongoing clash between the colonial and the postcolonial discourses, in relation to Islam and Muslims, in the British society. From an Islamic postcolonial perspective, the stereotypical images of Islam and Muslims in contemporary British fiction are clear manifestations of the colonial prejudice that still exists. The racism, marginalization and exclusion that the British Muslims still face gives evidence to the existence of the colonial perspective which led to their stereotypical and negative portrayal in fiction.

All in all, it could be argued that *Brick Lane* sheds light on female suffering in the Bangladeshi communities and this in itself is necessary and important although Ali's negative imaging of Muslims complicates the issue. As a matter of fact, Muslim women are suffering from some of the aspects of their national and traditional cultures and Islam is against many of such ways of oppression. However, Islam and Muslims are suffering from the stereotypical images in the West in particular. Between the suffering of the women and the suffering of Islam and Muslims, Ali finds herself in a critical and complex position. From one perspective, *Brick Lane* could be read as a feminist voice calling for the freedom

of women. From another perspective, however, it is another work that aims at stereotyping the image of Islam and Muslims in the West.

Muslim readers might feel sympathetic with Nazneen's difficult life, but their attention might move to the negative depiction of Islam and Muslims in the novel if they feel it becomes stereotypical and insulting. In other words, regardless of the main themes of the novel, Muslims are quite sensitive to their image in the West as a result of a long history of misrepresentations. Hasina and Nazneen's struggle for freedom, for example, is positive, but the implication that Islam is an oppressive religion is negative for Muslims. Therefore, in spite of some positive minor themes in the novel, *Brick Lane* in its main themes misrepresents Islam and Muslims in Britain.

From an Islamic postcolonial perspective, the images of Islam and Muslims in Ali's *Brick Lane* are "recycled", stereotypical and hence, colonially-influenced. Muslims are the uncivilized among the civilized, the uneducated among the educated. This depiction, ultimately, provides some authentic justifications for the racism and marginalization that Muslims face in British society. Such depiction of Muslims justified colonizing Muslims' countries in the past and is still used to justify the western intervention in the Muslim world nowadays. Before colonizing Afghanistan, for example, the Americans used the conditions of women there as a justification claiming that they would free the oppressed women from the oppressing men (Faqr 29).

Women everywhere, in one way or another, have fewer opportunities than men and writing about the difficult conditions of women is understandable and needed. However, Muslim men and women alike are subject to huge amounts of prejudice in the West and this should be understandable too. Writing about the "marginalized" woman in the "marginalized" Bangladeshi Muslim community in British society is quite difficult. The solution is, arguably, to write about the freedom of women, but within Muslim culture

itself. In comparison to the conditions of Muslim women in some very conservative countries like Saudi Arabia, for instance, Iranian and Malaysian women in some aspects provide examples from within particular Muslim cultures of Muslim women living in better circumstances. Such solutions need something more than the freedom of speech; they need to show respect and responsibility which Muslims always ask for. Strikingly, when The Guardian published the parallel between Brick Lane and The Satanic Verses that were made by Muslims in a letter, Ali became angry and blamed the newspaper for being irresponsible (Ali 27) . The absolute freedom that Ali uses against Muslims is now used against her.

Monica Ali is British and she seems to encourage the Bangladeshi Muslims in Brick Lane to be more British. This is an understandable point, but there is another one: the stereotypical image of Islam and Muslims in contemporary British fiction. The problem is, arguably, that the more Muslims are imaged stereotypically, the more they feel targeted and become unwilling to be more British. From an Islamic Postcolonial perspective, Brick Lane stereotypes Muslims and it angers and reminds them of their discrimination and inferiority in Britain.

Conclusion

To conclude with, Ali paints a colorful and panoramic portrait of the immigrant's experience in Britain. This portrait is framed by crisis of cultural identity and clash of cultures. It tackles painstakingly the themes related to generation's gap on all canvas of Britain in the 1970's and the early two thousands. Despite the fact that the historical context of the novel plays a crucial role in the making up of the novels plots. The problematic issues of culture posed by both of them seem to be timeless and universal. As such, Ali tends to portray characters that have gone through a movement of displacement.

These characters are meant to either choosing to be loyal to their original cultures or to open up the host cultures that are totally different from theirs.

The process of cultural location demanded physical displacement from their original homelands. Most of the characters in the novels dealt with, wanted culture of the host country. For instance, Nazneen embodies the major character of the novel. She resembles Chanu, one of the major characters in the novel, in the sense that they both feel that their original culture and the way they look (i.e. brown skin and Bengali/Indian accent) prevents them from being accepted within the English culture and community.

Finally, color prejudices, ethnic accents, clash of cultures along with religion intolerance shaped solid pillars upon which racism was built. Likely, most of the characters which represent South Asian diasporants suffered from being excluded and relegated to marginal spaces because of their inability to adapt to the English culture on the one hand, and their physical appearance on the other. Finally, it is important to mention that the obstacles that they face when trying to culturally relocate themselves in Britain have a notable effect on space production.

Introduction

Aboulela's novel *Minaret* tells the story of a Sudanese British Muslim woman's journey of self-discovery. This chapter is devoted to highlighting the experience of a Muslim woman in the United Kingdom. The main issue that is raised in this chapter is how the Islamic veiling practice constitutes an impairing barrier to Muslim British women exiled from their native lands to the UK and then ostracized in the UK on account of their religious adherence. This chapter also seeks to shed light on how disillusioned these women are after coming to the United Kingdom; for them a land of liberty a priori. Their disillusionment is nurtured by the intensified Islamophobia and the historically sedimented burdens that Islam has come to carry in the West.

Reflections of displaced identities

Migration has a great effect on time and history. It forms it; it creates it; and it defines which way it takes. Salman Rushdie describes history in a chain of moves, "This is the dance of history in our age: slow, slow, quick, quick, slow, back and forth and from side to side, we step across these fixed and shifting lines". (Rushdie 90)

While discussing the issue of mass migration and displacement, Salman Rushdie came up with a formula for this process in the modern era. He assumes that time is not linear; rather it follows an unconventional wavy and movable way where nothing is assured to be unchangeable (90). If this is the case with time and history, so it is the same with people living in the same time and making the same history. This means that people can be displaced not because they want to but because this is the way it is arranged to. This makes this abnormal phenomenon decades ago, a very normal one nowadays. Displacement, therefore, became a natural phenomenon. In this context, it is not related to post-colonial relations specifically but to the whole process of heading towards a new

different life in a new different place. The understanding of displacement as a theme in fiction comes in its best way when it is offered by a migrant whose life and personal experiences are part of this fiction. For this, the concern of this section is to try to project the different dimensions of displacement in a way that makes it a subject to Cultural Materialist analysis.

Russell, Connell, and White believe that digging deep into different literatures of migration helps in giving a sense of reality to certain themes like “place perception, landscape symbolism, senses of displacement and transformation, communities lost and created a new, exploitation, nostalgia, attitudes towards return, family relationships, self denial and self-discovery, and many more” (x) . Counting migrant narratives that are full of vivat themes is more credible than any other historical account.

Cultural Studies' focus is, undoubtedly, culture. Cultural Materialism, in particular, has a unique view to the place of culture in a materialistic context. Marvin Harris' Cultural Materialism can be practically extracted from Aboulela's Minaret. A common logic says that in any society, human actions and thoughts play a great role in the progress or failure that this community may meet. The interaction between the three core ethic and behavioral components of the cultural pyramid set by Harris helps in determining this fact. For Harris, the infrastructure, structure and superstructure are what define human behaviors and mentality (7).

The infrastructure of Najwa's original society, in general and family in particular, is damaged very deeply to the point that the other levels of structure and superstructure follow this change. In this novel, the three components that Harris talked about are related toughly. The infrastructure that forms the basic need changes after the collapse of the protagonist family. This family is in a continuous changing scale that touches the political

life with the fall of the government that is followed later by an immediate escape and fear of other falls.

The Sudanese society, of this novel, was challenging a very serious period that knew political divisions between who supported the government and who opposed it. Anwar is an example of a radical opponent for Najwa's father's government (Aboulela, 69). The social relations were no better than the political circumstances in Sudan. The structure of the family that appeared in many instances, shaking and unstable, in Najwa's family and her friend's too where parents have no serious responsibility towards their children in a time they focus all their attention to social charity.

The many Western-like parties and traditions that color the Sudanese society are another break in the infrastructural and structural levels that Harris alerted in his Cultural Materialism. In fact, Harris highlighted the importance of fulfilling the needs of society at the first and most crucial level (207). The apparent divisions within the Sudanese society between different slices of people are very prominent in Minaret. The difference between the poor and the rich, the educated and the uneducated, the English formed and the local, the devoted Muslims and the moderate ones, the girls wearing Hijab and the ones do not.

This heterogeneous pattern in Najwa's home land makes her lost in herself. She was passively active in this novel when everything was turning around these conflicts and divergence. Corruption made life worse in an already weak infrastructural composition. Anwar's pointing out over and over the fact that Najwa's father was a corrupt political man could not leave Najwa peaceful. He told her, "He's embezzling money. This life you're living - your new car, your new house. Your family's getting richer by the day ... Can't you see, it's corrupt?" (Aboulela 69).

The economic level, in accordance with the social one, changed to make this family going through an emergency case that ended up with the trial of the father, the death of the

mother; the homeless case of twins in a foreign place with one became a maid and the other a slave to drugs and addiction. The economic situation paves the way for displacement and migration and helps in the spread of globalization aspects and expectancies. "Money did that. Money gave us rights. I wanted to stay here the whole year" (Aboulela 145). These changes on the infrastructure and structure leads to other changes on the superstructure. As it is mentioned before, the influence is obligatory on the super structural level when the other two have already changed (Moore 7). In this case the change is portrayed in two ways, one with a negative spirit and the other with a positive one.

Displacement, in fact, cannot not always be taken as a negative aspect. It can drive different outcomes. This term can be referred to as one of the mobile social phenomenon. Aboulela develops two-edged experiences of a British-Arab-Muslim family through which she could juxtapose twin characters in a context of placement and displacement caused by migration. In Frank's book:

Voltaire, on the other hand, chose exile instead of imprisonment, as he considered the displacement liberating for his intellectual development. With James Joyce we normally speak of a voluntary exile, a self-chosen physical as well as spiritual distancing that was very much a premise for his artistic success. (18)

The story starts with the peak of change that happened to the main character 'Najwa', her first presentation to the readers denotes not a regular maid suffering girl but a person who would never be in this situation in ordinary life. Right from the beginning, a whole story was born: "I've come down in the world. I've slid to a place where the ceiling is low and there isn't much room to move" (Aboulela, 7). Here where the change is expressed in the beginning of the novel. Najwa, the Sudanese Bourgeois, is now, a Londoner maid. At the beginning of the novel, Aboulela expresses an interesting impression whereby she gave the

season of spring a gloomy and pessimistic tone. She says, "... and in spring, the season of birth, there is always disappointment". Now it is at its best, now it is poised like a mature woman whose beauty is no longer fresh but still surprisingly potent (7).

Spring symbolizes disappointment in this migrant author's eyes. Unsurprisingly, this is not the only case where authors relate spring to negative aspects of life, but for Aboulela, this may be taken as a good base for introducing the exclusive feeling of facing a new environment where migrants find it difficult to cope with.

Displacement in this novel takes two forms. The one through which, the writer exposes the logical outcome of being dislocated somewhere and the other that she manifests in its perfect way. Omar and Najwa are twins who the writer uses to contrast two different realities. For Najwa, being displaced in place and in social class is not an excuse to stop her life or ruin it as her brother Omar does. She becomes more mature and wise in her considerations and life perception. At one instance, she says "Something in her voice makes me guess that her brother is younger than her, rather than older. I wonder if he is the youth I met in the lobby" (103).

The social position of this family is obviously on a changing scale. The father is a hard worker since his childhood. After he meets the to-be 'mama', a dramatic change happens to his life whereby he founds, counting on her aristocratic origins, a bourgeois family that lives under the best life conditions in Khartoum. "Think of your father, kids. I started out with nothing, not a father, not a good education, nothing. Now I'm going to have my own jet" (80). This shift from a poor to a wealthy man did not last for a long time. The government, which this father is one of its icons, is accused of corruption and many other serious charges. This leads to a total transformation in the way life is perceived by the whole family. The mentality of social class prejudice is prominent in the society that Najwa and Omar were part of. Charity is the interest of any bourgeois family. Najwa's

mother is no exception with the interest in helping and funding in need organizations as Cheshire house and the orphanage (32).

The displacement that first happened in this novel is in mind, where Omar, Najwa's twin, distress the idea that Sudan is all right without the British colonialism. He and his friends are a symbol for a careless and thoughtless generation. This appears in Najwa's words: "Omar believed we had been better off under the British and it was a shame that they left" (21).

The theme of displacement in the novel is very prominent whenever the story progresses, Aboulela cannot miss to mention a displacement instance where one of the characters moves from one place to another. Samir, Najwa's cousin, was the one who holds the first candle of leaving and studying abroad "Atlantic College in Wales" (29). He enlightens the idea for Omar, the one who can never cope within his own culture and wants to cut the ties with Sudan (42). Randa, another prominent and influencing character in the first phase of Najwa's life, also goes through the shifting process (42). Like Samir, Randa seeks education in Britain. In fact, she fails in her studies but her displacement to Edinburg assures her a qualified doctor job and career (360). Her case, along with Samir's, approves a good outcome of a serious unquestionable success in a different cultural setting. Doctora Zeinab and her daughter Lamia, the Najwa's employers, reinforce the educational success (311).

Homesickness is one of the immediate reflections of displacement. As Aboulela's opinion suggests, this feeling appears in lots of the daily activities that displaced people do (5). Najwa's work as a maid does not stop her from feeling home. The physical and actual meaning of home, in this novel, is not very important or apparent. Najwa can feel that in a country and a culture that she does not belong to. Being with a family and feeling that she

is a part of it makes her happy and satisfied with the who she became, this appears in her confession, "It still takes me by surprise how natural I am in this servant role" (129).

And in another example, Aboulela states, "Baglau'a and basboosa, jars of green olives, tins of fowl, even frozen stuffed vine leaves and moulokhia" (311). These are what Najwa's employer's mother, 'Doctora Zeinab', brought from Egypt (311). The variety of places that are opened to Arab-Muslims and many migrants is explored as well in the novel. Besides Britain, Canada-exactly Ontario- is another destination for Arab Muslim migrants like Sudanese. Najwa's uncle 'Salah' founds an entirely independent life in Canada with his family. For Najwa, Ontario was an optional destination to take when her life fell apart (191). Different nationalities and countries that are mentioned in *Minaret* expose the reader to the reality of a multicultural world community. Ethiopians, Sudanese, Egyptians, English, Scottish, are some of the identities mentioned in the novel. The flashbacks that are used in this novel are quite suitable to the flow of the story's events. In other words, this simple technique helped in showing rather than telling the reality of difference between the characters' past and presence.

The first impression that this novel leaves for its readers is the structure of its plot. In fact, it is composed of six parts each one has a certain number of chapters. These chapters are not chronologically ordered but they present a kind of flashbacks. The story starts with Najwa saying "I've come down in the world" (1). This claim takes the reader directly to the climax where things edged to a peak of a complete awkwardness. Najwa thinks of her past life with her brother, and she recognizes well the value of the fortune they are no longer living in. Globalization is another face through which displacement appears. Apparently, the migration process will be viewed with a more materialistic zoom. The economic state of migrants is like a chain that brings them from a finite position to another. "I dreamt dreams shaped by pop songs and American films" (57).

This saying may serve the whole essence of globalization. In *Minaret*, Aboulela made a very keen link of what the migrant family was like and became after leaving their homeland 'Khartoum'. It is obvious that the family from which the twins came out to the world had a questionable economic and social state. Investigating the origin of this family in the novel was a bitter truth that the Protagonist found it hard to believe or even cope with, especially when things started to be clearer about her father's work. She says "He had married above himself, to better himself. His life story was of how he moved from a humble background to become manager of the President's office via marriage into an old wealthy family. I didn't like him to tell it, it confused me. I was too much like my mother" (16)

This confession of Najwa about what she knows about her father makes her neither proud of her origins nor comfortable with the fancy life she lives in. The duplicity in Anwar's personality is one of the globalization effects. While Najwa considers London as her second home, Anwar, her ex-boyfriend sees it as impressive. At this level, he shows a contradiction in his opinion. He is against going outside his country and enjoying holidays abroad, against Western music and traditions mainly, and he is very pragmatic and non-religious man. "I tried to see London as he would see it, not like my second home. 'The West is very impressive.'" (228).

Meanwhile, Anwar hates everything from the West and he is always criticizing Najwa for her Westernized life. He loves his country and wants to protect it from corruption that people like Najwa's father may commit, at the same time, he feels angry with everything. He thinks that the Arabs have 'double standards' (272) and hypocritical while he is displaying this through all his actions and unsure affiliations. This fact about Anwar shows the greedy character that may do anything to get to his goal and this in itself a Western-capitalist and materialist thinking that is brought to his society by globalization.

In fact, Sudan, unlike most of the European countries, benefits from a suitable infrastructure to be in a better economic state. According to a report stating demographic data about the Muslim countries, Sudan is a young-aged populated country (Hans, 67). This criterion of a country led by a young generation would logically overstep the ordinary expectations to boost the national economy. This report states many facts and statistics about the Arab World's countries performance at the demographic level in relation to other sectors like Economy. But unfortunately, this workforce of youth either did not meet many chances and opportunities for getting a job, or having the governmental support (39). "The youth unemployment challenge in the region, therefore, is enormous: the Arab states are characterized by one of the highest regional growth rates in working-age population and extreme volatility in economic growth and decline" (39). Globalization is a decisive ingredient in making a colourful atmosphere around the world. Conventionally, it omits the distances and makes new ties between different parts of the world.

With the increasing globalization process one might argue that we are moving towards a multicultural society with a greater cross-cultural understanding. People migrate and travel as never before, which result in a mix of the world's population.

Other cultures influence us and we thereby learn about each other (Astrid 5)

Globalization is a form of distance displacement "the party at the American club was in full swing when Omar and I arrived. We walked into the tease of red and blue disco lights and the Gap Band's "Say Oops Upside Your Head" (38). Coca-cola t-shirt, the disco culture, Boney M's songs, Pepsi, Paco Rabanne perfumes (72) are some examples of globalization in the novel. Interestingly, till the eighth chapter within the first part, the writer decides to introduce how the family gets to London escaping from the scandal that the twins' father caused them. At this level, the difference between the main characters of the novel in absorbing the whole situation is not the same.

While Najwa cares about her father's fate after his detention and the vague future that her family will face, her brother seems from the first day in London as a "Londoner. We can't go to a disco because of Baba, I said to Omar. What do you want people to say? The man's on trial for his life and his children are dancing in London." (92). Omar sarcastically rejects her words especially after she said that if they were in their homeland in such circumstances they would not dare to have fun in public (91). This superficial thinking, as Omar would agree with, is original; it is not something new so as to Omar's reaction.

This means that the way both work things out in their minds is different despite their one and same ground that they come from as twins (91). Even after all what happens to Omar, he has not changed. None of the problems he meets in his life could bring him on the right track. When Najwa describes Tamer for him as the Perfect guy, Omar does not like that, as if Najwa is offending him by listing all the opposite characteristics of his personality. Omar calls Tamer a wimp "What a wimp!" (143). Tamer presents the good side of displacement regardless to its reason "I tell him about Doctora Zeinab, Mai and Lamya. Her brother, I say, "is only nineteen and is so devout and good. No cigarettes, no girlfriend, no clubbing, no drinking. He has a beard and goes to the mosque every day". (143).

One of the things that this novel in its publication time must discuss is Islamophobic practices against Muslims in Britain after 9/11 events but in this novel, readers can hardly touch this feeling. The fact that some Muslims cannot integrate in Britain and elsewhere in the West may be prevented by some of the stereotypical and Islamophobic practices. In *Minaret*, two examples may be deprived to illustrate one explicit non-Muslim hatred action and another mentioning of a Muslim extremism possibility in the novel. The first is the incident that happens with Najwa in a bus:

Laughter from behind me... I hear footsteps come up behind me, see a blur of denim. He says, 'You Muslim scum', then the shock of cool liquid on my head and face. I gasp and taste it, Tizer. He goes back to his friends - they are laughing. My chest hurts and I wipe my eyes. (126)

The other example was in the park when Najwa and Tamer, her employer's brother, were walking his niece Mai, "I sense the slight unease he inspires in the people around us. I turn and look at him through their eyes. Tall, young, Arab-looking, dark eyes and the beard, just like a terrorist" (155). This is how Arab Muslims are stereotyped in the West. Yet, Aboulela clearly states that she does not want this novel to be on the grounds of Politics but readers should take it as it is. This is stated whenever Aboulela is asked to talk about her *Minaret* in a BBC talk show, Leila Aboulela claims that weak intention to raise negativity after she breaks the rules of Islam depiction in the West (interview).

Politically, Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* is a valid portrayal of the real situation that the Sudanese government faced in that period of time. The cause of the displacement at the first stage is due to the collapse of the father's government that is obviously a corrupt one. Meanwhile, Sudan was in an ambivalent scale in which it faced radical governmental issues from time to time. This political instability carried within it unceasing changes that touched all the building structures in Sudan. "All political parties were banned after the 1989 coup until 1999" (LaVerle xxxvi), this step in the Sudanese politics came logically because of the continuous conflicts and struggles that touched the whole process. Sudan is a multicultural society. Being within different races, nationalities and is not strange for the nature of Sudanese. Migration, therefore, is a common reality there. According to the same source, *Sudan: A Country Study*:

Sudan is divided between its Arab heritage, identified with the North, and its African heritage in the South. The two groups are divided along linguistic,

religious, racial, and economic lines, and the cleavage has generated ethnic tensions, clashes, and civil war. (5)

This multiculturalism and diversity within the Sudanese society has been projected in Minaret through the first phase of the characters living in Sudan. Najwa's family had maids from different nationalities. Importing maids, who are close of being slaves among the aristocratic families, is common at that time. This leaves many class differentials among the other social entities that are far away from being wealthy or even middle class citizens. Ethiopian maids and nannies are a normal advantage for the wealthy individuals in any society. They spread in Sudan like in the case of Najwa (129) and her friend Randa's family and they are taken abroad too whenever the families get displaced as in the case of Najwa's Aunty Eva (218). Interestingly, an Arabic country like Sudan was suffering of many social inequities. Berry's book states:

Moreover, the South's geographical isolation has hindered that region's political, economic, and social development. Imperial Britain acknowledged the North–South division by establishing separate administrations for the two regions. Independent Sudan further reinforced this cleavage by treating African Southerners as a minority group. (3)

In a case where any of the most important components of any society collapse or change, all the other branches and sectors will follow this change one after another. This is one idea of what Cultural Materialism and common logic proposes. Historically, Sudan, as it is already mentioned, has gone through lots of conflicts and wars. In addition to these political tensions, the nature of that hybrid society in terms of its different nationalities and origins makes it less stable according to what is mentioned in the book edited by La Verle Berry: Lastly, the civil war in the South has shaped Sudan's post independence history. This conflict has retarded the country's social and economic development, encouraged

political instability, and led to an endless cycle of weak and ineffective military and civilian governments.

The conflict continued to affect Sudan's people and institutions into the early twenty first century. Another crucial life event in the story that is exposed slightly is when Najwa, the maid, sees back her life from beneath. She reveals lately that her twin is in jail and her mother died in a near hospital to the family's flat she is working for. "I used to take them for granted. I didn't know a lot about them - our succession of Ethiopian maids, houseboys, our gardener - but I must have been close to them, absorbing their ways, so that now, years later and in another continent, I am one of them" (129). This feeling of revising her life and figuring out the gaps left between the past and the present makes her more mature to cope quickly with the current changes. This acceptance and satisfaction to displacement is what differentiates her from her twin. For this, displacement, in Najwa's case, is placement and reinforcement and in the case of Omar, it is displacement with all its negative aspects.

The standards of Najwa have been changed dramatically, her concerns after this trauma, raises to fit the awakened identity she found within herself. Catching the sessions of Tajweed and sticking to prayer exact times replaces her concerns of looking pretty and having fun. Another point is that Najwa, while she was in Khartoum, she got used of the follower position. She does not have a real charismatic personality or a unique attitude. In fact, this represents a crucial category in the Arab society, that of women. Najwa keeps this mentality even when she is living in London. "I never know which point of view I support. I find myself agreeing with whoever is speaking or with the one I like best. And I become anxious that someone's feelings will get hurt, or worse take serious offence, as sometimes happens, and stop coming to the mosque" (123).

This case stays with her for a long time because it is rooted in her personality since her childhood. In comparison to Najwa, the British-born Muslims find it better to be clearly expressive and honest and charismatic. Muslim residents in any European or a non-Muslim country may face the risk of eating a non-halal food. This hardship in being always aware of what to eat and what to drink is the price that Muslims must pay for living abroad.

My children grew up in Oman where we always had maids. They're very spoilt and can't look after themselves. Tamer can't even make himself a cup of tea! I wouldn't mind if he ate out, McDonald's or at his college, but none of that is halal here and he's always been strict. He will only eat halal meat. I don't know where he got his religiousness from, none of us is as observant as him". (131) .The globalized and the still-colonized mind that Omar makes it sure that his identity and personality are possessed and not valid, "For my brother, anything Western was unmistakably and unquestionably better than anything Sudanese" (203).

Being a Muslim, and adjusting quickly and perfectly to an exotic society without losing any standard is really hard. Najwa could survive at last but not that easy. She suffers a lot and pays a huge price before she can get back to normal. "I wanted to pray in the same way that I wanted to sprout wings and fly. There was no point in yearning, was there? No point in stretching out. In my own way, in my own style, I was sliding. First my brother and now it was my turn to come down in the world" (277).

Soren Frank's analysis of the themes and styles that characterize any migration literary text is very applicable on this novel. If taking the five themes that he sets, Aboulela, first, includes a great part of her life in this work in composing the character of Najwa. This is about the experience of migration that Leila Aboulela went through in her real life

and in Minaret. As quoted in Frank's book from Rebecca Walkowitz, "the biography of the writer may influence the way that books are written and received" (Qtd. in Frank 17).

Another criterion is also evident whereby the author and the protagonist share a good sense and perception of displacement. Also, the question of "nation and nationalism" is extremely present with the development of the character of Anwar and Omar, both shares a kind of ambivalence in recognizing the concept of nationalism. Then, the definition of the west and Europe is shown in the novel as a struggle to choose one point of view towards anything European by acceptance or rejection. Fifth, the concept of globalization, in Minaret makes a dominant atmosphere for all the characters.

Concerning the stylistic features, Aboulela did not miss the "multi perspectivism" (Frank, 19). As the point of view, she chose for this work Minaret. Everything is around Najwa's perception. Another point Soren talked about is the composition of the narrative form that makes this novel's characters, plot, and characters interacting together. The chronology of the work was disordered by the use of flashbacks. This has a relation to the main theme discussed that of displacement. Not to forget the last stylistic feature, Aboulela's unique use of language through which she could combine the English with some Arabic words like "Ya habibi ya Ahmed" (116), "baglau'a and basboosa" (311). This adds a cultural value to the language.

V. 3. Islam and Muslims in Aboulela's Minaret

Minaret is the story of a Sudanese girl living a happy and comfortable life in Sudan. Her family is rich and aristocratic. Her father is a close friend of the president and her mother is from an important family. Brought up and educated as western, Najwa enjoys travelling to Europe, attending parties in the American Club in Khartoum, and having fun generally. Then a coup in Sudan suddenly changes her life. She becomes a refugee in London, her father is executed, her mother dies, and her twin brother is put

behind bars for drug dealing and fighting with a policeman. In London she is free enough to have an affair with Anwar who was her friend in Khartoum University and who fled to London after another coup.

After leaving Anwar and to assuage feelings of guilt and find relief, Najwa turns to Islam; she wears the hijab and becomes religious. In London, without a family to help her, she works as a maid in a Muslim house where she falls in love once again, with Tamer, the younger brother of her employer. In spite of their different ages and positions, Najwa and Tamer's similar religiousness led Tamer to insist on marrying her, but his family refuses and Najwa leaves the house. As a compromise, she ends her relationship with Tamer, and the family does not stop Tamer from studying his favorite major at university. She leaves Tamer, but has before her the fulfilling prospect of going on hajj.

Referring to what has already been written above, the novel shows Muslims, and conservative ones in particular, as like everyone else in having their own positives and negatives. They are neither completely good nor completely bad. Tamer, for example, in Najwa's words, "is so devout and good" (Aboulela 93), but in another situation, she says "it disturbs me when he is harsh about his parents. It is the only fault I find in him" (210). Shahinaz, Najwa's close friend in London, is another example of a Muslim with mixed characteristics. In spite of her goodness, Najwa notices that "Shahinaz envies me sometimes" (210). Tamer and Shahinaz are very normal and have their own faults even though they try to be good Muslims. In fact, this issue is very much related to how a person judges other people in general. Najwa and Lamya are both Muslims, but they see each other differently. Najwa notices:

She will always see my hijab, my dependence on the salary she gives me, my skin color, which is a shade darker than hers. She will see these things and these things only; she will not look beyond them. It disappoints me because, in spite of what

Tamer's said, I admire her for the PhD she is doing, her dedication to her studies, her grooming and taste in clothes (116).

Both Najwa and Lamya therefore have mixed characteristics, some positive, others negative and limiting. But while Najwa focuses on Lamya's positives along with her negatives, Lamya focuses only on Najwa's negatives. Doctora Zeinab describes her daughter, Lamya, as a person who "sees things in black and white" (261). The same contrast exists in respect of Tamer and Omar.

In spite America's bad reputation in the eyes of many Muslims, Tamer has his own image. He says: "here [in London] there're all these anti-American feelings. It bugs me. My American teachers were really nice" (117). America is not a bad country; it has its own positives. Omar, on the other hand, seems to follow Lamya in her "black and white" perspective. Najwa says: "for my brother, anything western was unmistakably and unquestionably better than anything Sudanese" (131-132). Lamya and Najwa's different outlooks might be read in the context of colonial and postcolonial representations. Lamya creates a representation of Najwa that reflects Lamya's superiority in socio-cultural terms. Najwa is stereotyped and fixed by her veil, career and skin color and Lamya cannot see her without these frames.

For Lamya, Najwa is characterized by negatives, and the positives, if there are any, are ignored. Najwa, however, seems more realistic in her assessment of Lamya. For her, Lamya has her own positives. She provides a representation of Lamya without stereotypes or fixations. Though they are two Muslims who live in Britain, their view of one another is determined, on Lamya's part, by a colonial perspective. Lamya shows it is not only western people who can be accused of looking at things with a colonial eye: Muslims, too, do the same. The conflict between the colonial and the postcolonial perspectives, then, is not restricted automatically to the conflict between the colonizers and

the once-colonised; it can be extended to conflict between those within the same culture, where one adopts a colonial perspective toward those who challenge them.

Further, the novel portrays Islam as a global religion which attracts people from different nationalities and classes¹⁴². It diversifies Muslims. Najwa is from Sudan, Shahinaz, her close friend in London, is from Pakistan. Um Waleed the Quran teacher in the mosque is from Syria, Wafa who washed Najwa's mother's corpse, is from Egypt. Wafa's convert husband is a blond Englishman. In the mosque some look Malaysian and others Indian and there she meets the wife of the Senegalese Ambassador in addition to some British Muslim girls, while in a magazine she sees some Iranian girls in black chadors. All these are Muslims in spite of their different nationalities.

In addition, Muslims belong to different classes. The same Islam that attracts Najwa the servant attracts some of the Sudanese lecturers in Khartoum and the wife of the Senegalese Ambassador. Islam in *Minaret* is a source of inspiration for the poor and the rich, the simple and the important people. Moreover, the novel mentions some important and famous Muslim personalities, Islamic movements and countries without highlighting the differences between them; this is arguably done to focus on their belonging to one religion rather than differences between them. The personalities are Khomeini and Amr Khalid, the Islamic movements are the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizbullah, and the countries are Sudan, Iran, Iraq, Britain and Palestine. It is noticeable that some of these are Sunni while others are Shia; but they are mentioned as Muslims only. The idea is that in

¹⁴² By depicting Islam as a global religion, Aboulela presents Islam as an active participant in cultural globalization. Like western culture, Islam has the potential to cover the globe. In addition, this depiction challenges, in a sense, the core idea of stereotyping which depends largely on nationalism and the cultural difference between nations. On the issue of Islam and nationalism, Ziauddin Sardar writes: "Islam and nationalism are contradictory terms. While Islam is intrinsically a universal creed and worldview, which recognizes no geographical boundaries, nationalism is based on territory and is parochial in its outlook. While Islam insists on the total equality of humanity, recognizes no linguistic, cultural or racial barriers, nationalism glorifies assumed cultural, linguistic and racial superiority. Nationalism demands the total loyalty of a people to the nation ('my country, right or wrong'), Islam demands loyalty and submission only to God. However, while Islam rejects the ideology of nationalism, it accepts both the existence of nations and the practice of nationhood" (Sardar, 2003, p. 81).

spite of differences, Muslims are Muslims at the end of the day. The ability of Islam, according to the novel, to absorb or accept all these differences under its umbrella presents Islam as a global religion willing to unite people in spite of their national, class or sectarian differences.

Regarding Aboulela's giving a new direction to the portrayal of Muslims, Tamer, as a young conservative Muslim living in London, challenges the image of the fundamentalist. In contrast to the assumption that conservative Muslims appear unable to compromise their Islam with British culture, Tamer, in general, succeeds in harmonizing the relationship between Islam and the West: his appreciation of them both helps in shaping his identity. Although he is still immature in years, and displays the enthusiasms of youth, in comparison with the extreme, impressionable young Muslims we meet in Kureishi and Ali, such as Shahid and Karim, he is more balanced in the way he views his background, and more realistic in his aims.

However, this does not mean Aboulela turns him into an idealised character. Tamer was born in Oman of a Sudanese father and an Egyptian mother. In Oman, he studied in an American private school then he moved to London to study Business. In spite of his young age – he is only nineteen years old – he has exposure to the cultures of five countries (three Muslim and two western) though in different degrees: Oman, Sudan, Egypt, America and London, UK. Expressing the influence of both Islam and the West, when asked by Najwa about his identity, he states: “my education is western and that makes me feel that I am western. My English is stronger than my Arabic ... I guess being a Muslim is my identity” (110).

It could be inferred here that being Muslim does not lead ultimately to the rejection of the West, that Muslims can live appropriately in Britain. In spite of Tamer's arguments with his mother and sister on religious issues, he does not become involved in any

activities against the British culture or society. London is not an enemy. It is a place where he can pray and fast and even spend some days in a mosque for Itiqaf. The character of Tamer therefore clearly contradicts the stereotypes of young conservative Muslims.

Through Tamer, in fact, Aboulela provides the young conservative Muslim with a new, more rounded image. Tamer's relationship with Najwa also subverts the image of the male conservative Muslim who oppresses women. Aboulela presents the relationship between Tamer and Najwa with full sympathy. It is striking to notice that Islam's centrality in their lives marginalizes all their differences. The gap between Najwa and Tamer is twenty years; while she is a poor servant, he is a rich university student. However, they are both conservative Muslims. Najwa finds in Tamer the sobriety, the respect and the understanding that she is looking for. One of Najwa's wishes, especially after being left alone in London, is to live within a family after losing her own. Najwa's life in London is miserable. Her parents are dead, her brother, Omar, in prison and she is no longer in touch with her previous lover, Anwar.

In such a difficult life, she needs someone who can feel sympathy for her, calm her down, and encourage her to overcome her problems; these are some of the reasons behind her love for Tamer: "There are nights when I want nothing else but someone to stroke my hair and feel sorry for me" (117). She has been looking for someone like Tamer for years. Unlike his mother and sister, he talks to her about his personal life and thoughts and asks her about hers. He appreciates her religiousness and trusts her. Whenever she gets humiliated or blamed by Lamya, Tamer tries to calm her down. He accompanies her while going out with the little baby. In general, he always tries to take care of her and that is what she is mostly in need of. He is a positive, flesh and blood character: not a type.

In opposition to the negative image of the hijab in the West, in *Minaret* it is represented positively. Not merely a traditional headscarf, it is as Islamic as praying and

fasting. Throughout the novel, there is a link between wearing the hijab and being religious, but on the other hand, there is no relationship between the hijab and being Sudanese. At Khartoum University, for example, when Najwa was not wearing the hijab, she remarked “many girls dressed like me, so I was not unusual” (14). Najwa and those who do not wear it are as Sudanese as those who do. Khartoum University represents a cross-section of Sudanese society: it consists of Muslims, the westernized, and the communists, even though Islam is the religion of the country. However, Najwa notices that “not everyone prayed. Girls like me who didn’t wear robes or hijab weren’t praying” (43). This link, then, between wearing hijab and praying gives hijab its religious significance.

However, it might be argued that Aboulela’s point of view regarding the hijab is incomplete if read from the point of view of *Minaret* only. A more complete image is divided between her two novels *Minaret* and *The Translator*. The reasoning behind this statement is that Najwa in *Minaret* is in a better position socially before wearing the hijab. This might indicate that wearing the hijab and being religious could prevent women from holding a comfortable position in society. When she was in Khartoum, before wearing the hijab, Najwa was young, rich and a university student. In London, after wearing the hijab, she is older and poorer and works as a maid.

This contrast in social positions could be misunderstood and the hijab might be held as the cause. Here it is important to compare *Minaret* with *The Translator*. Sammar in *The Translator* is an example of a successful woman. In spite of her religiousness and wearing of the hijab, and in spite of living alone in Aberdeen for four years, Sammar’s professional position is good in comparison to her friend, Yasmin, who does not wear hijab. Sammar is a translator in a university and Yasmin works as a secretary. In addition, Sammar seems more attractive than her married friend. “She thought of herself as more educated, better dressed. She covered her hair with Italian silk, her arms with tropical

colours. She wanted to be as elegant as Benazir Bhutto” (Aboulela 8). The mere mention of Bhutto, Pakistan’s prime minister of the day, is significant here as she too adopted the hijab. Like Bhutto, Sammar’s elegance and successful social position do not conflict with her hijab. Sammar in *The Translator* and Najwa in *Minaret* can be seen to provide a rounded image of the hijab in Aboulela’s fiction.

Muslims are usually depicted as members of a group, a community or a society. This membership comes at the expense of their individuality. Najwa challenges this assumption about the relationship between Islam and individualism. The decision that she has taken to be religious is hers alone and was made without any kind of pressure from family or society. She accepts Islam as a way of life and a form of identity. Religiosity, she thinks, will benefit her. When she went to the mosque for the first time she reviewed her feelings: “I wanted to be good” (237). Before she had thought of others: the Sudanese who lived in Khartoum; the university students; and herself as one of a group of friends gathering in the American Club, as one of her own family in Sudan and then in London, as the sister of Omar, and finally the lover of Anwar. Now she thinks for herself for the first time in her life. In this intensified state of individuality she chooses to be religious¹⁴³

In *Minaret* therefore we see an attempt to represent the hidden side of the picture of Islam by its focus on Islam’s capacity to effect self-realization and spiritual consciousness in an individual. Najwa’s loneliness in London symbolizes, arguably, her loneliness in the materialistic world. She “yearned to go back to being safe with God” (242). God is her source of safety. Her sense of being close to God helps enhances her spiritual nature with its different shapes. “I felt a kind of peace” (237) and “now I wanted a wash, a purge, a restoration of innocence” (242). She seeks for “exfoliation, clarifying, deep-pore cleanse”

¹⁴³ Her individualism does not mean not thinking of others. In spite of leaving Tamer, she is happy in the end because she is going on hajj and becoming “innocent again” (Aboulela, 2007b). The hajj, in Aboulela’s words, is “the final stage in her process of completely getting over the past and becoming a new person” (Aboulela, 2007b).

(247). The demands she places upon her spiritual life are the consequence of growing weary of her previous spiritually empty existence. "I'm tired of having a troubled conscious. I'm bored with feeling guilty" (244).

At this stage, she has discovered a new kind of pleasure. "I reached out for spiritual pleasure and realized that this was what I had envied in the students who lined up to pray on the grass of Khartoum University" (243). The discovery of spiritual fulfillment is very striking here as it led to the discovery of the self. Many times before, Najwa envied those students who prayed and wore hijab at university. She even envied her servants who woke up early in the morning just to pray the dawn prayer. Her materialistic life did not provide an answer to her questioning self. She awakens to the realization that materialistic side of human life is limited and spirituality is not just a mere pleasure but a means of knowledge, too. In short, Najwa's religious spirituality is her source of safety, peace, purging and soul knowledge.

Reading the novel from an Islamic Postcolonial Perspective

In order to make an informed reading of Islam and Muslim identities in Aboulela's *Minaret* it is crucial to read Aboulela's writing as a reaction to the depiction of Islam and Muslim women in colonial discourse. In her book *Women and Gender in Islam* (1992), Leila Ahmed remarks that colonial discourse criticizes veiling, accuses Islam of the oppression of women, and believes in the inferiority of Islamic societies and the backwardness of Islam. In this discourse, according to Ahmed, the oppression of Muslim women is a result of the backwardness of Islam itself. Islam then is the main target in order to free Muslim women¹⁴⁴

Amal Amireh in her article, "Arab Women Writers' Problems and Prospects" (1997), probes the reasoning behind the western welcome afforded to the writings of Arab

¹⁴⁴ For more details, see Ahmed's *Women and Gender in Islam*, 1992.

women writers. While writing about Nawal El Saadawi, for example, she observes that for some critics “the West welcomes her feminist critique of Arab culture because it confirms the existing stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims as backward, misogynist and violently oppressive” (17). She adds: “Historically, the West’s interest in Arab women is part of its interest in and hostility to Islam. This hostility was central to the colonialist project, which cast women as victims to be rescued from Muslim male violence. The fixation on the veil, the harem, excision, and polygamy made Arab women symbols of a region and a religion that were at once exotic, violent, and inferior” (19). This indicates that the colonial and stereotypical images of Islam and Muslim women are still vivid in the West and some Arab women writers re-enforce these images.

The importance of Aboulela’s writing in this context is that it challenges the western image in general and these colonial images in particular. I would also argue that in itself the strong affiliation to Islam demonstrated by Aboulela is a postcolonial act. She “writes back” to the western centre making visible those marginalized Muslims who are frequently subjected to polemical prejudice. In addition to challenging the colonial image and giving voice to marginalized Muslims, she is an Islamic postcolonial writer because she “posits complex personal relationships experienced by women whose identities are co-defined by Islam and the post-colonial condition” (Stotesbury 69). Aboulela, in a sense, “shifts” the centre¹⁴⁵ without undermining the margin. In fact, in spite of her belief in the

¹⁴⁵ Islam is Aboulela’s centre and the perspective by which she writes. In order to understand her novels, Aboulela asks the western reader to respect her centre and perspective as she respects the centrality of the West while reading western novels. Speaking about Rae’s conversion to Islam in *The Translator*, she explains: “I was often asked ‘Why should Rae convert, why should religion be an obstacle etc., etc?’ In my answer I would then fall back on *Jane Eyre* and say ‘From an Islamic point of view, why can’t Mr. Rochester be married to both Bertha and Jane?’ In the same way that I, as a Muslim reader, respect and empathise with Jane’s very Christian dilemma, I want western/Christian readers to respect and empathise with Sammar’s very Muslim dilemma” (Stotesbury, 2004, p. 81). This centralization of Islam in Aboulela’s fiction is postcolonial as it led to a world with different “centres” which contradicts the centrality of the West in colonial discourse.

centrality of Islam, she does not seem to believe in the marginality of the West. She writes against stereotyping Islam as well as performing a similar function with the West¹⁴⁶

In order to challenge the stereotypical images of Islam and Muslims, Aboulela depicts the modern world as full of instability, transformation and confusion in which it becomes difficult to hold on to stable images and concepts. In *Minaret*¹⁴⁷, people are unrooted. Because of a coup, Najwa, the aristocrat in Sudan, becomes a maid in London. Sudan, then, is not for poor people only and London is not for the rich alone. In Sudan, the Muslim country, Najwa is western while in London, the secular western city, she is a conservative Muslim. Sudan and London, the Muslim and western worlds are globally connected. Anwar, the Sudanese, is a leftist and atheist while Ali, the white English, is a Muslim convert. Najwa and Tamer fall in love although they are conservative Muslims.

The mosque in London is similar to the American Club in Khartoum; each one answers to a civilization outside its normal territory. It could be argued that this depiction of the instability of the modern world is essential to understanding the transformational concepts and identities of postcolonial fiction. Like the world, the stable, fixed, stereotypical concepts and images of Islam and Muslims should be challenged. This transforming world needs transformational concepts and images.

By writing sympathetically about conservative Muslims in the West, Aboulela resists the colonial perspective at its centre. The West, historically, is the geographical and cultural centre of the polemical discourse directed against Islam and Muslims through Orientalism and colonialism. If the colonial discourse of the West is replete with

¹⁴⁶ She clarifies the positions of Islam and the West for her in this important paragraph: "I appreciate the West. I love its literature, its transparency and its energy. I admire its work ethic and its fairness. I need its technology and its medicine, and I want my children to have a western education. At the same time, I am fulfilled in my religion. Nothing can compete with the elegance, authority and details of the Koran" (Aboulela, 2007a).

¹⁴⁷ Before *Minaret*, Aboulela's postcoloniality appears in her debut novel, *The Translator*, in which Sabine Berking observes that its "happy ending represents a 'postcolonial reply to the colonial narratives'" (Guth, 2006, p. 80).

Islamophobia and racism against Muslims, Aboulela's fiction resists that through focusing on humanity equality and the right for Muslims to narrate their own values and experiences. This narration is of course in itself a function of postcolonial writing. In Aboulela's fiction, Islam is not a backward religion, Muslims are not all fundamentalists, Muslim women are not uniformly oppressed, though there are some fundamentalists and some oppressed women. From this positioning Aboulela humanizes Muslims, abrogates colonial perspectives, and actualizes the postcolonial bases of her fiction. In Hassan's words, Aboulela's "fiction adds nuance and complexity to the representation of Islam and Muslims" (317). It is postcolonial because it is "writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives" (Boehmer 3).

I intend now to further scrutinise the positioning of Aboulela's writing within Muslim and postcolonial writing frames. In *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English*, Malak points out that nearly "all the early Muslim writers in English and most of the current ones are either from there [the India-Pakistan-Bangladesh subcontinent] or have their roots there" (2). As a Sudanese writer, however, Aboulela brings further diversification to the national cultures of Muslims writing in English. The different national cultures from which they come have ensured that such writers will view Islam from a variety of angles. Under the wide umbrella of Islam this diversity has the potential to obfuscate the fixed stereotypical images of Islam and Muslims found in Orientalist and colonial discourse, providing Islam with its global dimension.

Malak finds that "the first narrative ever published by a Muslim in English is a short story entitled 'Sultana's Dream' written by Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and published in 1905 in India" (2). It is significant that a Muslim woman, Rokeya Hossain, wrote the first Muslim narrative in English. By publishing *Minaret* in 2005, Aboulela completes a century of female writing about Islam. If Aboulela's Sudanese culture challenges the fixity

of Muslim identities, her feminism as a fiction writer challenges the stereotypical assumptions of women's oppression in Islam. Malak writes: "the maturity and sophistication of Muslim women's writing are a definitive answer to the biased stereotypical images that we continually come across about the backwardness and enslavement of Muslim women" (13).

Perhaps more significantly, Malak argues that the first Muslim novel written in English is anti-colonial: Ahmed Ali's novel, *Twilight in Delhi*, was published in 1940. Malak believes that Ali's novel projects "the perspective of a colonized culture and civilization that had hitherto been denied the opportunity to speak for itself" (19). From the beginning, then, the Muslim novel plays its postcolonial role and represents its "colonized culture and civilization". Malak, moreover, observes some similarities between Ali and Chinua Achebe. "Like Achebe's attachment to the Igbo culture of Nigeria, Ali's allegiance to the Muslim civilization of India is committed but never uncritical" (27). It could be argued, building on Malak's observations, that the Muslim novel is, historically, postcolonial due to its representation of a "colonized culture and civilization", namely, Islam. Further, the Muslim novel's postcoloniality is similar to Achebe's in being "at once self-representative and self-critical" (27). Within this context, Aboulela's fiction could be read as a continuation of Ahmed Ali's project of voicing the "colonized culture and civilization" of Islam.

Through *Minaret* and the characters of Najwa and Tamer in particular, Aboulela not only gives a voice to Muslims, she writes against the colonial portrayal of Islam and Muslims as well. She believes that colonialism is the reason behind the current clash between Islam and the West. "People were suspicious of the British wanting to change their culture. So this clash between Islam and the West actually first happened in Muslim countries, when the colonizer came, not when Muslims started coming to Britain" (Allfree,

10). In addition, she thinks that the media coverage of Islam is still influenced by these stereotypes. "The coverage of Islam in the media is becoming more sophisticated and there is more access to knowledge. [...] Still, though, there is a stereotype of Islam as a religion of violence and oppression of women" (Aboulela 27). *Minaret* is written with the aim of refuting this "stereotype of Islam as a religion of violence and oppression of women". She tackles the issue of violence through the personality of Tamer and the issue of women oppression through Najwa.

Like any other piece of postcolonial literature, Aboulela's *Minaret* insists on the differences between the reality of Islam and Muslims on one hand, and the assumptions made about them in colonial discourse on the other. In colonial discourse, according to Leela Gandhi, "the 'West' attempts systematically to cancel or negate the cultural difference and value of the 'non-West'" (16). As a result, postcolonial writers resist this colonial attempt by "emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre" (Ashcroft et al 2).

Aboulela's depiction of Tamer and Najwa as different from western culture and different from colonial assumptions is postcolonial. In contrast to the colonial assumptions about fundamentalism, although Tamer is a conservative Muslim, he is not violent or anti-western. In fact, his western education and his appreciation of his American teachers led him to critique the anti-American feeling among Muslims. Najwa's personality and freely willed decision to wear the hijab in particular, on the other hand, confronts colonial assumptions regarding female oppression in Islam. In *Minaret*, Najwa appears freer and more independent after becoming religious in a portrayal that clearly resists the colonial one. Islam provides Najwa with peace, spiritual fulfillment, social life, a new identity, and dreams. To reiterate: this Islam is different from Islam's habitual representation in colonial

discourse. *Minaret*, in short, presents Islam and Muslims differently, and – it must eventually be concluded – postcolonially.

The portrayal of the hijab in *Minaret* is a clear example of Aboulela's method of challenging colonial assumptions regarding the position of women in Islam. A signally important subject in colonial discourse, the hijab, as I have suggested, has succeeded in convincing many people in the West of the inferiority of Islam. "For many westerners, the veil is a symbol of patriarchal Islamic societies in which women are assumed to be oppressed, subordinated, and made invisible" (Young 80). In dealing with these assumptions, Aboulela – by according the hijab its religious significance and context – appears to differentiate herself from those Muslim female voices that tend to think of the hijab traditionally, and as a sign of patriarchy.

Miriam Cooke, for example, in her book *Women Claim Islam* writes: "the veil symbolizes belonging to a religious community that is both patriarchal and powerful, but beyond it has many meanings. While some of these meanings are negatives, others are empowering" (Cooke 132). The first implication here is that the woman in Muslim communities is forced to wear the hijab by "patriarchal and powerful" currents. The second is that the hijab, especially because some of its "meanings are negatives", does not seem to belong to Islam. In short, Cooke believes that the symbolism of the hijab "is so saturated with patriarchal meaning that it is difficult to appropriate for feminist purposes" (136).

Minaret challenges this point of view. Najwa's freely arrived at adoption of the hijab in London directly after leaving Anwar contradicts the influence of the patriarchal and powerful community, reverses Cooke's view, and is thus an implicit criticism of it. In other words, where Cooke upholds freedom of choice and argues that powerful communities should not put pressure on women to wear hijab, Aboulela asserts that

freedom of choice is precisely what Najwa needs in order to do so. In complete contrast to colonial assumptions, the hijab in Aboulela's fiction "is an outer cover that far from hiding oppressed women is merely the public uniform of a variety of types: feminine looking, attractive, glamorous, motherly, Somali, Indian – all united by the occasion and a further implied emphasis: living in Britain" (Nash 48).

Another postcolonial characteristic of *Minaret* is its rejection of the superiority of western culture. Robert Young argues that postcolonialism "disturbs the order of the world. It threatens privilege and power. It refuses to acknowledge the superiority of western cultures" (7). *Minaret* adopts all these perspectives. "The order of the world" demands that people should leave their inferior cultures to join the supposedly superior western one. *Minaret* "disturbs" this order when Najwa refuses to accept the assumed "privilege and power" of western culture and embraces Islam. In point of fact, Islam in *Minaret* is the superior culture. However, western culture is not represented as entirely inferior. Tamer demonstrates an important positioning here.

His respect for his American teachers is an endorsement of the progressive values of western education. In addition, the stable life in London in comparison to the political chaos in Sudan (two coups within a few years) signals the progressive model of western politics. *Minaret*, then, both refuses the superiority of western culture but without ignoring its progressive aspects. It is clear that postcolonialism "seeks to change the terms and values under which we all live" (20). And that, as Edward Said argues, "The answer to Orientalism is not Occidentalism" (328). Nevertheless, while challenging colonialism, its images and stereotypes become Aboulela's primary concern, from this base she can strive to erect a harmonization of the issues that set Islam and the West against one another. This balance is also posited within the notion of the postcolonial.

The portrayal of Islam as a global religion in *Minaret* is, arguably, postcolonial due to its implication of the capacity of Islam to compete with western culture and limit its global domination. Implicit in the advocacy of the globalization of western culture is its superiority. *Minaret* challenges the uniqueness of globalised western culture by presenting Islam as a globalised religion. Muslim characters in the novel are from different countries. Moreover, the stable life pursued by Muslims in London portrays Islam as a religion which could be followed in the heart of the western culture. Aboulela, according to Ghazoul, “makes it possible to join South to North under the emblem of a universal quest, that of Islamic humanism” (76).

Muslims who live in the West are usually imaged either as culturally defeated or as strangers. They are either westernized or branded as fundamentalists. These two categorizations of Muslims are a result of the perceived inferiority of Islam and Muslims in the West. Aboulela's portrayal of Muslim characters, however, is different. Najwa, Tamer and all the Muslims who they meet in the mosque appear as conservative Muslims who function without feeling seriously affronted by western culture. Attending the mosque, praying, fasting and the like, are the tools they utilize to strengthen their affiliation to Islam and to inoculate themselves against the culture of the host country.

This Islam and these Muslims are strong. They are not westernized but neither are they strangers to the West. Islam here cannot be defeated. Said writes: “the main difficulty with Islam, however, was that unlike India and China, it had never really been pacified or defeated” (28-29). Islam in *Minaret* resists the domination of the western globalized culture. According to Ahmed, “the West, through the dominant global civilization, will continue to expand its boundaries to encompass the world; traditional civilizations will resist in some areas, accommodate to change in others. In the main, only one, Islam, will stand firm in its path” (264).

Postcolonial approaches also operate in *Minaret* in the manner in which the novel provides the voice of a Muslim self to challenge the voice of the Muslim other which is created from non-Muslim perspectives. The Muslims in *Minaret* are imaged by a Muslim. Aboulela articulates her own Muslim identity and experience through her characters. By doing so, she is one of those writers who, in Mike Philips' words, "write from inside the experience" (79). This "from inside" writing resists the writing from outside. Said notices that "since an Arab poet or novelist – and there are many – writes of his experiences, of his values, of his humanity (however strange that may be), he effectively disrupts the various patterns (images, clichés, abstractions) by which the Orient is represented" (291).

Writing about the self "disrupts" the colonial image of the other, and because of that, writing about the self becomes postcolonial. Aboulela clearly states her positioning of self in her writing about Islam. "I can never truly see [Islam] through western eyes. I am in this religion. It is in me" (Aboulela 76). The positive portrayal of Najwa's strong religiousness and affiliation to Islam could be linked with Aboulela's discovery of the importance of religiousness in her real life. Whenever Najwa justifies wearing the hijab or her spiritual fulfillment, Aboulela herself could be imagined justifying her own decisions. Aboulela can be seen in Najwa particularly in her experience with Islam.

This depiction of Muslims as the self is rare but celebrated by a writer like Malak who writes: "gone are the days when the representation in English of Muslims and their cultures was dominated by others" (7). We might argue that Aboulela's writing about the Muslim self appears closer to the reality than western assumptions. As Young puts it: "when western people look at the non-western world what they see is often more a mirror image of themselves and their own assumptions than the reality of what is really there, or of how people outside the west actually feel and perceive themselves" (2).

It is, however, noticeable that in spite of the postcolonial characteristics of *Minaret*, colonialism and resistance to it are not directly addressed in the novel. “The Islamic identity Aboulela articulates may be [...] empty of the ‘resistance’ element espoused by postcolonial theorists” (Nash, 48). Nevertheless, my argument is that the novel “resists” colonialism indirectly. The colonial discourse is marketed today within a western global culture. Colonialism and its adjectives like ‘colonial’ and ‘colonialist’ are old-fashioned terms. However, the domination that they originally once described is still alive. By the same token, resistance has developed new techniques of its own. Since culture is the field of the battle, *Minaret* resists the assumed inferiority of Islam and the assumed superiority of the West. *Minaret*, arguably, is an indirect critique of the indirect colonial discourse embodied in current western culture.

Religion as a Remedy for Displaced Identities

Muslims’ core subject of discussion in migration circumstances is doubtlessly their religious identity. Displacement in general, is expected logically to bring lots of changes at all levels of the displaced lives. Ironically, the majority of Muslim writers try to depict only the dark side of Muslim lives in the West without giving any credit to the positive conditions that only few of writers could transmit. Aboulela is one of the Muslim writers of the modern era who tries throughout her work, *Minaret*, to take another direction of exploring how life can be better anywhere if only the Muslim does not lose his or her own identity within a colored pot full of different identities and cultures. Tariq Ramadan is one of the influential Muslim figures. He tries, through his many works, to give revised and reread versions of what Muslim migrants need in order to live in more proper conditions. He has successfully presented a middle solution for Muslims to be far away from radical extremism and full assimilation in Western countries. This view is literally the best that can be suggested for both-sided integration: The integration of Muslims in the Western

cultures and the acceptance of Westerners to Muslims without prejudgments of Islam as terrorism and extremism.

Minaret is one of the novels that give birth to this view in literature through the development of its protagonist 'Najwa'. Najwa, in simple words, symbolizes the kind of a Muslim, male is or female, who finds his or her identity through religion after struggling very much in a non-linear line of a different life, in a different place, and with different people and ideologies. The journey for finding the Muslim migrant identity is the journey for finding God. This idea is also tacked In Nesrin Koç's research. She says "Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* portrays how faith can be used as a power that eases the trauma of migration, and in fact provides the individual with the sense of belonging and rootedness in the host country, and hence facilitating integration (34).

For most of the interviews made with Aboulela about *Minaret*, religion is the main reference. Due to her raising conditions like any Arab Muslim living the migration symptoms, Aboulela finds in distracted religious ties and homesickness a sensitive subject that can be only exposed trough writing. She claims that she discovers writing just when she is in need of something through which she can express her homesickness and unique history (35). In fact, this works as a kind of psychological treatment and relief. In the already mentioned book about Migration and literature, Frank says "I do believe that the Author, to some extent, colors his or her work" (15). This line fits perfectly the case of the case study's writer, Aboulela. This Sudanese author is a Muslim migrant who herself, experiences lots of incidents in her life that find place between the lines of *Minaret*. Leila and Najwa have different raising conditions. Leila has a Muslim family which supports and encourages her to know more about her religion. Her mother and grandmother create in her the passion of seeking for a happy life under Islam (56).

Unlike Leila, Najwa's family provides her with everything except an instinct religious awareness. Despite that both have many things in common. While answering one of the BBC World Club audience's questions, the writer confesses that her works cannot be deprived from her actual life because of the so many similarities in both. For *Minaret*, she says that her twenties are the period in which she experiences shifting and displacement from Sudan to Britain, and the same happens to Najwa (Interview).

In the arena of International Migration and Ethnic Relations, the converted Swedish writer Anne Sophie Roald sees the contemporary relations between the West and the Islamic nations in a more understanding way. Through her book *Women in Islam: The Western Experience*, Roald states that the cultural happenstances between Muslims and Westerners boosted the kind of relationship both had in the past. She believes that recently there is a progress in elucidating Islam. Through this book, she tries to hypothesize the situation. "The Islamic presence in Europe", Roald states "is perceived as a homogenous mass" (76)

This contradiction between "homogeneity" and "mass" holds a deep meaning that simply summarizes the nature of the effect left by the mixture between Islam with all its variations and the other religions in the West. Despite the clash that may happen in such situations, there is always a way for a compromise (3). Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* is the best evidence of this kind of relationship because it delivers a good spirit of finding inner peace in exile (Koç, 1). Aboulela is described in Koç's work as a "faith-driven" fictionist because of the religious tendency that she most of the time explores as a crucial theme (4).

For some Muslims, the consciousness of their religious identity does not appear till they contradict themselves to the Westerners (Roald, 5). This process of identification by contradiction is one of the postcolonial processes in the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. This idea takes different ways in the novel. But more deeply, feeling the

faith itself and understand it needs more than a contradiction by name and generalities. In an interview set by the BBC Channel with *Minaret*'s writer, a very important observation noted by Harriet Gilbert, the Channel's interviewer, says "Muslim women friends try to persuade her to take shelter in her religion. A religion from which so far she has been semidetached" (Interview). The protagonist's decision to follow the steps of the Muslim community in London is a choice that she unconsciously feels right about. Aboulela guides her to find refuge in her religion. Indeed, the environment that is prepared for Najwa to take off from where her sadness and sufferance left her is motivating. All these women, who seem for Najwa extremely happy by having everything they may dream of, support her to follow their steps to get by the end what they got. Religion is the solution that this writer suggests as a cure for her most traumatized character in this novel. Najwa finds rescue and comfort in her understanding to her religion while her brother does not because his denial to the existence of such a miracle of a faith to do. Aboulela does not miss commenting on one of the questions that proposes another substitute to cure Najwa rather than religion. She says:

At the end, she relies on God and on her faith. That's how my logic went. And I thought that if this were a secular feminist novel, then at the end she would rely on her career and maybe her friends after her disappointment with men. In *Minaret*, on the other hand, I wanted it to be that at the end she's relying on her faith rather than a career. (Chambers).

Throughout the novel, the author gives both characters of Najwa and Omar equal accessibility to a free choice that is set along with many other possibilities. Attractively, the same background of Najwa and Omar ends totally in a different way. "The book shows that she does change, she does move and that instead of self-destruction or something, she

does actually survive this trauma” (Interview). The way her life goes is different from her twin who ends up in prison, detained of drugs.

Interestingly, *Minaret* is full of such examples of this kind of identification. The whole story is a kind of a journey for searching Najwa's identity. This journey holds other minor journeys that similarly aim at discovering the self but result in dramatically, losing it. Omar is mainly the one-to-one opposition to Najwa.

Anne Roald believes that “Religious and ethnic identity cannot be isolated from other social influences” (9). In applying this case on Muslim migrants in Britain, the social influences are positive to the character of Najwa from the Muslim community that she interacts with regularly, that is why she can gain a positive view to religion and by this embracing its identity whereas, her counterpart character, Omar, the negative social influences drive him to no sense of religion. The family structure in *Minaret* is not strong even when all the members are all right. In one of the instances Najwa mentions her father as a careless and not quite responsible for the whole family. She says “It always surprised me how Baba deliberately forgot my mother's schedule, how his eyes behind his glasses looked cautious and vague when he spoke of her” (16).

As mentioned in Majed Hasan's study, Waïl Hassan considers Aboulela's novel as a picture through which readers may see a crucial turning point in the future of Sudan. “The failure of secularism and re-emergence of Islam in the Arab world is ... the background to the achievement of Aboulela's fiction” (45)

Aboulela could effectively break the negative rhythm that came out as a result of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. Majed believes that the Fatwa altered by Khomeini after the revolution against the way Salman Rushdie's debatable work helps in forming very judgmental opinions towards Islam as being the string that holds Muslims' freedom

(Majed, 196). “ Writers have seemed free enough to image British Muslims as victims to a religion which cannot match with Western values” (197).

Regardless to the controversy around *The Satanic Verses*, the Rushdie case has been used with manipulative intentions to uncover the vein of the British Muslims. In one hand, some writers who find in *The Satanic Verses* a source for their depictions share a huge part and responsibility of producing nonsense generalizations. Amine Maalouf is no exception after he released his *Samarkand* (251). In the other hand some others stick to the line and keep their eyes focused on the bright side of the displaced identities in their literary works like Aboulela.

Anwar, the black point in Najwa's memory, represents a kind of a person who uses his mind to control the others' views even if his ideas or beliefs are wrong. *Minaret*, figuratively presents the literary grounds of a concrete reality. There are different kinds of fictitious characters and real writers who mainly split up to two categories. The ones who act positively and effectively in any society they live in and the others who just cannot determine which attitude to take.

The history of Sudan has a lot to do with religion. The coming of Islam to Sudan marks a huge shift in the way it was taking. Meanwhile, its presence makes the country split up to those who are eager to raise it and make the whole government a subject to. According to Berry:

During the fourteenth century, Islam was introduced from Egypt. Together with migrations from the north, Islam gradually changed the nature of Sudanese society. Islam facilitated the division of the country into northern and southern halves, one Arab and Muslim, the other African and animist, a division that persists today (120)

1956 is the year when the British comes out of Sudan leaving it struggling between the people and the government fight for power (xxvii). In 1963, Sudan engaged in a continuous range of conflicts and civil wars. “The attempt to impose Islam and Sharia on the South aroused Southerners to rebel against the central government” (xxvii). In 2005, the year when the novel was published, Sudan gained an inner armistice after 22 years of instability and clashes especially for Southerners. One of the major events in the history of Sudan is the civil war in Darfur that took place in 2003. This war results massively in the country’s falling apart due to the bloody effects. “Darfur became mired in violence in 2003, when the government of Sudan launched a brutal crackdown on a rebellion in the region” (De Waal 65). Meanwhile, the novel’s setting in the same era reflects a kind of a fall down for the Sudanese in general. Aboulela’s main character Najwa’s profession is being a maid. Despite the fact that *Minaret*’s 2003 is set in London, the reflection of the turning out is very evident. The year 2011 witnesses a full independence of the southern part of Sudan from its Northern one (Berry xxvii).

Theologically, Sudan is a country with many religions, adherences and diversions. Islam is not the only religion there but it constitutes a great deal of Sudan’s population. As it is defined in this book Sudan: a study country:

Islam, Christianity, and traditional African religions are all found in Sudan. Perhaps three-fourths of Sudan’s population is Muslim. Sudanese are uniformly Sunni, although many are adherents of Sudan’s Sufi brotherhoods—Ansar, Khatmiyyah, and Qadiriyyah. Most live in the North, East, West, and Center, where they constitute more than 90 percent of the population. (xxviii)

The case of education in Sudan was not appropriate, since the civil wars and the inner conflicts the country had, affected heavily almost every aspect and education was no exception. People living in the North had more access to be better educated than the South

(Berry xxix). This for sure, ends up in drawing more serious borders than the already settled between the North and South of Sudan. These borders are of classes and different kinds of disparities.

Tariq Ramadan is one of the most important thinkers and defendants of Islam in the West. He wrote so many books through which, through which he tries to make Islam in its simplest way to Muslims and Westerners to understand from where they stand. In his book *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* he says:

Death, life, experiences, ordeals, pain, solitude, as well as joy and happiness, are so many lessons along the road to reconciliation. Wounds, separation, tears, as well as smiles, “say” something: if you live in unawareness, they touch you; with God, they guide and lead you. Where to? Where to then? Toward Him, toward you, close to him in you. Such is the most beautiful and the most difficult lesson of Islam: you find God only by rediscovering your own nature...ordeals drive you not to your limits but to your origin, where “the need for Him” has its roots. Ordeals will lead you back, whether you like it or not, to what you are, to the essence from which He has formed you. Exile will take you home (139)

This coming back to where once born and belongs is what brings you in front of a new purification and self-understanding that can never be at its best in good circumstances. Problematic situations and dilemmas that any person is open to at anytime is what bring the real identity of this person. Conventionally, it is known that only hardships and adversities enable the self to recognize and discover itself through knowing the essence of its creation. Knowing God equals knowing the self (viii). Tariq Ramadan's words express the whole essence of this chapter that is finding the comfort if not the healing in one's religion and God.

The origin of creation of all mankind is brittleness, dependence, need, breakability and after all innocence. Keeping or finding out the virgin identity that is already created pure and very “fragile” is the compass for arriving to self-consciousness and inner peace. The acceptance of that fragility is an important part within the process of finding the self. At the end of the novel, Najwa says “I am not surprised. It is a natural decay and I accept it” (Aboulela 421). This kind of peace with the self and the world and inner satisfaction do not happen right after the problems and tragedies she has because her identity is crowned with maturity, faith and social support. *Minaret*, the novel, is intended to be called *Innocent Again*.

In the already mentioned BBC interview, Leila Aboulela talks about the choice of the title. As an answer for Harriet Gilbert's question about ‘*Minaret*’ as a title, Aboulela says “When I was writing the book, my working title was *Innocent Again*” (Interview). But due to publication issues, she was asked to change it. Aboulela once again came up with “*The Minaret in the Park*” as a denoting title for the novel's essence. Finally, both of the writer and the publisher compromise to come up with only “*Minaret*” as the final title for the novel (Interview). The author's first intuition to call it “*Innocent Again*” is a result of the impression this novel left on the readers as well as the writer. This is illustrated through Najwa's words, “I had given in to him but he had been wrong, the guilt never ever went away. Now I wanted a wash, a purge, a restoration of innocence. I yearned to go back to being safe with God. I yearned to see my parents again, be with them again like in my dreams” (367)

Coming back to the novel, if we try to take off Najwa from the paper borders, she is born, as any other human being, an innocent child, then with the various experiences she lives in her life, the pure and innocent side in her got fogged, at the end the fog is revealed only by coming back to where she belongs ‘God’. Tariq Ramada formulates this state as

having to admit modestly the passiveness of the human's willing in order to get to know God, therefore, the self (Ramadan viiii).

“Go...you will return” (Qtd. In Ramadan viii), this is a very common sentence that Muslims still use to denote the inevitability of returning to God's will. Najwa, by the end of the novel says something which is very important. “No matter what, I will return. This is my base and goal; everything else is variable” (Aboulela 421). While Najwa is praying with Shahinaz, another character, in Najwa's house, she alters these words. They convey a very deep meaning if coined with Rabaa Adawiya's statement (Qtd. In Ramadan viii). As if they are a comment or a response to what Adawiya says. Aboulela, either consciously or unconsciously, proves the unavoidable ending through Najwa's experience in the novel.

Muslims of the world are the same whatever their nationality or culture is. They are on the same track, believing in the same God, looking for the same aim, defending the same set of principles and values, and having the same identity (Ramadan 9). Muslim communities form an inseparable part of any society in the world. Living together or sharing their religious and day-to-day interests makes life easier for them especially in a foreign country that is culturally different from theirs. For instance, the novel presents a very good example of Muslim communities living together in Britain where the identification first and most important is Islam. “This one looks Indian, as if the hijab had made me forget she was Indian and now she is reminding me - in the sari with her flowing hair and jewellery, she is relaxed, traditional” (282). The scarf and the respect of Islam to women made Najwa not racist to other's nationalities as if the scarf makes them all alike under one identical identity.

In the novel, the fate that Najwa and Omar have at last is due to the different decisions each made. While Omar rebels against everything and without any awareness, he wants to assimilate directly in the British society, Najwa finds it wiser to seek for the help

of the other Muslim Communities living in London. 'Wafaa' is the first who offers her help to Najwa after she lost her mother. This Character of Wafaa in the novel, in fact, is very impressive. She is the one who washes her mother's dead body before her funeral.

She teaches Najwa what she has to do in such circumstances. She offers her and kind of help when she invites her to attend some religious classes in the Mosque (Aboulela 207). Tariq Ramadan discusses the two extremist views. He says that there are Muslims living in the West but rejecting totally any of the Western productions or features. Others do heavily count on the Western side losing meanwhile their Muslim origins. These two extremes are not preferred by many as by the most effective thinker of the twenty first centuries, Tariq Ramadan. Through *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, he proposes holding the stick from the middle; neither from the too far right nor from the too far left (32-33). This enables those Muslims of benefitting from the West and keeping their own religion safe from the external variables.

British Muslim's most problematic issue is convincing the British government to pay the state financial backing for their schools as it is the case for other minorities' schools in Britain (6). This problem, according to Fetzer and Soper, increases more after the terrorist attacks all over the Western countries. Politically, the aftermath of 9/11 bombings complicates the case of Muslim migrants even more because of the questioning of the accessibility of these terrorists' training secretly and surreptitiously within the targeted society (4). Believing this excuse or not will not change the reality of threat that some extremist or manipulator groups put Britain and the whole Europe under. The establishment of Islam in is strong regardless to the different attempts of the usual Western anti-Islamic sentiments. The preliminary education for Muslims, is quite different from any other ethnic group, for this British Muslims have the chance to study in a suitable circumstances. This progress is tackled also by Tahir Abbas in his book *Muslim*

Communities under Pressure in Britain: "It is worth mentioning that there are at present over eighty Muslim independent schools in Britain" (3)

Despite all these confrontations, Britain could achieve some progression concerning Muslim minorities living there. The whole process of giving more rights to Muslims is slow in its efficiency. This point, however, is taken as a shortage in the British policy making towards minority communities (Abbas 4). Taking into consideration, Britain's politics is unique with its 'Slowly but surely' policy. This means that the time policies take to be on the practical ground does not matter if they lastly do happen. According to the same source, "Britain embraced multiculturalism in state-supported schools in the 1970s; the curriculum in required religious-education classes includes an extensive treatment of not only Christianity, but also Judaism, Islam, and Sikhism" (4)

Apparently, Islam, along with other religions, finds a place in the new multicultural British arena since 1970s and paves the way for some important modifications that suit only Muslims who are taken into consideration. Concerning this point, Fetzer and Soper stated that wearing the headscarf in state schools is allowed in condition it fits the colour of the school uniform (4). The year 1998 also witnesses one of the crucial amendments concerning the relationship with Muslim minorities. Two schools are given the state authorization to be fully funded by the state (5). Concerning the issue of Multiculturalism policies, Britain is inspired by the American model to try to put the country in a diversity mood for the benefit of migrants because of its considerable experience with cultural diversity (6)

In earlier times, Britain had a good impression about Muslims in general. Fetzer and his friend mentioned that arguing that the colonial history that gathers the British with Muslims leads to a more acceptance of the coexistence between them. "Jorgen Nielsen notes that "the British inherited a positive image of Islam because of their experiences in

Muslim parts of the Empire” (Fetzer and Spore 26). The first generation of Muslims in Britain is marked by observable attempts to hide their Islamic identity so hardly in order not to be excluded from the British society (31). However, this case does not last with the coming of the following generations where some maturity sense has been thrown in the British atmosphere. Aboulela's literary attempt shows a great part of this by raising the exciting experience that her protagonist had.

Islam, for Croth and Sousa-Posa, has many meanings. It steps up its religious value to transcend to all the forming structures of life. It makes individuals' lives; it governs and protects their families; and it builds the societies they live in. Following the principals of Islam and its holy book Quran in the way it should be, will form a healthy society that nothing can break it down (39). This is a very important rule in Islam. Whenever it is fulfilled neither Displacement nor discrimination, nor marginalization will have effect on Muslims. Displacement, therefore, will have less or even no echo on the Muslim migrants' personality or identity by keeping this unchangeable religious mentality that goes not to the extremes but to the place where the Islamic identity cannot be touched or negatively influenced in a time they may live free and happy.

Muslims, actually, must update their lives consistently in order to purify themselves from sins and mistakes. This kind of inner reform is clear with Najwa when saying “This was the scrub I needed. Exfoliation, clarifying, deep-pore cleanse - words I knew from the beauty pages of magazines and the counters of Selfridges. Now they were for my soul not my skin” (Aboulela 377). This is the cleansing process that shows more maturity and self-discovery that Tariq Ramadan already talked about.

In case this process does not happen, an emptiness and gloominess would come instead. Najwa, the Sudanese princess and the British maid, is lonely and empty inside when she gets everything, but becomes satisfied and friendly when she lost what she does

not mostly need. Najwa lacked the feeling of being important within her family members and boyfriend. She seems unconfident and socially unprepared to face the others and argue, especially with Anwar, the one she fell for. In one of the instances of superficiality that she has while living in her homeland, Najwa says "I had an admirer who kept riding his bicycle past the front of our house. Sometimes he came past three or four times a day. He had hopeful eyes and I despised him. But, like now, when the road was empty, I felt disappointed" (17), this shows the spiritual emptiness. Though she has everything that any girl in her age and place dreams of, she keeps looking for other things that may satisfy her inner desires and this proves the hollowness that she and her brother are living in.

Islamophobia is one of the negative features of the Western societies that emerge as a reaction against Muslim presence within their communities. Despite its huge impact on Muslims writings, this theme is not the core of Aboulela's attention in her works, especially *Minaret* where she shadows this theme. Nesrin Koç's in her research states some of the most important cases through which Islamophobia is expressed in Literature. She believes that after the controversy caused by Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, the fear and hatred of Islam raises more and more within the non-Muslim societies. Moving to other levels where Islamophobia is detected, Koç mentioned, "the Gulf War, 9/11 and 7/7 London bombings "these, according to her, "initiated a chain of failure to integrate discourse" (13).

According to the statistics stated in this book, Muslims living in Britain are of a sizeable amount. In 2001, there is a census asking about the British citizens about their religion. It locates 1.5 million Muslims living in Britain (Waters and Zukerman¹⁶). This amount increases with time to form now a very important component of the British society.

Aboulela says in the interview with Harriet Gilbert that there is a common thing in the Arab countries like Sudan that the most religious category of society is the elders, and the youth live far away from their religious borders (Interview). This, in fact, is just a generalization and there are always exceptions, but still, the novel addresses a kind of what she claims. In an instance where Najwa is in a disco hanging out with her friends and Omar, she is dancing with a boy and this does not seem to bother her brother, this shows the disappearing of the Islamic values among the young Muslims living in a Muslim society.

Readers of *Minaret* may trace this feeling of desperate youth in the character of Omar from the beginning of the novel till the end but not with Najwa. Najwa after all had an awakened conscience. She has always a feeling of guilt that makes it easy for her to know the right way by the end. In a conversation between Najwa and her best friend Randa about praying and fasting, they appear as knowing nothing about the instinct principals of Islam as already tackled by Tariq Ramadan; yet, one sentence that Najwa says in this conversation makes her in a better situation because of her feeling of guilt. She says, "What do we know? We don't even pray. Sometimes I was struck with guilt" (47). This is like a first phase in her life which is a princess in Sudan. The second phase makes her a lower class citizen but more knowledgeable about her religious identity. She starts to pray and fast and more than this thinking of making a pilgrimage to Mecca, not for personal interest as she was before: "I had prayed during Ramadan, during which I fasted mostly in order to lose weight and because it was fun. I prayed during school exams to boost my grades" (246).

Religion perception is so different between both twins. It is evident and still even after Omar is jailed. Najwa attempts many times to show him the right exit for his problems counting on God, but he is aggressively against such topics about religion and

faith. She tries for twelve years to change him but she could not because unlike her, he could not confess his subjectivity and fragility that God creates him with. Najwa, in this context, says "If Baba and Mama had prayed, I say, if you and I had prayed, all of this wouldn't have happened to us. We would have stayed a normal family" (148).

Najwa starts to feel the beauty in her religion in every step she makes towards God. When she put the head scarf, she felt gentle and "invisible" to the other's negative critical eyes that used to bother her when she was without it (377). The word "invisible" as its meaning to the text suggests and as Aboulela's claim, is used positively to mean protection from outside (Interview). She tastes the feeling of praying and reciting the Quran (144).

While rejecting the Western culture then adopting its values, Anwar, Najwa's boyfriend, stands in an unclear and doubtful place. This character presents duplicity in thinking and behaving. He speaks about Islam but he does not practice its pillars, he speaks about nationalism, but he is impressed with the West, he hates aristocrats but he wants their money. For that, Najwa describes him as, "He smoked every day but drank occasionally. He smoked only cigarettes and didn't pray. He never fasted in Ramadan; he did not see the point of it" (57). Anwar in this novel symbolizes the double-faced figures that use reason to manipulate and deceive people. Although, he causes more injury to Najwa, she could get rid of his manipulating and wrong views by the end. Aboulela through Anwar tries to highlight the negative perception of Arabs to themselves. She writes:

Arab society is hypocritical,' he would say, with double standards for men and women. I remembered how Omar was allowed to smoke and drink beer and I was not. The seedy parties he went to without taking me. I had taken these things for granted, not questioned them. Anwar told me that most of the guys in university

used to visit brothels. Then they would heat up their sister if they so much as saw her talking to a boy. (272)

The “minaret” is a symbol in itself that shows the right path Najwa, the protagonist, took in her life. She says “We never get lost because we can see the minaret of the mosque and head home towards it” (319). The sentence explains the whole essence of this chapter. Minaret, therefore, symbolizes the light that brought the migrant of this case study to the right path after she lost it in Sudan. London too may be seen as the ice that turned to be the eraser of her mistakes and sins, literally and figuratively. “Wash my sins with ice” (223). Through all this, one may believe that this moderation of religious adoption of Muslim migrants helps, definitively in healing their cultural differences struggles and having back their lost identity. Interestingly, what Tariq Ramadan suggests as theories of the best integration, Aboulela put it in a literary form and she succeeds in doing so.

Conclusion

Exile, in this chapter, takes two forms. It proves to be a provoker of a messy and unfixed life for some, and an excellent exchange for others. The analysis of Minaret, therefore, depends on the analysis of the characters in a help of Frank Soren ideas and surely Harris Marvin's views. Through the social, political, economic, and cultural changes that mastered the scene of Najwa's life, interacted all to revive a character's identity and destroys another's. Accordingly, the process of change occurs not only on an individual level but on the whole surrounding scene; it is determinism in the continuation and progression of societies. This change, interestingly, may bring different outcomes to the same society either positive or negative; either placement or displacement. This variation is explained very well in the book of Farank Soren: Migration and Literature, despite the fact that he devotes his book's main chapters to highlight other authors'

contributions in this field. It is of a great source to form the background for analyzing ant literary text of this kind.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This thesis began with an attempt to understand the nuances embedded in the perennial phenomenon of displacement and its representations throughout history. This historical profiling of the concept of exile helped to elucidate how the modern conception of exile has diverged from its conventional sense in the face of multiculturalism and mass migration.

The study of characterization in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *My Name is Salma*, *Minaret* and *Brick Lane* revealed that exile is an enriching experience that helps to construct new meanings and discover new or buried truths about one's history and identity. This might be justified by the round trip undertaken by Salma who decides to go back to her motherland in order to see her daughter but only to discover that their hostland is more homely than their homeland.

The four protagonists at work here have different experiences of othering and hyphenation, yet they all offer resistance as panacea for identity problems and leave no room for another perspective. While Najwa as a Muslim woman suffers from segregation because of the veil and her religious affiliation, Karim and Salma are discriminated against because of their race and Nazneen because of her national attachment. There are many similarities between Najwa, Karim and Nazneen. The three are hyphenated British who grow up in an environment they did not really choose and are forced to inherit the losses of their parents' displacement.

The female protagonists examined in this work create a certain distance between themselves and their families in exile in order to form their identities independently of any familial influence. Salman, Najwa and Nazneen come from countries that celebrate patriarchy and resign women to secondary roles and negative identities and hence the protagonists' feminist call for freedom and emancipation.

The narrative point of view in these novels corresponds to the sociological contemporary change regarding exile. Quite understandably, the authors do not trust an omniscient point of view, instead they call upon different characters to narrate different episodes of the whole story and let the reader decide what attitude to hold on different issues.

Exile in this work is considered as a journey towards newness that is essential in learning about one's otherness. However, this is done in reverse i.e., instead of moving from the homeland to the hostland, they have already found themselves living in a hostland. The feeling that their respective parents decide to exile on their behalf engenders skepticism within their minds as to whether the decision to leave Sudan, India or Bangladesh for the United Kingdom was appropriate. Therefore, Najwa and Nazneen go back to their motherlands in the hope of being able to decide by themselves whether to settle in their homelands or self-exile like their parents. The characters do not trust their parents' experiences and instead of trusting ready-made information about their homelands, they choose to form their own vision about them by returning to the past.

Although willfully leaving her homeland and ultimately choosing to definitively settle in the United Kingdom, Salma got at two important truths. First, the present is steeped in history and the past is a major constituent in the shaping of one's identity. Second, the plight of her family as well as hers is not her culture but is forced by man-made traditions in her homeland. Therefore, Salma's self-exile does not call for a sense of loathing for her mother culture that is not that "bad" after all and hence her decision to transplant it into the hostland. By contrast, Karim condemns his race for his plight and is trapped into thinking that change is possible. Striving for that change, Karim does not want the past to intrude on the shaping of his new and futuristic self.

While Salma and Nazneen turn a deaf ear to stereotypical discourses as regards their cultures and successfully create hybrid identities, Karim submits to the white supremacist discourse that forces him to become a renegade who refuses to give any meaning to his identity. Therefore, the process of identity making for Karim becomes the *sine qua non* of racial transformation.

In an attempt to discuss hegemony and resistance throughout these works, Gramsci's notion of hegemony and counter-hegemony has been useful. In the narratives of Faqir, Ali, Aboulela, and Kureishi the female protagonists reject subordination and silencing and chafe against Western as well as local structures of oppression. They rewrite their family stories and national histories to counter the reductive hegemonic narratives produced by the West about them. The novelists are outspokenly critical of ethnic cleansing, hegemony and patriarchy.

Taking into account the imminent hostilities that are recorded in the history of the United Kingdom vis-à-vis Muslims and the visible identity markers of notably Najwa and Nazneen, assimilation is far from being an option but becomes a necessity. Following the British principle of ethnic cleansing and at first sight, the reader would expect Nazneen to be the first and most favorable to assimilate as long as she has no visible cultural markers and would expect Najwa to abandon the veil, but envisages no solution for Karim who has no control over his racial marker.

Surprisingly, no one of the characters abandons his/her cultural affiliations. Trapped between the "them" and "us", they renegotiate a third space of their own to occupy privileging neither the original culture nor the dominant British culture. Interestingly, this hybrid identity throughout which they define themselves compels them to resist the contrastive binaries dictated by either culture that seeks to align them to one without the other.

The writers ultimately present home as a space that their protagonists inhabit without sticking to place-bound memories as their parents. The characters thrive on the diasporic hybrid third space they create and feel they belong in. Although, the globalized world celebrates cross-culturalism and national boundaries have theoretically become meaningless, the postmodern exile cannot individuate without a national affiliation that necessitates a journey back to the homeland. And it is this spatial relocation that fills in the historical gaps. So the classification of the postmodern exile experience as either spatial or temporal is impossible because geography is naturally the permanent faithful companion of history. Thus, they present their exile experiences in the form of their nostalgia for their homelands that are historically more informative about their identities than the hostland.

It was in the scope of the present thesis to highlight the significance of ethnic British writing as a reactionary literature and the way it protects us from what Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie names “the danger of a single story.” I have come to the same conclusion as Adichie that reading ethnic British books makes the reader feel overwhelmed with shame as s/he realizes that the public mind has been controlled by the British media coverage about Muslims. In fact, Adichie rightfully explains that the West creates a single story by showing a people as one thing and only one thing over and over again and that is what they become in the public mind. The single story is fraught with stereotypes that are not necessarily untrue but are compellingly incomplete and make the single story become the only story. Few examples are Westerners’ only story of Islam as a religion of terrorism and backwardness, and Muslims’ only story of Westerners as kuffar. To put it differently, identity must involve a multitude of determinants.

The other problem with the single story and stereotypes is that they emphasize how much different we are in a negative way, while many stories always remind us of how much equal we are. Henceforth, reading a single story about Sudanese exiles and a single

one about Arab exiles, a single one about Indian exiles and yet another single one about Bangladeshi exiles would make one believe that each case exile should be dealt with individually. Reading *The Buddha of Suburbia* might be regarded as an exemplar of “the danger of a single story” that has deprived Karim of the right to proudly narrate a different story. However, reading *Minaret*, *Brick lane* and *My Name is Salma* as three different stories whose protagonists take the same trajectory proves that the experience of exile that differs but its circumstances and the way of dealing with it that differ from one individual to another, and this is explained by the different dénouement of *The Buddha of Suburbia*.

In conclusion, the chief virtue of the novels at work here is to highlight the damaging effect of ethnic cleansing and the necessity embedded in revisiting the past in order to cure the identity malaise that is caused by exile. The authors insist on subverting the hegemonic discourse and negative portrayals of their national identities throughout a historiographic metafictional counter-discourse. The novelists; each in his/her own style, create a counter-discourse with regard to the representation of their respective homelands and identities. However, it should be noted that this counter-discourse does not necessarily qualify the already established historical Truth as false but claim that “there are only truths in the plural, and never one Truth; and there is rarely falseness per se, just other’s truths” (Hutcheon 109; emphasis in original). In this sense, the authors provide new truths about the experience of exile as well as other truths about their histories and identities. More specifically, Faqir commits *My Name is Salma* to presenting Arab diaspora from a hitherto unvoiced Arab British point of view. Aboulela dedicates *Minaret* to a representation of Muslim women and Islamness, while Kureishi presents *The Buddha of Suburbia* as a literary tract whose aim is to correct the biased opinion on black demonization, conceived as a truth by the white community, and calls for a humane understanding of black wrongdoers who are victims of negativity.

This particular counter-discourse is presented in the form of historiographic metafiction, to use Linda Hucheeon's label who assumes that "historiographic metafiction ... attempts to demarginalize the literary through confrontation with the historical, and it does so both thematically and formally" (108). In *Minaret*, Aboulela presents her historiographic metafiction throughout her presentation of new truths about life in Sudan.

Therefore, the significant contribution of these novels lies in their exploitation of the truths and lies recorded by History. These contested truths include the one about exile as established in the historical record by "authoritative" and "conclusive" voices like the one of Ovid. Thus, authors like Kureishi, Faqir, Aboulela and Ali put forward a new approach to reading literature and history in an inseparable manner so that the likely mnemonic failures of the historical record might be supplemented or revised by historiographic metafiction.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Biography of Fadia Faqir



Fadia Faqir was born in Amman, Jordan in 1956. She was raised by a conservative Muslim father, “a reluctant tyrant,” who required that his nine children practice Islam as devoutly as he did. At a young age, supported by her liberal Muslim mother, Faqir learned to bargain with her father, relinquishing a late-night curfew in exchange for freedom from wearing the Muslim veil, intended to protect the family from shame.

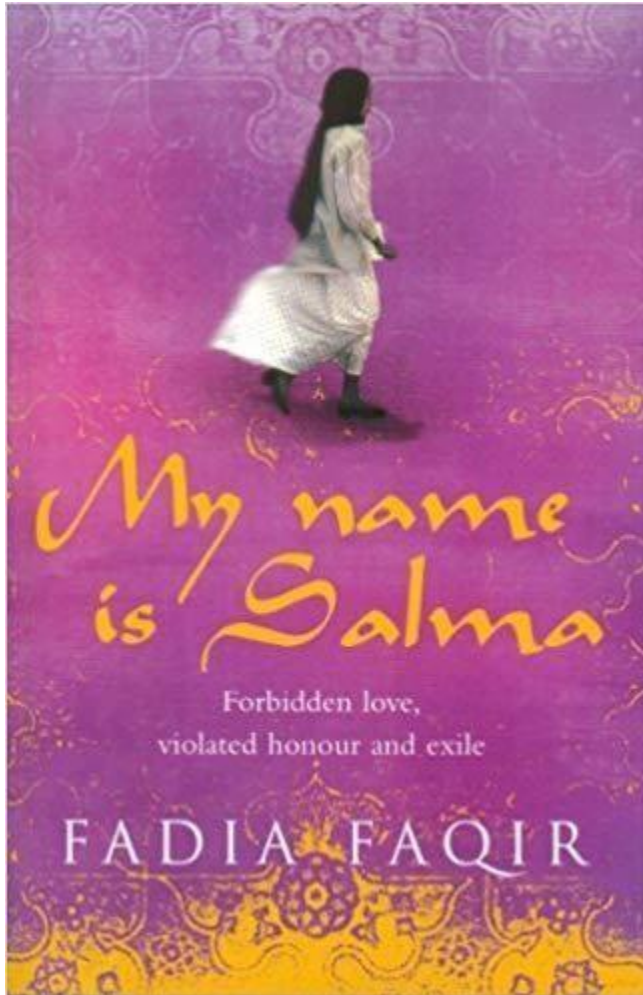
Appendices

Faqir was married at age 19 - an arranged marriage that was so miserably disharmonious that her father removed her from it only shortly after her son was born. The Jordanian government revoked Faqir's custody of her son, and this estrangement from her son is Faqir's biggest heartbreak in life. She has mended this emotional fracture in her own life through writing, and always makes a note dedicating her novels to her son.

Despite her father's traditional political and religious beliefs, he was committed to providing education opportunities for his children, and allowed Faqir to go to Britain where she received her MA in Creative Writing from Lancaster University. Interestingly, Faqir writes all her books in English. Faqir wrote her first novel, *Nisanit*, in 1987 and has since written *Pillars of Salt* (1996) and *My Name is Salma* (2007). She served as the senior editor of the Arab Women Writers Series, and won the New Venture Award for her work in 1995. In 2014, she published *Willow Trees Don't Weep* that negotiates the minefields of family, politics and religion and She is now a board member of *Al-Raida*, a feminist journal published by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World in Beirut. She is also a lecturer and coordinator at the Center for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at the University of Durham, in England, where she lives with her husband.

Appendix B

Synopsis of My Name is Salma



My Name is Salma (2007) tells the story of Salma, a teenage Bedouin who lives with her parents and elder brother, Mahmoud, in a small village in the Arab World called Hima. Her family is very conservative, consequently her care-free life ends when she gets pregnant out of This is a turning point in her life so as not to be killed by her father or brother; she takes refuge in the protective prison where she gives birth to a baby girl, Layla, who is snatched out of her arms by her cell mate.

After about six years in prison, a Lebanese nun decides to smuggle Salma to a convent in Lebanon. Ultimately, Salma is adopted by a British nun: Miss Asher who changes Salma's name to Sally and arranges to take her to Britain.

Salma tries to begin a new life in England but it is difficult for the unsophisticated Bedouin young woman to be so abruptly uprooted and reject her upbringing, confront a different culture and meld Salma into Sal or Sally, her English adopted names. She faces a new set of problems as an alien who has somehow to find a new identity and a life for herself. She yearns for her daughter, and is haunted by the trauma she suffered back home that she has hallucinations of a man who has come to kill her.

Salma gets married to an Englishman as a way of accommodating herself to the new country. However, after giving birth to her baby boy, she begins dreaming and imagining Layla calling her for help. After hesitation and in spite of the objections of her husband, she goes back to Hima to find that her daughter has been recently killed by her brother. While crying for her daughter, she is shot by her brother, too.

Appendix C

Biography of Hanif Kureishi

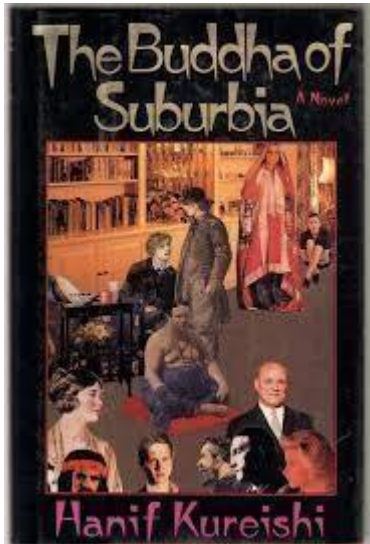


Hanif Kureishi is a very multi-faceted author; playwright, screenwriter, novelist and filmmaker, he was born in Bromley, UK, in 1954, the son of a Pakistani father and an English mother. He read philosophy at King's College, London. He began his career in the theatre, with his first play, *Soaking the Heat*, being performed at The Royal Theatre in 1976, followed by *The Mother Country* (1980) and *Outskirts* (1981). His first screenplay, for the film *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985, dir. by Stephen Frears), was nominated for an Oscar. Still in the 1980s he wrote the screenplay for *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987). He was awarded the Thames TV Playwright Award in 1981, for *The Mother Country* and the George Devine Award in 1982, for the play *Outskirts/Borderline*. In 1982 he became Writer in Residence at the Royal Court Theatre. The 1990s saw his debut as a novelist, with the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), for which he won the Whitbread first novel Award, followed by the novel *The Black Album* (1995). Throughout the 1990s he maintained his activity as a playwright, directed the film *London Kills Me* (which he also scripted) and wrote the screenplay for

My Son the Fanatic (1997), a film based on his short story with the same title, published in the collection Love in a Blue Time (1997). He also wrote two short stories collections, published in 1997 (Love in a Blue Time) and in 1999 (Midnight All Day). His recent work includes the novel, Something to Tell You (2008), the screenplay for the film The Black Album (adapted from his own play with the same title, 2009) and the film Le Week-End (2013). In 2007 he was awarded a CBE (Commander of the British Empire) by the Queen.

Appendix D

Synopsis of the Buddha of Suburbia



The Buddha of Suburbia, first published in 1990, is Hanif Kureishi's first novel and won him the Whitbread prize, after he had gained success in the theatre and in film – with the screenplays for *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and *Sammy and Rose Get Laid* (1987). As Kureishi has himself admitted, this is chiefly an auto-biographical novel, in the sense that it tries to describe his own situation as an English person who was struggling to find out his own identity “[a]s the son of an Indian father and English mother” (Kureishi, 2011b: 136).

The Buddha of Suburbia describes the life of young Karim living in the suburbs of London in the 1970s. He is desperate to escape from the suburbs to the city, which to him seems so far away that it might as well be in another country. He lives with his Indian father Haroon, English mother Margaret and little brother Allie, until his father leaves his wife for another woman, Eva. Haroon and Eva start organizing small gatherings for wealthy middle class people looking for spirituality, and suddenly Haroon becomes a Buddha-like figure for them, although he is actually a Muslim and

has never shown much interest in religion before. Haroon and Karim are able to retain a good relationship, largely due to Karim's appreciation for Haroon's new partner Eva and her son Charlie.

Karim is a self-conscious young man, who has to face name-calling and racism on a daily basis. However, his most pressing concern is his love-hate relationship with Charlie, his friend from school and Eva's son. Charlie is an idol for Karim, not only because he is very confident and from a middle-class family, but also because he is white, which allows him a different kind of freedom. Charlie eventually becomes an idol for others, as well, after starting a successful punk band. However, there are also other idols in the lives of Karim and other young people, namely rock stars. Popular culture is something that takes a significant amount of Karim's time, because it offers an alternative reality for the uneventful life in the suburbia. Furthermore, popular music is a common experience to the generation, uniting people who would normally have nothing in common.

Karim's life changes completely when he manages to get the leading role in *The Jungle Book*, which is the start of his acting career. He moves to London, the city of his dreams, where he is able to pursue roles in different theatres and try his wings at acting. A significant part of the novel is dedicated to the complicated relationship between Karim and Charlie, who switch from being lovers to friends to brothers. However, the most important theme in the novel is growth. Not only does Karim become an adult with a career in acting, but the lives of the other characters change significantly, as well.

Biography E

Biography of Monica Ali



Monica Ali was born in 1967 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, but grew up in England. Her English mother met her Bangladeshi father at a dance in northern England in the 1960s. Despite both of their families' protests, they later married and lived together with their two young children in Dhaka. This was then the provincial capital of East Pakistan which after a nine-month war of independence became the capital of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. On 25 March 1971 during this civil war, Monica Ali's father sent his family to safety in England. The war caused East Pakistan to secede from the union with West Pakistan, and was now named Bangladesh (Haq: 20-21).

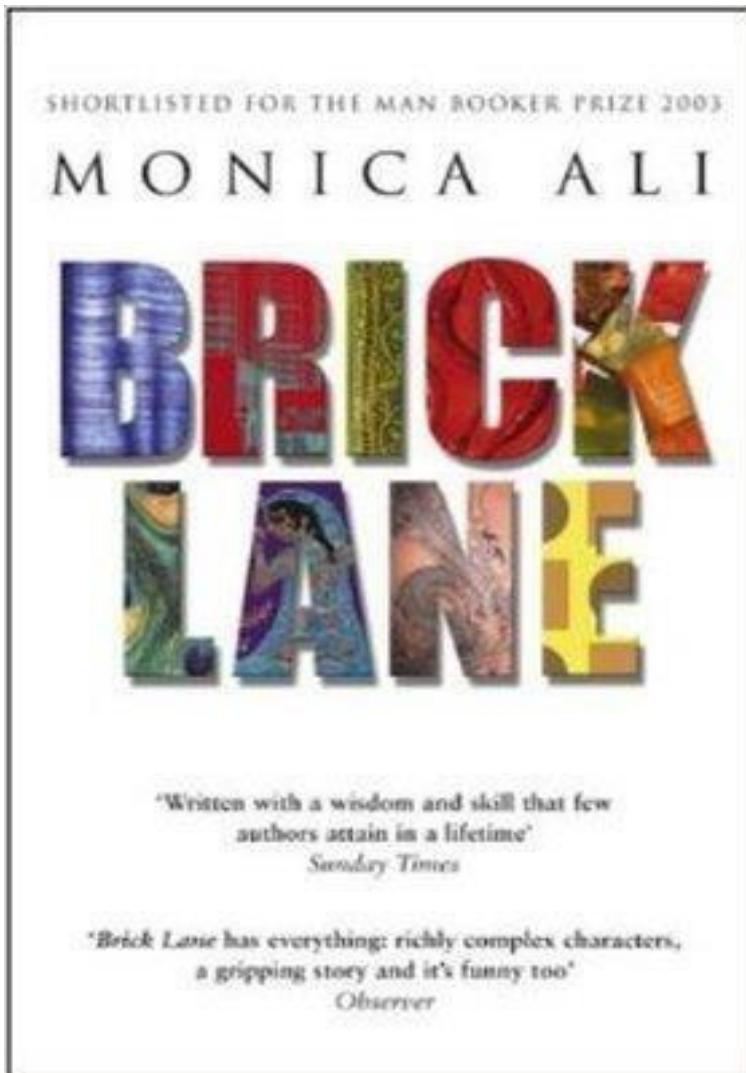
After studying philosophy, economy and politics, Ali started working in marketing. She has always been a reader, but did not begin to write before after the birth of her first child. Ali did this anonymously and for herself, getting critique from

other writers online. But when her grandfather died, she felt she could not put things on hold any longer and started working on her first novel, Brick Lane which was published in 2003. She published her second novel Alentejo Blue in 2006, and In the Kitchen in 2009.

Monica Ali lives with her husband, management consultant Simon Torrance, and their two children in south London. She has never gone back to Dhaka

Appendix F

Synopsis of Brick lane



Brick Lane is the story of Nazneen, a young Bangladeshi woman who moves to London following her arranged marriage to a much older man, and her sister, Hasina, whose life in Bangladesh, chronicled in letters to Nazneen, is one of instability, hard work, and heartbreak. In London, Nazneen struggles not only with bouts of crippling homesickness and a longing for her sister but a palpable loss of self. Cut off from family and everything dear and familiar, she lives like a displaced person, unseen and unseeing.

Having grown up in the small rural village of Gouripur where water buffalo and mynah birds were a regular part of daily life, Nazneen's new reality in London in the

low-income Tower Hamlets housing project is, at first, one of urban ugliness, isolation, and alienation. Even more than her home village's natural beauty, Nazneen misses her deceased mother, Rupban, a saintly, long-suffering woman whom Nazneen idolized as a girl for her piety and patience. It was Rupban who taught Nazneen to trust everything to God and fate and to never act out of her own desires, all contributing factors to Nazneen's decision to accept the marriage her father arranged for her to Chanu, an amateur academic Nazneen considers being old, unattractive, and bumbling.

In the early days of her marriage, Nazneen spends much of her time watching a neighbor she refers to simply as "the tattoo woman" drink beer. Nazneen invents a friendship with the woman, fantasizing about sitting down to tea with her and talking about their days. White, fat, and later institutionalized when she is found wallowing in her own filth, the tattoo woman symbolizes the depth of Nazneen's disconnection from her home and culture. When Nazneen begins to venture out of her apartment, she finds the city streets a maze of unfriendliness and teeming traffic. She watches the white faces of businessmen and the white legs of business women flash by her, and, sensing their judgement of her for being a confused woman in a sari, clearly lost and out of place, she "began to be aware of herself. Without a coat, without a suit, without a white face, without a destination. A leafshake of fear—or was it excitement?—passed through her legs. But they were not aware of her. In the next instant she knew it." Her self-awareness is short-lived. White disregard erases her, and Nazneen exists mostly as an extension of her husband and, later, as a mother to her children.

The self she constructs as a wife is on shaky ground from the start. Her marriage to Chanu is, in its initial stages, characterized by indifference and mild disgust. Their connection is almost nonexistent. He talks *at* her rather than *to* her, preferring to pontificate about Bangladesh's bloody and tragic history under British colonial rule than hear what his wife has to say. Nazneen hints that, like her friend, Razia, she would like

to learn English, but Chanu sees no reason for her to do so, thereby limiting her ability to set down roots in her new home.

When Nazneen becomes a mother to Raqib, an alert and beautiful little boy, she sets aside her own discontentment and anxieties and vows to devote herself to him. When, at one year old, he dies of a fever, Nazneen is again set adrift from herself. She had put all of her energy into nurturing her son. Her future is now a blank. The blank is filled for a time by her daughters, Shahana and Bibi, but as much as Nazneen cares for them, she worries she doesn't love them as much as she did Raqib, and her energy is drained by futile and exhausting efforts to keep the peace in the house, where fights are always erupting.

When Nazneen falls in love with Kamir, she admires how the young activist appears to her to be completely secure in his place in the world, and she finds his political passion and seemingly endless energy for pursuing social justice irresistible. She starts attending the meetings of his pro-Islamic youth group, the Bengal Tigers, and it would appear that she might find herself in the love and education Karim offers her. It is, of course, not that simple, and with so many people pulling her in different directions, Nazneen suffers a nervous breakdown. She has given herself away to her husband, her children, and her lover. There is nothing left over for herself.

It is only when Hasina writes to tell Nazneen that their mother did not die accidentally as they'd always been led to believe but, instead, committed suicide—the ultimate sin against the God Rupban always claimed to hold above all else—that Nazneen truly begins to inhabit herself fully. The news releases Nazneen from the burden of trusting in God and fate to determine her future, since Rupban obviously defied her own belief system and took decisive action, rather than waiting for Fate to determine when and how she would die. Rupban's action was self-annihilating. Nazneen's, in contrast, is self-affirming. She finds the courage to trust herself, telling

Karim she will not marry him and Chanu that, when he goes back to Bangladesh, he will have to go alone.

Nazneen's identity in Gouripur is determined by the beauty and wildness of the landscape, her close bond with Hasina, and her mother's morbid religiosity. When she relocates to London, she loses that self and must build another. This proves a difficult task because, in London, she is made invisible by her own outsider status. She wears the wrong clothes, doesn't know the language, and suffers from acute homesickness. Also, her identities as wife, mother, and lover all fail her at different times. Nazneen's transformation from submissive wife to independent woman is made that much harder by the fact that she is living in an unfamiliar place where both the customs and the very terrain are foreign and disorienting.

Appendix G

Biography of Leila Aboulela



Aboulela was born in 1964 in Cairo and grew up in Khartoum. She studied for a degree in Economics at Khartoum University, then moved to England to obtain a masters degree in Statistics at the London School of Economics. She worked as a part-time Research Assistant while starting to write.

She has had several short stories published in anthologies and broadcast on radio, and one of her short stories, 'The Museum', won the Caine Prize for African Writing in 2000. Her collection of short stories, *Coloured Lights*, was published in 2001.

She is also the author of three novels: *The Translator* (1999); *Minaret* (2005), which tells the story of Najwa, an aristocratic Sudanese woman forced into exile in Britain; and *Lyrics Alley* (2010), set in 1950s Sudan and inspired by the life of her uncle - a poet and songwriter.

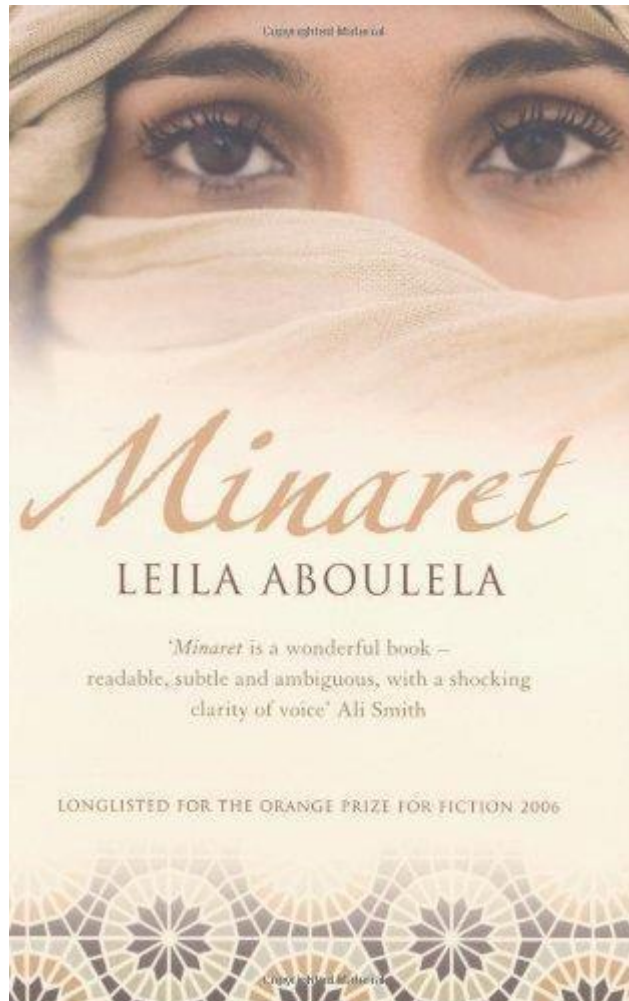
BBC Radio 4 broadcast a 5-part adaptation of *The Translator* in 2002, and a dramatization of 'The Museum'. She has also had several radio plays broadcast, including *The Mystic Life* (2003) and *The Lion of Chechnya* (2005).

Leila Aboulela lives between Abu Dhabi and Aberdeen.

http://www.literaryfestivals.co.uk/authors/leila_aboulela.html

Appendix H

Synopsis of *Minaret*



Aboulela narrates a sadder, starker story of one girl's fall from privilege to a life of exile and menial work in London. In Khartoum, Najwa was “an average Sudanese girl, not too religious and not too unconventional” who fasted at Ramadan but also danced with her westernized friends at the American Club. But her indulged life of servants, travel and shopping ended with the coup that forced her to flee with her mother and brother Omar while her father was arrested for corruption and later executed. In London, the grieving family loses its way: Najwa's mother falls ill and dies; Omar turns to drugs and is sentenced to 15 years in prison for dealing. Najwa

herself—always passive, her opinions dominated by the men around her—falls back under the spell of manipulative Anwar, a politically active boyfriend from Khartoum who is now an exile too. Sex with Anwar intensifies Najwa's feelings of guilt and alienation, and when he refuses to get engaged, she is cast further adrift. Invited to attend classes at the mosque, she discovers a refuge and "a wash, a purge, a restoration of innocence." Najwa adopts the headscarf and covers her body. Through the mosque, she finds work as a nanny in affluent Muslim households, in one of which she meets Tamer, a student who disapproves of his secular family and wants to study Islam, not business. A relationship develops, which ends with Najwa's dismissal. The family offers her money to stay away, which she accepts on one condition. This simple near-parable of a story successfully combines a tale of inexperience and cultural confusion with an insider's view of the conflicts and complexities within the immigrant and Muslim communities.