

**ATILIM UNIVERSITY**  
**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**  
**ENGLISH CULTURE AND LITERATURE MASTER'S PROGRAMME**

**DECONSTRUCTING THE MIGRATION DISCOURSE IN ANDREA LEVY'S**  
***SMALL ISLAND* AND MONICA ALI'S *BRICK LANE***

**Master's Thesis**

**Tuğba KUTLU**

**Ankara-2022**



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**Tuğba KUTLU**

**Supervisor**

**Assist. Prof. Dr. Kuğu TEKİN**

**Ankara-2022**

## ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

This is to certify that the thesis titled “Deconstructing the migration discourse in Andrea Levy’s *Small Island* and Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*” prepared by Tuğba KUTLU meets with the committee’s approval unanimously/by the majority vote as the Master’s Thesis in the field of English Culture and Literature following the successful defense of this thesis conducted on 08/06/2022.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Ayşe Selmin SÖYLEMEZ (Chair)

Asst. Prof. Dr. Kuğu TEKİN (Supervisor)

Asst. Prof. Dr. Gökşen ARAS (Member)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Şule TUZLUKAYA

Director

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27.04.2022

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Tuğba KUTLU

## ÖZ

KUTLU, Tuğba. Andrea Levy'nin *Küçük Ada* ve Monica Ali'nin *Brick Lane* Romanlarındaki Göç Söyleminin Yapısökümü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2022.

Bu çalışma Andrea Levy'nin *Small Island* ve Monica Ali'nin *Brick Lane* adlı romanlarının detaylı bir analizini yaparak göç söyleminin yapı sökümünü amaçlamaktadır. *Small Island* İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası İngiltere'sinde Jamaikalı göçmenlerin durumunu gözler önüne sererken, *Brick Lane* Bangladeşli Müslüman-Asyalı göçmenlerin durumunu ele almaktadır. Bu iki roman farklı etnik kökenlerden ve kültürlerden insanları konu edinse de göçmenlere yönelik ırkçılık her ikisinde de ortak konudur. *Small Island*, ırkçılığın çoğunlukla siyah ve beyaz ayırımına dayandığı 1948'lerin savaş sonrası İngiltere'sinde geçmekte, ancak hikâye böyle bir ayırımın bu iki ırk arasında artan etkileşim sebebiyle yapılamayacağını gösterecek şekilde evirilmektedir. Benzer şekilde, Monica Ali'nin *Brick Lane* romanında ırkçılık İngiltere'de hala vardır ve savaştan yaklaşık elli yıl sonra zirve noktasındadır. *Brick Lane* 'de ırkçılık konusunun değişen göçmenlere yönelik politikalar ile daha karmaşık bir hal almış olduğu görünmekte ve göç söylemi asimilasyon, entegrasyon ve çok kültürlü bir İngiltere'yi içermektedir. Her iki roman ortak nokta olarak ırkçılığı Londra'da farklı zaman süreçlerinde ele aldıklarından, göçmenlerle ilgili incelenen söylem değişen biçimleriyle ırkçılıktır. Bu inceleme kapsamında, göçmenlere yönelik ırkçılık söyleminin metinlere detaylı göndermeler yapılarak ve daha önce yapılan araştırmalara dayanılarak yapı sökümü sağlanmış ve ırkçılığın getirdiği ikili zıtlıklar yerine melezlik fikri sunulmuştur.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** *Small Island*, *Brick Lane*, Irkçılık, Yapısöküm, Melezlik

## ABSTRACT

KUTLU, Tuğba. Deconstructing the Migration Discourse in Andrea Levy's *Small Island* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2022.

This study aims to deconstruct the discourse of migration by a detailed analysis of Andrea Levy's *Small Island* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*. While *Small Island* portrays the situation of Jamaican immigrants in the post-war Britain, *Brick Lane* deals with the condition of the Muslim-Asian immigrants from Bangladesh. Although the two novels are concerned with people of different ethnic origins and cultures, racism against immigrants is a common issue in both. *Small Island* is set in the post-war Britain of 1948 when racism is mostly based on the separation of black and white, yet the story evolves to show how such separation cannot be made due to the growing interaction between the two races. Similarly, in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* racism still exists and is at its heights in Britain around 50 years after the War. In *Brick Lane*, the issue of racism appears to have become more complex with the changing immigration policies and the discourse involves terms such as assimilation, integration, and a multicultural England. As both novels deal with racism as a common point within different time periods in London, the discourse analyzed in connection with immigrants is racism in its varying forms. Within this analysis, the discourse of racism is deconstructed with detailed references to the texts and by relying on previous research, and the idea of hybridity is presented in place of the binary divisions racism causes.

**Keywords:** *Small Island*, *Brick Lane*, Racism, Deconstruction, Hybridity

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to carry out a deconstructive discourse analysis of the migration in Andrea Levy's *Small Island* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* by providing a detailed examination of the binary oppositions concerning immigrants to London, England from Jamaica starting in the post-war Era (1948) in *Small Island* and from Bangladesh starting in the 1960s in *Brick Lane*. The two novels share a common discourse regarding immigrants although the time periods they deal with are different. The reason for choosing these two novels is to observe the discourse of immigration in Britain from 1948 up to the 2000s by providing evidence from the two texts. These two novels help observe how the dominant discourse of migration changed in England starting from post-World War II up to the 2000s.

In Andrea Levy's *Small Island* racism, against the skin color of Jamaican immigrants is portrayed in a post-war atmosphere. The novel places its four main characters in a post-war London where masses of Jamaicans arrive at with the end of WWII and colonization. The novel deals with a dramatic moment of British history when the white inhabitants of the country are faced with the former subjects of the British Empire, who are dark-skinned. As a result of the immigration of Jamaicans to England in great numbers, the two races and cultures confront each other within the same space – London. In *Small Island*, this encounter is presented in Andrea Levy's use of both Jamaican and English characters whose lives intersect with each other. The subjective experiences of these characters portray the experience of the whole Empire with the arrival of immigrants. The intersection of their lives represents the encounter of the two races and cultures and put forth the binary divisions related to them. The idea of 'us' and 'them' - the other, the idea of Britishness and Englishness, the idea of being civilized and uncivilized in relation to one's skin color are in question throughout the novel. The analysis of these binary divisions helps foreground the ambiguity in their meanings and with their deconstruction the novel paves the way for constructing new ideals with reference to racism. In *Small Island*, this new idea challenging racism is the hybridity of races.

Similarly, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, presents racism against the Bangladeshi immigrants arriving in England in high numbers starting in the 1960s. Their immigration is mainly due to Britain's recruitment of workers to rebuild the country

and strengthen its economy after the destruction caused by World War II. Monica Ali narrates the story of a Bangladeshi family, living in Tower Hamlets, London, to depict the condition of the Muslim-Asian immigrants in England. *Brick Lane* deals with the theme of racism from the 1980s to the 2000s, and in this way shows the extent of racism in England decades after the War while portraying the rising tension between the immigrants and the natives of London. The novel refers to many major political events leading to the rising of racist aggressions in the country and shows how racism against one's ethnic origins, religion and culture, is constructed within the host society on encountering unfamiliar people. With the experience of the Bangladeshi family Ali depicts in her novel, how England handles the masses of immigration is reflected. By providing an analysis of racism against the culture, religion, and skin color of Bangladeshi immigrants, the binary oppositions indicating them are defined. After specifying these oppositions, the ambiguities concerning them are discussed to deconstruct their meaning and a newer meaning about the clash of two different cultures and peoples is constructed. Similar to *Small Island*, in *Brick Lane* this new ideal challenging the dominance of the racist discourse is the hybridity of cultures.

Even though the immigrants in the two novels have different origins, they share several common points, which help reflect the situation of immigrants in England from different perspectives at different phases of British History. Both Jamaican and Bangladeshi immigrants belong to former colonies of England. The main reason for their migration is to search for a better life in the mother country. Both peoples have darker skin colors compared to the white citizens of England. In the case of Bangladeshi immigrants, they believe in Islam and their faith is different than the common Christian religion in the host society. Both groups of immigrants face racism in the mother country and although the epithets used for them change in time, their experiences are similar in both novels and they are introduced as the representatives of the dominant immigrant discourse in England from 1945 to the 2000s. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how the two novels help observe that the binary oppositions of the migration discourse in England within the mentioned period become ambiguous, how the borders between these constructed opposites are deconstructed and the lines between black and white, English, and non-English, civilized, and uncivilized, us and the outsider, the small islander and the citizens of the mother country are blurred compared to their initial meanings. For this purpose, a close reading of the two novels

is carried out and the discourse involving these binary oppositions is analyzed with detailed examples and references from the texts. A review of previous research and the major historical and political events relating to the Jamaican and Bangladeshi immigrants within the time scope of the two novels is conducted to provide the necessary basis for this thesis.



## CHAPTER 1: AN OVERVIEW OF POLITICAL HISTORY OF IMMIGRATION IN ENGLAND AND THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The British Empire fell soon after WWII (1939-45) (McIntyre 11). The British Nationality Act of 1948 recognized Commonwealth and colonial people as British subjects (Kennedy 48). This was in a way Britain's efforts to maintain the empire and its imperial ties with the colonies; however, it had more to do with the demand for labor after WWII (48). With the arrival of the non-white immigrants the Commonwealth Act turned out to be problematic and restrictions were applied in order to limit the entry of the colored immigrants to the UK (48). "The immediate post-war years saw the British Commonwealth enlarged and revamped as a multicultural association [...]" (48) which could not maintain the British influence over its former colonies but became an alliance of sovereign states (48).

### 1.1 Post-War and Post-Windrush Britain

*Empire Windrush* was the ship which carried immigrants from the Caribbean to the United Kingdom in 1948 (Wardle and Obermuller 3). It became the symbol of generations of immigrants arriving in Britain from the West Indies starting with this date (3). They were called the Windrush Generation and from 1948 onwards more people from the former colonies in the West Indies arrived in the United Kingdom in masses which resulted in a clash of cultures, "More broadly, Windrush points to a world where definitions of citizenship are being pushed to the point of meaninglessness by governments desperate to retain control over a visibly fragmenting national space" (3). As increasing numbers of 'black' people from the Caribbean immigrated to the UK, this changed the face of Britain as a homogenous nation. Therefore, the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* came, "to symbolize the start of Britain's transition to a multi-cultural nation" (Gentleman 12). In this brief historical overview, I will discuss the situation of immigrants starting with the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* and focus mainly on the details concerning Jamaicans. As there is a very deep and complex historical, economic, and political background to immigration to the UK, the details related to the history of the Jamaican immigrants will be limited to the extent that they refer to *Small Island*.

The numbers of immigrants added to those arriving in the *Empire Windrush* higher numbers in the 1950s and the 1960s (Gentleman 13). The immigrants of the

Windrush Generation were required to prove their existence in the UK prior to 1973, as the government passed an Immigration Law granting citizenship to those who arrived before this date and denying it to the ones who arrived later (13). 1971 Immigration Act came into force in January 1, 1973, and while giving the older generation of Windrush immigrants their citizenship, denied it to those, the younger generation, who arrived after the Act came into force (13). This led to the Windrush scandal leading to the Windrush immigrants' deportation back to their countries of origins, years after being in England. The Windrush scandal came, "as a direct result of a government attempt to assuage the anxieties of a nation stoked up into a frenzy about immigration" (13). It was reflected on the newspapers that the newly arriving immigrants were occupying the spaces in schools, hospitals, and council houses (13). Although it was known by the government that the immigrants and the cheap labor they provided would benefit the country's economy, it was promoted on the media that immigration would be put to an end. This led to a 'brutal' tackling of the matter of immigration in Britain and, "showed how an anti-immigrant rhetoric infected everything", when "blameless grandmothers found themselves being locked up by the state" (13). The anti-immigrant measures in the country, apparently, led to the hostile treatment of immigrants by the state. Anti-immigration policies were already promoted on the media and gained the support from the society. The unwelcome atmosphere was thus created against the newly arriving immigrants to the country.

The issue of immigrants from the Caribbean started even before the Empire Windrush arrived in England in June 1948 (Gentleman 69). More than ten thousand men and women had voluntarily served in the Second World War as they viewed England as the mother country (69). Many men signed up for the RAF (the Royal Air Forces) which was better than joining the army. In *Small Island*, this is the case for the Jamaican character Gilbert (Levy ch. 6) and the 'white' English citizen Bernard (Levy ch. 28) who both join the RAF voluntarily. In the case of Bernard, he says if you don't volunteer for the RAF, you will be recruited for the army, which he considers to be worse. Another character who becomes a RAF man in the *Small Island* is Michael (Levy 59), another Jamaican, who does not have a chapter named *Michael* as opposed to Gilbert and Bernard who have eponymous chapters. *Small Island* by its several Jamaican and English characters depicted as a part of the WAR, portrays the reality of both the War and the post-WAR era and the immigrants' history in England. The

contribution of the immigrants in the RAF was valued especially due to the “decimation of pilots in the Battle of Britain” and yet their presence along with the American soldiers was seen as a problem and caused unease in the rural parts of the country (Gentleman 69). “British people found it necessary to set rules for the appropriate behavior” for their dark-skinned citizens (69). The American soldiers also appear in Andrea Levy’s *Small Island* several times. They appear in several cases confronting Gilbert when he accompanies Queenie who is one of the two main white English characters in the novel. Gilbert feels the most hatred from the American soldiers as a colored Jamaican (Levy 177) and says that the war does not serve its purpose because it does not end the hatred but causes people to otherize and hate each other. The Americans hate colored men as they would hate the “black” people in America. One of the American soldiers calls Gilbert a “nigger” and tells him to sit where is told when Gilbert and Queenie (with her father Arthur) go to the cinema (Levy 186). To this, Gilbert objects saying there is no “segregation” in England and says, “This is England, not Alabama” (Levy 185). This ironic situation in *Small Island* overtly deals with racism against its Jamaican subjects. It is ironic in comparing the situation to the segregation in the US and in proving Gilbert’s faith in his Mother Country, and how he expects the Mother Country to treat her colored citizens. Despite his high opinion of the mother country, in the novel Gilbert feels betrayed by the treatment he is subject to when he comes to Britain as a civilian and not a RAF man, which is the case for the most immigrants arriving in Britain in the post-war era.

Most first-generation immigrants came to Britain as “young adults and spent most of their lives helping rebuild the country in the wake of the devastation of the Second World War” (Gentleman 69). They worked as drivers or as construction workers in repairing the damage caused by the war bombings or took jobs as nurses at the National Health service (69). “But most had made the brave decision to travel across the world to the UK to start building better futures for their families without a firm job offer in hand” (69). This is the case with the Jamaican immigrants in *Small Island*. Both Gilbert and Hortense, the main Jamaican characters of the novel, come to the Mother Country with the hope of a better life. In addition, the case of Gilbert reflects another historical and political reality related to the West Indian immigrants who served in the Second World War. After their demobilization, many of these troops returned to the Caribbean but the economy there was not strong (Gentleman 70). The

small islands were destroyed by storms and there was rising unemployment (70). And the Caribbean men, seeing the UK and a bigger world than their small islands were not willing to live in a colony anymore (70). The tickets for the *Empire Windrush* were advertised in the Jamaican newspaper *Gleaner*, the cost of these tickets (28 pounds) was equal to the six months' wage in Jamaica (70). With this opportunity many men wanted to get on this ship and sail to the Mother Country for a better future. This truth for the West Indian colonies is reflected in *Small Island* when Gilbert, a former RAF man, wants to go back to England where, "opportunity ripened [...] as abundant as fruit on Jamaican trees. And he was going to be the man to pluck it" (Levy 98). As Gilbert lacks the money to get on the ship, Hortense offers it to him on the condition that they get married (Levy 100). The novel deals with much of the truth about the experience of the Jamaican immigrants and in this way presents a whole history of the Windrush Generation.

During the post-war labour shortage in Britain, although the colored Jamaicans arrived for the Mother Country's help, what was expected by the officials was 'white' Europeans (Gentleman 71). In 1946, the estimated number of workers needed in the country was 1.346.000 (71). Among the Europeans who arrived during this time were the Polish, Ukrainians, Latvians, Irish and Italians (71). Although the white Europeans were welcome in Britain, the idea of the West Indians caused unrest (71). "In 1947 the Colonial Office had sent an official to Jamaica to dissuade people from coming, attempting to suggest that there were not actually many jobs available" (71) but these attempts to stop the Jamaican immigration did not work because Jamaicans could access British newspapers with job advertisements (71). Although there were some politicians (such as Arthur Creech) who were realistic enough to accept that there was no power which could stop the West Indians from arriving in the UK as they were the subjects of the Empire and had the right to free movement and settlement in the country, they were not as welcome as the white members of the Empire (71). The reason making the acceptance of this reality difficult is explained in the following quotation:

It is hard to see anything other than racist discomfort behind their anxieties. Britain had accommodated 120,000 Poles and tens of thousands of workers from Italy and Ireland, barely batting an eyelid, but the arrival of just a few hundred men from the West Indies triggered for some an existential crisis. Now familiar debates on immigration were beginning, centering on the question 'How many is too many?' (Gentleman 73)

It is obvious that there was a discomfort due to the skin color of these West Indians and that their labor contributing to rebuild the country was also not appreciated as much compared to that of the white workers. In addition, when they arrived, they were accommodated in the Clapham tube station once used as a war time air-raid refuge (73). The treatment they received upon their arrival was nothing warm as would be expected from a 'mother-country' and was nothing that could compare to the attitude towards the white Europeans.

The service provided by the RAF men from the West Indies was also long forgotten when they arrived in London after their demobilization. They faced, as civilians, the same attitude along with the other West-Indians. They were denied housing and jobs (Gentleman 73). When they could find rooms to stay, they were charged higher prices (73). This was the case for Gilbert in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*. Having trouble to find housing after he arrives in England, he finds Queenie's address in a state of helplessness (Levy 222), and Queenie rents him and other *colored* people her rooms although she is judged for this by her *white* neighbors. During his search for a room to stay, Gilbert wonders if he had been still in uniform, he would have received the same treatment or would the people thank him for the victory of the Second World War (Levy 215). After fighting the War for the Mother Country, he is not even given a room to live in and wonders if these people even know that he was an airman in the army and if they had known, would it have changed their attitude. It is such an ironical situation in Gilbert's and many other Jamaicans' case that even though they fought for the mother country they had not even seen before the War; the Mother Country does not recognize them and their contributions to protect her.

Paradoxically, while the West Indians are subject to racism upon their arrival, the government passes the 1948 Nationality Act which opens the door to the mass migration of non-white Commonwealth residents (Gentleman 74-75). The Nationality Act granted the former British Subjects Commonwealth citizenship and the right to settle and travel in Britain (75). This is crucial in terms of the situation of the West Indians who were exposed to racism upon their arrival. As they were not expected to manage to travel to Britain due to the poverty in their countries, what the act aimed at was the old Commonwealth countries of British stock such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa (Gentleman 75). Therefore, the government tried to restrict the scope of the Act because the immigration from the West Indies, unexpectedly,



increased at a high rate. From 1948 to 1955, the number of West Indians increased from one thousand to forty thousand. On the other hand, the attitude of the government towards its colored citizens was not consistent as with the intensifying lack of work force in the 1950s it turned to Barbados for recruiting more workers.

In 1962, a new Commonwealth Act was passed, and it restricted the entrance of new colored immigrants (Gentleman 79). The new act was considered racist because: “It slashed unskilled migration from Asia and the West Indies but did nothing to prevent Irish unskilled workers from continuing to come; white immigrants from the old dominions (Canada, Australia, New Zealand) were broadly unaffected” (79). The Mother Country was only bothered with the flow of the colored citizens of the Empire, whereas the immigration of people with white skin could continue. Despite the new restrictions there was another wave of immigration of the colored citizens, this time the families of the first Windrush émigrés (79). Following the arrival of the *Empire Windrush*, it was not likely for the British authorities to disintegrate colored citizens from the white citizens of the Empire. After the first generation was given legal rights of residency, their families and relations continued to come, and they formed new families while living in Britain and thus their population in the country continued to grow:

Postwar black migration, beginning in earnest with the arrival of the Empire Windrush in 1948, transformed the face of British society and brought British identity itself into question. It touched a deep reservoir of negative and stereotypical attitudes in Britain about racialized difference—a legacy inherited from Britain’s imperial role and brought to the surface by the arrival of significant numbers of black migrants from the Caribbean on the “home territory” of a society which imagined itself to be liberal, tolerant, and racially homogeneous. (Hall et al 378)

In spite of the certain restrictions on the new arrivals from Caribbean to settle and live in Britain, the amount of immigration had already had a dramatic influence in shaping the British society in the post-war era. No matter if the authorities were unwilling about the colored people’s existence in the country, it was obvious that they had citizenship rights in Britain but even so, they were faced with much opposition and reluctance from the majority of the public and political opinion. Nevertheless, they made their stance in the mother country starting with the opportunity of *the Empire Windrush* and the need for the workforce. They continued to arrive in search of a better life in their home country and they grew in number. Their arrival was supposed to benefit the economy and reshape the war-driven country; however, it not only achieved

the economical ends but also shaped the society and the politics of the country, which led to the change in the discourse concerning the colored people of the British Empire. “For several decades the Windrush generation had been at the core of an opposite narrative: it had been the example of a new relationship between postwar Europe and the world, as well as the symbol of the creation of a multicultural society” (Laschi et al 66). The arrival of the Windrush immigrants is crucial in the history of the British Empire and marks the changes beginning in the composition of the nation from a homogenous society to a multicultural one. It signifies the encounter of distinct cultures and peoples in one space and is therefore the start of an important transformation for the nature of the British culture and society.

## **1.2 Bangladeshi Immigrants: Tower Hamlets, Brick Lane, 9/11, and the Race Riots**

In the post-war era, British Empire did not only turn to its former subjects from the Caribbean, but it also looked for workers from East Asian countries such as Bangladesh. The arrival of the Bangladeshi people as well is crucial in changing the structure of the British society. The first Bangladeshi immigrants, lascars, to Britain arrived at the end of 1945 in small numbers and others arrived in 1947 after the Partition of India (Bhimji 27). Their numbers were difficult to estimate because they were counted together with the Indians and Pakistanis until after the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 (27). The number of Bengalis in Britain was around 2000 in 1951 which rose up to 22.000 in 1971 (27).

Most of these Bengali immigrants were seamen who faced unemployment after the Partition, “cut Sylhet off from Calcutta, now in India, where the traditional jobs in shipping were based” (Bhimji 27). These seamen from Sylhet were given passports by The Seamen’s Union to sail to Britain and in 1956, 600 former seamen were given passports, which was followed by increasing numbers. The immigrants who arrived in England during this period worked as pressors or tailors in East London, or others moved to Bradford, Oldham and Birmingham to work in the textile and manufacturing industry such as car factories, as did the earlier settlers (27). However, they did not come to stay too long because they were mostly young men who left behind their families in Bangladesh and kept sending them money from England (27). The plan was to invest the money on land or property back in Bangladesh and to *go back home*

after saving enough money for a better life, which was called “The Myth of Return” (27).

The Myth of Return appears in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* several times as the “going back home syndrome”. In Ali’s novel, the father of the Bengali family living in Tower Hamlets London, mentions several times that their people living in London are from Sylhet and are peasants (Ali 28). His wife Nazneen starts working for the textile industry, like most of the Bengali women, when Chanu brings her a sewing machine (Ali 206-207). The novel touches much of the historical truth of the lives of Bengali immigrants from the perspectives of its male and female characters. It also focuses on the differing experiences of the immigrants in terms of the young and older generations.

Tower Hamlets was one of the smallest of the 32 London boroughs with 8 square miles (Rasinger 17). Its location is the east of London and is bordered with the Tower of London and the Tower Bridge on the west and with the river Thames on the south (17). London’s East End was a marshland and was popular with migrant groups starting from the 17<sup>th</sup> century such as the French Huguenots and the Jewish and Irish immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first Bangladeshi settlers arrived in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (17-18). East End was suitable for immigration because of its location on the river Thames, the shipping and wharfing industry, and the development of trade routes (18). The Bengali community grew considerably and according to the 1981 census there were 14000 residents in Tower Hamlets (18). Tower Hamlet’s population was around 196,000 in 2001 and involved a variety of ethnic groups (Rasinger 18). Bengalis accounted for the 33 percent of the overall population and 59 percent of the non-British residents (18). Thus, according to the census in 2001, they were the largest minority group and formed the largest ethnic group after white-British (18).

The immigration of the Bangladeshi people results directly from the British colonialism and trade (Rasinger 19). The early Sylhetis arrived in Tower Hamlets as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century as seamen in the merchant army and the East India Company (19). A small number of these first Sylheti immigrants stayed in London to work in docks and formed the first Bengali settlements in East London (19). During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the need for the Bengali labor rose due to the two World Wars (19-20). With the incentive of the governments, there was an important first wave of immigration in the 1950s and the 1960s from Bangladesh to work in the industrialized

city centers of Britain (20). Despite the Commonwealth Act of 1962, limiting immigration, British government issued ‘labor vouchers’ which were work permits allowing entry and working in Britain, which resulted in the arrival of Bengali people in large numbers for economic reasons (20). “In the following thirty years, the number of Bengali migrants in the United Kingdom, grew thirty-fold from 6,000 to more than 162,000 people” (Eade qtd in Rasinger 20).

Most of the immigrants who arrived from Bangladesh were men because of the jobs required in Britain (Rasinger 20). As a result, most of the Bengali community in Tower Hamlets was made up of men by the 1920s (20). The Bengali immigration reached its peaks in the 1970s and London’s East End played a big role in the growth of the number of Bangladeshi immigrants (20), as stated in the following quotation, “Tower Hamlets emerged as the political and cultural dynamo of this rapidly expanding British Bengali population” (Eade qtd in Rasinger 20). By 1981, Tower Hamlets had the highest number of Bangladeshi immigrants (Eade qtd in Rasinger 20). And in the 2000s Britain had a number 163000 Bangladeshi immigrants (Rasinger 20). 43 percent of all the immigrants in London lived in Tower Hamlets (21). Brick Lane, an area to the west of London, was famous for its Bengali restaurants and came to symbolize Bangladeshi immigrants and their community (21). It came to be known as the *Banglatown* among public (21).

Starting from their early settlements in London, the Bengali immigrants had social and economic disadvantage compared to the white inhabitants (Rasinger 21). The young immigrants arriving in Britain originated from a “Muslim, agrarian and pre-industrial society” (21) and most of them were “poorly educated, had few skills and little experience of the harshness of the urban industrial life” (Kershen qtd in Rasinger 21). Most of the Bengali men worked in the manual sector in the 2000s (22). With the disappearance of the docking and shipping industry they had a worse economic situation, and many young men became unemployed (22). They had little entrepreneurial activity and those were Sylhetis who opened Bengali restaurants rather than Bangladeshi men. Their economic disadvantage is attributed to their being unqualified. This is another issue which appears very often in the novel *Brick Lane* and is addressed by Chanu who compares himself—an educated man—to those who are unskilled peasants unlike himself. The novel openly deals with this situation of the Bangladeshi immigrants in making their way through life in Britain. The low

socioeconomic status of the Bangladeshi immigrants is also due to the majority of the male existence compared to women because there were few women immigrants who worked, and most Bengali families depended on only one income from the male (23).

The Bangladeshi immigrants, along with the other Muslim immigrants in Britain, fell to more disadvantage after the 9/11 attacks in 2001: “After the 9/11 attacks of 2001, and reinforced by the London bombings in 2005, the British state identified certain interpretations of Islam as an important component of the terrorist violence, and thus security became the central theme in relations between the state and Muslim Britons” (Archer 329). Despite the fact that the prejudice against Muslim religion existed in Britain even before the 9/11 attacks and there was unease between the Muslim immigrants and non-Muslim residents, the tension reached its heights after the 9/11 attacks in the U.S., which had global results leading to Islamophobia. Similarly, 9/11 events affected the legal measures taken by the British government against its Muslim immigrants. Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* deals with this political and historical reality in relation to Bangladeshi immigrants and its global effect in leading to the perception of Islam as almost equal to terrorism. The news of the 9/11 attacks is received on T.V. in *Brick Lane* and is commented as “the start of madness” by Chanu (Ali 366). This presents the power of media in constructing worldwide images of Islam resulting from one major terrorist attack in the U.S. After 9/11, “[...] (im)migrants of South Asian and Middle Eastern origin and of Muslim cultural identity are finding their lives in the Western host societies, especially in the US and UK, more and more difficult to cope with” (Liao 6). The attacks increased the hostility towards the Muslim Bangladeshi immigrants in the UK and they led to a rise of nationalism – the idea of ‘we’ in Britain, and to the otherizing of the Muslim immigrants as ‘non-we’ (Liao 6).

The 9/11 attacks prompted a discourse in America for calling itself America rather than the U.S., calling the war against terrorism America’s war, and brought about a kind of collective compassion by the way of calling for prayers for those who were affected by the attacks. Words like freedom, liberty, and justice, once again, were heard to stand for what America meant as opposed to the “madness of the terrorists who had no faith in God” (Reynolds and Barnett qtd in Liao 12). This opposition of such fundamentals related to the two sides, “reinforced Huntington’s ‘clash of civilizations’” by setting the attackers in opposition to the universal values of the Western civilization (Liao 12). In Britain, “the most supportive ally of the U.S. in the

War on Terror”, the Prime Minister of the time, Tony Blair, was noted to use a “rhetoric that specified matters in terms of a war between democracy and the rest, portraying the death and destruction in New York as a global attack on freedom” (Liao 12). Other than being a major global event, 9/11 attack served to construct the “‘strategies of othering and dis-association, demonizing and distancing’ that has conflated ‘violence, terrorism and Islam’” (Matar qtd in Liao 12). The 9/11 attacks in the U.S. were globalized to construct opposites between the Western and Eastern civilizations in Britain and the outcome was felt by the Bangladeshi (and South Asian immigrants) of the country. The attacks served the same purpose in the U.S. and the UK in terms of creating an opposition between the Western and Eastern civilizations by the image of a physical attack on the World Trade Center towers and Pentagon in the U.S. Monica Ali in *Brick Lane*:

offers a critique of the US post-9/11 (un)domestic (global, imperialist) notion of the homeland by portraying how the supposedly domestic ‘Homeland Security’ policy has indirectly produced transatlantic, namely undomestic, effects while bringing to crisis the race relations in Britain and inflicting insecurity on Bangladeshi immigrants. [...] [By] making visible the (un)domestic violence that afflicts Bangladeshi immigrant women at home, at work, and in the ethnic community, Ali presents a female perspective from which to counter the chauvinistic and militant discourse in the post-9/11 mainstream politics. (Liao 21)

The polarization between the two cultures – Muslim Bangladeshis and the white non-Muslim Britons – increases after 9/11 and this situation is clearly dealt with in *Brick Lane*. The rising tensions and the conflict between the two cultures are embodied by the youth gangs: *Bengal Tigers* and *Lion Hearts*. The novel presents the leaflet wars between the two sides, which help convey the opposing opinions of the two sides and their point of view in the case of the existence of Bengali immigrants in the neighborhood of Tower Hamlets. The opposition between the two cultures and communities is obvious before the 9/11 attacks in the novel and historically, however, 9/11 marks the date when the situation gets worse for the Muslim Bangladeshi immigrants in the UK. In the novel, the effects of the attacks are also reflected in the characters’ (Kareem and Chanu’s) return to Bangladesh.

### 1.3 Theories of Culture: Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the discourse of immigration in Andrea Levy's *Small Island* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, which encompass a time span of around sixty years. The discourse of immigrants in England is then deconstructed based on Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction. I will provide an overview of Derrida's theory of deconstruction in analyzing the binary oppositions related to the Jamaican and Bangladeshi immigrants to England from 1946 to the 2000s.

Post-structuralism was a complex paradigm that occurred in the 1960s and consisted of several perspectives such as discourse analysis, deconstruction, post-modernism, and social and cognitive constructivism (Zajda and Majhanovich 4). It is argued that post-structuralism precedes deconstruction and can be dated back to Michel Foucault's works (4). Discourse analysis, which is applicable in analyzing cultural identity, involves Derrida's Deconstruction theory (4). Discourse analysis has been used in many fields of social sciences to:

examine the sorts of tools and strategies when people are engaged in communication, such as the use of metaphors, choice of particular words to display affect, and how people construct their version of an event, and how people use discourse 'to maintain or construct their own identity.' (Zajda qtd in Zajda and Majhanovich 4)

In other words, deconstruction analyzes how meaning is constructed by using certain words which reflect people's individual perception of events or express their identities. Besides focusing on how identities are constructed by the use of words and the tools of the language, "The ambivalence between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization" is a central and unresolved problem in the process of globalization and identity within a post-structuralist view (Zajda and Majhanovich 5). Therefore, Derrida's deconstruction theory along with a discourse analysis is carried out to analyze the discourse of immigration in the UK in the post-war era in the chosen narratives from Levy and Ali. The deconstruction of this discourse is based on the binary oppositions relating to the racial and cultural identity of the Bangladeshi and Jamaican immigrants. As both novels deal with a multicultural Britain and portray the end of a homogenous society in the UK, they provide a central problem for the deconstructive theory.

Deconstructive readings are at the heart of identity politics which center discussions on the divisions and controversies over how to include people under a

certain category of identity, how to represent the minorities, how to idealize the lived experiences to change the world:

Identities, understandings of experience, and foundations of knowledge are fractured from the start, and in acknowledging the faulty logic of binary oppositions at the heart of all such origins, deconstruction aims to work with, rather than deny, the collisions and crises between and within all the oppositional predicates inhering in the articulation and elaboration of the emancipatory promise. (Cruz 5)

Deconstructive discourse analysis is applicable to the discussion of anti-racism and the discussion of the cultural identity crises of the Bangladeshi and West Indian immigrants to the UK. In order to present how deconstructive discourse analysis will work in dealing with the discourse of immigration it is crucial to know the basic concepts of the deconstruction theory by Derrida. Deconstructive reading, first of all, claims that there is no central meaning to a word or a text – a combination of words (Zuckert 336). The meaning is found in the context which is the relation of a word to the other words, ideas, or signs (336). According to Derrida, context is set by the language, the historical conditions of the writer and the reader and by the logical distinctions formed by the human mind (366). The context set by language requires the word to be understood along with the whole system the language works with such as the grammar structure (336-37). The language context brings the historical context along with it because the meaning of each word changes with every use (337). So, the present meaning of a word can be different than its past meanings and yet within its present meaning the word carries a multiplicity of all the past meanings (337). Similar to the context providing meaning to the word, the meaning of a sentence or a text also depends on its literary and historical context according to Derrida:

If the meaning of the text necessarily includes the state of affairs at the time at which the text was produced-the state of the language, the character of the audience, the character of the author-and that meaning is further altered by the changed state of affairs or context when the text is later read, the division between the text and the world begins to break down. (Zuckert 337)

The context of the text when it was written and when it is read by an audience with a different character is subject to change, which results in the idea that the text has no stable meaning, but its' meaning is dependent on the dynamic relationship between the text and the context (Zuckert 367). This argument of Derrida involves historicism which means that the author cannot control the meaning of the text he/she produces because, “[...] that writing is done in, and implies the structure of, an entire



language which is not under the author's control, and because the meaning depends on the context which will change with every reading” (336-337).

Another crucial part of Derrida’s deconstruction is the idea of *differance*. According to Derrida, every word, group of words, sentence or text implicitly contains its own negation because of its fundamental “linguistic, logical, contextual structure” which gave it meaning in the first place (337). This does not mean that the words and ideas come and go between assertion and negation (337) because, “all thinking, speaking, and writing, as well as life and action for that matter, occur in time, the context and hence the meaning of each negation of the previous negation (or new affirmation) changes” (337). As a result of this, every *differance* or negation involves a supplement, which is a left over or in addition from the previous negations. This interaction of negation and supplementation causes the text to have no stable meaning (Zuckert 337). To put it another way, words rely on an order of differences to receive their meaning:

If words and concepts receive meaning only in sequences of differences, one can justify one's language, and one's choice of terms, only within a topic [an orientation in space] and a historical strategy. The justification can therefore never be absolute and definitive. It corresponds to a condition of forces and translates a historical calculation. (Derrida qtd in Barnet 277)

Derrida, therefore, means that there is no central or absolute meaning to the words or sentences and the meaning is always subject to change depending on the dynamic forces creating the context. The meaning of the texts is multiple and recontextualized (Barnet 288). Although some basic concepts of deconstruction are provided here it is noteworthy to point out that Derrida was unwilling or ‘elusive’ in offering a definitive explanation of deconstruction in saying that “... deconstruction doesn’t consist in a set of theorems, axioms, tools, rules, techniques, methods... There is no deconstruction, deconstruction has no specific object” (Derrida qtd in Freshwater and Johns 17). The closest definition suggested by Derrida is that “... perhaps deconstruction would consist, if at least it did consist, in... deconstructing, dislocating, displacing, disarticulating, disjointing, putting ‘out of joint’ the authority of the ‘is’” (17). It is understood that a statement saying, “Deconstruction is...” would give it a definitive meaning which would conflict with what deconstruction is trying to do in challenging absolute meanings defined by the authority of the ‘is’ (17). Not even providing a fixed definition of itself, deconstruction is “best employed to challenge critiques made by the dominant discourse against less powerful discourses” (24).

Deconstruction achieves this, “not by denying the charges laid against the less powerful discourse, but by turning them back against the dominant discourse from which they originated.” (24). In this sense, deconstruction aims at analyzing the strongly established discourses by challenging them with weaker discourses which are derived from the stronger ones. It is concerned with language and the way that it is often distorted by the dominant discourse to its own ends (24). It attempts to break down dichotomies in which one term is favored over its opposite by the dominant discourse (24).

In order to apply the above-mentioned steps of deconstruction in analyzing the discourse of immigration to post-war Britain from its former colonies, Andrea Levy’s *Small Island* and Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* are selected as the texts to be scrutinized. As the first step, the social, historical, and political context for these novels is provided in brief overviews. A general overview of Britain’s situation in the post-war era is also provided. Secondly, short biographies of the authors Andrea Levy and Monica Ali are given in relation to the context of the novels. Third, a comprehensive close reading of the two novels is carried out to detect the dominant discourse relating to immigration from 1945 to the 2000s. With this close reading, the dichotomies concerning the Jamaican and Bangladeshi immigrants to the UK are specified. After this depiction of the racist division of black and white, civilized, and uncivilized, British, and non-British, these concepts are challenged with detailed examples from the novels which help blur such separations and confront their meanings within a new context of a multicultural Britain rather than a homogenous country. This new context is presented with reference to the theory of hybridity of cultures and races introduced by Homi Bhabha. The examples from the chosen texts challenging the meaning of the established dichotomies of a homogeneous Britain are supported by Bhabha’s ideas to present the blurring of the previously established meanings about the identity of the immigrants.

#### **1.4 Theories of Culture: Homi Bhabha and *The Location of Culture***

Postcolonialism is an academic discipline which carries out a critique of the several aspects of the colonial rule like its’ cultural, political, and social effects (Fay and Haydon 9). Homi Bhabha is an academic and a postcolonial theorist born in 1949 in Mumbai, India (9). In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues that there is no

identity which is not subject to change (9). The work is considered one of the most important works of the postcolonial thought (9). *The Location of Culture* consists of a series of thoughts challenging the established concept of identity (9). The main concern of the book is the division of the West and the East – or the Other, which is seen, “as different from or inferior to the ‘Self’” (10). In this division of the West and the East, the West sees itself as, “cultured, civilized and industrious” and the East as, “prone to self-indulgent pleasure, lazy and uncivilized” (10). In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues that “the binary divisions like East-West were unstable and unsustainable” (10) and aiming to prove that he develops the two key concepts: hybridity and mimicry. Hybridity is the idea that identities are formed with the effect of all the different cultures they encounter (11). “When two cultures or nations meet, ideas, language, and material goods are shared between them. That process of sharing forces them both to adapt and change. For this reason, there can be no “pure” Western or Eastern culture or nation” (11). This division between the West and the East creates an ““Other” to engage with and to integrate (a process that denies it its identity)” (11). According to the idea of hybridity, identities are formed throughout all the interactions between one’s culture and other cultures. There is always a process of sharing which leads to a dynamism of one’s identity. This way of interaction of cultures leaves no space for the idea of the existence of pure “cultures” or races as there is always an influence of the other. In this process of sharing, the other – according to the Western culture, is denied its identity and is to be integrated into the dominant culture. Mimicry is another concept by Bhabha and means that a person or a group of people can adopt an idea from another culture (11). This adoption may be interpreted as ‘imitation’ or ‘copying’ or can be used by groups to reinforce the ideas and beliefs of their own culture (11). “This is a strategy of resistance, as mimicry turns into mockery. Adopting a different accent might be an attempt to present a higher social status (mimicry), or the voicing of things perceived to be ridiculous (mockery)” (11).

Bhabha’s concept of hybridity easily applies to the situation of the Bangladeshi and Jamaican immigrants in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* and Andrea Levy’s *Small Island*. The immigrants populating London in the two novels face problems of identity, racism, and are otherized although ironically being former subjects of the British Empire and having the right to citizenship in post-war Britain. The concept of hybridity is helpful in challenging the binary divisions concerning these immigrants and

provides a new understanding of the ideas of citizenship, race, and Britishness by showing that these concepts are subject to change due to the interaction between nations and cultures and the past interactions between the colonizer and the colonized. Even though Britain's colonies go through the process of decolonization, the ties between the mother country and its subject are stronger than to be ended by this process. With the arrival of the immigrants into the UK starting from 1945 their interaction continues, and the homogeneity of Britain comes under question. Bhabha, in his *The Location of Culture*, poses the questions:

How does the deconstruction of the 'sign', the emphasis on indeterminism in cultural and political judgement, transform our sense of the 'subject' of culture and the historical agent of change? If we contest the 'grand narratives', then what alternative the postcolonial and the postmodern temporalities do we create to articulate [...] historicities of race, gender, class, nation within a growing transnational culture? Do we need to rethink the terms in which we conceive of community, citizenship, nationality, and the ethics of social affiliation? (Bhabha 249-250)

Deconstructing the meaning of the signs/words, constructing the discourse of culture therefore requires challenging the dominantly established narratives and requires a newer articulation of newer signs to express the changed perception of culture. Bhabha asks if the concepts of a society, citizenship, nationality should be reconsidered and restated with new articulations of thought in a world that is witnessing a growing transnational culture. The same questions can be easily applied to the situation of immigrants in the post-war Britain as their status of citizenship, Britishness and their cultural and racial identities were under great scrutiny within the host society they arrived at. Bhabha's concept of hybridity answers these questions by suggesting a new form of discourse expressing the new meanings attributed to the concepts of cultural and national identity, citizenship, community, and race within the changing context of a newer world which has become globalized and produced the concept of a transnational culture.

Bhabha was influenced by the French poststructuralist thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Derrida (Fay and Haydon 23). Bhabha shared their suspicion over "the order of things" which was the philosophical thought which occurred with the intellectual thoughts of the 18th century Enlightenment (23). This "order of things" was based on "scientific investigation, deductive reasoning, and the rule of law" (23). However, Bhabha, like Foucault and Derrida, perceived a more universal and 'value-free' ordering of the world as opposed to seeing the world in categories of ideologically

constructed discourses which links partial knowledge to a desire for total power (23). To put it differently, “the Western philosophic tradition claimed to have the key to comprehending all the world’s mysteries, and therefore claimed the right to rule over that categorized world and everyone in it. Bhabha’s work challenged the primacy of such discourses” (23). Bhabha’s questioning of the discourses established by the Western rule makes his thoughts compatible with Derrida’s theory of deconstruction. It is apparent that Bhabha was influenced by Derrida and built on his ideas of deconstruction. He combined Derrida and Foucault’s theories with the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud who was the pioneer of the psychoanalytical method, and the ideas of Jacques Lacan, an important psychoanalyst who contributed to poststructuralist theory considerably (23). With the effect of psychoanalysis, Bhabha revealed the ‘repressed’ anxieties and desires of the nation, which were a threat to the existing world order and progress in the colonial and the colonized countries (23). “In essence, he questioned the alleged integrity of Western thought and identity (23). In this way, Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* was a challenge to the ideals and the notions of the Western world and threatened its totality in terms of having power and control.

Bhabha questioned the discourses constructed by the Western world, which categorized the world and suggested a world order that was still serving and promoting the ideals of the West and putting the non-West and the non-Westerners in a secondary and lower position and, therefore, at disadvantage in relation to their national and cultural identity, their race, and their citizenship rights. In challenging these prevailing discourses Bhabha’s concept of hybridity, analyzed in his *The Location of Culture*, is relevant to the study of the discourse of Bangladeshi and Jamaican immigrants in the novels, *Brick Lane* and *Small Island*. In addition, Bhabha shares common ideals with Derrida in terms of questioning the binaries regarding the culture and identity of the immigrants to the UK in the post-war era. Therefore, Bhabha’s concept of hybridity is highly applicable and useful in the study carried out in this thesis and it supplements Derrida’s theory of deconstruction and the deconstructive discourse analysis of immigration applied to these novels. Applying Derrida’s deconstruction and carrying out an analysis of the discourse of the immigrants from 1945 in Britain lays out the binaries and dichotomies attributed to the national, racial and cultural identities of these Bangladeshi and Jamaican immigrants. Deconstructive analysis helps detect from the chosen texts evidence which challenge and destroy the meaning of these

binary oppositions within the narratives. While deconstruction challenges and blurs the lines between the sharp contrasts of Western/non-Western, British/non-British, white/black, civilized/savage, and host/guest in the post-war British society, Bhabha's concept of hybridity provides a new understanding and a new articulation of such concepts by analyzing the changing dynamics of the post-war British society and therefore leads to the creation of a newer discourse of nationality, Britishness, citizenship, culture, and race. Both Derrida's theory of deconstruction and Bhabha's concept of hybridity are applicable and helpful in analyzing and comprehending the discourse of immigration in Andrea Levy's *Small Island* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* then and now.

### **1.5 Post-War Europe, Migration Policies, National Identity, Belonging, Racism, Multiculturalism, Assimilation, Integration, Discussions and Reflections**

After the end of the Second World War (after 1945), not only the United Kingdom but also Europe and the former empires (such as France and Italy) were faced with an influx of immigrants from their former colonies (Laschi 56). After 1945, the number of the immigrants arriving in Europe was "between 5.4 and 6.8 million" and those were people from the former colonies and were of European descent (56). Their return led both to practical and cultural problems in the European community (56). In the case of the UK and Commonwealth, the immigrants coming from Asia, Africa and the West Indies had a different bond with their "mother country"- the British Empire (56). That bond was created by their colonization for centuries which led to a sharing, an interaction, and an exchange of 'culture'. Additionally, the immigrants from these former colonies spoke the same language – English – spoken in their mother country. Therefore, it was stated by Elizabeth Buettner that these people were not completely immigrants but were "internal migrants" within the British Empire and the Commonwealth (Buettner qtd in Lashci 56). Even so, their arrival to the 'mother country' still led to controversies about their rights of involvement in social and political life and over their culture, identity, citizenship status, over the definition of 'Britishness', and their race in which regard they were seen as the "other" (56).

The otherizing of these immigrants caused crises in the immigrants' personal and social lives, and general socio-political conflicts within the UK. It is noteworthy to state that the experience of the immigrants arriving from a certain geography differs

from those arriving from another and yet they do share common concerns over the concepts of nationality, citizenship, Britishness, culture, and race. In the case of the Jamaican and Bangladeshi immigrants, one striking difference between the two peoples is the issue of religion. Bangladeshi immigrants to the UK, additionally, had to suffer the state of being otherized due to their religion – Islam, which distinguishes their experience from that of the Jamaican immigrants. Despite this difference, they share the exposure to discrimination and racism due to their skin color – being dark skinned, their different cultures, and their status of citizenship and the idea of Britishness.

While the arrival of these immigrants in Europe (in this case in the UK) led to a questioning and otherizing of their culture, race, and identity, simultaneously it caused the questioning of such concepts within Europe and required a range of political and social regulations and laws to be passed to cope with the existence of the non-Western immigrants in their communities as explained in the following quotation, “[...] the topic of post-colonial migrations deals with the redefinition of collective rights, the organization of urban and non-urban spaces, and, above all, the rehash of the idea of (national) belonging in Europe” (Laschi et al 56). The collective rights had to be redefined and regulated after the arrival of the immigrants as their arrival marked the changing of the existing order not only due to the ending of empires but also by reforming the societies and communities, they arrive in, by adding ‘color’ and thus challenging the idea of homogeneity of nations, races, and cultures. The idea of a nation and being a European, the definition of Western ideals, values and culture were brought into question when they clashed with the ideals, values, and the culture of the immigrants. The existence of different cultures within one space required the organization of such spaces as the cities and certain districts of cities that were preferred by the immigrants. As a result, the migration to the UK created conflicts in the definition of a national and cultural identity and racial identity for both sides. For the host community, it created a high necessity of social, political, and economic reorganization even though the host community had the advantage in the case of all these aspects. Besides requiring many changes in all aspects of a collective life, the immigrants’ existence was a challenge for the Europeans who had to confront with “the other” in their own homes (Laschi et al 57). While the European communities had difficulty in hosting the great number of immigrants and organizing their existence,

they also held the advantage of being at home, which means that they had the right to make social and political changes and had established lives along with stable legal and financial status. The situation caused both sides to struggle but it is obvious that the immigrants were at disadvantage as they were the minority and had none of the securities the host community had for itself. Such a case of disadvantage and inequality in regard to the status of the immigrants is also due to their former colonial ties with the former colonial empires because these colonial empires still chose to treat their ex-colonial immigrants in a hierarchical way. In the case of the UK, the British Empire wanted to have power and control over the existence of its former subjects. Such a hierarchical attitude was another drawback for the immigrants in the post-war Britain. “In both democratic and, predictably, fascist contexts, the marginalisation of migrants thus emerges as a long-lasting phenomenon, which raises the question of the colonial origin of racism and hierarchisation practices” (57). This shows that the racism against these immigrants has its origins in the colonial history which put them already below the colonizer country.

The presence of the immigrants within their European borders made Europeans worry that they were going to ‘contaminate’ their community and culture (Laschi 57). As the number of immigrants increased within the host society and they created their own isolated communities, their existence was perceived as a threat to the host culture. The same concern of protecting their own culture was shared with the first-generation immigrants as referred to in the Tower Hamlets and Windrush generation sections. The clash of two different cultures was worrying for both sides but still the host society had the advantage in calling the immigrants “the other” and themselves “us”. This necessity to reconsider the meaning and boundaries of the nation required, “reasoning about the inclusion of or the exclusion from the national community of migrants, on the basis of articulated and changing criteria such as history, culture, language, and sense of identity” (Laschi et al 58). With the end of the colonial empires and the independence of their former colonies, Europe had to redefine their political lines and geographical borders. This brought about the formations of new governments and a new definition of the idea of a nation. In such a process, the emergence of an immigration problem added to the consideration of the redefinition of a “nation” and national identity.



The concepts of national identity and citizenship work together to constitute the sense of national belonging (Laschi et al 58). Being a citizen of a certain nation establishes the national identity in legal and formal terms:

Formal citizenship, in general, is the instrument that establishes whether an individual belongs to a national community; formal belonging, with all the rights and duties that derive from it, leads to belonging in the sense of participation, cultural ties, language, and sentiment, which make the individual an integral part of a community. (Laschi et al 58)

Even though a definition of a formal citizenship is provided in the above quote, the idea of identity and belonging is more complex than suggested by this definition (Laschi et al 58). Analyzing the existence of the immigrants in the post-war and post-colonial European countries made the definition of these concepts more intricate and difficult for the European countries. In the case of Britain, the British Nationality Act of 1948 and the second Act in 1962 were two important political changes in trying to identify the scope of national identity (58-59). The 1948 Act gave the British subjects the right to enter the UK, to freely travel in the UK and to look for work (58-59). “[...] this formally based national inclusion policy was accompanied by a heated public debate, which revealed widespread hostility to questioning the meaning of British national identity” (Thompson qtd in Laschi et al 59). This statement reveals how the existence of the immigrants affected the perception of national belonging and national identity in the UK. They were considered a threat to the perception of British National identity which apparently did not involve people from the Empire’s subjects in its meaning. During this process of controversy about the definition of British nationality, it was not all migrants but those with colored skin who were subject to more hostility (59). So, the implementation of the 1948 Act did not treat all immigrants equally: “the implementation of the law was accompanied by an attitude of formal exclusion and an asymmetry in the treatment of migrants” (59). This asymmetrical treatment was further formalized by the 1962 Act because it changed the status of the colonial migrants from ‘British subjects’ to ‘Commonwealth immigrants’ (59). “The 1962 Act sanctioned the official failure [...] to widen the nation’s borders by welcoming former colonial subjects and rejected the assimilationist idea in Great Britain” (59). This was in a way a refusal to rethink the idea of ‘national belonging’. Therefore, the end of empires, decolonization, the post-war period and the arrival of the immigrants led European countries and the UK to reshape their citizenship policies for the immigrants arriving at their countries and they tried to do this in a way which benefited the country’s

national community as stated in the following quotation: “Before, during, and after decolonization, each state shaped citizenship policies towards post-colonial migrants according to their usefulness for supporting the idea of a national community they were developing during the second half of the 20th century” (Laschi et al 62). This brought a national perspective to the issue of immigration, citizenship, national identity, belonging and racism regarding the immigrants:

During and after decolonization, the question the former imperial powers had to answer was if people sharing a language and part of a contemporary history with a European country, but at the same time often having a different religion and different culture, had the right to be a citizen of that country, and why. The way they answered influenced the way the nation— but also Europe—was conceived during the second half of the 20th century. (Laschi et al 62)

It was the arrival of immigrants that was challenging to the previously existing meanings attached to the idea of a nation and the sense of national belonging by the way of citizenship. In addition, as stated earlier there was discrimination between the European and white-skinned immigrants and immigrants with colored skin from the former colonies in the UK (64). In spite of the idea of multiculturalism brought by the immigrants to the UK (and to Europe), the idea of a “nation” was still at the center of the European regimes (64).

In the case of Britain, the British Nationality Act (BNA) of 1948 was a way of reasserting the power of the ‘mother country’ on its former colonies (Ashcroft 5). However, it did not produce such an expected outcome but led to a greater amount of non-white immigration which caused highly negative public reaction (5). These reactions even turned into race riots in 1958 (5). The citizenship rights given in 1948 could not be taken back but were limited with the following Act of 1962 and the later legislations of 1968 and 1971 (5). They were aimed at restricting non-white immigration (5). “Decolonization [...] posed a direct threat to Britain’s understanding of itself and its place in the world, and it was the political dilemma that created modern multicultural Britain” (Ashcroft 5). British multiculturalism:

is consequently often described as ‘Janus-faced’, with tough restrictions on outsiders cast primarily in racial terms, but substantial protections for internal cultural pluralism (Meer & Modood, in press). The unsuccessful attempt to secure the post-imperial Commonwealth vision immediately after the Second World War therefore created a political and legal legacy that intertwined race, citizenship and immigration with the search for ‘Britishness’ after decolonisation. Part of this legacy was a distinctive bifurcated and bipartisan ‘regime’ of British multiculturalism. (Ashcroft 5,6)

As Ashcroft puts it, the way multiculturalism occurred in Britain with the arrival of the immigrants was marked with its unequal treatment of the non-white immigrants. The concepts of race, citizenship and immigration came together when the concept of Britishness was to be redefined in the post-war UK. It also resulted in divisive regimes of British multiculturalism which received support from both political opinions. According to Ashcroft, the definition of multiculturalism involves, “a request for tolerance of behaviours” that are different from, “the norms widely accepted by the majority especially if those norms have a disproportionate impact on members of minority groups” (3). As stated by Ashcroft, Britain struggled in applying such tolerance to the immigrant minorities and followed a two-faced or multi-faced approach in its multicultural policies. Multiculturalism also includes giving ‘distinctive rights’ to minority communities “such as the protection of minority languages, or special forms of political representation” (3). The case in Britain does not comply with such a definition of multiculturalism in the post-war era. Ashcroft states that “[...] a range of government policies and programmes – in Britain, particularly those relating to education and immigration – are explicitly entangled in disagreements over the costs and benefits of a multicultural polity” (3). The reason for the multi-faced approach towards the immigrants is therefore not only political but also economic. As stated earlier, the post-war era required Europe and European countries to rebuild their countries and redefine their national identities and it is obvious that there were ‘dilemmas’ in their political attitude towards the rights and culture of specifically the non-white immigrants. While the process requires adaptation from both sides - the host culture and the immigrants, the host country Britain was not able to experience multiculturalism fully regarding the provided definitions by Ashcroft.

The measures of the British government in the 1960s to limit immigration is argued by Randal Hansen to be the reason creating ‘racism’ in Britain (11). He argues that the socio-economic reasons such as unemployment, crime, housing presented by British state in its migration policies to restrict immigration were used to establish a link between the social problems and immigration which racialized immigration and constructed a ‘racialized’ conception of Britishness. This means that being white was linked to being British and being black led to an exclusion from the identity of Britishness. As Hansen puts it, “In building its strong case the state undertook nothing

more than a political project in which notions of “belonging” and “community” were reconstructed in terms of “racial” attachments and national identity organized around skin color” (11). As it was a process for the former British Empire to redefine and rebuild itself after the war, Britain made use of the immigrants not only in rebuilding the post-war economy of the country by the cheap labor provided by immigrant workers from its former subjects, but also in redefining and reforming its national identity. The presence of the immigrants helped the British people call themselves ‘us’ again and name the immigrants as ‘them’ and the ‘other’. The difference in their skin color, and their cultural practices were probably the easiest and most striking reason to promote against them to gain the support of the public against these immigrants. In this way, while the immigrants established a different culture and thus opened the way to multiculturalism in Britain, the rejection of their existence by the British public and politics, and the hostility against them because of social and economic reasons did not let Britain become truly multicultural according to the definitions by Ashcroft. Even if racism in Britain is often linked to the colonial ties it had with these immigrants, Hansen argues that in the post-war era this was a policy, and it was constructed by the state to promote a new sense of national identity and Britishness in the country (11).

The racialized attitude against external immigrants to Britain led to an “internal race relations” regime in the country (Ashcroft 5). The Labor Party passed Acts in 1965, 1968 and 1975 as a part of this race relations regime and it created a discursive shift of immigration from assimilation to integration (Ashcroft 5). According to Ashcroft, “Integration was understood ‘not as a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance’” (Jenkins qtd in Ashcroft 5). The idea of integration was there to provide equal treatment of the immigrants along with tolerance towards their cultural differences rather than expecting their adoption of the host culture: “The newly founded welfare state was seen as the primary mechanism for integration, supplemented by substantial funding and activism engaged with the needs of minority communities, and a series of exemptions from general laws for ethnic, racial, and religious minorities” (Ashcroft 5). The shift from the concept of assimilation to integration shows a change in the attitude towards immigrants at least in theory. The concept of integration requires a fairer treatment of immigrants than assimilating them without tolerating their cultural differences and promotes a cultural diversity. This

displays a decline in the nationalist attitude, which carried racism along with it against immigrants, and is a step towards the existence of a multicultural British society. Ashcroft states that the nationalist approach favored by the British government in the 1960s and 1970s, was not supported in the 1980s and 1990s by the Labor Party, which got engaged in anti-racist activism (6). In 1997, the New Labor Party was elected and adopted a pluralist approach, which created a sense of citizenship and community again (6). In 2000, a report was published on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, which is considered an important step in British multiculturalism (6). The 9/11 attacks in 2001 and the race riots were a setback to this advance in terms of British multiculturalism. The events led to a lot of reaction from the public and the media (6). Therefore, the New Labor Party had to adopt a new approach to deal with the growing reactions which were mostly negative. It was at this time that “New Labour then began to emphasize the need for immigrant and minority communities to assimilate British values and traditions” (6). During this time, immigrants were seen more as a threat to the host community and Britain had to make new laws for the security of its ‘own’ citizens. It had to pass laws against terrorism, and the 9/11 attacks, which was Islamic terrorism, affected the Muslim Asian immigrants to Britain (Bangladeshi immigrants) more negatively. “The security measures were linked explicitly to assimilative policies that problematically muddled together counter-terrorism work with community relations, particularly in relation to Muslim groups” (Meer qtd in Ashcroft 6). The 9/11 events from the U.S. affected the community relations in Europe and Britain negatively especially in the case of the Muslim communities due to the antiterrorism measures.

The issue of immigration and the concepts of national identity, citizenship, and even racism are still on the agenda of many European countries. The discussion does not seem like it has an ending as the world keeps changing and the interaction between countries keep increasing. The social and political discourse of immigration has changed considerably from racism to a more recent term such as integration in the case of a multicultural Britain from the 1940s to 2000. The discussion of such concepts depends greatly on the changing dynamics of politics, economy, and society in Britain and in the world. During the post-war era, while Britain was trying to define Britishness, Europe was trying to construct a definition of a European identity and citizenship. However, looking at the amount of contact between different peoples and cultures in the world by the increased mobility of people and the increased

communications due to the advances in the digital world, even the meaning of such concepts of identity and European citizenship seem to have weakened. The world has reached a point where there are discussions of being a citizen of the world, nevertheless, countries still try to maintain the established discourses for the sake of holding power and control over their society.



## CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHORS ANDREA LEVY AND MONICA ALI AND THE NOVELS *SMALL ISLAND* AND *BRICK LANE*

Andrea Levy was born in London on March 7, 1956 (Baxter and James). She was raised in Highbury, North London (Baxter and James). She went to Highbury Hill Grammar School, and Middlesex University where she studied Textile Design and Weaving (Baxter and James). In 1989, She enrolled in a Creative Writing program at Covent Garden, London. She wrote *Every Light in the House is Burnin'* (1994), *Never Far from Nowhere* (1996), *Fruit of the Lemon* (1999), *Small Island* (2004), and *Long Song* (2010) (Baxter and James).

Her family sailed to London in the *Empire Windrush* in 1948 like most of the first Jamaican immigrants to Britain ("Andrea Levy"). As the Jamaicans migrating to England in this ship came to be known as the Windrush generation, the experiences of this generation became a major topic for Levy's novels. The setting for most of her novels is London, where she spent most of her life.

Levy is known to have started writing in her thirties and she reflected the experience of Black Britons and the relationship between the Caribbean and Britain in her novels ("Andrea Levy"). *Small Island* is Levy's fourth novel, and, in this novel, she examines the experiences of her father's generation, namely the Windrush Generation ("Andrea Levy"). In *Small Island*, Levy reflects the experiences of men who returned to Britain after serving in the RAF (the Royal Air Force) as well as the experiences of women who were not commonly included in narratives dealing with migration ("Andrea Levy"). Besides voicing the immigrant characters in her novel, Levy includes the perspectives of the English whose lives intersect with each other in London ("Andrea Levy"). In her last novel the *Long Song*, Levy examines the British-Caribbean relations further ("Andrea Levy"). Levy died in 2019 ("Andrea Levy").

Monica Ali was born in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 1967 (Stade and Karbiener 11). She is the daughter of a Bangladeshi father and an English mother (11). She grew up in Bolton, England and studied philosophy, politics, and economics at Wadham College, Oxford (11).

She is the writer of the books *Brick Lane*, *Alentejo Blue*, *In the Kitchen* and *Untold Story* ("Monica Ali"). The subjects she deals with in her novels varies but she deals with immigration in *Brick Lane* ("Monica Ali"). Monica Ali wrote *Brick Lane*

in 2003 (Stade and Karbiener 11). *Brick Lane* is a novel about the Bangladeshi immigrants to the East London's Tower Hamlets area. With the publishing of *Brick Lane*, Monica Ali was named as Best of Young British novelists (11). The novel won the British Book Award for the Newcomer of the Year and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize (11). Her representation of Bangladeshis, especially the Sylheti, in the novel was criticized as they portrayed stereotypes and satisfied the negative perceptions about these immigrants in Britain (11). The film version of the novel appeared in 2007 (11). Ali still lives in London ("Monica Ali").

### **2.3 *Small Island* by Andrea Levy: Deconstructing the discourse of racism: black vs. white**

Andrea Levy's *Small Island* tells the story of its main characters after World War II and refers to the War and its characters' experiences at war by flashbacks. In bringing together characters from both Jamaica (small islanders) and from the motherland (the bigger island) in London, England, *Small Island* concerns itself with the racism of skin color - of the 'black' and 'white' - in a post-war England and displays how these binary oppositions were dissolved in time and the sharp line between them was blurred. The idea of racism in the novel naturally involves the idea of Englishness and the outsider; however, the novel does not limit its concern over racism only to England but expands it as far as the US and India by telling the war experiences of its main characters in these countries. The novel also deals with the discourse of racism among authorities such as the armed forces as well as among civilians. Despite seeming to present instances of racism experienced at different levels in England, the novel displays how the dominant discourse of racism lost its meaning, and how the once very strong oppositions of 'black' and 'white' were weakened due to the post-war effects of loosening of the borders. This effect blurs the sharp line between the black and white 'races' and by doing so the novel helps deconstruct the once dominant discourse of racism in post-war England as *Small Island*:

[...] is about the disaffiliative nature of the colonial experience. Here, Levy depicts flawed and contradictory characters caught in the wake of the diasporic dislocation that arises from the trauma of colonization. She examines the contention of inter-cultural encounter and presents hybridization as one inevitable and problematic effect of colonialism. (Powell 201)

As the Jamaican characters (Hortense and Gilbert) get involved in the life of the English characters (Queenie and Bernard) and their roads intersect at several



instances throughout the story, it is observed that the novel is concerned with the theme of racism and the relations of its characters with each other help construct this theme. By analyzing the relations of these Jamaican and English characters with each other and with the English society, the novel portrays racial hybridization because of colonialism and de-colonialism at the end of WWII and while deconstructing the discourse of racism it is inevitable to refer to hybridization. When talking about hybridity:

[...] contemporary cultural discourse cannot escape the connection with the racial categories of the past in which hybridity had such a clear racial meaning. Therefore 'deconstructing such essentialist notions of race today we may rather be repeating the [fixation on race in the] past than distancing ourselves from it or providing a critique of it (27). This is a subtle and persuasive objection to the concept. (Mambrol)

*Small Island* starts with an anecdote of Queenie from her school years when she tells the teacher that "she had been to Africa" which turns out to be funny because as a child she only went to the exhibition of the British Empire in its miniature form (Levy 1). "The year we went to the Empire Exhibition, the Great War was not long over but nearly forgotten. Even Father agreed that the Empire exhibition sounded like it was worth a look. The King had described it as the 'whole Empire in little'" (Levy 2).

In employing this visit to the miniature of the Empire, Levy sets one of her solid discussions of her novel from the start. The Exhibition includes countries like Malaya, Barbados, Grenada, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, India and Africa. It includes all the colonized countries by Britain before the War. And when Queenie gets to Africa there, in the jungle, encounters the 'dark skinned' woman who is weaving. By portraying the British Empire in its miniature form and with this visit to Africa the contrast of 'blackness' and 'whiteness' is set, and the novel establishes one of its strongest discussions right from the start with the prologue about Queenie's childhood.

In this prologue, the description of the African man's 'blackness' by Queenie, who is only a child, is striking in terms of serving the discussion of the black and white. Queenie narrates "I shook an African man's hand. It was warm and slightly sweaty like anyone else's" (6). It is clear in Queenie's observation of shaking hands with the African man that she sees it naturally even though at the beginning she feels like the 'big nigger man could have swallowed her up' (6). He was an African man, "who

looked to be carved from *melting chocolate*” (6). The lips of this men were not, “pink like they *should* be” but they were brown. “His hair was woolly as a black *shorn* sheep. His nose, squashed flat, had two nostrils big as train tunnels. And he was looking down at me” (6). Queenie’s descriptions of the ‘dark race of the African man’ sets the contrast against the ‘white’ race very clearly but the way the African is described from the eye of a child – Queenie, brings an innocent side to this contrast. Queenie’s description of the African man like that of ‘melted chocolate’ and his nose, lips, and hair; how they look different to the eyes of a child who has never seen an African man sound very naïve. Nevertheless, still, in the use of the adjectives like “nostrils big as train tunnels”, and hair “like that of a black shorn sheep” there are connotations of ‘savagery’ attributed to the African man. When she feels that the African man could swallow her up, it hints that there is a kind of ‘scariness’ attributed to African people. In contrast to looking a little scary and ‘savage’, this man speaks English well and shakes hands with her in a very *civilized* manner, which negate this distinction between the black and white as savage and civilized. Queenie’s father tells her not to worry about shaking hands with the African, because this man was probably a chief or a prince in Africa as he could speak English well, and says, “when they speak English you know that they have learnt to be civilized - taught English by the white man, missionaries probably” (Levy 7). This remark refers to the idea of “Englishness” and ‘civility’ being attributed to the ‘white race’ while “the other” and ‘savagery’ is related to the dark colored races. The novel establishes such contrasts between the dark and white races so as to prove that they can be destroyed and that there are no sharp contrasts. It can even be hinted in Queenie’s shaking hands with an African man as a child that she would have more contact with dark skinned people in the future. She does not mind it as a child, but only finds this man different and thinks his hand to be like the hand of any other man. Even as a child, she has an embracing attitude to a man with a darker color. On the contrary, her father’s approach and comment on the African man in saying that he is civilized because he speaks English is ‘racist’. Queenie’s experiences with dark skinned citizens of England and her attitude towards them prove crucial in disproving the binary contrasts of black and white – therefore English, throughout the novel. *Small Island* is: “[...] narrated polyvocally by Jamaican and English couples without children, the former epitomizing the survival of immigrant Jamaicans in London during and after the Second World War” (Friedman and Shultermandl 161). In portraying this survival of the Jamaican immigrants and the

discourse related to them in the post-war London, Queenie's attitude both sets and destroys this discourse of racism, which culminates in the end with her miscegenation.

In chapter one, Hortense is introduced and remembers Celia Langley's *dream* of "leaving Jamaica" and "going to England" one day to live in a big house – a dream which Hortense does not even dare imagine at the time (Levy 11). In the end, she is the one who ends up sailing to England in a big ship and goes to ring the bell of a big house (Levy 11). She travels from one *island* -Jamaica- to another -Britain and rings the bell of this big house which is answered by an Englishwoman, and the description of this woman by Hortense parallels the description of the African man by Queenie in the prologue. "A blonde-haired, pink-cheeked English woman with eyes so blue they were the brightest thing in the street" (12-13). The English woman represents the ideal 'white race' "English" women and counters the description of the 'black' African. In this way, the novel presents these binary opposition regarding skin color clearly to question this existence of a pure "English" of a pure race. In spite of presenting the two races in clear opposition at the beginning, the novel progresses to depict that the relationship between the two is much more complex, and this complexity is vital in destroying the clear-cut distinctions between them.

It is learnt that the complexity of race starts much earlier for the Jamaican character Hortense when she talks about her past with a flashback in part three. She was born to a well-known and respected father who worked for the government (Levy 37). He was a noble and intelligent man (37). Her mother was Alberta to whom she was born "out of wedlock" (38). Hortense explains that she took after her father rather than her mother (38). She says: "I grew to look as my father did. My complexion was as light as his, the color of warm honey. It was not the bitter chocolate hue of Alberta and her mother. With such countenance there was a golden life for I. What, after all, could Alberta give? Bare black feet skipping over stones" (Levy 38). She obviously says that the skin color matters for her future and influences the type of life she can have. Alberta here represents the type of life people with "black" skin would have. Hortense is promised a better life only because she is born to have lighter skin color. Here, it is revealed that she was given to her father's cousins for upbringing so that she could be educated, rather than live the life with bare feet Alberta could give her and become a worthy lady even if she is away from her father (38). The novel apparently deals with the issue of race. By telling the story of Hortense's birth and revealing that

she is not of pure 'dark' color or origins, it helps destroy the contrasts of pure black or white. It can be understood from the following quotation that: "*Small Island* confronts British racism and undermines its notions of homogeneity even while it asserts the "in-placeness" of Black Britain. [...] Levy's work clearly lies within the framework of the conventional Caribbean modernist exploration of the dynamics of in and out migration" (Powell 203-204).

Still in part three, Hortense mentions the private school where she assisted the education of young children after her schooling (Levy 44). This private school is run by Mr and Mrs Ryder, who are from America and being from America Mrs Ryder is "the whitest woman" Hortense has ever seen (45) and her husband Mr Ryder has a red head and freckled face. The opposition of the black and white races are here set with the whiteness of an American couple. In addition, when Hortense talks about Mr Ryder she says; "When a pretty young woman produced a fair-skinned baby with a completely bald head, the men [...] whispered that Mr Ryder was spreading more than just his love of learning" (45). In this way, the novel refers to the 'miscegenation' in Hortense's memories which shows the complex relationships between the two races. It should be noted here that as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century miscegenation was evident in Jamaica as stated in the following quotation, "Miscegenation varies in form from the temporary encounter to the more permanent union involving concubinage and marriage. With the exception of marriage, which seldom occurred, miscegenation was extensive in [both] islands" (Sio 7). As it can be seen in the case of Hortense's father and Mr Ryder's relationship, the amount of miscegenation in Jamaica was observed in the number of the free colored people who included a proportion of racially mixed individuals (Sio 7). Additionally, the population of the white race was considerable compared to the black and free colored people and that, "A rank order of colour existed in Jamaica that was based on skin colour and status at birth [...]" (Sio 7). The relationship of the two races is much older and complex than to be only commented on depending on the arrival of the immigrants from Jamaica (and West Indies) to the mother country. It is obvious that a relationship of superiority and inferiority between the two races existed in the small island of Jamaica, even before they arrived in the island of their mother country. Another case of miscegenation in the novel is about Hortense's cousin Michael, whom she was in love with and who proves to have a relationship with Mrs Ryder (Levy 54-56). Michael's relationship is another

transgression of the borders between black and white; however, this is only the start. Upon the discovery of his relationship with Mrs Ryder due to the sudden death of Mr Ryder during the storm, Michael decides to go to England by joining the RAF (the Royal Air Force) and although he disappears from the story in this part and only to be reminded by Hortense's thoughts and his news from the war, he reappears in the novel with his connection with Queenie in the end, which causes the discussion of race to reach a climax.

"My dream was and always had been that I should find employment teaching at the Church of England school in Kingston, for it was there that light-skinned girls in pristine uniforms gathered to drink from the fountain of an English curriculum" (Levy 86), says Hortense at the beginning of part six. Completing her teacher training, she wants to teach English, but she is told that "her breeding" is not enough to stand in the elegant classroom of that school before high-class girls (86). Even in Jamaica, her trouble of not being able to teach begins. Even if she is educated to speak perfect English by English or British teachers, she still cannot qualify to teach in the eye of the headmaster of this school. The reason is shown as her "breeding", so here the origins of her family prevent her from receiving equal treatment as a teacher. While the headmaster asks her about the facts of her upbringing, the reason is obvious that she is a "colored" person. Hortense's teachers where she received teacher training and earlier where she assisted the Mr and Mrs Ryder were all white teachers. During Hortense's search for a job, no matter if they are trained, colored people are not seen qualified to teach even in Jamaican schools.

As Hortense is already denied a job in Jamaica due to her breeding and her colored skin, she experiences more of this racism in the mother country. She ends up at Queenie's door to find her husband Gilbert -a former RAF man- whom she gave the money he needed to sail to the mother country on condition that he married her. Six months after their marriage, Hortense sails to England with the hope of a more comfortable life and finding a teaching position. Gilbert lives in the house of Queenie -a white woman- whose husband also joined RAF and did not come back. The narration shifts between these four characters, including Bernard who comes back from the War later in the novel:

Levy's fragmented polyphonic novel, with four different I-narrators, weaves together interactive narratives expressing contradictory views. It also opposes and yet bridges different spatialities and temporalities. The novel's composite

textual space and its dialogic structure support the author's counter-hegemonic discourse (Duboin 28).

Even in Queenie's hosting of the colored people, including Gilbert, the novel brings together the two races in close contact under one roof implying the situation of the nation in the bigger picture. Levy's use of characters from different backgrounds even if from the same race brings different perspectives together on the issue of racism.

In part nine, Queenie says: "For the teeth and glasses/ That was the reason so many *colored people* were coming to this country, according to my next-door neighbor Mr Todd. 'That National Health Service- it's pulling them in, Mrs Bligh. Giving things away at our expense will keep them coming,' he said" (Levy 111). These are Queenie's thoughts on the arrival of Hortense. Queenie's neighbor Mr Todd is complaining about her renting her house to colored people and ruining the decentness of the neighborhood (112). Mr Todd asks her about her husband Bernard who went to war and asks if there are any news of him. He says he is doing this for looking out for Queenie as neighbors should do as, "*Our* own kind sticking together, just like during the war" (113), with which Queenie does not agree. She knows he is asking because if her husband was there, he would not let colored people in her house to make money. Queenie says that war causes people to scatter like dandelion seeds (113). This remark refers to immigration of many to live in another country. Jamaicans - the colored people of the nation - were coming into the Mother Country in big numbers in search of a better life:

In *Small Island*, Andrea Levy explores the impact of immigration on sense of space. Through her novel's dual time frame (1948 and before) and its multiple locations (England, Jamaica, India), the author aims to show that the island's history and national identity have been shaped beyond its borders, which have been repeatedly crossed back and forth, first by British colonizers, then by West Indian servicemen and migrant workers who came to defend or help re-build the country. Given this long-standing intimate contact, Andrea Levy insists on the legitimate urban presence of these émigrés, claiming that: "Englishness must never be allowed to attach itself to ethnicity" ("This Is My England") thus intends to redress the balance and, so as to give a complete picture of post-war London as a problematic "contact zone" from different vantage points, she gives voice to both "mainstream" white Londoners and black newcomers. (Levy qtd in Duboin 28)

The contact between the two races has been intimate, and this intimacy was the reason for questioning the idea of Englishness which was attributed to the "white" race only. The changing idea of Englishness and the dissolving of the line between the two races go hand in hand. The novel provides evidence about the fusion of the two races which is useful in deconstructing the racism discourse in relation to the discussion of

Englishness. Another instance of this separation in post-war London is seen when Queenie talks about her neighbor Blanche who wants to leave the neighborhood due to Queenie's colored tenants. Blanche says that her husband, "[...] is just back from fighting a war and now this country no longer feels his own" (Levy 117). Although these immigrants are citizens of Britain and fought a war for Britain, they are not welcome in the Mother Country as they make it unwelcome for the English. Queenie narrates how Blanche feels, "Forced out, she felt. All those coons eyeing her and her daughters up every time they walked down their own street. Hitler invading couldn't have been any worse, she declared" (117). The arrival of the immigrants is even compared to Hitler's invasion and that is how the locals in their neighborhoods feel about them. They are seen as guests in the Mother Country and are even supposed to step of the pavement to give way to the white (118). Queenie is expected by her neighbors to tell her lodgers about how to behave which she does not do. She only wants one of them -Kenneth- to leave because she does not like him as a person, not because of his color.

In part eleven, Gilbert has a flashback to his experience in America as an airman and how they were treated, with which the novel refers to segregation of Africans in America and how Jamaicans were allowed to mix with the whites (Levy 128,129). Gilbert explains: "West Indians, being the subjects of His Majesty King George VI, had, for the time being, superior black skin. We were allowed to live with white soldiers while the inferior American negro was not. I was perplexed" (131). It is a perplexing situation how people with the same dark skin are considered superior and treated differently. He says that the African Americans were segregated because they wouldn't work and that they - being British - were different (132). However, that was only in the camp as Gilbert says he was happy the American military authorities did not let them off the camp because:

We West Indians, thinking ourselves as good as any man, would have wandered unaware, greeting white people who would have swung us from the nearest tree for merely passing the time of the day with them. And my brother Lester? How would they know he was a British colored man with no uniform to distinguish him? By a badge perhaps worn on his coat? But in what shape? (132)

Gilbert is worried about how Americans could distinguish between the difference of the black skin of Africans and the British West Indians, which reveals the irony of the situation. It is shown that in America there is segregation only for the

Africans but if the West Indians appear in public, no one would be able to distinguish them from the Africans and would treat them in the same way. The novel is not limited to Britain in dealing with racial discrimination and compares the nature of racism in America and Britain in this way:

Regarding postimperial, multicultural Britain, James Procter argues that there are crucial differences in etymologies of 'black' in the United States and the United Kingdom, because in the United States the term has 'conventionally referred to a particular "racial" community (African - American)' (2003-5) whereas in the British context "black" has been translated as a political rather than racial category' (2003-6). As Jim Pines defines it, black Britishness represents 'a complex set of relations... which are not necessarily structured as binary oppositions – e.g., "black" and "British" – but to the complex relationship between them' (2003-5), a position that I believe describes the ambivalence of transnational identities. (Friedman and Schultersmandl 161)

Andrea Levy reflects this complex contact by presenting the relationship of her Jamaican and English characters. She refers to America and racism against Africans in America to portray the different nature of it. Even though it is suggested to be a more political issue than racial in the above quotation, the contrasts of the dark and white race are drawn vividly throughout the novel and yet as the relationship of the characters gets more intricate, the issue of race, in parallel, becomes more complex, and this leads to the questioning of such binary oppositions.

It is learnt in Gilbert's flashback that his father was born a Jew (129). He looks up the meaning of "anthropoid" in the dictionary and is struck by what he reads: "resembling a human but primitive, like an ape" (129). In this way, the massacre of the Jews in World War II is also referred to in Gilbert's memories. He also remembers how his father told him that he could have been Jewish, which for his father was the greatest curse that could befall him (129). The war was fought so that everyone could live with "their own sort", they say in the Mother Country, and they stick to this 'racial massacre' of the war as a reason for not wanting the colored Jamaicans in their country. Gilbert says that he joined the war to fight against the "master race" theory (131). The character of Gilbert opposes racism in several instances throughout the novel and is exposed to it as a RAF man and later as a civilian.

In part fourteen, Gilbert remembers that he goes to pick up some parts as a truck driver to the US base in Grimsby, and he overhears the American officers speaking:

Shall I send him out?



You said he is colored.

He's British, though.

British! Who cares? British – it's still trouble. IF I send a colored down to that unit, it's trouble. [...]

Shall I send him back?

How colored is he?

Enough, sir (Levy 150)

It does not matter if he is a British soldier since he is colored, he will be a problem in that US base as the officer would not be able to use a 'colored' in that place. Even when the setting is the US, the idea of Englishness is questioned here. Gilbert is not treated as a British soldier because his skin color is dark. Later, when two soldiers - with dark skin - get into Gilbert's truck and start having a casual conversation as to ask him where he is from, he says he is British. One of the men reply that to his eye, Gilbert does not look British. Then, Gilbert explains that he is from Jamaica, and it is in the Caribbean, the West Indies and a British subject and that England is his Mother Country therefore he is British but colored. He continues to explain that Jamaica is the colony and that they are British and live in Jamaica (157). So, one of the men - Levi goes on to say, "the British have all their black folks living on an island" (157). The two men getting in his truck function in a way as agents in questioning the nature of racism against the colored citizens of Britain's colonies. The difficulty these men have in understanding what Gilbert is saying makes the absurdity of the situation clear.

In the same part, the two men tell Gilbert about the segregation in the US and how some towns are for black only while others are for the white. Levi tells Gilbert that Gilbert is a negro, and a negro is never welcome in the US army no matter if he is British and the British do things differently (158-159). The novel refers to the kind of racism in the US and compares it to the colonization of Britain. Although it appears that Britain treats its colored citizens better because there is no segregation in the Empire like in the USA, it causes the question whether the treatment of these colored citizens is any better. There is a parallel in the confusion of the two parties as Gilbert is confused about segregation, and Levi and his friend are confused about Jamaica being a part of Britain. It displays different faces of racism practiced by the two great powers of the world. Levi leaves Gilbert's truck saying, "The British Empire – I'm gonna remember that. And all their colored folks on an island in the sea" (162). It

obviously refers to a different kind of segregation and isolation these people are subject to. This attitude of Britain towards its former subjects is obvious when their citizens immigrate to the Mother Country. For the ‘English’, they were meant to be staying in their islands although they fought a war for that country, they were not expected to be living in the Mother Country.

While the United States, due to a long history of slavery and the violent oppression of indigenous American cultures within its own geographic borders, has always been an inequitable and racially divided society, racial difference in England was contained mostly within the colonies. African, Caribbean, and Indian people, among others, were spectacles, such as at the Empire Exhibition in *Small Island*’s prologue. They were not seen as British subjects. Characters such as Bernard and Mr. Todd view Hortense and Gilbert as, “an illegitimate intrusion into a vision of authentic British life that, prior to their arrival was as stable and peaceful as it was ethnically undifferentiated” (Gilroy 7).

Of course, Britain was never the homogenously white culture that the rise of nineteenth-century nationalism painted, and that Bernard and Mr. Todd imagined. For example, around fifteen thousand black soldiers who fought with the British during the American Revolution, as well as other people of color tied to imperialism, such as sailors and merchants, had settled in England by the late eighteenth century (Makdisi x). When Hortense and Gilbert arrive in England, they continue a legacy of black subjects seeing themselves as British due to their service to the “mother country.” On the contrary, white British citizens saw the sheer number of postwar immigrants—what they viewed as the onslaught of colonial migration—as a threat to British identity. (McMann 202)

The historical and political reality explained in the above quotation is clearly represented in Levy’s *Small Island*. Even though Britain was never homogeneously ‘white’ and the two races had been in contact with each other due to colonization even in the eighteenth century, the perception of white and black races as English and non-English, superior-inferior, and civilized-uncivilized was still prevalent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This prevalence is presented in the novel with the intersecting lives of the Jamaican and English characters, and the idea of a homogenous Britain, Britishness and Englishness attributed to people of a certain race are questioned.

According to research carried out in 2005-6, the people interviewed within the scope of this research display a shift from Britishness, which became diversified, to Englishness – which is more exclusive (Clarke and Garner 60). According to this study, most people who identify themselves as being British are the minorities such as the Bangladeshis rather than the white UK nationals (65). In addition, the study displays an indifference against the idea of Britishness which indicates that it does not mean much (66). “Whatever Britishness means, it does not mean the same thing to everyone” (70). This statement claims that the value and meaning attributed to Britishness changes from one individual to the other and that there is no common ground for defining Britishness. While for immigrants, Britishness means an “unattainable formal equality”, for the white UK nationals involved in this study, it has negative meanings (70). The white respondents of the interviews usually refer to what Britishness meant in the past, and how it cannot be the same (70). The interviewees usually connect the idea of Britishness with immigration, and the white UK nationals chose to call themselves rather “English” because “Britishness” does not define them anymore (71). According to the study, “This ambivalence towards the diversity and inclusiveness associated with ‘British’, and the notion of exclusivity linked to ‘English’ was a common thread across classes and genders” (71-72). The study shows that the idea of Britishness has been decreasing culturally and economically (73) and cultural change has been taking away the national identity defined by Britishness (74). This research claims that, “Britishness seems to be defined more by what it is not” (74). The discussion on the definition of Britishness and Englishness within this study, exists in Levy’s novel and is presented in the experiences of her Jamaican immigrant and white English characters. The dilemmas experienced by her characters parallel the ambiguities existing in the definition of Britishness.

In part seventeen, when Gilbert and Queenie (and her grandfather) go to the cinema and the usher tells Gilbert to sit at the back with the other colored people, that is another display of racism. The novel compares the treatment of ‘dark skinned’ people in the US and in Britain. Gilbert objects saying, “This is England”, “This is not America. We do not do this in England. I will sit anywhere I please” (184). Queenie tries to back him up, but for Gilbert she misses the point because she says that Gilbert could sit between her and her grandfather and that would mean he would not sit next

to any white person, which is not satisfying for Gilbert. So, he insists that there is no “segregation” in England and says, “This is England, not Alabama” (185). It is ironic that he makes this comparison since it shows that Gilbert holds a very high opinion of England as the Mother Country and maybe there is no segregation as in the US but still there is a rule at the cinema in England that forces him to sit at the back with other ‘dark skinned’ people. Disobeying this rule, he prevents people from watching the film by causing a fight. One of the American soldiers calls him a “nigger” and tells him to sit where he is told (186). During this fight Gilbert sees that “it was hatred raged in these men’s eyes not anger! Queenie’s grandfather Arthur gets shot during this fight and Gilbert says he became another casualty of war but asks, “of which war”?” (193). This is the fight of races, hatred for one another for no reason other than one’s skin color.

In part eighteen “Gilbert”, Gilbert finds himself demobilized but rather than being joyous, he feels: “So, that was it. Now what? With alarm I became quite aware that the island of Jamaica was not universe: it ran only a few miles before it fell into the sea. In that moment, standing tall on Kingston harbor, I was shocked by the awful realization that, man, we Jamaicans were small islanders too!” (196). After fighting the war and seeing different parts of the world such as America and more importantly his Mother Country, Gilbert feels that his home country was only a small island and that there is a much bigger world outside it. Being demobilized, he feels that his world is not the same any more after World War II. He finds out that his four sisters got married and went to America, two of them to Canada, and his brother Lester also became a big man in America (196). He says that all his siblings had been “scattered” and this connects with Queenie’s earlier remark that war scatters people like the seeds of dandelions. Gilbert’s family was also scattered around the bigger world outside their small island. He was only welcome by young boys in his district, who were seeing a real soldier coming from a real war. His mother and aunt were not happy at all seeing him back in their yard and even they were about to leave their home for they had reason to visit their children who were happily wed overseas (196-97). One other person who is happy to see Gilbert back is Elwood who believes in an *independent* Jamaica and that it can “take care of them” (208). For him, once they get rid of the *white men*, there will be no more trouble for Jamaicans. On the contrary to Elwood’s faith in Jamaica, Gilbert says that all they will get is *colored men* when they get rid of the white men. It

is either this way around or that, according to Gilbert. When Elwood wants to get rid of the white rule, he wants the black men rule in place of it. Elwood tells Gilbert to stop fighting for the British; instead, he wants Gilbert to stay in Jamaica and fight for Jamaica; that is, Elwood wishes him to fight the white men rather than to fight for them but for Gilbert it is the same logic, just the other way around. These contrasts of one's "own" country and "the other" are set yet at the same time transgressed with this dialogue. It is not clear which is their "own" country for these Jamaican characters. For Elwood, it is Jamaica but for Gilbert, as seen on several occasions from the start, he is a British Jamaican, and his mother country is England. Elwood's remarks are ironic in displaying the situation of the Jamaicans in the case of their independence from the Mother Country. In the end, Elwood connects Gilbert's desire to leave the island to his father being a "white man" although he might look like one of them- Jamaicans (209), which is also ironic, as Gilbert is a colored man and is exposed to all kinds of discrimination; as his father is white, he is exposed to a kind of 'discrimination' by his own "kind"- by Elwood. Besides the oppositions of the races shown very clearly in the novel, this detail about Gilbert's "white skinned" father is another important point that trespasses this contrast.

In part nineteen, Gilbert talks about his arrival in England after leaving the small island, and how he had to live in a cramped room with six other Jamaicans. He thinks, after failing to find a room for himself:

If I had been in uniform- still a Brylcreem boy in blue - would they have seen me different? Would they have thanked me for the sweet victory, shaken my hand and invited me in for tea? Or would I still see that look of quite horror pass across their smiling face like a cloud before the sun, while polite as nobility they inform me the room has gone? (215)

After finding Queenie's home, when she lets him and a couple of his friends to live in her house, Gilbert considers himself lucky but calls it an England - style luck for a colored man who has just arrived in England (222).

Hortense and Queenie's – now her host – interactions display how the white perceive the colored people. Although Queenie does not treat the colored with a racist attitude, she carries the traces of that perception in thinking the colored people as 'uncivilized' or 'uncultured'. Visiting Hortense in her room, Queenie tells her that she could teach her a lot if Hortense wanted (229). Queenie tells Hortense that she can go out with her and will not mind being seen with a 'darkie' outside. Hortense wonders

what a “darkie” is and “why” this woman should be worried to be seen in the street with her as she is a teacher, and this woman is only someone living on the rent obtained from her tenants (231). Despite Hortense’s confidence in herself as an educated woman and her English -believing that she can speak and understand English language well- Queenie thinks she is a woman who needs her help and tells Hortense that she will get used to ‘their’ language. For Hortense, Queenie does not act like an English woman belonging to any high class and is even lacking manners. For Queenie, Hortense needs to learn a lot about living in England and she does not mean this in a “racist” way as any person moving to a new country may need to learn a lot but still, she approaches her with the common attitude towards the colored people in England, which is quite surprising and new for Hortense. Queenie also calls Hortense a ‘darkie’ even when she tries to be friendly to her, she still adopts the main discourse dominant in the country at the time (1948). Queenie’s behavior is very important in blurring this strong division between the black and white, but she still unconsciously adopts the dominant discourse against the colored immigrants from Jamaica, which reflects the general ambiguity in the attitude towards these immigrants.

According to Kathleen Paul, "the populations of the West Indian isles had been encouraged to think of Britain as home, as the cultural and political center of 'their' empire" (Paul 114). The ties between the colonies and Britain were strong during the colonial period and Britain was the power holding these ties as the ‘mother country’. Therefore, upon their entry to Britain, migrants from the West Indies were unprepared, "to be treated as members of a separate sphere of Britishness" based on differences in race and culture (120). The immigrants did not expect the harsh treatment that was waiting them in Britain but they -the colonial migrants- were rejected on the pretext of their darker skin color and different cultural practices along with several socio-economic reasons. The rejection of these migrants helped, “the British political world to reify the idea of a homogenous (white) Britain. The experience of this historical moment and its legacy stretching into the six decades beyond it have become a major theme in the literature of the Caribbean diaspora” (Evelyn 130).

In part twenty-six, Queenie has a flashback to the wartime and remembers Bernard and the bombing of their house. Queenie remembers Mr Plant who was a German and a Jew and was staying in one of the rooms in their house. While Queenie did not give him in when a ministry man came and asked for him, her husband Bernard

says, “these Jews are more trouble than they’re worth” (267). After that, they come and take Mr Plant away early in the morning along with another woman and a family with little children in the back of a lorry ‘only to Olympia’ (267). Queenie remembers Mr Plant tipping his hat at her before leaving and reflects on their being taken away (German Jews) with tenderness and sadness while Bernard only says, “He was German, you can’t be too careful” (267). By placing her characters in the scene of World War II and post-war England, Levy deals with several kinds of racism and discrimination against people of different origins. Queenie’s attitude to the Jews is important because she does not adopt this hatred that was imposed by Hitler’s hatred against them. She is not afraid to hide them in her house when Bernard calls them only a trouble. Queenie has a more humanitarian approach in her attitude to the Jews as well as the ‘colored’ people in England and again in this way she helps opposing the racism in the country. When Queenie wants to let a woman and her kids, whose house is bombed, stay with them, she again discusses with Bernard:

...Queenie, have you gone quite mad?  
They’re people, [...] They’ve got nowhere to go.  
They’re not our sort.  
But they need helping. (277)

Queenie does not see any difference between herself and these people as Bernard does and considers them only as human beings in need of help. When Bernard says that she cannot help everybody and there is so many in need of help because, “There’s a war on”, Queenie says, “that’s what I mean’ (277). How they look at the situation from two opposite angles portray the situation of the war time and puts Queenie as opposing to the prevalent approach to people of *different kinds* during the war. She functions as a destroyer of boundaries set between people by skin color, different nationalities, and the enmities of the war. “*Small Island* is set in the same post-World War II Britain and follows both West Indian and British communities, both men and women [...]” (Evelyn 131) and more importantly it, “confronts and depicts the claim to a domestic space as an act of refuge from and resistance to racism in postwar Britain” (131). Due to her efforts to help people affected by the war, Queenie finds herself a job at the rest center. In part twenty-seven, she talks about the people at the rest center:

*Population*, we called them at the rest center. The bombed-out who'd had the cheek to live through the calamity of a world blown to bits. [...] They came in as a *crowd* like you'd watch through on the Underground or elbow during a department store sale. And that's how some saw them – *population*, not people. (Levy 278)

Queenie tells how these people's individual identities do not matter at the rest center. They were just population, a crowd, but not people. This was the result of the war. Nobody cared about their names or their individual situations, but they were a crowd gathered there, a burden to be dealt with. A problem to be solved. As Queenie continues her description of these *people* who did not die during the war but survived to reflect the whole tragedy, her words get more dramatic, "Just population. A mass whose desperation made them seem like the feckless [...] I would never forgive Hitler for turning human beings into that" (Levy 279). As from the start Queenie said that the War made human beings spread around like dandelion seeds, these people were similarly some of the seeds swept by the war and gathered in this rest center. The war, as Queenie says, turned human beings into this—into a desperate mass, into just populations. Queenie's approach is very humanitarian and shows how sensitive she is towards human beings without making any distinction. She wants to help anyone in need and how she describes the people in need of care at the rest center is very important in reflecting how the war affected the perception of the immigrants as explained in the following quotation:

[...] following the Second World War, British West Indian (the contemporaneous term) migration to Britain increased at an unprecedented rate and established the presence of a large West Indian diaspora in the UK. The arrival of the Empire Windrush carrying 492 West Indian migrants to Britain is treated as the symbolic start of this migration movement and gives this generation of Caribbean people in Britain its moniker: the Windrush generation. Britain's response was to pass successive immigration laws, changing policies on subjecthood and nationality, in order to curb the number of eligible entrants from the colonies. (Evelyn 129-30)

In part twenty-eight, Queenie remembers accepting three officers who are on leave for a couple of days before they go back on active duty again and one of these officers is a colored man from Jamaica named Michael. Queenie and Michael have sex before Michael goes back on duty and her sexual intimacy with this colored man is another issue of miscegenation in the novel. After her husband Bernard volunteers for the RAF, she continues working at the rest-center and lets these officers in the house without Bernard being there and objecting. And with Michael she goes further. The result of their one-night relationship is revealed at the end of the novel when Queenie



gives birth to a dark baby and contributes greatly to showing how the two races are in close contact with each other and how the racial hybridity occurs, and the idea of a pure and superior race is confronted.

In part thirty-three, it is Hortense and her description of England and Englishness when she goes out shopping with Queenie who does not mind being seen with a colored. She talks about all the different skin colors she sees outside:

The surprising colors in the countenance of all the English people. In no book or tutoring that I had acquired did anyone tell me that so many different types of English could be found. In Jamaica all English people had looks as my tutors at college had appeared. [...] But here now, in England, so many different complexions were placed before me that my mind became perplexed. (330)

She is amazed to see different colors of skin when she goes out and thinks of her teachers at college who had fair hair and a red and ruddy complexion from the Sun (330). They were very 'white' as she refers in previous parts. In contrast to her teachers, here in England when she sees a woman with hair as black as the ink with complexion not even lighter than her own, she is puzzled (330). She stares at this woman with "blue-eye-yet-black-hair" and thinks, "I had never seen an Englishwoman so dark before" (331). Then, she sees a man with red hair and a speckled face and thinks him to be Scottish because in Jamaica only Scottish people are so red (331). However, this man is English, which shows that Englishness is not about being white and there are many different complexions although it is denied to the dark-skinned people of the former colonies. The blue eyed but black-haired woman shows that the 'races' have got mixed up and that there is not a pure race. When she sees a 'very' white woman who makes her think that her blood must be made of 'milk' Hortense thinks, "Who was the most astounded? For we both stared, certain we were viewing an apparition before us" (334). This woman later warns her child not to point at Hortense and says, "She's not black- she's colored" while at the same time three young men start calling her a 'darkie' (334). Hortense is not offended but more surprised and wants to see the face of these men thinking, "What sort of English person could call out so coarse?" (334). Once more the idea of being civilized, refined, and having manners which are attributed to Englishness are here questioned by Hortense's thoughts. When they are walking back home, Queenie -Mrs Bligh as Hortense calls her- teaches Hortense to step off the pavement into the road if an English person tries to pass because the pavement is only enough for the two and she is a *visitor* in this country (335). It is ironic in that all the people with different complexions are called

English but Hortense considering England as the Mother Country is counted as a visitor. At the end of this part Queenie sees Bernard -her husband- back from war, standing at the door of their house.

One other scene of racism occurs when Hortense is applying for a teaching position at a school but is told that her teaching qualifications will not be valid in England and that she has to be trained again (454) and Gilbert calls this, “a sharp slap from the Mother Country’s hand” (458). The Mother Country again fails the high expectations of its Jamaican subjects and thus the idea of England is changed in showing that racism continues to exist although there is no homogeneity in England:

Very generally speaking, colonial migrants of this period relocated to pursue opportunities unavailable in their countries of origin, often in response to labor recruitment and an idea that the so-called "mother country" needed them in the post-war recovery and restoration effort. They were largely unprepared for the racism they encountered upon arrival. (Evelyn 130)

In part fifty-two, Bernard comments on his ‘own’ country now with the ‘colored’ people living there, he says that “these colored people don’t have the same standards. I’d seen it out east. Not used to our ways. When in Rome... Lost on these immigrants” (469). Since he was on duty in India during the war, he thinks that he has a better idea about how colored people live and considers the ‘English’ way of living to be of a higher standard. For Bernard, the way to a quiet life is that everyone should live with their own kind, which is recurrent throughout the novel. Bernard thinks:

The War was fought so people might live amongst their own kind. Quite simple. Everyone had a place. England for the English and the West Indies for these colored people. Look at India. The British knew fair play. Leave India to Indians. That’s what we did. [...] Everyone was trying to get home after the war to be with kith and kin. Except these blasted colored colonials. I’ve nothing against them in their place. But their place isn’t here. (469)

Having this mindset, Bernard forces Queenie’s colored tenants out of the house so that they can live respectably again and says that that’s why he fought a war for (471). When he tells this to Queenie, he is surprised to see her take the side of the darkies over himself - her husband (473). Bernard continues to treat them in an unwelcome way and wants them to leave as it is his own house. As opposed to Queenie, Bernard’s approach is quite racist and in line with the general approach in England during this post-war period.

In part fifty-three, Hortense remembers how she realizes that Queenie is pregnant and helps her to give birth, a little early (7 months). Queenie gives birth to a

baby with a “round head complete with curly dark hair” (479). Queenie wants Hortense to lock her husband Bernard out and wants Hortense to help her give birth. Finally, when the baby comes out as a ‘dark’ baby, Hortense is surprised but Queenie is relieved. Hortense assumes the baby to be Gilbert’s first and attempts to leave him. Similarly, Bernard thinks the baby to be Gilbert’s and attacks him, which leads to some funny moments in the story. Queenie does not tell Hortense or Gilbert about the baby’s father but when she tells the name of the baby -Michael- to Hortense, to her surprise, it is revealed that she became pregnant when she had sex with Michael-one of the colored officers she took home. She says she hid her pregnancy not because she was ashamed but because she did not want ‘prying eyes making it sordid’ (496). She remembers how she even thought of going to Canada to live there but with Bernard’s return her dream is shattered. On thinking about giving birth Queenie says, “The war had been an enormous blast. Everything thrown up, tumbling, turning, and scattering high into the air. Now it was over; the whole lot was coming back down to land. But it was all settling in different places. A mother with a lone child - a little unusual we might be, but not wicked” (497). Her words are effective in describing the outcome of the war and how it displaced people and transgressed the borders. People were mingling, races were mingling, borders were softening with these kinds of inter-racial intercourses and the mobility of populations. This is the moment when Bernard’s attitude softens against ‘colored’ people, in the face of this blameless baby, he cannot be as harsh as he is with the grown-ups, and he cannot help but just love this baby when he is sleeping (509). Queenie watches him with surprise, when Bernard stretches his finger out to the baby and the baby holds it. The moment he softens with the sight of this baby, his wife’s but not his, is another moment in the novel which leads to the questioning of racism and eliminates part of the hatred due to skin color with the birth of this innocent baby.

Queenie’s giving birth appears as if it were the resolution of the novel; however, the novel does not end there. When Gilbert and Hortense are about to leave for a new house proposed to them by Winston -Gilbert’s friend- at the right time when they were forced out, Queenie stops them and hands them the baby to show him to them (516). When Hortense takes the baby in her arms and *softens* looking at him, Queenie asks her, “Will you take him?” (518). Hortense is puzzled with this question and tells Queenie that she already has the baby. Queenie repeats her question in another

way and asks, "Will you and Gilbert take him when you leave?" (518), which still makes them more surprised and when they finally understand that Queenie wants to give away her 'colored' baby to them because they are 'colored' too, not only Hortense and Gilbert but also Bernard is shocked. All of them object to it saying how she can give away her *own* baby. Queenie says she wants him to have a good home and Bernard objects saying that he has one. Queenie asks him what they are going to tell the child when he is grown up and Bernard says, "There's been a war, all sorts of things happened. Adopted, that's what we'll say. An orphan. Quite simple" (520). Even Bernard works out a solution for keeping the baby, but Queenie pleads Hortense and Gilbert to take him and says:

He's colored Bernard. [...] He is not your son. [...] You might think you can do it now, [...] while he's a baby saying nothing. But what about when he grows up? A big, strapping colored lad. And people snigger at you in the street and ask you all sorts of awkward questions. Are you going to fight for him? [...] Are you going to be proud of him? Glad that he's your son? (521)

Queenie's reaction here sounds like a motherly concern for a colored son as she fears the difficulties he will experience in the future being the child of white parents. It is motherly and protective to some extent but still it is ambiguous because so far, she wouldn't mind being seen with a darkie, having a relationship with a darkie or letting her rooms to colored people but now that the colored child is hers and only hers, she is not strong enough to face the future to come for her child. No matter how much Bernard insists that they will say he is adopted, Queenie is not persuaded, and she says, "I haven't got the guts for it" (521). She says she even considered giving the baby to an orphanage, but they don't want him because it is colored. It is apparent she is afraid for her child nevertheless she is giving up her own child so that he grows with a family with a dark skin like himself. She swears that it is not for herself but only for the good of the child. It is understandable as she knows what colored people experience in this country -England- very well. Although giving her baby to Hortense and Gilbert because of his skin color might look like she surrenders to the dominant perceptions of discrimination and racism - and in one way she does, she suffers in having to give her child away for the fear of society and how her child might be treated. It is such a crucial and dramatic moment in the course of the novel which suggests that the issue of racism will continue in the future and Queenie does not want her child to be bothered with this trouble. When Queenie gives up, this time Bernard crosses all the lines he has had so far and wants to keep the child saying that the baby does have a good family,

which is not enough to change Queenie's mind. Although Bernard is softened when it comes to the baby, with Gilbert he is still not friendly, and they get into a fight during which Gilbert speaks in a way to make Hortense proud and says:

You know what your trouble is, man? [...] your white skin. You think it makes you better than me. You think it give you the right to lord it over a black man. but you know wat it make you. You wan' know what your white skin make you man? It just make you white. That is all, man. White. No better, no worse than me – just white. [...] We both just finish fighting a war – a bloody war [...] And on the same side – you and me. [...] You and me, fighting for the empire, fighting for peace. But still, after all that we suffer together, you wan' tell me I am worthless, and you are not. Am I to be the servant and you are the master for all time? No. Stop this, man. Stop it now. (525)

Even though there are ambiguities in Queenie's and Bernard's attitudes, Gilbert here gives a very clear message that despite the difference of their skin color, they are on the same side, they are citizens of the same country and they both fought for peace and asks what the point of continuing this fight is. Although Gilbert's speech makes the room quiet for a moment Bernard says he does not understand what Gilbert is saying. It is ironic because what he says is very clear but is just wasted. In the end, Hortense and Gilbert take the child with them when leaving for their new home. The novel ends with a quotation from Churchill on war saying, "Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few" (531). The quote from Churchill may be interpreted in several ways but in the sense of these characters' experiences looking like small personal actions, it is clear that they mean a lot for the future of the British society:

The novel's final twist - the discovery of Queenie's pregnancy and the birth of her bi-racial child fathered by Michael Roberts and adopted by Gilbert and Hortense as they are leaving Nevers Street to move into their new house to start up a family - is more than an unexpected happy ending which binds two communities together. The newborn is not to be seen as "an impostor (508), but as the native son of "a hybrid nation . . . plural and inclusive " (Levy, *This Is My England*), a child "[who] 's got a home" (519). This denouement sheds light on the potential of multicultural London as a place "[p]aved with no gold, no - but, yes, diamonds appear on the ground in the rain (Levy qtd in Duboin 28).

Although Queenie gives up on her child, it does not change the result that the child is bi-racial, and the ultimate result that the two races are mixed and that there is no homogenous race but a hybrid one. It shows that London (and Britain) has become multicultural and although there is no gold found on the streets of London as dreamt by many immigrants coming there for such opportunities after the difficult process the immigrants go through, there is hope for the white and the black race, and for the host

culture and the immigrant communities to co-exist. In *Small Island*, this hope is seen in the birth of Queenie's baby. On one hand, her giving up of her baby shows how racism continues, shapes the society, and affects the lives of the individuals no matter white or black. On the other, it reveals the intimacy of the two races and offers the hope of their existence within one body and within the same space: "The mobility of peripheral societies challenged the fixedness of racial purity (and, thus, racism) which the Other thought fit to inscribe in itself as inherent to its power politics" (Bonnici 93). The migration of different peoples to England was crucial in challenging racism and the idea of a pure race, and this is portrayed through the experiences of Levy's four characters in *Small Island*, each of whom contribute to the blurring of divisions in terms of race, each in their own subjective way.

#### **2.4 *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali: Deconstructing the discourse of racism**

Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* starts in East Pakistan in 1967 with the birth of Nazneen and moves to London, England with her arranged marriage to Chanu in 1985 when she is only eighteen. Her life in London is stuck between four walls and she can only speak few English words. Her husband sees no point in her learning English (Ali 19) and her days pass in loneliness doing the housework in a "large box with furniture to dust, and the muffled sound of private lives sealed away above, below and around her" (Ali 24). As years pass by, the relationships Nazneen forms in London within 'their' Bengali community, her correspondence with her sister Hasina running away after a love marriage, her attitude to her children, and later when she meets Karim midway through the novel, their relationship, display crucial points in the journey of immigrants to England. The condition of the immigrants from Bangladesh will be focused on to analyze and deconstruct the prevalent discourse of migration from the 1980s to the 2000s in England. The situation of immigrants will be analyzed from the perspectives of Nazneen (her sister Hasina) and Chanu, the neighbors Mrs. Islam and Razia, Dr Azad as the older generation, the perspectives of the young children who are born and grow up throughout the novel and finally from the perspective of Karim. These different characters in the novel provide insight to the varied aspects of the Muslim immigrants' lives in England and each of them help deconstruct the discourse of migration. In the case of *Brick Lane*, the main discourse prevalent in the later part of the twentieth century is the assimilation and integration of the immigrants rather

than racism. Racism will also be mentioned in comparison to its use and dominance in the post-war era and later in the century.

The first Bangladeshi people who settled in Britain were mostly sailors for the East India Company who 'jumped' ship (Ziegler 146). It was the main way of migration until after WWII (146). These settlers were mostly males and were from the Sylhet region of Bangladesh, and they were in small numbers (146). However, after the War, more Bangladeshi men started migrating to England in large numbers due to the labor recruitment of the British government to rebuild the country:

The racial tensions that arose in London and elsewhere as a result of the growing Bangladeshi presence led to a series of bills throughout the 1960s limiting immigration, until eventually the only members of the Commonwealth allowed entrance were the families of those already present. It was not until the 1970s and '80s that Bangladeshi women began moving to Britain in significant numbers, as many British Bangladeshi men sojourned to Bangladesh to claim their long-absent wives or find new ones, frequently through arranged marriages. It is such an arranged marriage that sets in motion the plot of *Brick Lane*, Monica Ali's first novel [...] (Ziegler 146)

Nazneen, with such an arranged marriage to Chanu, moves to Tower Hamlets in London in 1985. The events in the novel are narrated through Nazneen's thoughts about her life, her husband and her marriage, her dialogues with her neighbors and her husband. Chapter seven is solely dedicated to Hasina's letters, and these are written from 1988 to 2001. After chapter seven, the novel continues from 2001 when Nazneen has two daughters going to school. Chapter seven creates a leap in the course of narration from the 1980s to 2001 and in this way encompasses different decades in the lives of these immigrants in London:

Ali's *Brick Lane* questions the degree to which the adjustments put forward in Levy's novel came about 50 years later, illustrating as it does community life and racial relations in the area of London from which the novel takes its title. In this case, the non-white ethnic group depicted is not Black but Asian. The novel focuses on the Bangladeshi population that began migrating to Britain in considerable numbers in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Brick Lane* concentrates on community life and highlights different degrees of cohesion and fragmentation within the Bangladeshi community inhabiting the area of Brick Lane. (Fernandez 150 - 151)

Nazneen's husband Chanu's ideas about his own community are important in deconstructing the idea of homogeneity within the same community. Chanu is working and at the same time studying at an Open University, trying to finish his degree, and striving to get a promotion at work. He has a higher opinion of himself compared to other Bengalis in his community because he is educated. His observation about his

community reveals a crucial reality about the immigrants from Bangladesh. Chanu says:

Most of our people here are Sylhetis. They all stick together because they come from the same district. They know each other from the villages, and they come to Tower Hamlets, and they think they are back in the village. Most of them have jumped ship. That's how they come. They have menial jobs on the ship, doing donkey work, or they stow away like little rats in the hold [...] And when they jump ship and scuttle over here, then in a sense they are home again. And you see, to white person, we are all the same: dirty little monkeys all in the same monkey clan. But these people are peasants. Uneducated. Illiterate. Close-minded. Without ambition. [...] I don't look down on them, but what can you do? If a man only ever driven a rickshaw and never in his life held a book in his hand, then what can you expect from him? (Ali 28)

Chanu's ideas on his *own* people portrays the situation of immigrants in Tower Hamlets, London. Chanu, apparently, does not consider himself at the same level with these uneducated people from his country, who just 'jump' ship and arrive in London only to live as if they were in their villages. As they are unskilled and illiterate, they do only menial jobs about which he does not blame them as no more can be expected from them. Even though Chanu makes a distinction between himself and the uneducated people from his hometown, he says, in the eyes of the 'white' people, they are all the same:

[...] Chanu criticizes the existence of a homogenised view of all Asians in the British collective imaginary. This issue is questioned every time he tries to draw a line between himself and the illiterate members of the community. He considers himself to be an educated man and, therefore, insists on establishing connections with well-off educated members of the Asian community such as Dr. Azad. He establishes internal divisions within the Asian population living in Brick Lane based on education and by so doing shows that the assumption of homogeneous communities within the same space is quite unreasonable. (Fernandez 151)

Chanu's ideas about his *own* people and his interaction with Dr Azad, not only serve to deconstruct the idea of homogeneity within the same culture, but also to display different degrees of assimilation and integration experienced by the younger generation of their community. Their exchange of ideas during their conversation when Dr Azad comes to dine in Chanu's house reveals how they observe their community and how much, as the first generation of immigrants, they interact with the host country. During this dinner, Dr Azad talks about his patients who are drinking and says that now their children are copying what they see here-in England, "going to pub, to nightclubs" and drinking even secretly at home when their parents think that they are safe in their rooms. He says the reason for this is that their community "is not



educated about these things” (31). Chanu adds to Dr Azad’s ideas saying that it will not happen to his children because they will go back home before his children are spoiled (32), which Dr Azad calls the “Going Home Syndrome”. Chanu replies by reinforcing his idea that these people do not actually leave home because they are recreating their villages here. Dr Azad adds that these people want to go back after saving up enough money, which implies that they are not in this country to stay but are there temporarily. As he points out it does not matter how much they save since it is never enough, and they can never go back as is the case with himself (32). This portrays the situation of immigrants who came to England to make money that would provide them with a better living in their home countries and shows the internal conflicts related to assimilation and integration within the community:

The other means by which homogeneity is deconstructed is the fact that the novel presents the reader with a community in which there are not only external conflicts - as the creation of the radical Islamic group shows - but also many intra-community problems in terms of first-and second-generation relations. These differences are explicit in the novel's depiction of characters that show different levels of assimilation and interaction with the host society. (Fernandez 151)

As Chanu mentions Dr Azad his lifetime story and how he had dreams of becoming the Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, he admits that after coming to England he realized things were a little different. He could not make such a progress in Civil Service, and explains that it is 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). Obviously, Chanu himself makes a distinction between his *own* people depending on their social status. At this point in the story, Chanu is expecting a promotion at work and is constantly thinking about his colleague Wilkie, considering his chances against him. He thinks, he has nothing to fear Wilkie as he has a degree in English Literature from Dhaka University (38) and asks, “Can Wilkie quote from Chaucer or Dickens or Hardy?” (38). With his degree in English Literature, Chanu hopes that he can have a higher chance of getting a promotion and tries to finish another degree at the Open University to increase the possibility of getting the promotion. It is noteworthy that Chanu is studying *Race, Ethnicity and Identity* as a part of the sociology module for his Open University degree (38). As he always makes an educated comment on the issues concerning their community and their relations within the country, the courses he is taking contribute to his observations. He calls Wilkie, for example, a white under-

class (not exactly under-class as he has a job) who is afraid of people like him. He says:

As long as we are below them, then they are above something. If they see us rise, then they are resentful because we have left our proper place That is why you get the phenomenon of the National Front. They can play on those fears to create racial tensions and give these people a superiority complex. The middle class is more secure, and therefore more relaxed. (Ali 38)

The way he addresses the situation as ‘we’ and ‘them’ shows the extent of racial tensions in the country. Although, this time it is not based on the skin color, it is based on ethnicity. Similar to how Chanu distinguishes himself - in being educated - from his own people, he considers Wilkie as a ‘white under class’, which is important in showing that not all the ‘whites’ are the same. The way he uses the word ‘phenomenon’ of the National Front is significant in showing that the perceptions of race and nationality based on a homogenous ethnicity are constructed by political powers and the novel is challenging these powers. The National Front was formed by the merging of the two far right parties of Britain in 1967 (Bowling 39-40). The National Front adopted the idea that the black and Asian immigrants should be repatriated (Bowling 40). And with the emergence of the National Front, “politically organized racism found a home in both inner and extended East End during the 1970s” (Bowling 178). Chanu’s reflections on this historical and political realities are vital in showing the extent of racism in the country. The far-right parties in the country used the fear of immigrants for their political benefits such as getting more votes. However, these activities promoting racism were countered by left wing parties and activists in the country against fascism and racism. Therefore, although there were political powers trying to construct the perception of racism against immigrants these were historically and politically challenged at the time. And Chanu here, as an educated immigrant, shows that he is aware of the fact that the perception of racism is constructed politically to benefit these political parties.

As Chanu keeps commenting on the issues in their life by basing his comments on the knowledge from his Open University degree books, Nazneen, who only knows that her husband is working for the local council (Ali 44), remembers when he asks Chanu about going out, he says he personally does not mind his wife going out but says, “these people here are so ignorant” as they will say, “I saw her walking out on the street” (45). Chanu tells Nazneen that she is lucky because she has an educated husband and calls himself “Westernized” (45). For him, Nazneen is not missing

anything because if she were in Bangladesh, she would not go out so here it is the same for her (45). Although Chanu does not mind his wife going out, he still surrenders to the Bengali cultural norms. This shows how Chanu struggles between living like a Westerner and a Bengali. As he cannot be both, he cannot reject either and this leads to the hybridity of his sense of belonging and culture. His situation can be explained better by Homi Bhabha's definition of hybridity as quoted in Fay and Haydon: "Bhabha aimed to show that binary divisions like East-West were unstable and unsustainable" and he developed the key concept of hybridity:

Hybridity is the idea that identities are made up of all the different cultures with which they have contact. When two cultures or nations meet, ideas, language and material goods are shared between them. That process of sharing forces them both to adapt and change. For this reason, there can be no "pure" Western or Eastern culture and nation" (Fay and Haydon 11)

In *Brick Lane*, this form of cultural hybridity is clearly seen in Chanu's situation, in his observations and comments about his own community. While at the beginning of the novel, he is willing to make his way in England, his later decision to go back home to Bangladesh is another result of this hybridity. As Chanu is expecting a promotion at his job, Nazneen thinks he is talking more about *racism* than promotion and remembers how Chanu warned her about making friends with 'them' because, "*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 with the right, and with the left they stab you in the back*" (72). Chanu has no confidence in the politeness shown to him by the host society as he thinks they will not give him what he deserves because they are racist and warns Nazneen to be careful in her relations with people from the host society. Nazneen tells her friend Razia that Chanu calls this 'discrimination' upon which Razia tells Nazneen to ask him, "Is it better than our own country, or is it worse? If it is worse, then why is he here? If it is better, why does he complain? (72)". Nazneen says she does not know what Chanu means with all of these but that he says these are built in the 'system' (72); however, Razia replies by saying, "There are good ones, and bad ones. Just like us. And some of them you can be friendly with. Some aren't so friendly. But they leave us alone, and we leave them alone. That's enough for me" (73). Although here Nazneen reports Chanu's educated remarks from his Open University classes, Razia has a more practical approach which only makes a distinction between people as good or bad which is another approach to destroy the binary divisions

because it claims that there are all types of people in all communities and that no community is homogenous.

As Nazneen's two daughters are grown up, Chanu decides to go back *home* after his failing hopes in getting a promotion and becomes a taxi driver despite being an educated immigrant (Ali 200-201). Failing to secure himself the place he imagined in England Chanu:

constructs a mythic Bangladesh to compensate for his failure to succeed in English culture. It is his opinion that the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore is "the true father of [the] nation" (147), and he demands that his deracinated daughters learn to recite Tagore's poem "Golden Bengal," in order to understand fully their roots. (Cormack 703)

Chanu's giving up on his dreams, in a way, parallels Queenie's giving up of her baby. This act of giving up and submitting proves that racism is still dominant in the country and affects the lives of both immigrant and native British citizens. As Chanu fails to fulfill his dream of rising within the British society, Queenie fails in moving away (to Canada) with her colored baby. In both cases, these characters are not able to cope with the racist social and political structure within the country. Their decisions show their pessimism about the future of the society they live in.

In the case of Chanu, his decision to go back home shows that he cannot feel home in England: "In Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, we meet Chanu the well-meaning patriarch, the first-generation immigrant failing to capitalize on the resources of the host country, uncertain both about his British identity and his place of origin" (Anis 44). Before chapter seven, Chanu is seen to be striving about getting a promotion at work and relying on his education and knowledge, calling himself a 'Westernized' husband, and even criticizing his own people and putting himself above his own people who are not educated. He even criticizes the culture of his own people, for instance, when he says he will not mind his wife going out or working but he knows that the people in his community are so 'ignorant' that they will say this and that. However, when he cannot get the promotion, he accepts failure and becomes a taxi driver; he changes his direction towards Bangladesh. Chanu, despite being middle aged and having lived in England for forty years, cannot find his identity. So, he starts saving up for going home, plans to work at Dhaka University, and thinks of his Dhaka home:

Immigrants ensure psychological survival in the new nation through what might be termed the 'deferred home', particularly within British Asian literature. Thus, in Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane* (2003), Chanu endures the

disappointments of life in London by saving up for a house in Dhaka and dreaming of constructing a further home in the Bangladeshi countryside, [...] This tendency towards a kind of domestic postponement, through the vision of property-ownership in South Asia, allows immigrants like Chanu [...] to maintain their dignity. (Maxey 79)

When Chanu shifts his focus and endeavors to his 'deferred dream' of going home – to Bangladesh, this affects his approach to his two daughters. He starts educating his daughters Shanana and Bibi about Bangladesh. The girls are not happy with this decision at all because as the second generation of the immigrants they are born in England and know nothing about Bangladesh. In chapter nine, when Chanu wants to show his daughters the website 'Bangla2000', of the two, Shanana says, 'it's boring' and is reluctant to look at the website, which causes Chanu to get angry (200-201). Belonging to the younger generation, the girls adapt more easily to the host culture, which shows that they have a higher level of integration than their parents, and that of the first-generation immigrants. The sisters know nothing about Bangladesh, other than their father's teachings; however, they are still highly affected by this culture because they live in a Bengali community with their Bengali family. That's why, they are subject to a form of cultural hybridity due to their closer contact with the host society; hence, their level of integration is higher. The discrepancy between the first- and second-generation immigrants is evident; nevertheless, this does not change the fact that they are influenced by both cultures. This supports the idea that no community is homogenous in terms of culture any more as there are discrepancies even in one family.

The effect of the host culture on the younger generation is obvious when Razia's son Tariq becomes an addict without her mother realizing till it is too late. This is comprehended as the result of his affiliation with the host society by Dr. Azad, who considers such an assimilation inevitable for the young. Razia and Nazneen take Tariq to Dr Azad (Ali 357- 358) who talks about the drug addiction among the young people of *their* community throughout the novel and says that it is unavoidable for them not to be influenced by the ways of the host society. It is apparent that although the degree of interaction differs for the first- and second-generation immigrants both reach a point of cultural hybridity through their contact with the host society. When Chanu and Dr Azad are again having dinner, Azad mentions that he is worried about drug use in their community and that the funding for counsellors is inadequate. As a doctor, he comments about immigrants and their habits in a Muslim community. Chanu answers

saying, “This is the tragedy. When you expect to be so-called integrated. But you will never get the same treatment. Never” (Ali 247). While Dr Azad focuses more on the material side of the situation by mentioning the insufficiency of the funding, Chanu focuses more on the social aspect of receiving unequal treatment. Although they focus on different parts of the topics during their conversation, it functions well, in a comical way, to give hints about the situation of the immigrants and the prevailing discourse of the time.

During the visit of Dr Azad, there is a leaflet slid in through their mailbox and Shanana picks it up. When Chanu demands her to read it, it says *Multicultural Murder*, (Ali 250-52) as Shanana reads:

In our schools [...] It's multicultural murder. Do you know what they are teaching your children today? In domestic science your daughter will learn how to make kebab, or fry bhaji. For history lessons, your son will be studying Africa or India or some other dark or distant land. English people, he will learn, are wicked colonialists. (Ali 251)

The note on the leaflet is critical in putting forth the situation from the side of the host society. It portrays that there is negativity not only against the ethnicity of the immigrants but also their culture. It is vital in presenting that the host society fears assimilation just like the immigrants who are worried about their younger generation. It exposes how the host society reacts to the growing existence of the immigrants and how they evaluate them. The word *multicultural* is significant in terms of reflecting the discourse of migration at the time. Both sides try to resist the existence of multiple cultures within the same space and are concerned about losing their own cultures to the other. No matter how much they are worried, it is obvious that the two cultures had been in close contact, and it is impossible for them to avoid one another. The leaflet continues and conveys the anxieties about the teaching of religion to their children as Shanana reads, “And in Religious Instruction, what will your child be taught? Matthew, Mark, Luke or John? No. Krishna, Abraham and Mohammad. Christianity is being gently slaughtered [...]” (Ali 252). The members of the host society writing this leaflet are apparently unwilling about their children being exposed to another religion – in this case Islam, and they want to protect Christianity. At this point, the level of negativity towards the Bengali immigrants is not only against their ethnicity and culture but also their religion. In every way, fifty years later than depicted in *Small Island*, the issue of racism is more complex and involves more hatred towards the minority groups other than the hatred against their skin color. The leaflet continues,

“Should we be forced to put up with this? When the truth is that it is a religion of hate and intolerance. When Muslim immigrants are planning to turn Britain into an Islamic Republic using a combination of immigration, high birth rates and conversion” (Ali 251). Evidently, the growing number of immigrants is worrying for the host society and the effect of their culture and religion is felt over them, which causes them to react to the existence of this immigrant groups.

The leaflet wars between the two groups of Bengal Tigers and Lion Hearts representing the two communities trying to protect their own culture and cultural identities are portrayed in the novel. These two groups display crucial historical and political realities related to the history of Asian immigrants to England during this period. By employing the two opposing groups, the novel tells the story of this polarization between the British society and the Bengal community. How Bengal Tigers is formed is seen with Nazneen’s meeting with Kareem due to her garment sewing job. Kareem is a second-generation Bengali who is an activist in their community. As the Bengal Tigers is formed and named in chapter eleven, its mission is defined as being against the Lion Hearts (Ali 240). During the meeting Kareem as the leader says, “We are for Muslim rights and culture. We are for protecting our local ummah and supporting the global ummah” (242). In this chapter, the Bengali perspective and how they want to protect the rights of their community and culture by organizing these groups is depicted. During the discussions in the meeting racism is mentioned and the group is trying to take guard against it. However, the way racism is referred to is crucial in revealing its evolution. One of the people in the group says that ““The *racists* they cleared out of here ages ago”” (241). To this, another member replies by saying, ““Thing is, they is getting more sophisticated. They don’t say *race*, they say *culture, religion*”” (241). This statement on the nature of racism is significant in showing that it did not decrease in time but evolved to include hatred against more aspects of an ethnic group such as their culture and religion as it is exposed in the leaflets by the Lion Hearts. It is crucial that the novel depicts both sides of the situation of immigration to London. The clash of the two cultures within the same space is presented along with the similar reactions of both communities. They both want to protect their culture and religion and reject the existence and the influence of the other. It proves that assimilation is not only a concern for the immigrants but also for the host society. As Chanu says when he reads the leaflet that ‘they feel threatened’ by the

existence of a growing community of immigrants with an unfamiliar culture to themselves. However, the contact of the two cultures is inescapable within the same space although it causes tensions between the two. In the end, this clash of cultures causes the hybridity of the two and eliminates the homogeneity of both. This is observed in the subjective experiences of each of the characters in the novel and Chanu is the one who verbally presents this reality about the case of the immigrants and his own situation. His experience and his comments are important in depicting the controversy related to the discourse of racism, assimilation, and integration. When Chanu decides to visit Parliament in chapter fourteen, before going back home, he says that now that he is going back, he is a tourist in London where he has lived for most of his life yet has not visited much around. This portrays that the degree of contact he has with the country he lives in is not very high. In Chanu's experience -in his failing dream- the novel depicts that the idea of integration of the immigrants is not achieved fully, and there is still racism against them. Chanu's construction of a 'home' to go back is only due to his failure because after living in England for forty years, he does not have a realistic idea of the 'home' anymore. He idealizes this idea only because he thinks he does not get the treatment he deserves in England.

One critical moment which leads to the rising of tensions in England and in the world and leads to Islamophobia is the 9/11 attacks in the US. *Brick Lane* deals with this dramatic terrorist attack, in chapter sixteen. Chanu comes home and demands the TV to be turned on, which shows two towers being attacked by planes and collapsing. When Nazneen asks, Chanu says it is the 'Pentagon' (Ali 366). After this point, the racial tensions against Muslim communities and minorities around the world, and in Britain, as depicted in *Brick Lane* reach their height. However, the attacks are not the only reason for racism to make a peak in Britain:

The impact of 9/11 and The War on Terror on the South Asian immigrants in *Brick Lane* result not so much from the American government's responses to the events as from the issues of racism that dominated Britain in the 1960s as responses to the colored immigrants and that have come to a crisis after 9/11. (Liao 101)

As presented in the two novels, racism did exist in the country starting with the arrival of the first immigrants in the 1960s and the idea of a homogenous Britain was promoted politically as a reaction to immigration. With the increasing number of immigrants and the diversity of their ethnic, cultural, and religious origins, the reactions against them were also diverse. In the case of Muslim Asian immigrants from



Bangladesh, their religion Islam was already a target of this hatred. As presented in the war between the Bengal Tigers and Lion Hearts, both communities were worried about their children being exposed to Christianity and Islam, respectively. After the 9/11 attacks there was just another excuse to show Islam as a religion of hatred:

On the surface, Ali's novel seems to confirm the deep segregation of the Bangladeshi Muslim community from mainstream society in terms of residence, language, and religion. [...] Most of the immigrants practice Muslim customs, wear traditional dress, and eat Bengali cuisine. In a sense, the Bangladeshi immigrants are "home again" in the segregated area of Brick Lane. However, as the post-9/11 backlash in the novel illustrates, the immigrants' new homes in Britain are not actually sealed from outside influences, for violence from outside world and the host society finds its way in. [...] (Liao 101)

The novel illustrates that the tensions were high between the two communities before 9/11 already and that it just got worse because hatred against the immigrants' religion and culture just found a stronger basis and an outlet to exert itself. The Muslim immigrants were feared and were claimed to hold a separate identity than being British, which would again show them as a threat to the British community. Although a majority of them identified themselves as being British, which they considered to be a more inclusive identity than Englishness, holding a strong religious identity was still considered as a threat from the Muslim immigrant groups in the UK, according to research carried out in 2009 (Thomas and Sanderson 1031). The research proved that the Islamic terrorist attacks abroad and at home did not have a negative effect on the Muslim immigrants' identification of themselves as British (Thomas and Sanderson 1033). On the other hand, the adoption of the British national identity by the Muslim immigrants is considered as a form of survival to prove that they are loyal to Britain and are not terrorists (1034-35). In any case, their strong faith Islam was seen as a threat to the national identity of Britishness (1036). This strong Islamic identity put the Muslim immigrants at the target of the fight against terrorism at home in the UK. Ali's novel *Brick Lane* displays the identity crisis of the Bangladeshi immigrants under the influence of the Islamic terrorism abroad and in the UK. The activities of the Bengal Tigers depict how the Bengali immigrants want to keep their religious identity and how they identify themselves with Islam. The reaction from the Lion Heart proves that their activities are not ignored within the host society and the exposure to Islamic values are felt and feared by the host community. The situation strengthens the idea that it is impossible for the two communities to live without being influenced by the religion of the other. This clash between the two cultures, the mutual hatred against

the religion of the other, and fear of assimilation from both sides prove that such an interaction is the natural result of this co-existence. Nevertheless, as the immigrants' form the minority and the host society is the stronger group and has more control and rights, it has the power to impose racism and discrimination on the immigrant groups although at the same time expecting them to be integrated. These ambiguities between the two communities suggest that there cannot be a strong separation between the host society and the immigrants' community under these circumstances and that both parts are influenced by each other, in the end leading to a hybridization of cultures although through a painful process involving violence fueled by racism.

In Chapter seventeen, it is heard that a boy had been stabbed because of the fight between the two gangs. However, it is narrated that this news was "all lies" made up to give Bangladeshis a bad name now that there was a reason to believe it. Later, it is revealed that the boy was killed during some form of violence within the same gang. The nature of the news about the killing of the boy proves how such news can be constructed to lead to division within a society:

There were no gangs at all. The *white* press had made them up to give Bangladeshis a bad name. The *Tower Hamlets Bugle* was the worst offender (but all white newspapers were culprits); if you read the rubbish, you'd think that our boys were getting as bad as the *blacks*. No, there weren't any gangs. Just boys who grew up together and hung around together. (Ali 388, emphasis added)

The quotation above displays that the division of white and black are still named and used in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain. The mention of newspapers suggests that this kind of contrasts are constructed by media, and politics as in the case of 9/11 attacks. However, as the narration goes on to say that this news is 'rubbish' and there are no gangs, it just destroys this idea of opposition between two groups. With the influence of the 9/11 attacks, the talks during the Bengal Tigers meetings shift their focus and the members of the group want to prove that Islam is a religion of peace. During this increasing hatred against Islam, there is evidence of attacks to women wearing hijab on the streets, which shows the degree of violence directed towards the Muslims. It is ironic that people who are against the religion of 'hatred' - as they call it, are similarly full of hatred. The qualities attributed to both -opposing- religions and religious groups, to create a separation between them, are blurred in this way. It is not certain that one group is peaceful, and the other is full of hatred and violence, but violence spreads everywhere in all forms against one another.

Chanu's decision to go back home makes Nazneen struggle about how this going home is going to work out. Nazneen thinks, "would we sit like this in Dhaka and [...] would it feel just the same and would everything be just the same in a different place" (Ali 372). Nazneen, although she is the one who spent most of her time home, has an awareness of the change caused by living in a different country after leaving her village. Her question here is crucial in suggesting that it is not easy to go home and call it home after living in a foreign country for decades. Later, she thinks about Kareem and her relationship with him; her daughters and how they hate the idea of going back home as they are born in England. She thinks also of Chanu and if he is going to be able to fulfill his dream of home. While she is unsure of going back to Bangladesh, Nazneen makes a decision first to leave Kareem. She leaves him saying that she is not the village girl he is looking for. How Kareem perceives Nazneen makes her question if she is the 'village girls' he sees: "How did Kareem see her? The real thing, he said. She was the real thing. A Bengali wife. A Bengali mother. An idea of home. An idea of himself he found in her" (Ali 454). This shows that although Kareem looks like he found his identity in this host country, he is still looking for a feeling of security in his relationship with Nazneen. Nazneen cannot remember much about the village any more after twenty years of her marriage to Chanu in England. Even though she spends most of her time in home, she is in contact with the host community, which increases after her relationship with Kareem. She learns about the problems related to the society she lives in more in the Bengal Tigers meetings. However, she chooses to leave Kareem because she is not what he thinks she is, and she is not the village girl anymore. For Nazneen, the village is left so far behind and after twenty years she cannot even remember it even if she wants to. Nazneen talks to Kareem and tells him that she does not want to marry him. In return, Kareem asks her if she thinks their relationship a sin. Although it is a sin in their religion, it is not the main reason why Nazneen leaves Kareem. The way she leaves Kareem offends him and he leaves Nazneen saying that they should repent as Allah forgives all. Their relationship portrays that they accept not acting as a Muslim would act because their affair would be considered a sin for a Muslim. This shows that under the influence of another culture and religion, they fail to practice the requirements of their religion.

After leaving Kareem, Nazneen is confronted with the problem caused by Shanana's refusal to go back to Dhaka. Shanana is strongly against going home as she

is older than Bibi and is more aware of her situation. She speaks English well and corrects her father all the time, which makes him angry. The girls both go to school and are not having trouble in adapting as Chanu says the children adapt more easily. After this confrontation, Nazneen talks to Chanu saying that she cannot leave. Their conversation is as follows:

You are coming with me, then? You'll come?

No. [...] I cannot go with you. [...]

I cannot stay. [...] (Ali 479)

As Nazneen left Bangladesh when she was very young, she does not consider it her home anymore. For Chanu, after struggling for most of his life in England, he cannot feel home and says he cannot stay. This conversation portrays how each character suffers in their own way from this clash of the two cultures and the creation of a new cultural identity. Their subjective experiences are only a part of the bigger fight between the two communities and reflect their feeling of in-betweenness. Each of the characters changes due to this interaction between the cultures. Their newly formed identities are a product of both cultures, yet they do not belong to either of them separately. This causes the characters to suffer in feeling a sense of belonging because it cannot be defined by a separate space like Bangladesh or England.

After Chanu goes back home he keeps writing letters to Nazneen, and when she asks how things are he says: "Is it how you expected? Is it what you wanted? / The English have a saying: You cannot step into the same river twice [...]" (Ali 488). Although Chanu does not complain, he feels that it is also different in Bangladesh in the sense that it does not feel like the same place he left years ago, or he is not the same Chanu anymore. These people are looking for another space that will make them feel home, the feeling which left them with migration. When he leaves, he feels tired and that he cannot face any more racism and discrimination and wants to protect his family, too. But as he realizes, Nazneen is not only a village girl and the children, "can adjust to anything. The place is immaterial. They will make their own place *within* the place" (Ali 371). This statement is vital in showing the degree of adaptation and integration that can be achieved by older and younger generations of immigrants. It suggests creating one's own place which is crucial in meaning that a new form of culture and cultural space is created by these immigrants, especially the younger generation and this place is not a material one anymore. The idea of home and belonging is about

adjusting and being able to express oneself and identity in all its forms including culture and religion. As Chanu does not have any hope of achieving this because he could not find himself the space he looked for in his profession, he sees that younger generation have a higher chance of getting the space they need and deserve.



## CONCLUSION

In both *Small Island* and *Brick Lane* the issue of racism is depicted by the subjectivity of the characters' experiences. This provides different perspectives to approach the issue. As *Small Island* and *Brick Lane* cover different periods of time of the immigration to Britain, this adds another dimension to the topic of immigration. These two novels present different time spans in migration history and yet they can be considered as a follow-up of one another in terms of timing. While *Small Island* deals with the condition of immigrants in post-war Britain, *Brick Lane* presents the long-lasting effects of the War and colonization on immigration forty years after the War. While in *Small Island* there is a considerable focus on the racism based on skin color against the 'dark colored' citizens of the country, in *Brick Lane* it is seen that racism against one's skin color is still prevalent but that the issue is more complex and varied in terms of including hatred and discrimination against one's cultural behavior, ethnic origins and religion – disregarding skin color. While *Small Island* depicts the black and white division and how this division is blurred, *Brick Lane* portrays the British society in close contact with its Asian immigrants and shows how these two communities are affected by each other. In *Brick Lane*, in addition to the encounter of different cultures and races, the existence of Muslim Asian immigrants within the British society brings with it the influence of the religion of Islam over the host society. This strong religious identity is as unwelcome just like the colored immigrants from the former colonies of the Empire.

This clash of two different races, cultures, and religions - in the case of Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, caused a series of social, economic, and political changes in the UK. While the government had to take practical measures and pass laws to organize the social life, at the same time, it had to deal with a moment of crisis in reframing the previously existing political structures and the concepts created by these structures. As with the end of the British Empire there was a requirement for a new form of government, this new government had to redefine its national identity. The necessity of describing the national identity and the idea of Britishness became more complex with the appearance of immigrants within all aspects of the British society. The idea of a homogenous Britain was under great scrutiny with the effect of the immigrants' arrival in increasing numbers. Even though through a painful process, the immigrants' arrival marked the start of a multicultural society for Britain. The discourse of a

homogenous Britain which attributed its national identity to the idea of belonging to the white race shifted to an idea of Britishness which involved people from different races, different ethnic origins, cultures, and religions. As a result, the idea of Britishness became more inclusive during the process starting with the arrival of the immigrants to the UK. Within this process, Britain could not become fully multicultural, applying the term in all its meanings, and racism did not disappear completely. On the contrary, the term 'racism' evolved to include more aspects of different groups of people, which made the path to multiculturalism a more intricate and challenging one.

The novels *Small Island* and *Brick Lane* depict this process from the colonial British Empire to the multicultural Britain by employing their characters within this changing context for the definition of a nation. The novels portray the changing conditions of the country due to the War and decolonization. They reflect, with the immigrant and white-English characters employed in the stories, the effect of the changing conditions on the individuals within the British society. The experiences of these characters stand for the reality of most immigrants to the UK from 1945 to the 2000s. In this way, the study of the two novels portrays the case of immigration to the UK and provide the reader with the discourse relating to the immigrants, and present evidence on how this discourse had to change within the changing social and political conditions, therefore the changing context. The novels prove that this changing context requires the established meanings attributed to the definitions of a national, cultural, and racial identity, and citizenship to be redefined. How the novels prove such necessity of a redefinition is by presenting the binary divisions directed at the immigrants and by proving the invalidity of such dichotomies.

Finally, despite dealing with the condition of migrants in different decades (and centuries) both novels challenge the idea of racism and the strong separations imposed by the social and political discourse of racism. To challenge this idea, the idea of hybridity of races and cultures is suggestive in both novels. The discourse of racism is observed to differ in the two novels paralleling the contemporary social and political changes of the time they refer to. While in *Small Island* this discourse mainly focuses on the use of the words 'black' and 'white', in *Brick Lane* there is a newer terminology such as 'integration', 'assimilation', 'discrimination', and 'adaptation'. In both cases, it is obvious that the discourse is shaped by the fundamental changes in history and

politics. While in *Small Island*, the major event is the Second World War, in *Brick Lane* there are many political changes with respect to the situation of immigrants, and they are crucial in shaping the discourse of migration. While both novels depict the effect of power struggles and their impact on society, they challenge these powers by questioning the divisions they impose on the society.





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## RESUME

**Name, Surname: Tuğba Kutlu**

### Education:

<b>Degree</b>	<b>Field</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>Year</b>
<b>Undergraduate</b>	American Culture and Literature	Ankara University	2009
<b>Graduate</b>	English Language and Literature	Atilm University	2022

### Work Experience:

<b>Workplace</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Year</b>
<b>Gazi University</b>	<b>Instructor of English</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Ted University</b>	<b>Instructor of English</b>	<b>2013-2019</b>

Foreign Language(s): English

Publications: -

Date: 08.06.2022