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"This Blessed Plot": Negotiating Britishness in Sam Selvon's The Lonely Londoners, Hanif Kureishi's The Buddha of Suburbia, and Zadie Smith's White Teeth

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"The study of art that does not result in making the strong less willing to oppress the weak means little."

Booker T Washington,
Inaugurating Address to the 1896 season of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences. The Brooklyn Museum, New York.

ABSTRACT

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"THIS BLESSED PLOT": NEGOTIATING BRITISHNESS IN SAM SELVON'S <u>THE LONELY LONDONERS</u>, HANIF KUREISHI'S <u>THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA</u>, AND ZADIE SMITH'S <u>WHITE TEETH</u>

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  This thesis considers how contemporary British literature helps us negotiate better ways of being in an increasingly diverse world. Britain understood itself as a relatively homogenous white society and reacted badly when commonwealth citizens unexpectedly began to "return" following World War II. Colonial migrants' increasingly large presence, particularly as many settled and had children, challenged the myth of a "pure" Anglo-Saxon Britain and forced a re-conceiving of what it is to be British. This thesis particularly examines how colonial immigrants found ways to (re)negotiate their identities as British in the face of hostility in their "mother country." Chapter One looks at how Sam Selvon's <u>The Lonely Londoners</u> depicts ways early West Indian immigrants found to endure in immediate post-war, nationalist, Britain. I argue that while working class migrants found ways to survive, they did so at the expense of personal growth. Nevertheless, their tenacity laid down the foundations of a new Britishness on which future generations could build. Chapter Two examines Hanif Kureishi's <u>The Buddha of Suburbia</u>. I argue that Kureishi's novel indicates how second-generation migrants, who are often more psychically flexible, form their identities differently to their immigrant parents. They negotiate ways of being British via their heritage and immediate family, but also with peers, and across various boundaries including those of class, gender, and culture. Chapter Three considers Zadie Smith's <u>White Teeth</u>. I argue that this novel suggests how immigrants negotiate their identities across even more boundaries and increasingly take advantage of the changing circumstances of life in Britain. This literature indicates reasons for some minority groups' disaffection and subsequent behavior and so helps us to better understand and negotiate difference. In the Afterword, I reiterate that, starting from Britain's nationalistic fear of hybridity in the 1950s, the novels in this study show the trajectory of how colonial immigrants found ways of being accepted as British. While it must remain vigilant to possible peril, Britain's "social imaginary" has expanded to understand the benefits of multiculturalism and of valuing all citizens as equal.

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INTRODUCTION

In his classic 1927 study <u>Aspects of the Novel</u>, E.M. Forster spotlighted the importance of character in the novel and made the distinction between "flat" and "round" characters. Despite the development of the postmodern novel and sensibilities, Forster's interpretation of the importance of character has not become outmoded. British literary critic James Wood has recently brought our attention back to Forster because of the persistence of character as an element that keeps us interested in novels. In <u>How Fiction Works</u> (2008), Wood insists that "fiction is both artifice and verisimilitude" (xiii). Fictional characters are "sites of human energy" and are representative of the real (124). This leads to the understanding that to ask how a fictional character exists is to ask "How do *we* exist?" (118). Further, in <u>Modern Social Imaginaries</u>, Charles Taylor writes of the "social imaginary" as containing the modern idea of order. It is of the ways "people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (23). Since the seventeenth century, it has been increasingly assumed that society is for the advantage of all citizens and that the norm is for peaceful collaboration for the common benefit. The "social imaginary," which has increasingly presumed equality, is developed through our daily experiences, including reading literature. Literature informs our understanding of the world and how we interact in it and the literature is informed by the world; through this mutually constitutive process we can negotiate better ways of being in an increasingly diverse world.

Britain understood itself as a relatively homogenous white society and reacted badly when commonwealth citizens unexpectedly began to "return" following World War II, a period coinciding with the empire's contraction. The West Indian presence challenged the myth of a "pure" Anglo-Saxon Britain, particularly as increasing numbers of colonial migrants settled, and had children, in Britain and so forced a re-conceiving of what it is to be British. To extend Wood's ideas, when one reads about characters as they negotiate their identities—where "identity" is an individual's understanding of who he or she is, of the individual's defining characteristics—and try to find ways to be in the

world, so does one question his/her *own* identity. Through literature we can find ways to negotiate our own identities and to honor others; we can become more aware of how society's accepted norms influence lives within minority groups and how, in turn, these individuals can turn to alternative orders that might bring the "social imaginary," how society believes it should morally operate, into peril.

Since the end of the eighteenth century, Westerners increasingly understood humans as having what Taylor calls "*individualized* identity, that is individual to me, and that I discover in myself" (28). In striving to reach one's potential, one aims for the ideal of authenticity, of "being oneself" (28). The way we feel about ourselves is affected by our position in the world and about how others receive us. As Taylor writes in Multiculturalism,

> our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*cognition of others, and so a person or group can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. (25)

Colonial immigrants in Britain were often forced into such a state by the dominant white population and their experience is explored in the novels examined in this study—Sam Selvon's The Lonely Londoners (1956), Hanif Kureishi's The Buddha of Suburbia (1990), and Zadie Smith's White Teeth (2001). I particularly set out to understand how colonial immigrants found ways to (re)negotiate their identities as British in a country that was hostile in its political and ideological climate, its material conditions and its weather. Furthermore, partly because the "social imaginary" supported notions of homogeneity and superiority, immigrants in Britain found themselves alienated. Yet, despite these obstacles, they stayed in a "mother country" very different to the one they had envisaged. How did they find ways to sustain themselves?

Ania Loomba suggests that it is dangerous to rely completely on discourse and text, including novels, for interpretations of the daily realities of the colonial experience. "One must be aware of the possible blurring between representations that are ideologically charged and material reality because distance might appear between the pain of the lived experience and the representation in the text" (qtd. in Wisker 39). To this end, as Gina Wisker writes in Key Concepts in Postcolonial Literature, it is important

that as readers "we find out as much as possible about the broader cultural and historical contexts of the texts we read" (40). In agreeing with Wisker's assertion, the current study draws from historical texts, including migrants' testimonies, media archives, psychology studies and government papers. While we must be careful of reading it as fact, fiction does play into a larger "social imaginary" and so can undercut the hegemonic narrative of an exclusive national culture. I discern trends through the main characters in these three novels, and these patterns become meaningful as they enter into the "cultural imagination" and so generate ways that people might conceive of themselves and others. This literature also does this by alerting us to perils created by migrants' mistreatment and to some of the ways that missed opportunities led to young British Muslims' involvement in fundamentalist religious political groups towards the end of the twentieth century. Contemporary multicultural British literature depicts various ways that working-class colonial immigrants found to survive in a hostile environment. Traumatized early migrants concentrated on survival within restricted social groups, but their tenacity laid down the foundations for following generations to develop increasingly more sophisticated ways of negotiating Britishness even as Britain's "social imaginary" struggled to fully accommodate multiculturalism.

In examining representative experiences and behaviors in each novel against these non-fictional accounts, I show that each is based in historical narrative and that these particular imagined literatures have value in the making of the "social imaginary." I demonstrate that these novels follow a historical projection from 1948 through to the end of the twentieth century as colonial immigrants negotiated their identities in a Britain which became less exclusive and increasingly multicultural. Chapter One looks at how early West Indian immigrants found ways to endure in immediate post-war, nationalist, Britain. The majority of these early migrants were single males without family support who often arrived in Britain with no job, nowhere to live, and very little money. The characters in Selvon's The Lonely Londoners are representative of this section of the immigrant population, and particularly of those who settled in London. Writing against contemporary British notions of West Indians, Selvon depicts several of these young men, with individual personalities and life philosophies, and who come from a variety of West Indian islands. I argue that while Sam Selvon's lonely Londoners found, in

Selvon's own words, enough "plaster casts" and "justifications for living" to stay in Britain, the struggle for survival was so great that it stultified their personal growth (qtd. in Nasta 58, 56). Nevertheless, these pioneering migrants gradually formed the foundations of a new Britishness on which future generations built.

Chapter Two examines Hanif Kureishi's The Buddha of Suburbia. Haroon, a Bangladeshi-Indian, arrived in Britain around the same time as those in The Lonely Londoners. Differently to them, he married an English woman and had a steady job in the civil service. Although the material conditions of his life were less problematic than those of Selvon's "boys," Haroon moved into a ready-made "British" identity and by doing so stifled his sense of self. As his British-born son, Karim, enters a coming-of-age identity crisis, Haroon too has a crisis of identity as he attempts to mature out of his stasis. Focusing on their respective identity crises, including how Karim is affected by his father's transformation, I argue that second-generation migrants form their identities differently than their immigrant parents. This is made possible because migrants' presence in Britain interrogates the "social imaginary" which gradually becomes more accommodating. Migrant's children have more opportunities and more psychic flexibility and negotiate ways of being British via their heritage and immediate family, but also with peers, and across various boundaries including class, gender and culture.

Chapter Three considers Zadie Smith's White Teeth, especially the Indian-born Samad, and his British-born twin son Magid. In "Speaking in Tongues," Smith writes that art is important in that it allows authors to do "what civic officers and politicians can't seem to: speak simultaneous truths" (Section 3). Of mixed heritage herself, Smith recognizes that identity is always complex and in flux. I argue that White Teeth, in common with the other novels in the current study, suggests that immigrants negotiate their identities across many different boundaries and increasingly take advantage of the changing circumstances of life in Britain that have been created by the struggles of preceding and contemporary immigrant groups. Britain's collective "social imaginary" gradually opened itself to ideas of a multi-cultural British identity. Nevertheless, Smith points to how, despite improvements in "race" relations, ongoing discrimination led to missed opportunities in transitioning to a truly multi-cultural society. Compared to their parents, second generation migrants had more choices in identity formation, but, they

also experienced more confusion about belonging to either one culture or another. The suggestion is that towards the end of the twentieth century, this confusion—this sense of belonging everywhere and nowhere—left some young British Muslims susceptible to indoctrination by religious-political groups which offered a strong identity framework. Recent official reports concur with this suggestion.

In representing a particular type of immigrant in London, The Lonely Londoners focuses most closely on two main characters, Moses and Galahad. In making the same focus through close readings of these characters, I hope to avoid falling into the trap of cherry-picking traits or experiences from various characters that might be used to justify pre-conceived Platonic notions of identity or its formation. In my qualitative account, I use a small sample to study male immigrant experience. Although Claude Lévi-Strauss suggests such accounts lack the "anonymity of numbers," I believe this approach is useful, as Mary Chamberlain suggests in Family Love in the Diaspora, in exemplifying immigrant communities' "beliefs, mores, and activities" (8).

The immigrant experience, although it can be usefully generalized, creates different issues of identity for males and females. Differences in the social and material conditions of gendered lives, particularly when considered across seas and cultures, require different strategies to negotiate identity. In "White Woman Listen!," Hazel Carby writes that there was no women's dimension to the "race" struggles in Britain until after the mid-1970s when consciousness arose in response to the exclusion of women's experience of racism from the anti-racist movement. For Carby, "because they have been structured by racism," black women's struggles and experiences "have been different to those of white women" and, as feminisms have traditionally been structured around white women, they are often not relevant to non-whites (49). Further, Heidi Safia Mirza writes that white women hold power over black women by virtue of their ethnicity, and so matters of "feminism" remain contentious between these groups (qtd. in Carby 50). Critical engagement with black female characters across the period of the current study is, for these reasons among others, too rich to explore as a secondary issue, and deserves separate study. For argumentative efficiency and clarity, and to allow space to explore the trajectory of the male experience, I do not tackle female-specific concerns here. As in Chapter One, the other chapters focus mainly on two male characters.

In There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack, Paul Gilroy writes that early racist agitation had been based on old "science." Particularly as the 1960s approached and the number of immigrant family units rose as a proportion of total immigrants in the rush to "beat the ban" introduced by the 1961 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, whites also feared the quantity of incomers, principally as this was understood as exacerbating the housing shortage (Gilroy 1987 80, 84). After the 1958 Notting Hill riots, a new racism developed, focused more on the crime rates among the black population (45, 86). For Gilroy, in Britain "[l]egality is the pre-eminent symbol of national culture and it is the capacity of black settlement to transform it" which alarms the white population (87). By 1973, the Government views "black criminals and disorderly types as a minority within an overwhelming majority of solid citizens" (91). The mid to late 70s saw the fear of "Black Power" militancy, and neo-fascist political activity rose along with the growth of crime and disorder, but in response to increasingly authoritarian policing, immigrant groups become increasingly politicized and the emergent anti-racist movement was joined by large numbers of black youths. As the quality of policing is questioned, "race," which is also the way that the skinhead and crombie gangs were understood (89), becomes seen as working against the forces of law and order (97). By the "long hot summer" of 1976, relations between the black community and the police were at an all-time low. Around one third of those arrested in the 1981 and 1985 riots were "non-white," yet press reports depicted a "black mob" and anti-authoritarianism became recognized as a black cultural trait (32).

After the 1981 Brixton riots, the Scarman Report, which is widely understood as one of the most influential reports in post-war Britain, led to the introduction of many measures to improve relations between the police and the black and Asian community. Twelve years later, the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence led to the Macpherson Report which crucially, in opposition to Scarman, judged the police as institutionally racist. Since then, Britain has become steadily more integrated and black communities have become increasingly valued; the broader "social imaginary" is of a multi-cultural society. Nevertheless, there were, and still are, hurdles to be negotiated, and this study shows, particularly in Chapter Three, how Britain paid a high price for continuing deficiencies in understanding and negotiating cultural difference. The "social

imaginary" is always in flux and open to the perils of fundamentalist politics among other things. And, in this global age, Britain's "social imaginary" is part of, and thus affects, a global "social imaginary."

This study begins with representations of post-World War II West Indian colonial migrants. West Indians had been separated from their ancestral past by their forced and coerced removal from Africa and India, and so their identity was based less on inherited cultural practices, and more on an understanding that they were British. In Windrush, Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillips write that West Indians "had no account of national self interest … patriotism was firmly linked with the need to defend Britain" (19). Arriving in post-war Britain, however, and finding that their conception of "British" was different to the indigenous population's, they were plunged into a crisis of identity. West Indians' conceptions of Britain were learned in school history lessons about Britain's vainglorious past, and from British literature. These would have been selected by the colonial power to justify colonization as a matriarchal project, and the British as a superior "race." As SS Windrush passenger Vince Reid says, West Indians were "encouraged to love them [the British] … encouraged to cheer for the white goodie and boo the black baddie … seduced into believing in their benevolence, in their goodwill" (Windrush 14). Further, West Indians understood Britain as a place of improvement since it was common for better-educated West Indians to attend British universities before returning to the islands to take up government positions. For these reasons, among the West Indians who arrived in 1948 Britain aboard the SS Empire Windrush, optimism was high. But many passengers' sense of self was dealt a terrible blow when they found a nationalistic, war-weary, bomb-damaged, Britain struggling to come to terms with the decline of Empire.

Britain's empire, for better or worse, was an institution that dominated the world for over two centuries and continues to influence today's world. When it went into decline, conditions in its colonies suffered too, and many colonial people migrated to Britain. I am interested in how these migrants found ways to build new lives in a distant, and very different, country to that of their birth. What induced people to leave what one might understand as the idyllic West Indian setting to live in a Britain they had never seen? The contribution of Britain's colonial citizens to the war effort was considerable, and by the end of the war, West Indians had an increased awareness of Britain, the

"mother country," as a physical site. Poor post-war economic conditions in the British West Indies, coupled with the long tradition of migrancy for work, and then compounded by affordable sea-crossings and a desire for adventure, meant that many West Indians "returned" to Britain.

The majority of these pioneering migrants were working class single males who arrived in Britain to find that it did not match up to their expectations of an open-armed maternal figure. Britain's almost-entirely white population did not greet immigrants as siblings but as aliens who posed a threat. Wartime Britain was constantly on guard against enemy spies, constantly on the lookout for the enemy hidden within. Contrastingly, this new "alien threat" was easily recognized; it spoke "funny" English and had dark skin.

Yet colonial migrants had British citizenship and could not be denied entry to the country. This meant that many nationalist British people resorted to making life difficult for immigrants so that they might leave; immigrants were subjugated and racially abused. However, multi-cultural twenty-first century Britain testifies to the fact that immigrants did stay in Britain. How did they find ways to cope with daily racial abuse? Apart from the practical matters of negotiating daily life, what psychological struggles did they face? Colonial migrants were legally British, yet they were not accepted as "properly" British. Did they negotiate their identities through the culture of their forefathers? Or what other ways did they find of framing their sense of self in this harsh environment?

The signifier "black" is fraught with prospective terminological difficulties, related to homogeneity and generalization. In using "black," my intention is not to replace or conflate "West Indian," "African" and "Asian." Rather, as James Proctor writes in Dwelling Places, "black" is used alongside these terms "in order to signal points of linkage or articulation, their 'positional and conjunctural character.'" Since the 1980s, "black has been used "less as a 'racial' or biological sign than as an imagined community and ethnicity. It is called upon to draw attention to its own constructedness, its potential as a *constitutive* rather than a reflexive formation" (8). Furthermore, in Readings in Contemporary Political Sociology, Kate Nash writes that "It is their [blacks'] exclusion which provides what Laclau and Mouffe … call the common 'axis of equivalence' of this new identity" (117).

Notions of national terminology can also be problematic when discussing Britain. While the novels in this study are each set in England, and mainly London, and the migrant experience in other parts of Britain is not much addressed, it is the experiences of colonial migrants that I examine. As a Scot writing in the United States, I might like to lay all the responsibility for colonization at England's feet; nevertheless, it is nonsensical to talk of an "English" Empire. For expediency, therefore, I will, as far a possible, use the officially correct "British" rather than "English."

CHAPTER ONE: "GIVE ME A CHANCE BIG CITY"[1]

> By de hundred, by de tousan
> From country and from town,
> By de ship-load, by de plane-load
> Jamaica is Englan bound.
>
> Louise Bennet, "Colonization in Reverse"

During the period of empire, people in the British West Indies were raised to believe themselves British. They spoke English, read British history and literature, and listened to the BBC. And yet, as Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillips write in <u>Windrush</u>, when West Indians migrated to the "mother country" they found that "[t]here was an inextricable link between nationality, citizenship and race. To be British was to be a white Anglo Saxon and, whatever that meant, it was not us" (3). West Indian migrants did stay in Britain, however, and within fifty years had become an important and valued sector of a multicultural Britain. Most of the original migrants were single men, with no family ties. Why, in the face of nationalist intolerance, did these West Indians stay? And how did they find ways of framing their identities so as to survive in Britain's hostile environment?

Sam Selvon was one of the early migrants of the mass movement from the West Indies to Britain that began in 1948. As Nick Bentley discusses in "Form and Language in Sam Selvon's <u>The Lonely Londoners</u>," "Selvon's fiction is important as one of the very first dramatizations and articulations of the anxieties and daily challenges faced by the marginalized black immigrant population in 1950s and 60s Britain" (18). In <u>Writing Home</u>, David Ellis notes <u>Londoners</u>' "educative quality" (xiii) in Selvon's attempts to "humanize and individualise the emigrants in response to the mass perceptions of racist ideologies" (xiiv -xiv). As a West Indian in Britain, Selvon asserts his right to engage at the centre of the dominant literary culture rather than writing a resistance literature from the periphery. Selvon, as Lewis MacLeod writes, thought that "writing a book" could serve as a "plaster cast" for a human life and that stories could provide "a justification for living" (qtd. 2). I argue that while Sam Selvon's lonely Londoners found enough "plaster

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[1] Citations from <u>The Lonely Londoners</u> will be represented by <u>L</u>.

casts" and "justifications for living" to stay in London, the struggle for survival was so great that it stultified their personal growth. Nevertheless, the small ways they found to offer resistance to nationalist oppression gradually formed the foundations of what became, as Phillips and Phillips put it in their book title, "The Irresistible Rise of Multicultural Britain." As a West Indian in Britain, Selvon asserts the validity of immigrant Creolized English, which he uses throughout The Lonely Londoners (hereafter Londoners[2]), for both characters and narrator. While much of the criticism on this novel has been about Selvon's use of language[3], I will detail the ways that the characters in Londoners negotiate their British identities on the margins of British society.

Long before West Indians began to move to Britain in large numbers, it was common for them to migrate seasonally for work, with many, particularly young single males, migrating to the relatively close United States. As Britain came under threat in World War II, so too did its colonies and, among others, West Indians made a significant contribution to the British cause. Many West Indians who had been to Britain during the war decided to return there after they had been demobilized. Reports of a higher standard of living in Britain than in the West Indies led to increasingly high numbers of migrants, especially as the 1948 British Nationality Act had extended British citizenship to all commonwealth people. When, in 1952, the United States Immigration and Naturalization Act drastically cut migration allocation from the West Indies, even more of Britain's colonial citizens looked to their "mother country" as a place of refuge. While many West Indians went to Britain to find work, almost half of the historic SS Windrush's passengers were simply looking for adventure or to see Britain. Some, like Arthur Carling, as he explains in a BBC interview, "Windrush – Arrivals," were happy to pay the £28 passage to sail on the SSWindrush simply "to get away from the control of [their] parents" (1). It is worth noting that, as another passenger, Sam King, says, "the average Jamaican who came on the SS Empire Windrush … was not the destitute. The destitute man did not have £28." Further, King estimates that "three-quarters of us … were skilled" (Windrush 60).

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[3] Nick Bentley's "Form and Language in Sam Selvon's The Lonely Londoners" is particularly interesting.

Many immigrants expected to put their skills to use in Britain's post-war reconstruction, particularly because the shortage of labor was so serious that, as Paul Foot writes, the 1951 King's Speech would speak of the "serious shortages of labour [that had] handicapped production in a number of industries" (124). Despite this need for labor, and immigrants' legal status as citizens, not everyone was welcoming to these newcomers. This was particularly because Britain's post-war nationalist sentiment remained high, and the situation was exacerbated by the fact that migrants' skin color instantly delineated them as "alien." This racial discrimination meant that many immigrants found it hard, or sometimes impossible, to find work, especially skilled. Furthermore, Britain's post-war housing shortage, coupled with the often poor standard of what was available, became a source of tension with natives often seeing incomers as unfair competition for housing.

Britain's post-war condition, as evoked in Selvon's opening paragraphs, recalls T.S. Eliot's "Unreal City," a London "[u]nder the brown fog of a winter dawn" (57). Introduced like a fairy tale—"One grim winter evening" (L 23)—Selvon's London seems to stretch back into history, to the infancy of Empire and up to its post-war waning. More than the stagnation of a modernist London, an ominous fog "sleeping restlessly over the city" gives the sensation of a London under duress (L 23). The city's lights no longer shine out against the night sky in celebration of its centrality but only "show in the blur as if it not London at all but some strange place on another planet" (L 23). London, no longer confident as the centre of empire, is repositioned as an alterable and even transitory space. At the same time, Selvon's narrator plants his story specifically in London where the main character, the West Indian Moses, is found, like a native, hopping on "a number 46 bus at the corner of Chepstow Road and Westbourne Grove" (23). Selvon thus points to London's internal tensions and to its altered situation in the new world of declining imperialism. In The Practice of Everyday Life, Michel de Certeau writes that the city can be read as "a *universal* and *anonymous* subject" that comprises "all the functions and predicates that were previously scattered and assigned to many different real subjects—groups, associations, or individuals." Thus, the city is a concept understood as "a finite number of stable, isolatable, and interconnected properties" (94). In claiming their place in London, the heart of empire, colonial migrants disrupt the "stubborn resistances offered by traditions" (94). "The act of walking is to the urban

system what the speech act is to language," and so Moses' presence starts to erode the hegemonic narrative (97).

In "The 1951-1955 Conservative Government and the Radicalization of Black Immigration," Bob Carter et al. write that the British Government "took a major role in constructing black immigration as a 'problem' and in so doing reinforced a conception of Britishness grounded in colour and culture (as expressive of colour). Racist policies and practices were an integral part of this construction" (21). Racial intolerance was not a new phenomenon, however. In the 1940s, Selvon's Moses experienced its expression in the popular media and in the wider community. Moses was "among the first set of spades what come to Brit'n" in around 1940, and is already "a veteran, who living in this country for a long time" (L 120). Prior to the arrival of the SS Empire Windrush, there was little public reaction to the small number of West Indians living in Britain but Moses, through experience of racial intolerance, has already come to know "which part they will slam door in your face and which part they will take in spades" (L 25).

Moses, though, reminiscing about pre-1948 London, insists that "them was [the] days," and seems to overlook the racial antagonism of that period; while he has clearly internalized its effects, he chooses to remember the good times (L120). The discrimination he bore included Moses' dismissal from his railway yard job only because other workers objected to his skin color (L 29). There would be no legal redress for those who suffered racial discrimination in the workplace until the Race Relations legislation of 1965, and so Moses is denied a voice in this incident (Windrush 226). While he had no opportunity for legal or even public reparation, Moses found a way to offer resistance; when asked to pose for a newspaper photograph to accompany an article about his dismissal, he refused. As Homi Bhabha says in "The Third Space," "we do negotiate even when we don't know we're negotiating: we are always negotiating in any situation of political opposition or antagonism. Subversion is negotiation; transgression is negotiation" (qtd. in Rutherford 216). By withholding his own image, Moses effectively negotiates his political stance and opposes the nationalist order. Further, Moses forces the reporter to take responsibility for meaning by telling his story through the written word. Both the journalist and his readers are forced into thinking afresh, and so Moses disrupts the repetition of the false notions of identity inscribed by white Britain on the black body.

Moses' refusal importantly prevents his image becoming what Bhabha, in "Dissemination," calls one of the "scraps, patches and rags of daily life" that the nationalist narrative attempts to turn "into the signs of a coherent national culture." In this case, the black body is excluded as exotic and Other (Location 209). In this small and effectively silent act, Moses finds a way to claim citizenship and maintain a modicum of self worth when he performs as a political subject. He takes what little emotional consolation he can from this negotiation and registers, not least to himself, his stance against the nationalist narrative.

Marginalized by nativist sentiment, Moses also feels isolated from his fellow West Indians, and he accordingly warns the newly arrived Galahad (whom I will discuss later in this chapter) that "It ain't have anything like 'ease me up' or 'both of we is countrymen together' in the old London" (L 28). Selvon's migrants tend to become more inward-looking and less responsive to the needs of others as the daily struggle for self-preservation means that they always "have matters on the mind" (L 37). Nonetheless, Moses, a London "veteran" (L 33), does feel a strong connection to his fellow countrymen, and the arrival of large numbers of new immigrants provides an outlet for his compassion as he takes on an almost fatherly role for many newcomers. Occasionally, Moses is ambivalent about this position and is sometimes "vex with himself that his heart so soft that he always doing something for somebody and nobody ever doing anything for him" (L 23). And yet he helps others so often that he is like "some liaison officer" (L 24), "like a welfare officer" (L 25) to both recent and more established immigrants. True to his character, Moses travels to Waterloo station in "nasty weather to go and meet a fellar that he didn't even know" (L 23). In so doing, Moses reveals an empathetic nature through which he helps newcomers "because he used to remember how desperate he was when he was in London for the first time and didn't know anybody or anything" (L 25). Further, this role forms part of the framework of Moses' identity and his need to be Man-the-Protector, a concept explained by Lewis MacLeod in "You Have to Start Thinking All Over Again" (3). Moses' interactions with individual immigrants give him connections to his homeland in the West Indies, and it is "for old time sake" that he goes to meet one of his fellow countrymen, as requested by a mutual acquaintance in Trinidad (L 23). This means that on an ongoing basis Moses' identity is informed not only by his

experiences of the native British, but by continuing interactions with his fellow countrymen both in Britain and, via international mail and word-of-mouth, in Trinidad.

Moses' adopted role as a pseudo governmental-welfare officer sees him "scattering the boys around London" (L 25). In this function, Moses is situated in what Bhabha calls an "interstitial" space of negotiation between immigrants and the native population (Location 4). He is not in direct discussion with the civil service, but he is motivated to limit tensions between them and West Indians, and so he effectively acts mutually. Thus, while Moses gains no official recognition for his efforts, he at least has a discernable position and a modicum of influence in society and this sustains, even if only in a very small way, his self worth.

Moses' sense of identity includes at least one notion of Britishness as is apparent when, in talking to new immigrants, he chooses to use the colloquial diminution Water for the Bayswater area where he lives. In this declarative act, Moses takes possession of a part of London's topography and declares pride in the fact that he has been a local resident for "at least two years," since, as he explains to Galahad, it is only after this time that one becomes entitled to use this contraction (L 35). While he is forced to live in temporary accommodation, Moses asserts his position as a citizen involved in the realities of his locality and, in effect, appropriates a British identity. And each time that Moses helps someone settle, he further affirms and establishes himself as a local with knowledge of his neighborhood and so reinforces his understanding of Britain as home, as part of him.

As in Selvon's Bayswater, immigrants often lived in temporary accommodation that tended to be clustered around particular areas because, as Phillips and Phillips write, "access to council housing was tightly controlled by residence requirements, so the migrants were thrown back on the private market" (Windrush 129). And, as Susanne Pichler discusses in "Alien-Nation and Belonging," because the 1954 relaxation of private sector rent controls meant the "only areas designated for slum clearance and/or areas with short-lease properties were generally available" to immigrants (24). Despite this, both official and popular nationalist sentiment held that immigrants should be dispersed rather than live in ghettos. This is reflected in a 1949 Times newspaper article, "Immigrants from West Indies," which, when discussing the forthcoming arrival of a ship

carrying West Indian migrants, reported that it was hoped they would disperse "partly because the concentration of coloured people in particular areas is undesirable on principle" (4). Immigrants, then, in what was just one of many sources of seemingly unnavigable tension, were caught hopelessly and defensively in between what natives wanted and what was possible.

When Moses tells newcomers that there are "[t]oo much spades in the Water now," his actions seem to reflect nationalist desire (L 25). Yet he mimics institutional and public sentiment, not because he agrees with it, but out of an instinct for self-preservation. When Moses says that he "don't want no concentrated area in the Water—as it is, things bad enough already" (L 25), his reasons are widely different from the hegemonic agenda. Moses disperses immigrants not because he refuses to live among them, but because he has learned that the native population responds negatively to the proliferation of West Indians in any one locale. Moses is so overwhelmed by daily life that his defensive actions, although they help maintain a level of stability and so will ultimately help to free others from the same drudgery, are about survival rather than about becoming self-actualized.

Indeed, Moses has become "uneasy" because the increasing number of immigrants has become a central issue in British politics and there are "big headlines in the papers every day" that engender negativity about the immigrant population (L 24). By the 1950s, the political climate was moving against colonial immigrants in Britain, such that there was "big discussion going on in Parliament about the situation" (L 24). Media coverage of this fuelled perceptions of colonial immigrants as a problem particularly given that, as Selvon's narrator says, "whatever the newspaper and the radio say in this country, that is the people Bible…. Newspaper and radio rule this country" (L 24). What the narrator recognizes is that the "social imaginary" is affected by what people read and hear in the media.

West Indians were often portrayed in the British popular press, even in well-intentioned articles, as a homogenized mass without individual identities, and <u>Londoners</u> counters this portrayal. To this end, Selvon does not make the mistake of presenting himself as what Wood calls "the didactic creator[] of stable, moralizing, satiric characterization" (153). Rather, against ideas of ethnic absolutism, his characters are

representative of human beings in all their complexities, struggling both internally and externally to negotiate their identities. Selvon does not suggest that West Indians should have a favored position, only that, in common with all citizens, they should have the right to self-determination. Moses' psychological inertia, which causes the continuing passive/defensive condition of his life, does not allow him to contemplate such a possibility. Galahad too says that "We only want to get by, we don't even want to get on" (88). Nevertheless, Selvon signals more confrontational undercurrents that will, although his novel does not address these, eventually erupt in the 1958 Notting Hill riots.

Parenthetically—but relevant because of the global significance of the "social imaginary"—the 2009 inauguration of Barack Obama as U.S. President can be seen in many ways as the culmination of Martin Luther King's aspirations for equality as expressed in his 1964 "I Have a Dream" speech, and so speaks to the necessity of conceiving of change. Meanwhile, in the context of the conviction that all humans are equal, Selvon's characters are so traumatized and limited in their own outlook that they do not even dream of equality. The outer extent of imagining for the "boys" is limited to hoping for a localized retaliation to racial discrimination. This is demonstrated by one of Moses' West Indian friends, Big City, who dreams the almost-impossible dream that is common among Britain's working class: winning the football pools. In his wildest dreams, Big City imagines spending some of his winnings buying up a whole street of houses and erecting signs saying "Keep the Water Coloured, No Rooms For Whites" (L 97). Although this is a stunted reverie, it is a dream of resistance, a stage King himself believed crucial to the Black cause.

In contrast to those, like Moses, who have been in Britain for a few years and who have come to accept racist abuse as part of daily life, new migrants are shocked by nationalist prejudice. Moses has become so weighed down by life, however, that he descends into an "evil mood" when a new friend "start to get on ignorant … and want to get in big argument with the white people standing around" (L 89). Moses' energy for resistance wanes, and he has come to accept racially-motivated abuse as a cost of remaining in Britain.

Those who arrived on the SS Windrush to stay in Britain were typically not unskilled and destitute, but this could not always be said of later arrivals from the West

Indies who, unlike the pioneers, had needed time to scrape together their passage to Britain. Accordingly, Selvon's fictional character, Moses, notes that more recent West Indian arrivals are often more "desperate" than earlier migrants and judges that many of these newcomers "are real hustlers" (L 24). He recognizes that, motivated by the stick rather than the carrot, new migrants are "running from the West Indies" (L 24). In the West Indies, levels of social deprivation are so bad that people leave and travel across the Atlantic Ocean only to "land up hopeless on the doorstep with one set of luggage, no place to sleep, no place to go" (L 24). In light of this evidence about conditions at home, for Selvon's immigrants it is "only logic for them to say it would be damn foolishness to go back" (L 24). So Moses, unable to entertain thoughts of being multiply located, deliberately suppresses any desire he has to return home. This denial of the option of return means that Moses is effectively entrapped in Britain. Further, there is the suggestion that he should be grateful for his lot because it would be even more difficult if he were to return home. These feelings of entrapment and beholdenness constrict Moses' sense of self and so curtail his potential to self-enactment.

For Moses, there is little profit in turning his gaze back to the West Indies, but he has been in Britain long enough to look back and remember when there were "better fete" than now (L 120). As will be seen in Chapters Two and Three of the current work, people commonly turn their gaze wistfully backwards to better days. It might initially seem that Moses mirrors nativist sentiment that considered Britain a better place before mass immigration from the colonies, simply on the grounds that the white British "just don't like black people" (L 39). It is, however, because of, and not parallel to, the nationalist view that Moses feels the way he does as he remembers Britain "when it only had a few West Indians in London and things used to go good enough" (L 39).

This "good enough" existence had, by the 1950s, deteriorated to the extent that Moses wonders if the best advice he can offer a new immigrant is "to hustle a passage home to Trinidad" (L 39). This begs the question of Moses, "how come you still holding on in Brit'n?" (L 40). For one thing, Moses is determined to assert his right to British citizenship since "we [colonials] have more right than any people from the damn continent to live and work in this country, and enjoy what this country have, because is we who bleed to make this country prosperous" (L 40). Here, Moses refers to the large

numbers of West Indians who helped in, and even died for, the war effort. Further, Stuart Hall, who migrated to Britain from the West Indies in 1951, writes that "however hard you tried to preserve an unaltered sense of who you were, as a Caribbean, it was impossible to stop the routines and circumstances of your everyday life re-defining your identity" (Windrush 233). For immigrants, the seemingly insignificant routine of everyday life in Britain "began to matter more than your memories, and, of course, the longer you stayed the more your life filled up with new and different souvenirs and remembrances" (Windrush 233). Like Hall, Moses has clearly built up a stock of many, although not often happy, memories of life in Britain, and these help anchor him to his life there and make it home.

There are benefits to living in Britain, including that Moses has become acculturated to London life, and, although he is depressed, his quasi-patriarchal role earns him sustaining respect from his fellow West Indians. While the "boys'" life is hard, political and economic conditions in the West Indies were in many ways worse than in Britain and, as Moses says of the seemingly idyllic Trinidad, "[i]t ain't have no prospects back home" (L 130). In an interview with Ramchand, Selvon acknowledges similar anxieties on this matter, saying that "if I had remained on the island experiencing the realities of what I hear is happening, then the dream would turn nightmare" (qtd. Ellis 12). The fictional Moses has become located in a sort of "between cultures" stasis, traumatized by London life, but unable to find a way out and drawing what sustenance he can from helping fellow migrants.

The "social imaginary" of the West Indies, as Pichler writes, is of a "collectivist culture" that forms around "small autonomous communities which are defined by familial, kinship, tribal, ethnic, religious … or other social relationships," with each group having its own narrow base of interests (177). The main "intragroup controlling concept" is paternalism; males decide what is best for and between the groups (178). Economies, as Phillips and Phillips write, are based on agriculture, cottage, and workshop industries, and operated on mutual trust in intra-personal relationships (99). In contrast, Britain is highly industrialized, with a more open and complex egalitarian social structure. There is large-scale social organization and the economy depends on depersonalized, legally-binding contacts. All this meant that, for Selvon's characters, in

addition to coping with practical matters like the changes in climate, living conditions, social manners, diet and so on, the social structure was so different that it necessitated their making psychic re-locations around their understanding of the male role.

Constructions of manhood vary from one society to the next, and in "Masculinity as Homophobia," Michael S. Kimmel writes that "Masculinity is a constantly changing collection of meanings that we construct through our relationships with ourselves, with each other, and with our world. Manhood is neither static nor timeless; it is historical" (184). Men's understanding of their role is based in the culture they inhabit, and definitions of manhood are constructed in opposition to various Others. For West Indian migrants, these Others comprise the native British majority, other immigrant minorities, sexual minorities, and women. In the West Indies, each person had a social role and knew his/her place in the order of things. For the male individual, this included understanding what constituted maleness and how he matched up to those expectations. In London, then, West Indians lost their place on the moral and social compass by which they previously defined themselves and became de-centered and anonymous (Kimmel 100). Correspondingly, in The Novels of Samuel Selvon, Roydon Salick writes that in Londoners, "the struggle for masculine legitimacy underscores every character's struggle for a psychologically and sociologically viable sense of identity, and the struggle for that identity is, in some basic sense, a struggle to find a place inside some overriding storyline, some cast, that will frame (and straighten out) his life" (2).

Although his thoughts on the matter are controversial, for Selvon, "Caribbean man" is a creation of the "assimilat[ion] of different cultures," rather than a product of history. In later chapters of the current study, we will see how some Asian characters look back to their ancestral roots in the building of identity frameworks, but Selvon's West Indians do not do this. They clearly gain pleasure from similarities between Britain and their birth islands, similarities like summer-time's warm weather, "liming," and music, but do not look back beyond their own island history to earlier times. Selvon puts greater emphasis on the role of culture and ideology in the formation of identity, and says that notions of "ancestry and going back and tracing things like that are of no interest to him" (qtd. in Ellis p. 11).

One difference in the framework of male life from the West Indies to Britain is concerned with the matriarchal role. Phillips and Phillips write that the basing of social organization on family units and small communities, combined with the mobility of men as they looked for work, meant that women had an authority that led to some aspects of West Indian culture being dominated by, particularly older, women (13). Most of the initial West Indian migrants to Britain were single males who, without a matriarchal influence, often reveled in practices previously inhibited by the presence of women in the social structure (13). Freedom from this structure is one of the factors that permit Selvon's "boys" to spend much of their free time "liming" in London's parks. Here they come into contact with some of London's seedier characters in a sexually-deviant side of London, a London that is not included in conventional understandings of Britishness and which therefore mocks that term. It is only in the space of London's parks on summer evenings, that "it aint have no discrimination," and that "one does meet all sorts of fellars from all walks of life … it might be your boss or it might be some big professional fellar" (L 104).

Given that immigrants are attempting to find ways of being accepted as equals, it is poignant that in this furtive space West Indian immigrants feel most uninhibited. It is here perhaps more than anywhere else that they can, dressed in "hot jitterbug shirt and … light sharkskin pants," relax (L 98). On the other hand, Hyde Park is hardly a Midsummer Night's Dream scape, since the prostitution that attracts Selvon's migrants also brings out the police. So, even in this peripheral libertine space, immigrants are held in a repressive frame that is constructed by a traditional British sense of morality and justice.

Despite the duration of his stay in London, Moses has no long-term relationship with a woman, and much of his social life is based on casual encounters. He consciously chooses bachelorhood when he sees how difficult life is, because of poverty and racial prejudice, for his West Indian friend, Joseph, who is married with four children. Unfortunately, Moses' decision to "never marry" locks him in the ossification of a bachelorhood that does not seek the emotional gratification of romantic love or of fatherhood (L 131). Moses has no meaningful social relations outside of his West Indian circle, so he is obliged to perform to a West Indian construction of manhood which is based on a spirited heterosexuality. This is essential both to his sense of self as a man,

and to his credibility among his West Indian peers. It is worth noting, Berthold Shoene-Hardwood says in <u>Writing Men</u>, that the adherence to this image of manhood "debilitates individualism" by encouraging "a uniform, highly codified set of behaviors." Selvon's early migrants brought this model of manhood with them from the West Indies, and this suggests that they arrived in Britain with underdeveloped frameworks of identity that were highly influenced by peer pressure (qtd. in MacLeod p. 2). Nevertheless, Moses has no other model to follow and, particularly because he feels the need to maintain some basis of identity, it is important to him that he engages in an active sex life. To this end, in common with his friends, he seeks sex through casual encounters, including with prostitutes. The "boys" clearly see these interactions as social in nature and for them sexual conquests are, as David Gilmore writes, a means of garnering "approbation and admiration" from their peers. Their regular discussions of these interactions signal a pathetic appeal for validation and indicate their reliance on the group in the casting of their individual identities (qtd. in MacLeod 2).

Phillips and Phillips write that for many of London's migrants, outside of their small groups, "the prostitutes they encountered were the only people to show them any generosity of spirit, to give them a friendly smile or a helping hand" (114). Of course, one negative consequence of these interactions is that they confirmed stereotypical thinking of West Indian immigrants as having "the legendary and indiscriminate lust of black men" (114). Immigrants, then, were trapped in a moral dilemma in which they were damned by traditional British principles if they did slake their "thirst" for sex, and damned by their own sense of manhood if they did not. In standing up to national mores, however, the "boys" adhere to their sense of West Indian identity and this affords them some stability, although this identity is ultimately counter to their desire to be accepted as "British." On the other hand, they at least get some satisfaction from participating in what is seen as subversive behavior, and when the police arrive in Hyde Park there is a sense of the carnivalesque when they "see how them girls fade out and make races … and the high heels going clipclop" (<u>L</u> 104). Further, one senses that here is a story that will be shared again and again: another little piece of Britain added to the immigrant's accumulation of British experience.

The "boys'" options for social interactions are restricted due to racial exclusion from many private clubs and dance halls. This meant that "ordinary" West Indian men in London could only meet women of lower-socio-economic groups who frequented the same types of places that Selvon's characters had access to. Men like Selvon's Londoners typically consorted with women who were either "straight out of the pub or straight out of approved school" (Windrush 53). For Selvon's characters, other than the streets and parks their "only social outlet was the pub" (53). And so their opportunity for entering what Bhabha calls an "interrogatory, interstitial space" was limited (Location 3). One consequence of this restricted social life was that women from higher socio-economic groups—"woman who was working at Marks & Spencer"—were not accessible (Windrush 54). Being forced into this situation made the "boys" feel defensively inferior, and they afforded the women they did meet little respect. These women were considered only as means for slaking sexual "thirst" and not as potential life partners with whom to build a nurturing future. Mike Phillips tells us that "[a]ll we used to do to them was in the name of sex and love. Or sex and lust, whichever one…. we were still living with a frontier mentality" (qtd. in Mike Phillips and Charlie Phillips, pp. 52- 3). An individual with this mindset tends to look for instant gratification, to think in a transitory way, and not to plan for the future, and does not develop in terms of cultural identity. For West Indian immigrants, this frontier mentality is difficult to break out of. As seen throughout Londoners, they had to expend much of their energy simply surviving in London and struggling, as MacLeod puts it, "for a psychologically and sociologically viable sense of identity" (2). Finding decent work, a place to stay, food and a little time for themselves, while at the same time suffering racist abuse and the consequent humiliation and sense of confusion, proves simply exhausting.

One important site of negotiation between immigrants and the white British is Waterloo train station, a "place of arrival and departure" (L 25), where Moses seems to be offered a public forum when a newspaper reporter, reflecting how easily recognizable West Indians are in Britain because of their phenotypical appearance, asks if Moses is from Jamaica. Because Moses is instinctively hungry for a right to speak, he replies in the affirmative, even though he "didn't know why," and despite the fact that he "don't know a damn thing about Jamaica" and hails from "Trinidad, which is a thousand miles from

Jamaica" (L 28). Moses understands that immigrants are cast en-masse and that in their ignorance "the English people believe that everybody who come from the West Indies come from Jamaica" (L 28), but he also understands that interaction with the native Britains has to be conducted on their terms. Racially prejudiced representations of West Indians as intellectually inferior and irrelevant have weighed Moses down so that, while he might have gained some sense of superiority from knowing the reporter's ignorance, his low self-esteem does not register this. However, intellectually nimble, he "[t]hink fast" about how to make the best of this rare opportunity to speak in the popular press. Moses, expressing both a strong connection to the West Indies and empathy for the plight of others, claims to have been in a recent Jamaican hurricane, hopeful that the reporter will write about it. However, the reporter demonstrating hegemonic indifference to the plight of commonwealth citizens interrupts Moses' flow in an attempt to get the answer he wants. When Moses mentions the prevailing high levels of West Indian unemployment, and then tries to expound on the poor conditions faced by immigrants within Britain, the reporter abruptly terminates the interview (L 29). Even Moses' quick thinking does not help him, and he is left feeling frustrated and, again, voiceless.

Moses is thwarted each time he attempts to communicate with British authority, and this theme repeats across characters and throughout Londoners. Yet the West Indian migrants were British citizens, struggling to validate their place within society. In order to achieve this it seems necessary that they find a voice. In "Interaction in Mental Health and Neighbourhood Development," Sue Holland writes that "the making of connections and interactions with the wider community" is essential for empowerment and liberation (qtd. in Fernando 139). It is through assembly that people can find a way to articulate personal autonomy with group empowerment.

Phillips and Phillips write that, at home, West Indians "had been fervent churchgoers and accustomed to using church as a gathering place and a community centre" (201). British churches, particularly the Church of England, were unwelcoming, and Selvon's Londoners meet, with quasi-religious significance "[n]early ever Sunday morning, like if they going to church the boys liming in Moses room" (L 138). The "boys" gain essential support from one another by "coming together for a oldtalk, to hand out the latest gen, what happening, when is the next fete" (L 138), and their presence is so

fundamental to Moses' identity framework that even when he is alone he sometimes feels "as if he hearing the[ir] voices in the room" (L 138). In their Sunday meetings, the "boys'" conversation stagnates in "moaning and groaning and sighing and crying"; this small migrant group fails to amalgamate their concerns (L 139). Consequently, they do not articulate their subversive discourse out into the broader community. Selvon's migrants' conversation rarely develops beyond the fragmented and self-centered. They never realize a structured group identity or develop any sense of proactive meaningful resistance, even against their individual situations. In Mental Health in a Multi-Ethnic Society, Susan Fernando recognizes that, in order to actualize group identity with the purpose of effecting changes in the larger community, groups must build a collective voice that can be raised to action (141). The lonely Londoners' failure to achieve this group identity is as a result of, and also adds to, the debilitating psychological stress of their existence. Colonial immigrants did eventually negotiate British identities, so how did these pioneers find a way forward from this level of enfeeblement?

Selvon's isolated Londoners find relief "in the summer, in the sweet, lazy summer … when the sun shining and the sky blue and a warm wind blowing across the park" (L 98). They are able to move outside of their confining dwelling spaces and gain some physical and mental release in weather more akin to that of the West Indies. De Certeau writes that "to walk is to go outside," that is to be "extrovert" (103), and so it is in the summer that West Indian migrants most strongly footprint London, marking it and "distorting it, fragmenting it, and diverting it from its immobile order" (102). And yet, immigrants form only small social groups, are British citizens, and have no group political identity that the establishment "can take hold of" (95). Thus, operating "beneath the discourses that ideologize the city," they are "impossible to administer," and this helps migrants establish a foothold in Britain (95).

The summer weather gives West Indians an abstract connection to home; Selvon's Londoners psychologically readjust and regain equilibrium. In this respite, Selvon's Londoners' move outdoors brings them to "congregate by [Marble] Arch" (98). In The London Encyclopedia, Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert write that, historically, passing through Marble Arch was a privilege reserved for members of the Royal family and their retinue. Immigrants' possession of this space is therefore

particularly subversive. A further edge is added to their presence as the "boys" gathering place is near the Tyburn Arch, the historic site of state hangings of religious martyrs who had challenged the hegemony. There is nothing in the novel to suggest that Selvon's characters are aware of this, and this means that, although their presence is subversive, they are unconscious of its significance and so do not gain sustenance from their act. Nevertheless, it is a colonial act of possession, a negotiation, in which the lonely Londoners "make themselves available to the diverse meanings given them by passers-by" (De Certeau 104). West Indians' skin color rendered them highly visible amongst a dominant white population, and that created problems for them. At the same time, it made their presence legible, and so they affected Britain's idea of itself and became foundational to the experience of future generations. As Fanon says, "[t]he present of the people's history … is a practice that destroys the constant principles of the national culture that attempt to hark back to a 'true' national past, which is often represented in the reified forms of realism and stereotype" (152). Particularly because of their visibility, the "boys'" presence on London's streets breaks down stereotypical notions and is another way in which they undermine the "scraps, patches and rags of daily life" of the nationalist narrative (Location 209).

Close to Marble Arch is Hyde Park's Speakers' Corner, where Galahad was "amaze at how them fellars saying all kind of thing against the government and the country, and the police not doing them anything" (L 98). In their enervation, Galahad and his friends have found a platform where they can speak their plight. The longest-term resident, Moses, is so depressed by this time that he is "frighten" of his stagnation and sees "all his years in London pile up on top of the other" (L 98). He seems oblivious to the white British speaker who is campaigning for the immigrants' cause, but one of the "boys," Big City, grasps the importance of West Indian's adding their own voice, and he challenges Galahad, "you always grumbling and cursing about something or other, why you don't go and talk to the crowd?" (L 99). His challenge sparks a light in Moses, the effective patriarch of the group who earlier had encouraged Galahad to write down his experiences of racial abuse, and he "start to poke fire" and pushes Galahad to speak on the public stage (L 99). Galahad tries, but unfortified by rigorous political discussion within his own group and therefore lacking confidence, he declines into a naive state and

"start to grin foolishly and shrug his shoulders" (L 99). His friends, rather than offer encouragement, heckle him, so Galahad's attempt to make use of the site's free-speech policy results in him "getting more and more vex" (99). Galahad's attempt at proactive articulation fails miserably, and the debacle ends in the "boys" fighting among themselves. An opportunity has been wasted; this set of migrants have once again made an unfavorable impression on the native population and failed to gain a sense of control in the struggle to construct their own British identities.

In this episode, the extreme nature of Galahad's anxiety surfaces when he reacts to his friends' taunts by pleading, from this platform of free speech, the central demand of Selvon's novel: "Give me a chance Big City" (L 99). At the same time as this exposes the depth of the lonely Londoner's despair, it also shows that Galahad is not entirely passive. He recognizes that it is not only he who has a responsibility to change but that London and Britain must adapt their identities to accommodate incomers; and so he voices resistance to the idea of an essentialized British identity. One can, then, see how these small, discrete, acts of resistance, although seemingly insignificant, began to add up to form more substantial opposition.

In a manner different to his timid performance at Speakers' Corner, Henry Oliver, a Trinidadian bachelor, had "descend[ed]" into Britain with such audacity that Moses instantly renamed him Sir Galahad. Less than nine months after his arrival, "Galahad junior" is born (L 35). The locals feared miscegenation, and as late as 1958 the British Eugenics Society argued that mixing ethnicities "runs counter to the great developing pattern of human evolution" (qtd. in Gilroy 81). Galahad's action has every possibility of returning to haunt the black community. His hybrid child might well be used by the establishment to recast white women who enter into sexual relations with black men as a "signifier of the social problems associated with the black presence," thus inflaming racism (Gilroy 80). Selvon mentions the occurrence of, but not the social interaction that led to, this birth and so proposes Galahad as nonchalant. Galahad, who arrives in Britain alone, with no luggage, and only £3 to his name, succeeds in impregnating a woman within days of his arrival. This action suggests that he is socially active, virile, and perhaps even wishing to repossess the empire at its centre by creating a mixed-ethnicity baby. Nevertheless, Galahad has to pay a price for his bravado. The child is never

mentioned again; Galahad is an absent father. Separation from his child necessitates separation from his identity as a father and is a hindrance in the construction of a solid framework for his identity. A more likely explanation of his early sexual interaction is that, rather than an act of possession, this was a desperate act of self-confirmation, an effort by Galahad to stabilize his ricocheting mental state during his first days in Britain. His enactment of a West Indian notion of manhood speaks to Galahad's search for not only physical affection and psychic stability, but for a feeling of belonging and of knowing who he is.

Part of the rationale behind reading Galahad this way is that, despite his boldness, when he is on his own for the first time "a feeling of loneliness and fright come over him all of a sudden" (L 41). Realizing how alone he is among so many people, Galahad feels that "[e]verybody doing something or going somewhere, is only he who walking stupid" (L 42). It is clear then that in his isolation, Galahad consciously performs rather than intuits bravado. He dons this overconfident mask as a means of better negotiating his surroundings. Galahad becomes increasingly aware of the scope of his loneliness in London even though his naivety is such that, in his understanding of himself as a British citizen, he does not consider himself as Other. Accordingly, he looks to negotiate his surroundings by attempting to frame London in the tropical terms that are familiar to him. This proves impossible, however, and Galahad realizes that he had "never see the sun look like how it looking now. No heat from it, it just there in the sky like a force-ripe orange" (L 42). Galahad perceives London's sky as "so desolate it make him more frighten" (L 42). In addition to his insecure psychological reflex, the shock of arrival begins to manifest physically and, for him, the sky takes on "a kind of melancholy aspect … that make him shiver" (L 42).

More complexly, Galahad presents a strange physiological reaction to the trauma of migration when "some miracle of metabolism … keeping him warm at a time when normal people rattling with cold in his feeling hot when London's weather is cold" (123), and vice versa. It is unclear exactly how to interpret this, but Chen-Bo Zhong and Geoffrey J. Leonardelli's recent paper "Cold and Lonely: Does Social Exclusion Literally Feel Cold?," might shed light on the matter. In it, they point to studies which show that "deprivation of social contact causes stress, depression, and physical pain," and has

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"significant adverse effects on our psychological and physical well-being" (3). Their own investigation takes place around the idea that social isolation manifests in a feeling of coldness, and studies in this area are ongoing. Although these investigations might speak to Galahad's feeling cold in warm weather, they do not explain why he should feel hot in the winter. Perhaps Galahad's physiological imbalance might be usefully understood as a general traumatic response similar to that experienced by today's "world citizens" beset by feelings of "disconnection, of displacement, of being lost in a labyrinth of impersonal spaces," as discussed by Pico Iyer in The Global Soul (36).

It is clear to the reader and to Galahad himself, at a deep level, how much of a life-line his fellow countryman, Moses, is to this newly-arrived immigrant. Counter to his determined attempts at independence, Galahad finds himself "unconsciously repeating Moses advice" to allow himself time to settle in (43) and, exposing an unconscious desire for a support figure, he calls Moses "papa" (41). This connection to a man from his own cultural background encourages Galahad to drop his temporary intrepidness and relax into his West Indian self. He now behaves as he would have done at home, and he "start to whistle monkeyeric like how fellars in the West Indies whistle when they see a friend and want to attract attention" (43). As Galahad seems successfully to straddle two worlds in an attempt at equilibrium, he is reminded almost immediately of his foreign status when, at the bus stop, "a old lady look at him with a loud tone in her eye" (44) and says to her companion, "[t]hey'll have to do better you know" (44, emphasis added). This Othering of West Indians as "they," and not "us," was part of Britain's "social imaginary" and was constantly borne by immigrants, even before they moved to Britain. An early immigrant, Connie Mark, remembers that when she a child in the West Indies, "The schoolbooks, the missionaries and everything was the British mentality. You could not be good on your own. Your good was not good. Your good had to be British" (qtd. in Windrush 17). This lack of recognition of another way of being would prove to be highly problematic in terms of policing, and would lead to the development of institutional racism (as discussed in Chapter Three). Immigrants were constantly judged to be not only different but wrong, and so in need of improving. In this woman's rebuke, one can also see that immigrants, like those Galahad represents, had to negotiate not only differences in language but in understandings of health, particularly mental health. For Galahad, the

woman's scornful expression contains suggestions of the "evil eye" which, in many West Indian cultures, is thought to contain powerful magic. Galahad's cultural misreading of the woman's derisory intention reinforces, for him, her prejudice and makes him doubly victim. For Galahad, who has a West Indian understanding of health, the woman's stare, in addition to wounding him psychologically, suggests the possibility of a supernatural threat to his physical wellbeing.

Western thought does not comprehend health in the same way. Differences in the cultural understanding of the way health is understood would, for many years, penalize blacks in Britain and make it more difficult for them to find a framework for their identity that was in harmony with Western thinking. These differences were neglected by the psychology and psychiatry professions which operated under Western ethnocentric terms. Fernando, using 1991 and '92 figures, shows that more than forty years after mass West Indian immigration started, blacks in Britain are more likely than whites to be "diagnosed as schizophrenic; compulsorily detained under the Mental Health Act; admitted as 'offender patients;' held by police under s. 136 of the Mental Health Act; given high doses of medication, sent to psychiatrists by courts, and suffer from unmet need" (Fernando 34). Selvon points towards the psychological stresses suffered by the immigrants in Londoners that are indicative of societal problems that will worsen as time goes on. (In Chapter Three we will see that Zadie Smith also makes such connections.)

Galahad seems to split his identity into at least three different sections: the man who comes home from his nightshifts "groggy and tired," wearing clothes that would "shame them ragandbone man"; the contemplative philosopher, as discussed below; and the gentleman who wears expensive, bespoke suits. Dressing up is, for Galahad, an essential component of the framework of how he understands himself. In putting on different clothes, he dons different identities, and when he is dressed up he "feel like a king living in London"; Galahad appropriates Britishness in a subversive way that is a great boost to his ego (L 85).

Galahad thoroughly enjoys the theatre of preparing for an evening out. Selvon's narrator adopts Galahad's bonhomie, painting a picture of his pleasing obliviousness to his skin color: using the culturally laden black boot polish for its intended purpose, he shines his shoes. Selvon, through his narrator, talks back to the image of blacks as

lampooned in the hugely popular "Black and White Minstrel Show" that was aired on prime time BBC television from July 1958—and which, although the fact now seems incredible, was not taken off the air until 1978. As Sarita Malik discusses in an article for the "Museum of Broadcast Communications," the "Black and White Minstrel Show" alluded to the history of enslavement in America, with docile black slaves portrayed as unsophisticated men wishing to woo demure white women (Para. 4). In this show, white entertainers were "blacked up" with makeup routinely associated in the popular imagination with black boot polish. Galahad's preparations for donning his British gentrified persona, allow him to subvert the power of the British establishment and of British popular culture. This is beautifully and subtly emphasized when Galahad does not just give his shoes a quick polish, but puts on "a little more Cherry Blossom and give them extra shine" (L 85). Galahad intensifies their blackness so that he can proudly "see his face in the leather" (L 85). The reflection he sees in the black shiny surface does not distinguish color but reflects a sort of trichromatic world of black, white and shades of grey symbolic of a less polarized society. It is ironic that Galahad is so relaxed in his blackness even as he prepares to imitate a characteristically British dress style. This is another indicator of Galahad's self-division, itself a tactic of survival.

As Galahad continues making his toilet, Selvon's narrator's vocabulary shows how West Indians internalized the colonizer's language with its pseudo-scientific claims that blacks were an inferior "race." Galahad is portrayed not as simply looking in a mirror, but as "concentrating on his physiognomy," and as finishing his preparations like a medical "specialist" (L 86). While Galahad's expensively tailored clothes are one of his central sources of pleasure, and give him self-confidence, mainstream opinion might understand his display differently. As a contemporary Times correspondent wrote, "Those [West Indians] out of work get national assistance, but the well-dressed appearance of some of them and the high prices they pay for accommodation suggest that this assistance is supplemented *somehow*" (emphasis added). As Moses insists, newspaper reports are the bane of immigrants' lives. Of course, anyone seeing a smartly dressed man in London would not know whether he was employed or not. Press coverage that lumps all West Indians together encourages those already prejudiced against blacks to jump to the conclusion that Galahad is likely one of those unemployed men discussed

in the article, a West Indian who "somehow" acquires a handsome wardrobe. Here is another example of the "Catch-22" stresses of the immigrants' daily lives. While Galahad, because of his happy-go-lucky approach, seems to deflect much of the racism directed at him, he achieves this at the cost of a fractured identity.

Sam Selvon, in an interview with Peter Nazareth, says of his own identity: "It's all well and good to appreciate what the world is like and what people are like, but, who the hell am I? And where do I fit into it?" (426). Similarly, after multiple experiences of racial abuse, the fictional Galahad, while putting on a brave face in public, privately has self doubts. And his habit of self-division makes it impossible to examine his life as a whole. Instead, he "watch the colour of his hand, and talk to it, saying, "Colour, is you that causing all this, you know. Why the hell you can't be blue, or red or green, if you can't be white? You know is you that cause a lot of misery in the world. Is not me, you know, is you!" (L 88). This powerful scene again shows that Galahad has internalized racial discrimination and developed self-hatred for a part of him, his skin color, and this negativity infects his being. Feeling defeated by bigoted abuse, he does not hope for the prejudiced discourse to change, but demands of his skin, "Why the hell you can't change colour?" (L 89).

Galahad, in his public persona, places so much pride in his appearance that he spends a large percentage of his wages on clothes, and this in turn gives him the confidence to walk down the road "cool as a lord" and not "giving a blast" whether or not women respond to his "polite 'Good evening'" (L 87). While his public face is subversive, particularly as Galahad defines himself in terms of British heraldry, it is clear that, as on his arrival, his bluster is an adopted role. As he examines his hand, we see the less confident Galahad, unprotected by his "British" work or holiday clothes which are so necessary to his performance of Britishness.

Although other West Indians, such as students and nurses, were beginning to form associations that demanded recognition in Britain, it would be some time before their successes would be experienced by those like Selvon's "boys." They did, however, find adequate ways to sustain their remaining in Britain, and music was crucial in this respect. It brought West Indians together in celebration of their culture. Further, it gave them opportunity to reminisce about earlier experiences in the West Indies, to maintain old and

establish new friendships, and, importantly to their establishing a home in Britain, to discuss their British experiences. Immigrants were barred from existing social venues, but they found ways to put on their own music and dances. This was made possible, in part, by people like the fictional Harris. Harris is an Uncle Tom figure, because much more consistently than Galahad he appropriates a white British persona. This enables him to mix, to a certain extent, with natives. Harris fails to develop an authentic self, but his ultimately self-sacrificing behavior facilitates the making of alternative public spaces, where West Indians can both recognize one another and perhaps interact with white Britons. Further, at Harris' "fete" music subverts the hegemony when "God Save the Queen" is performed by a Calypso steel band[4] in a Certeauean "remaking" of a British cultural production.

This celebration of West Indian culture was indispensable to the well-being of immigrants; as noted, it allowed them to come together as a group while it also introduced them to the majority population. Nevertheless, Stuart Hall writes that after spending some time in Britain, West Indian immigrants "were no longer Caribbean, but our new environment offered no alternative sense of belonging" (qtd. in Windrush 233). Galahad continues to try to negotiate his identity through the guise of his carefree public mask and after almost ten years does seem to find a degree of contentment in Britain; he feels enough at home to want to know the lyrics to a popular song, recorded by Davy Jones in 1965. Selvon leaves the reader to imagine Galahad singing, "I get a funny feeling inside of me / When walking up and down / Maybe it's because I'm a Londoner / That I love London town."

His depressed state at the end of Londoners notwithstanding, and "feeling everything else give way," Moses is vaguely aware that the early immigrants' struggles to find ways of living in Britain are beginning to pay dividends. Moses never feels properly at home in Britain, yet still does not understand why he did not return to the West Indies where, he only now reveals, "he have a grandmother and a girl friend who always writing him and asking him why he don't come back" (141). Beneath his own unhappiness, he subconsciously acknowledges a bigger picture, and perceives that "it had a greatness and

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[4] In "(Not) Knowing the Difference: Calypso Overseas and the Sound of Belonging in Selected Narratives of Migration" Jennifer Rahim explores the function of the calypso as a sign of cultural identity and belonging as represented in Londoners.

a vastness in the way he was feeling" (<u>L</u> 141). Each immigrant footprint and every tiny act of resistance imprinted Britain and began to accumulate into an increasingly indelible black presence. The collective "social imaginary" was gradually enriched by immigrants, although only later would the effects of the Windrush generation's determination and resilience be recognized (97).

CHAPTER TWO: "I AM AN ENGLISHMAN BORN AND BRED, ALMOST"[5]

We saw in Chapter One how some of the first wave of colonial migrants started to establish themselves in Britain. While the 1950s saw the arrival of thousands of economic migrants from the West Indies, the diaspora of Commonwealth South Asian immigrants was also expanding in Britain. The struggles of daily life for colonial migrants meant that, as Phillips and Phillips confirm, the communities that emerged from the fifties "were traumatized and embittered" to the extent that their ability to negotiate the problems of the following decades was "inhibited and hindered" (129).

Migrants' children expanded the communities, and differed from their parents in that they were often born in Britain. In <u>Interviews with Writers of the Post-Colonial World</u>, Jussawalla Feroza notes that the generation following that depicted in <u>Londoners</u> seems to be less accepted by the white establishment than was the immigrant generation. Selvon, agreeing, says, "I imagine that there are very, very interesting aspects about that new generation … that I am hoping will come out…. I am hoping that there will be one or two big novels coming out from that new generation that will depict their times and experiences as <u>Londoners</u> did for the fifties and sixties" (110). In 1990, Hanif Kureishi, himself a second-generation immigrant, fulfills Selvon's wish by depicting 1970s London immigrant life in <u>The Buddha of Suburbia</u> (hereafter <u>Buddha</u>[6]). From 1979 to 1984, Kureishi, whose father was Indian and mother English, had worked mostly in the theatre, at the Royal Court, the Soho Poly and the RSC, before writing, in the three years to 1987, the films <u>My Beautiful Laundrette</u> and <u>Sammy and Rosie Get Laid</u>. In an interview, Kureishi complained to Tim Appelo that the "contemporary British novel excludes…. politics, the lives of immigrants, [and] the changes in British society." With the money he had made from screenwriting, Kureishi took the "opportunity … to find my voice as a prose writer" and he set out to redress these omissions.

The presence of colonial migrants, such as those represented in <u>Londoners</u>, was forcing a re-thinking of notions of British national identity. This ongoing process meant that for migrant communities and individuals the negotiations of identities and the

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[5] <u>B</u> 3.
[6] Citations from <u>The Buddha of Suburbia</u> will be represented by <u>B</u>.

struggle to find ways to be British continued. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur, in their essay "Nation, Migration, Globalization," discuss the experience of hybridity experienced by immigrants who, like Karim, Kureishi's protagonist, reside in a "liminal, dialogic space of identity negotiation and formation" (Theorising Diaspora 5). Through Buddha, Kureishi points to difficulties faced in identity formation by the children of migrants whose situation was very different to that of their parents. I argue that second-generation migrants form their identities differently than their immigrant parents who often concentrated on survival tactics. Migrants' children negotiate ways of being British via their heritage and immediate family, and additionally, as the "social imaginary" becomes more culturally inclusive, across multiple boundaries, including class, gender, and culture. Compared to their immigrant parents, they become increasingly determined in claiming their rights as British citizens.

The novel's opening words are spoken by a self-reflecting Karim, a seventeen-year old living in the south London suburbs, but the book is named after his father, Haroon, whom Karim comes to think of as the "Buddha of Suburbia." This introduction suggests that the narratives of father and son are intertwined. The Buddha of Suburbia, among other things, is a bildungsroman, but it is an exploration not only of Karim's personal development as he enters manhood, but also of his father's "coming of age" in the 1970s twenty years after he immigrated to England. As Kureishi said in a BBC World Service interview, the novel assesses how immigrants, particularly those from the Indian subcontinent, found ways to be themselves in Britain (n.p.). In this chapter, I will explore the ways that Haroon, a first-generation immigrant, and his son Karim, who is born and raised in Britain, resolve matters of identity conflict in an emergent multi-cultural nation. Selvon's single "boys" remained in a sort of adolescent stasis, failing to develop from itinerancy and "liming," into fully realized men; with stability, however, Haroon eventually finds a way to develop. By the 1960s, the process of "becoming British" is experienced differently; it develops from the first to the second-generation, and Haroon's negotiations of identity have a strong influence on how his son constructs his unique personality. While Haroon fails in his role as fatherly mentor, his son at least benefits from witnessing his father's attempts at self-realization to the point that he is aware of their ultimate limitations.

Lisa Lowe's influential <u>Immigrant Acts</u>, although explicitly about the Asian-American experience, is useful in considering the Indian diaspora in Britain. Lowe argues against the tendency to make fundamental assumptions about the individual identities of diasporic people. She notes that "culture is frequently represented in a family narrative" in which cultural identity is passed down from one generation to the next (62). However, negotiations between communities across shifting borders of gender, race, and ethnic traditions also play a large part in identity formation and "the reduction of the cultural politics of racialized ethnic groups … to first generation/second-generation struggles displaces social differences into a privatized familial opposition" (63). Throughout <u>Buddha</u>, it becomes clear that "the particularities and incommensurabilities of class, gender, and national diversities" play out for each generation and so affect generational differences, and that each affects the other (63).

In <u>Buddha</u>, familial opposition occurs in the relationship between Karim and Haroon, his father. Unlike Selvon's Londoners, Haroon, who is from a higher socio-economic background, has found stability in his English wife, two children, and his twenty years in the same Civil Service job in London. As Selvon's migrants stagnated, so does Haroon who has "started to see himself as a failure and his life as a dismal thing" (<u>B</u> 115). In an attempt to negotiate this identity crisis, Haroon, beginning with his attendance at a "writing for pleasure" class, explores new ways of framing his life as an Indian man in Britain (<u>B</u> 6). The consequential change leads him gradually away from his working-class suburban life as he meets and interacts socially, including romantically, with more middle-class, "art-fart" people (<u>B</u> 66). As Lowe writes, the typical essentializing of migrants leads to reductions that "contribute to the aestheticizing commodification of … *cultural* differences, while denying the immigrant histories of material exclusion and differentiation" (Braziel 135). Kureishi's characters speak to this need to see immigrants as individuals. Haroon's own self-agonizing reveals that he does not wholeheartedly support some stereotypical concept of cultural identity and the stress points of his relationship with his son tend to be played out not among familial generational and cultural differences, which are encouraged by traditions, but around the modern Western themes of divorce and family breakup, and of sexual orientation.

After having suffered many years of racist abuse, Haroon capitulates to Londoner's stereotypical concepts of "Indianness." As Kureishi explained in his BBC World Service interview, in the 1950s and 60s, British perceptions of people from the Indian subcontinent were based on news of poverty and starvation. In the 1970s, however, the British started to believe that people who had suffered so much hardship must have learned something from their experiences, and so they began to look to Asia for ways to fill the spiritual gap in their Western consciousness. As Michiko Kakutani says in The New York Times, "Gurus [had] recently made a big splash in London society and anything vaguely Indian—from Satyajit Ray films to curries—seem[ed] to achieve instant popularity" (n.p.). It is, ironically, to this model of Indianness that Haroon turns, buying into the Western commodification of cultural difference.

Karim says that his father "had been in Britain since 1950—over twenty years— …. Yet still he stumbled around the place like an Indian just off the boat" (B 7). Haroon, then, has been unsuccessful in making Britain completely home and still struggles with his Indo-British identity. Encouraged by his new friend, Eva, he begins to experiment with playing a role created by London's pretentious bourgeoisie: capitalizing on the desire for eastern mystique, Haroon becomes a pseudo-Buddha, holding meditative soirées at which he shows Eva's suburban friends "the Way. The Path." The incredulous Karim knows that in everyday life his father "couldn't even find his way to Beckenham" and is astounded to see his father appropriate this identity (B 13).

When his son is "ten or eleven," Karim, looking for ways to endure the drudgery of his existence, looks not to his family life or Indo-British society, but to Eastern philosophy and meditation, as he attempts "to keep [his] mind blank in constant effortless meditation" (B 5). Later, Haroon transfers his contemplative abilities from the private to the public sphere of his life in an attempt to reframe his British identity. His wife, Margaret, is discomfited by Haroon's involvement in satisfying middle class Londoners' curiosity about Eastern culture, and she turns down an invitation to attend a meeting at Eva's house, insisting petulantly, "I'm not Indian enough for her. I'm only English" (B 5). Haroon understands that authenticity is not required to capitalize on the British desire for Eastern philosophy; he has learned that the appropriation of exotic clothing is sufficient, and he sarcastically replies to Margaret, "I know you're only English, but you

could wear a sari" (B 5). Ironically, whereas immigrants are expected to adopt Western clothing in order to fit in, the adoption of Asian dress by Europeans meets with approval, as middle-class Londoners, often pretentiously, attempt to use Eastern meditative practice to fill their own spiritual vacuum. Haroon, then, far from suggesting that his wife should authentically participate in his culture, has internalized years of racism and come to understand that his national dress possesses mere novelty value for the white British. Since his arrival in Britain, Haroon has not developed his persona but has maintained an unbending framework of identity. In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Stuart Hall proposes that cultural identity is a matter of

> "becoming" as well as of "being," … it is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power. (qtd. in Braziel 240)

Although Haroon has been a creature of habit for many years, his public identity has changed since his days in India: he wears Burton's suits (B 84), reads The Daily Mirror (B 14), and works for the British Civil Service (B 7). Still, he has retained, in keeping with his dual identity, some of his Indian habits. This is demonstrated by his preference for Indian food like the "keema and roti and pea curry" that he would take to work in his briefcase (B 43), and in his pursuit of Eastern philosophy. Haroon's habit of carrying his Indian food in his briefcase, however, is psychologically complex. On the one hand, it can be understood as subversive because the food is not traditionally British. On the other hand, there is a suggestion of the food being camouflaged, hidden, by the briefcase, just as Haroon veils his Indianness by his British attire. So, while Haroon has a hybrid sense of identity, he, rather than celebrating this, disguises it to suit the nationalist idea of Britishness. Yet this makes him unhappy, and Haroon's new project is to "revert" to being more "Indian." This is not the manifestation of a naturally developing process of identity; rather is a conscious act to become something, someone, else. Haroon feels isolated in the liminal space between his Indian and British identities. Rather than negotiate his identity within this space, Haroon attempts to straddle it by adopting a persona constructed by, and so perhaps acceptable to, the nativist narrative.

Like Haroon, many immigrants in Britain felt out of place because they were Othered by societal and establishment racism. In 1968, the Race Relations Act made it illegal to refuse housing, employment, or public services to people on the grounds of cultural background. Conservative politician and Shadow Defense Secretary, Enoch Powell, was against the rights of Commonwealth citizens being enshrined in what he understood to be an exclusively white British judiciary, and in his infamous "Rivers of Blood" speech, said,

> We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants, who are for the most part the material of the future growth of the immigrant-descended population. It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre. So insane are we that we actually permit unmarried persons to immigrate for the purpose of founding a family with spouses and fiancés whom they have never seen…. As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see "the River Tiber foaming with much blood." (The Daily Telegraph)

This speech, described by Rob Shepherd, Powell's biographer, in a 2008 Radio 4 programme as "one of the most explosive in living memory by a British politician," was greeted with horror by many in Britain, and Powell was dismissed from his government post. At the same time, however, many people agreed with Powell, whose popularity then soared. The ensuing acrimonious debate in political circles and the mainstream media exacerbated racial intolerance, making life even more difficult for immigrants in Britain. It is within this Britain that Karim, beset with adolescent existentialist angst, observes his father deliberately adopting a new persona in order to gain social currency among his new friends.

For Karim, a positive effect of his father's experimentation with identity is that Haroon demonstrates the possibility of psychic flexibility and the facility to change personality as a way of relieving his melancholy. But this construction has been forced on him as a means of finding some sense of belonging in Britain; Haroon's project to satisfy other people's desires interferes with his true self development. At the same time, Karim's witnessing of his father's project frees him from any residual ideas of essentialist identity that growing up in Anglo-centric Britain might have instilled in him. Even as Haroon's project is ultimately scuppered, his engagement in the struggle to free himself from the bonds of inertia by adapting his persona, as it is witnessed by Karim, effectively frees his second-generation son from the position of colonized victimhood. As a second

generation migrant, Karim to some extent is freer to negotiate his identity on a broader plane.

Although Karim will ultimately benefit from witnessing his father's attempt at transformation, it is particularly difficult for him to witness Haroon's sexual relationship with, and growing love for, a woman who is not his wife. Karim later admits that his discovery of his father's affair with Eva was "my introduction to serious betrayal, lying, deceit and heart following" (B 253), and this has a negative impact on the rest of Karim's youth. Karim sees Haroon's deception manifest in his developing romantic relationship with Eva and is aware that this accompanies the construction of his father's new personality. Karim, overhearing his father practice for a performance, understands that

> Dad was seriously scheming…. He was speaking slowly, in a deeper voice than usual, as if he were addressing a crowd. He was hissing his s's and exaggerating his Indian accent. He'd spent years trying to be more of an Englishman, to be less risibly conspicuous, and now he was putting it back in spadeloads. (B 21)

With the abundant sibilance in this passage, Karim mimics, in his English accent, his father who also has an English accent, as he paradoxically tries to imitate a recollected Indian accent. Here, we see demonstrated, through mirrored mimicry, the vicissitudes of identity that are negotiated not only across and between cultures, but across and between generations, geographies, and times.

Despite Haroon's project to be more Indian, he incongruously "always carried a tiny blue [English] dictionary with him … making sure to learn a new word every day" (B 28). He does this because "[y]ou never know when you might need a heavyweight word to impress an Englishman" (B 28). Haroon's reason for continuing to straddle two cultures, rather than to negotiate hybridity, is to gain acceptance as traditionally British which he, raised in colonial India, understands as the ideal. We feel the poignancy of Haroon's situation when later we hear him ask his friend Anwar, "[D]on't you ever feel you want to know yourself? That you are an enigma to yourself completely?" (B 28). This is Haroon's more authentic voice, and suggests a deep desire to know himself, a desire that is thwarted, however, by his project to fit in.

Haroon's son recognizes that "Beneath all the Chinese bluster was Dad's loneliness and desire for internal advancement." Haroon "wanted to talk of obtaining a quiet mind, of being true to yourself, of self-understanding" (B 28), but sees that he is

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unable to achieve this. Instead, Karim sees his father construct an inauthentic identity; at his first demonstration of Eastern meditation Haroon dresses as a "British man" in "a black polo-neck sweater, a black imitation-leather jacket and grey Marks and Spencer cords" (B 6). On his second "appearance" (B 21), however, he takes on a more "Eastern" appearance, appropriating the guise of a guru. The extent of his transformation is noted by Karim who, when contemplating the new identity of his father, renames the man who "was certainly exotic … wearing a red and gold waistcoat and Indian pyjamas" (B 31). He wonders if "[p]erhaps Daddio really was a magician, having transformed himself by the bootlaces (as he put it) from being an Indian in the Civil Service … into the wise adviser he now appeared to be." Karim realizes that the co-workers who knew the anglicized Haroon would understand the transformation "back" to an Eastern identity as shockingly pretentious; and he laughs, "If they could see him in Whitehall!" (B 31).

Haroon has borne over twenty years of isolation because of racism in Britain—racism he would rather avoid than resist. For example, sometimes, he would change his walking route to the train station "for fear of having stones and ice-pops full of piss lobbed at him by schoolboys from the secondary modern (B 28). Further, he feels trapped in this scenario, insisting that "[t]he whites will never promote us…. Not an Indian while there is a white man left on the earth" (B 27). Haroon's ambition and sense of self-worth have been subdued and the scope of his imagination, the range of possibilities he can conceive of for growth, is abridged.

As mentioned earlier, in the U.S. context Martin Luther King understood the value of dreams and so in the British context does Salman Rushdie. In his essay, "In God We Trust," Rushdie writes that "[g]iven the gift of self-consciousness, we can dream versions of ourselves, new selves for old…. We first construct pictures of the world and then we step inside the frame" (Imaginary Homelands 377-78). Haroon does this, but, unfortunately, he steps into a ready constructed picture rather than into a unique identity imagined through the suppleness of his own nature; Haroon enters a frame created by mainstream ideologies of belonging. For Rushdie, while "[d]reaming is our gift; it may also be our tragic flaw," and politics and religion are "manifestations of our dreaming selves" (378). Haroon, whose life has become "a cage of umbrellas and steely regularity" (B 27), is psychically inhibited; he cannot broaden his mind to be concerned about the

communal, about politics or religion. Instead, he works within a tight mental framework and his attention does not extend beyond existentialist matters of his self. Subjugated by racism, he does not have the emotional maturity, the mental dexterity, to imagine having power in any event outside of his personal sphere. He cannot have what Rushdie calls "a dream of adequacy," and his dreams are immured within the limited possibilities that he has adopted via British nationalist pedagogies (378). For Bhabha, this posits people as "historical objects" rather than acknowledging their ability to perform themselves as subjects who create their identities in the present (Location. 208-9).

Haroon, caught up in his own existential crisis and focused on his own transformation, fails to fulfill his fatherly role and the generational gap between father and son becomes more apparent. When Haroon gives the first public performance of this adopted persona, at a soiree arranged by his mistress, Eva, Karim attends not primarily to support or even observe his father, but rather in the hope of spending time with Eva's son, Charlie, to whom Karim is sexually attracted. When, impressed by Haroon, Charlie, exclaims to Karim, "Your father. He's the best. He's wise," and asks "D'you do that meditation stuff every morning?" (B 14), Karim is drawn into his father's charade, replying with an affirming nod. Despite earlier claiming to "like people who were callous or vicious" (B 7), however, he goes on to reveal a sense of integrity, because he is discomforted by his father's project, and immediately questions himself, "A nod can't be a lie, right? (B 14). Charlie further asks if Karim's family, the Amirs, chant every morning, and Karim, unwilling to perpetrate his part in his father's myth, hesitantly but then firmly answers, "Not chanting every day, no" (B 14).

Karim's reservations about Haroon's project make him somewhat ambivalent about his father. Haroon's British identity up to this point is undeveloped to the extent that he has been stuck in a kind of adolescence. Rather than understanding his role as mentor to his teenage son, Haroon, recognizing Karim more as a peer than as a son, feels that "We're growing up together, we are" (B 22). Karim, however, unlike his immigrant father, is a second-generation Indian-British man with different issues and, in keeping with Lowe's observations, each man plays out the struggle for his cultural identity on a field broader than that of his family. Even as he watches his father change, Karim becomes aware of an increasing generational gap and, in an inversion of the usual father-

son relationship, thinks that his father is "[t]oo busy with the woman he ran off with … to think about me too much" (97).

As Mark Stein discusses in <u>Black British Literature</u>, in Karim's opening statement, "My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost," the terse "almost" indicates ambivalence towards his cultural identity (xiii). While Haroon is a first-generation immigrant who, having been born in India, straddles the cultures of his birth-country and his adopted home, Karim was born in Britain and has never been to India. But because of his family heritage, he exists at the same time inside and outside of the British community. Despite being born in Britain, he understands that, like Selvon's lonely Londoners twenty years before, he is not considered "properly" British. Karim's cultural, linguistic, ethnic and national hybridity—he has "emerged from two old histories" (<u>B</u> 3)—exclude him from the nativist identity of Britishness. Karim, instinctively repositioning himself by repeating his words in a different order, restates "I am an Englishman" as "Englishman I am." Intellectually agile, he attempts something his father has failed to imagine: Karim tries to make Britishness fit his persona rather than the other way round. On the other hand, Karim's repetitive emphasis is perhaps too insistent, revealing his uncertainty. For him, while the concept of an altered conception of Britishness is at least a possibility, he does not yet conceive of it as a likelihood. The highbrow English, "a new breed *as it were*" (my emphasis), juxtaposed with the fact that Karim is "from the South London suburbs," shows the variety of class influence Karim has been exposed to and suggests that he has not yet settled on the way he wants to speak himself. For Karim however, this indication that he is not yet a fully formed subject is not problematic because he knows, particularly because he has seen his father adapt, that he has choices about who he is and who he can become.

Karim, age seventeen, thinks that his discontentment might be the result of a family life in which things are "gloomy, so slow and heavy." He quickly, however, rethinks the possibility that it might be "the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored," and further surmises that it may have been "being brought up in the suburbs that did it" (<u>B</u> 3). Karim seems to instinctively want to be situated in a space where cultural difference is celebrated and enriching rather than oppositional and discordant. Whereas other

characters in this study attempt to straddle the gap between cultures, Karim is better placed to operate within it and so to influence the "social imaginary" toward broader conceptions of Britishness. Further, Karim comprehends his ethnic background as only one of the several factors in his identity negotiations. Unsure not only of his identity as a British man, Karim is also an adolescent anxious about his arrival into the enigma of manhood and his peripheral state on the edge of manhood, of cultures, and of the metropolis. This complexity is exemplified throughout <u>Buddha</u>, reflecting that identity cannot be understood as fixed but must be continuously negotiated. In keeping with Lowe's observations, Karim's negotiations of identity occur across various borders.

When Haroon enthusiastically greets his family when he returns home from work Karim thinks his father acts "as if we'd recently been rescued from an earthquake," and so evinces his familial connection to India through his choice of metaphor: earthquakes, a common occurrence in the Indian subcontinent, are uncommon in Britain and cause little damage when they do occur (<u>B</u> 3). Further, Karim reiterates language—which it is reasonable to assume he learned from his Indian father—when he says that, compared to Haroon, "most English men looked like clumsy giraffes" (<u>B</u> 4). This simile also attests to Karim's Indian heritage, even in this relatively inconsequential moment; living in London, the only place he might have seen a giraffe was in a zoo, where the giraffe is usually presented as a graceful creature. The suggestion is that although born and reared in Britain by an English mother and an anglicized father, Karim, like Haroon, possesses a hybridized cultural identity. Interpersonal negotiations related to identity formation do not exist only in the public realm but, in situations like those portrayed here for children of cross-cultural marriage, in the home environment. Karim's mother, especially, promulgates these anxieties, insisting that one facet of Karim's identity is superior to, cleaner than, the fictive Other when she insists, "[Y]ou're not an Indian. You've never been to India. You'd get diarrhea the minute you stepped off that plane" (<u>B</u> 232). And when Karim, trying to claim his mixed heritage and identity, asks "Aren't I part Indian?" she, anchoring him to her side of a split "reality," responds, "Who gave birth to you? You're an Englishman, I'm glad to say" (<u>B</u> 232). Karim, then, is under pressure from his mother to deny his Indian heritage. At the same time he is constantly reminded of his genealogy by prejudiced natives and, ironically, because we are talking about a pseudo

version of Indianness, by his own father. Selvon's Londoners were situated against a colonial heritage that was understood as immutable and they remained in contact with people in the West Indies, and socialized among others from the islands. Karim's situation as a second generation migrant means that he must negotiate his identity amidst the fractured, shifting and contested templates available to him.

Jules Smith's biography of Hanif Kureishi shows that Kureishi knows from experience how contentious the mixed-culture space of marriage can be and how offspring can be affected by tensions between their parents (n.p.). As Karim's heritage is half Indian and half British, the way his mixed-race parents interact clearly impacts how he understands his cultural identity. Rather than allowing him to celebrate his dual heritage, his parents make Karim a battleground, pitting one cultural identity against another, each seeking supremacy. Meanwhile, Karim is just trying to work through the trials of late adolescence. Karim and his family's experience, then, represent a familiar variant of the immigrant experience in Britain. Those wishing to better the immigrants' situation believe that as Karim's acquaintance, Simon, wisely says, "The problem … was how to overthrow, not those presently in power, but the whole principle of power-over" (B 218). Karim is not victim only to the dominant discourse; in their conflicts about their son's cultural identity, Margaret and Haroon repeat the colonial binary model of the powerful attempting to force their will on the less powerful. Karim, then, gets a better overview of his situation from a friend, who sees the broader political picture, than from his family. Counter to the binaries of colonizer/colonized, superior/inferior, Karim is helped to better understand other possibilities for his own identity, both internally and externally.

As Karim, the second-generation immigrant, undergoes his existential crisis, he sees London as a place for young liberals different from his father, who "never socialized with anyone from the office" and "fled London as quickly as [he] could after work" (B 46). Employed by the Civil Service, Haroon's presence in Britain is at least better tolerated than Selvon's Londoners, but both his conservative job and colleagues do not encourage notions of resistance. Thus, Haroon rests in the modicum of acceptance he does have, and avoids disrupting "the disquieting familiarity of the city;" he does little more than Selvon's characters to disturb the official narrative (Certeau 96). His ignorance

of London's topography, despite working there and living for many years in its suburbs, suggests that the navigation of, and purposeful interaction with, the metropolis are beyond his abilities. As an immigrant, he has not developed to the level where he is able, or even wants, to claim London, the site of colonial power, as his own and this is why "still he stumbled around the place like an Indian just off the boat" (B 7). As mentioned above, Haroon takes Indian food with him when he goes to work in London. This represents a little piece of India; it is a cultural crutch and a reminder of his roots.

In contrast, born in Britain although only "almost" an Englishman" (B 3), Karim's more instinctive sense of belonging gives him the resolve to be considered, and to consider himself, "properly" British. And it is in the metropolis, "where life was bottomless in its temptations," that the understanding of Britishness stands the best chance of being redefined so that Karim, and many like him, might no longer feel like outsiders in their own country (B 8). The city, for Karim, offers a welcome and a sense of multiplicity that he is mentally better equipped to handle than is his father. Because of the influence of immigrants like those portrayed in Londoners, and indeed of those like Haroon who, although at the expense of his selfhood, has done nothing to antagonize the majority population, London is a city in some ways more accommodating to Karim. Nevertheless, despite London's increasingly liberal understanding of identity, the conservative beliefs held by the individuals Karim comes in contact with repeatedly stand in the way of his desire to be accepted as "fully" British. The broader "social imaginary" does not yet encompass ethnic equality.

Karim's identity is in flux, and when he sees his father having adulterous sex with Eva, he is shaken to his core, and wonders if his multiplicity even pre-dated his birth: "Was I conceived like this … in the suburban night air, to the wailing of Christian curses from the mouth of a renegade Muslim masquerading as a Buddhist?" (B 16). Karim, seeking to relieve this mental trauma that results from his biographical history, focuses on the present and decides that he "wanted only to be like Charlie—as … cool in every part of my soul" (B 16-17). Combating his anxiety, and lowering his inhibitions with whisky and cannabis, he regains some sense of equilibrium and begins "to feel confident." Moving his attention from his cultural identity, he confronts the borders of his sexuality and initiates a homosexual encounter with Charlie. This interaction is of such a

magnitude that, even amidst his cultural angst, it becomes for Karim "one of the pre-eminent moments of my earlyish life" (B 17). Charlie is more than a role model for Karim, who thinks, "I preferred him to me and wanted to be him. I coveted his talents, his face, his style" (B 15). Karim, now separated in many ways from his father, looks to his peers for role models, and to different types of lives and sexualities. Haroon's homophobia is rejected by Karim, who refuses to adopt the frame built for him by his father and that of the white British; he feels no obligation to repress his desires, including homosexual desires. In the course of this bildungsroman, Karim later realizes that he has "moved beyond [Charlie], discovering myself through what I'd rejected" (255). Karim confirms the value of his flexibility and experimentation because these enable him to come to terms with his own identity outwith the confines of the conventional national framework and, as Lowe suggests, outside of his family relationships. Traditional constructions of British identity are based on heterosexuality, and so the relaxing of sexual boundaries goes hand in hand with the recognition of national identity as more fluid.

Because of his refusal to limit his identity to received paradigms, Karim is able to construct his personality with more fluidity; he chooses what to accept and what to reject. As a second-generation Indian born in Britain, he is better equipped for change than his father, who feels powerless to dream a better future outside of the extant "social imaginary." Karim can at least envision the possibility of resistance and change, but as we have seen, he struggles to give life to this possibility. According to Hall, in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," the individual's resources for resistance and realizing one's identity are compromised further when external criticism and prejudice becomes internalized; this "inner expropriation of cultural identity cripples and deforms" (qtd. in Rutherford 226). We see this in Selvon's characters for who this leads to a crippling of identity in the individual and a failure to address the resultant inner silences. Hall borrows Fanon's "vivid phrase" to show how this produces "individuals without an anchor, without horizon, colourless, stateless, [and] rootless" (qtd. in Rutherford 226). The power exerted by hegemonic racist attitudes against the individual cannot be easily shed and eventually become intrinsic to his/her identity. For Fanon, the way out of this repressed state is to "burst apart" in anger. Only then can the individual reconstruct his

identity (109). While Fanon wrote of an earlier and much more direct and overtly injurious "colonial experience" than that of postcolonial migrants, this example shows how he remains relevant even if in the contemporary situation his writing sometimes seems somewhat extreme. A "burst[ing] apart" then, might exaggerate the degree of emotion Karim requires, but he at least needs to reach a level of responsiveness to his situation that can motivate him towards agency.

Haroon never reaches this level of response, and his attempts at self-revelation fail. Karim, conversely, shows more awareness of British irony and more resentment towards persistent racist abuse at school where he has become "sick … of being affectionately called Shitface and Curryface" (B 63). The abuse goes on outside of school too, especially on Karim's regular visits to Jamila, who lived "closer to London." Her neighborhood was "far poorer" and was "full of neo-fascists…. [who] roamed the streets, beating Asians and shoving shit and burning rags through their letter boxes" (B 56). Despite Karim's familiarity with working-class racist abuse, he is surprised to hear racist comments directed at his father from Eva's middle-class suburbanite friends. While his father ignores the abuse, Karim, aggrieved, gives one of the perpetrators "a sharp kick in the kidney" (B 12). Yet, his response shows token rather than determined resistance, while Jamila's vigorous reactions to racist taunts are "inspired by the possibility that a white group might kill one of us one day" (B 57). Karim realizes that in contrast to his friend, he is not a militant but rather "a real shaker and trembler" and says that "if people spat at me I practically thanked them for not making me chew the moss between the paving stones" (B 53). Nonetheless, while Haroon offers little or no resistance to racism, either sidestepping or ignoring it, the more open-minded and flexible Karim is at least conscious of discrimination even if he has not yet worked out how to process these feelings. Comparing himself to Jamila, Karim recognizes his weakness in acting out his feelings. Nevertheless, he benefits from this cross-gender relationship and exposure to a different view—a view Selvon's Londoners did profit from because of their containment within male social groups. He is alert to the possibility of active opposition. Throughout Buddha, Karim develops in this sense, eventually realizing that he cannot go on living in a way that is overly superficial and self-centered. He admonishes himself that "[p]erhaps in the future I would live more deeply" (284). The suggestion is that through

experimenting with his identity, and by observing others such as his parents, his friends, and Charlie and his New York acquaintances, Karim has matured to understand the difference between superficial affectation and authentically constructed identity. By "living more deeply," Karim might find the strength to demand not only explanation but action towards the development of a genuinely multicultural Britain. Karim will hopefully be able to reassemble the fragments of his identity into a fully actualized self and so encourage acceptance of hybrid identities as "properly" British.

Growing up, Jamila and Karim, playing with their identities, would try on substitutes: "Sometimes we were French … and other times we went black American" (B 53). They were motivated by more than the usual childhood role playing, though, because as second-generation immigrants they knew that "we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it" (B 53). Essentialist racist abuse taught Karim that one identity does not fit all and, even before he saw his father's crisis, he intuited the possibility of substituting roles. Seeing his father initiate identity change, however, made Karim more aware of his father's previous stasis and of his mother's obsession with essentialist nationalism. Unlike his father, Karim does not feel delimited by received identity configurations, and he makes the leap from childhood play to actively negotiating his adult persona.

While Margaret, a white Briton, refuses to try on any other role, and Indian born Haroon adopts a ready-made frame of identity, Karim, the second-generation immigrant, is flexible and benefits from practicing diverse roles. And because he is good at it, and it is a way of escaping present reality, Karim continues to enjoy acting. When Eva persuades her friend, Shadwell, to offer Karim a part in his upcoming play, Karim is delighted, albeit frightened, "of taking it, frightened of exposing myself and failing" (B 138). Karim is serious about acting, about role exploration, and with Eva's encouragement, he auditions for the part and finds that he has "never worked so hard at anything in [his] life," nor "wanted anything so badly" (B 138).

It is only later that Karim discovers his part is to be Mowgli in Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book. As Paul Brians writes in Reading About the World, despite being celebrated as a children's author, Kipling often came to be reviled as the poet of British imperialism. In his poem, "The White Man's Burden," Kipling describes blacks as "new-

caught, sullen peoples, / Half-devil and half-child." Mowgli is a feral child, and it becomes clear that Shadwell views Karim in a similar vein, as an inferior human being, due to his ethnic background. Shadwell submits Karim to a racist diatribe that makes him "shake with embarrassment that he [Shadwell] could talk to me in this way at all" (B 142). Nevertheless, Karim wants the part so badly that he capitulates to Shadwell's racist bullying and accepts. By casting Karim as Mowgli, Shadwell perpetuates racist stereotypes like those propagated in Kipling's poem. The suggestion is that children of color are uncivilized and behave as if raised by beasts. Shadwell's racism is further exposed when he tells Karim that he has been cast for "authenticity and not for experience," simply on the basis of his appearance as half Indian (B 146). Shadwell's idea of "authentic," while reflective of racist opinion, is clearly absurd because, in the first instance, Karim is not a child and so cannot "authentically" play the role of a pre-adolescent. More importantly, Shadwell insists that Karim's skin color, although purportedly "authentically" Indian, is not dark enough to fit stereotypical notions of an Indian. Additionally, Karim was born and raised in south-London, and his accent bears witness to this. Finally, Shadwell wants him to "authentically" represent an Indian feral child, not by speaking an Indian language, but by using an "Indian" accent to speak English (while presumably being blind to the paradox that this suggests that a child brought up by animals might be expected to speak English).

Karim, faced with such a direct racist challenge, voices his humiliation about being asked to use an "Indian" accent. Appealing as one man to another, and using his first name, Karim resists Shadwell's racism with reason, saying, "Mr Shadwell— Jeremy—I feel wrong in it. I feel that together we're making the world uglier" (B 146). He then pleads, "It's a political matter to me," and finally, on the verge of tears, says, "Jeremy, help me, I can't do this" (B 147). Jeremy will not listen to reason, however, and, because he has not yet risen to the requisite level of anger, Karim submits to his bullying.

Beyond Shadwell's outspoken racism, Kureishi exemplifies the silent prejudice that Karim, as a second-generation immigrant, is perhaps less likely than his father to internalize because he is at least aware of it. Karim's fellow actors are witnesses to Shadwell's racist bullying, and Karim wonders if these white Britons will respond and show "an expression of spontaneous feeling" (B 147). Karim is disappointed, but not

surprised, when they do not speak out in his defense; Kureishi particularly highlights common hypocrisies and how they increase the insidiousness of passive racism. The passivity of Selvon's Londoners and Haroon was matched by non-racist white British, and Karim's nascent resistance emphasizes that such inaction is increasingly untenable. For instance, Karim recalls that Terry, an active Trotskyite who now refuses to act, had "encouraged me to speak of the prejudice and abuse I'd faced being the son of an Indian" (B 151). Meanwhile, Shadwell, in addition to using racist bullying against Karim, perpetuates the false binaries of the superior white "race" over the inferior Indian; Karim, although disheartened, lacks the strength of character to resist and, albeit reluctantly, capitulates to Shadwell's demands. It is interesting to note that Haroon's response to seeing his son play Mowgli is to condemn "[t]hat bloody fucker Mr Kipling" and compare his son to "a Black and White Minstrel!" like those seen on television (B 157). Haroon's lack of self-knowledge leads him to condemn his son for doing what he does— that is, for commodify and deriding Indianness to entertain middle class English people.

Karim, then, through social and, in this case, hierarchical relations is offended and deeply affected by racism. These interactions, as Lowe suggests, contribute to Karim's developing a more sophisticated awareness of xenophobic abuse as it affects his identity, and he develops a better understanding of how people can manipulate others. When Karim's Uncle Anwar goes on a hunger strike in an attempt to force his daughter into an arranged marriage, Karim does not assume that this is a strictly cultural matter; instead he sees Anwar's actions less as a religiously driven "fanatical hunger-strike" than as "calmly intended blackmail" (B 180). Karim, with a pragmatic eye, describes Anwar's claims to Buddhist religious observation as "plain illusion in the head" (B 60). Karim understands that Anwar's religious absolutism is a ruse masking his impious human manipulations.

To further emphasize Karim's complexity and growing self-awareness, Kureishi introduces Tracy who, contrastingly, is depressed by her ethnic heritage. She bemoans being "ill at ease in the world." Yet when Karim sees her at an Indian party, she is "completely different—extrovert, passionate, and dancing wildly" (B 179-80). Tracey's lack of self-confidence around white people shows that she has internalized racial prejudice and is only able to be herself around "her own" people. Her sense corresponds to the desire for a revision of colonial mores in which the binaries of black and white are

inverted rather than ameliorated and a desire for a different "power-over." Untempted by the seductions of this reconceived binary vision, Karim shows himself aware of the multifaceted nature of subjectivity. It is an awareness that he is keen to hold on to, both as it applies to ethnic heritage and sexuality.

Karim is sexually active from the age of thirteen, but sex for him is a merely functional act, such as when he has sex with Jamila in public lavatory and he "inhaled the urine, shit and disinfectant cocktail [he] associated with love" (B 55). However, Karim continues to indulge his sexual appetite, with both boys and girls, although he avoids thinking about his homosexual desires for fear that society will judge him "a pervert," and will force him "to have treatment, hormones, or electric shocks through [his] brain" (B 55). Despite these fears, Karim is inclined to ignore what he recognizes—perhaps from his father's example—as "inbred bourgeois morality" (B 149). Instead, he honors his own subjectivity because, given his bisexual inclinations, he feels "that it would be heart-breaking to have to choose one or the other" (B 55). Karim's inclinations, perceptions and interests all gesture towards transgressing boundaries of the norm. It is this that gives Karim his best chance of achieving his dream for equality, and, in turn perhaps, recovered sense of self. This dream includes the desire not to "be treated like everyone else" because Karim "recognized that what [he] liked in Dad and Charlie was their insistence on standing apart" (B 149). Unlike Haroon, Karim has an adaptability that allows him to learn from others, and to choose which traits to imitate and which to refuse. Karim wants be unique, to "stand apart," rather than fulfill the preordained notions of identity that were adopted by immigrants intent on survival (B 149).

As Karim matures, he enters a relationship with Eleanor and, for the first time, experiences sex as romantic love within a complex relationship: "this was one of the first times in my life I'd been aware of having a moral dilemma…. I was developing a sense of guilt, a sense not only of how I appeared to others, but of how I appeared to myself, especially in violating self-imposed prohibitions" (B 186). Karim's guilt, unlike that sometimes imposed by rigid religious canons for example, seems to be enabling. Forced by his sense of guilt to look more closely at the way he lives his life, Karim also begins to see that complying with societal norms is effectively a form of self-constraint, and thus he starts to recognize the necessity of independent thought and genuine self-reflection.

Karim goes beyond adhering to traditionally defined morality and learns to police his own thoughts in a way that can only strengthen his ability to show active resistance and so fulfill his self potential.

Because Karim is psychologically adaptive and prepared to experiment, he builds the resources to negotiate his identity even within the ideological and psychic confines of Britain. He is assisted by the fact that Britain's "social imaginary" regarding migrants was changing and he is able to come to experience the land of his birth as truly "home." He gradually constructs his persona through cross-generational interactions with his parents and across ethnic, sexual, class, and national borders with people of various ages, including his younger brother. Haroon, on the other hand, who was born in India, settled into a developmental stasis. After twenty years of attempting to deny his own identity and be conventionally British, he succeeds in breaking his inertia, but only to step out of one constructed role into another. After Haroon leaves his wife and lives for years with Eva, Karim notices that "the resentment was growing deep" between his father and Eva, and he wonders if it was only now "that he [Haroon] realized the decision to leave our mother was irrevocable" (B 281). Only minutes later, Haroon, responding with seeming ambivalence to Eva's persuasion, announces that they are getting married (B 283). Haroon, who now earns his income solely from his guru activities, and who has become emotionally, socially and possibly even financially dependent on Eva, has become locked into his constructed persona: the frame that constructs him is now self-made because "hegemonic racist attitudes" have become "intrinsic to his personality" (Fanon 109).

As Stuart Hall says, "the heart has its reasons" (Braziel 223), and it is from the heart that Haroon speaks when he repines, "We old Indians come to like this England less and less and we return to an imagined India" (B 74 and B 64). Haroon's weariness and desire to return to the past reminds us of Moses in Londoners, and also appears in Samad in White Teeth. Like these other characters, Haroon, because he has failed to genuinely rebuild his identity, thinks that he can recapture some sense of who is "really" is by looking back to his roots. Karim, amazed when his Uncle Anwar suddenly "behave[s] like a Muslim," muses that "[f]or years they were both happy to live like English men…. Now, as they aged and seemed settled here, Anwar and Dad appeared to be returning internally to India, or at least to be resisting the English here" (B 64). Karim, who has

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never been to India, struggles to understand the attraction of what Anwar and Haroon decry as a "filthy and hot" country where it is "a big pain-in-the-arse to get anything done" (B 64). Haroon though, because his "coming of age" was never really achieved, like Anwar, wants to return to an imagined home rather than a geographic place.

This desire for return is explained, in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," by Hall who writes that one's "cultural identity" is the position one holds within a "shared culture, a sort of collective one true self…. which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (in Rutherford 225). And, as Hall discusses, for Fanon, diasporic people have the desire to recapture that identity, describing the process of recovery as a "passionate research … directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others" (226). Hall, revisiting this notion, explains that this search is not for some concrete foundation of identity available for "rediscovery," but rather for an identity in "*production,*" an identity available in the "*re-telling* of the past" (226). In Chapter Three, we will see that, as for Karim, this "production" of identity is increasingly negotiated beyond the immediate need for survival tactics and across diverse borders while the social imaginary within Britain increasingly reflects a multi-cultural population.

As Britain became more comfortable with multiculturalism, the 1980s saw a decline in overt nationalist politics. In <u>New Xenophobia in Europe</u>, Adrian Favell and Damian Tambini judge that while non-white minorities still suffered discrimination this was no longer of an exclusionary xenophobic nature and did not in the main "contest [minorities'] recognition as being British" (148). However, prejudice adopted a new façade as Margaret Thatcher captured the nationalist vote by incorporating jingoistic ideology into the mainstream of the Conservative Party. Special exceptions for the white Falkland Islands and Gibraltar exposed racist undertones to The 1981 Nationality Act which effectively ended Commonwealth immigration. Further, nationalism was amplified with the 1982 Falklands War. Nevertheless, increasing numbers of West Indians and Asians were making progress in Britain, buoyed by anti-discriminatory laws like the Nationality Act. Ethnically-motivated attacks were at least infrequent and isolated incidents. For many within the Black and Asian communities, though, "an everyday reality of fear" persisted (154).

Assessing Britain's growing multicultural society and the resistance to it, Paul Gilroy believes that racist and nationalist discourses can make these identities appear to be mutually exclusive to the point that suggesting any middle ground has sometimes been judged a "provocative and even oppositional act of political insubordination" (1993.1). Gilroy, Homi Bhabha, and others, however, understand the gap between these identities as a liminal discursive space that is pregnant with possibility. It is from this space that Selvon produced <u>The Lonely Londoners</u>, Kureishi wrote <u>The Buddha of Suburbia</u>, and Zadie Smith offers <u>White Teeth</u>[8] (2000), her fictive representation of immigrant life in Britain during the last thirty years of the twentieth century. Keeping to the idea that essentialized identity is redundant, Smith furthers Gilroy's understanding of a society in which "[t]he instability and mutability of identities … are always unfinished, always being remade" (xi). As seen in previous chapters, negotiating individual identity within

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[7] <u>WT</u> 385
[8] Citations from <u>White Teeth</u> will be represented by <u>WT</u>.

diasporic communities in Britain involves navigating diverse cultural influences and heritages. Such factors are further complicated by whether an individual is an immigrant, or of a second or subsequent generation born in the "motherland." In <u>White Teeth</u>, Smith portrays and explores individual and familial experiences at points of intersection of cultures and generations within Britain as immigrants begin to resist discrimination with increasing confidence. In <u>Windrush</u>, Wayne Haynes writes that in the 1970s and 80s it was his "generation who changed things." He acknowledges that this was possible "because we didn't have the kind of constraints that our parents had," or like Selvon's "boys" and Kureishi's Haroon had faced. This generation "didn't have to put up with it, and we didn't. The result, according to Haynes, was that things "began to change" (300).

Zadie Smith is now a widely recognized and acclaimed literary figure, but this was not the case when, aged twenty five, she published her first novel, <u>White Teeth</u> (2000). Smith was brought up in the Willesden and Kilburn area of London depicted in her book, by her English father and Jamaican mother. Smith is comfortable in her identity as British, attributing this partly to the fact that "I'm not an immigrant" although she "was around people who had that experience, who felt separated or cut in two, who had moved from one country to another, who had that sense of leading two lives" (Ellam n.p.). Smith, then, is well situated to represent how both immigrants and their offspring found ways to negotiate their identities and develop a sense of belonging in Britain. Like the other novels in this study, critiques of Smith's novel have often mentioned its use of language but again I am interested in the politics of identity formation[9]. I argue that <u>White Teeth</u>, in common with the Selvon and Kureishi novels, shows that immigrants negotiate their identities across many different boundaries and increasingly take advantage of the changing circumstances of life in Britain arrived at by the struggles of preceding and contemporary immigrant groups and supported by legislation. As <u>Buddha</u>'s Karim came to understand, betterment in the migrant experience depends not only in their alteration, but on Britain changing its notion of identity. I show how Smith, despite having an optimistic view of Britain's multiculturalism, is alert to these instances where, sometimes willful, nationalist misunderstanding of the migrant situation led to

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[9] In "No More Lonely Londoners" Jan Lowe writes that "Zadie Smith's inventiveness with language pops open like a bottle of champagne and the fizz lasts to the end." In "Small Axe" 9, March 2001, 166-180.

missed opportunities in this process. These culminated in disaffection among Britain's black youth that resulted in some turning to fundamentalist politics that haunt British life at the beginning of the twenty-first century and which imperiled the healthy development of Britain's "social imaginary."

By the 1980s, then, the migrant experience had changed. As stated, there is a wide variation between the male and the female experience, and so, while acknowledging the richness of some of Smith's female characters, particularly Irie, I continue to look for ways in which male immigrants, particularly Samad Iqbal and his son, Millat, negotiate their identities as Britain changes. This may be a focus different to that more typically expected in the U.S. In Zadie Smith's White Teeth, Claire Squires notes that British critics "concentrated more on the Iqbals—and the aspects of faith and fundamentalism that the Muslim family illustrate—than on Clara's Jamaican family" on which U.S. reviewers tend to focus (77). Squires understands this as being "indicative of a greater level of interest in the U.S. in Smith as a black author describing a black experience, rather than as a mixed-race writer depicting a multicultural environment" (77)[10].

In this study, I am looking at fictional characters as representative of the real, but, although highly praising the novel some critics are not convinced about the efficacy of characterization in White Teeth. James Wood argues that "as realism, it is incredible; as satire, it is cartoonish; as cartoon, it is too realistic … It is all shiny externality, all caricature" (qtd. in Squires 75). Although unconvinced by characters like the novel's Chalfen family, Caryl Smith nevertheless highly praises White Teeth's depiction of "the complexities of multiculturalism" (76). In staying within the same two-male model of the first two chapters, then, I continue to explore immigrant identity formation within an expanding multicultural society but avoid unnecessary (for the purposes of this study) expansion into the machinations of what The Sunday Herald's Beatrice Colin considers to be a "convoluted and contrived" plot which often seems to dominate characterization in this novel (qtd. in Squires 73).

Selvon, a West Indian immigrant, and Kureishi, a second-generation Pakistani Briton, both claimed their right to write from within Britain. Smith, advancing this claim,

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[10] Smith herself briefly addresses differences in the way White Teeth is received in Britain and the United States in "An interview with Zadie Smith."

borrows her epigraph, "What is past is prologue," from Shakespeare's <u>The Tempest</u>, intimating her right, not just to write from within Britain, but to occupy a place in the long history of British writers. Smith, rather than cite Shakespeare, problematizes the ownership of language and the stability of history by acknowledging her source as an "[i]nscription in [a] Washington, D.C., museum." This inscription is found on the wall of The American National Archives, where the "Declaration of Independence" is stored. Britain's one-time colony, America, has taken possession of Shakespeare's words in a subversive act against the past colonizer who understands the National Bard as forming part of what it is to be British. It relegates British involvement in America to the past, while appropriating imported "British" culture and using it in the formation of American identity. Smith's motivation here is to show how words, culture and history can be redefined and reused in various identity frameworks, particularly as they cross and re-cross geographic and temporal borders. She suggests that these words now belong to America as much as to Britain and so destabilizes white Britain's exclusive possession of Shakespeare. Smith thus claims her right to re-write Britain and Britishness against "[o]riginal whitecliffsdover piesmash jellyeels royalvariety britishbulldog" nationalism (<u>WT</u> 200). What has gone before informs the present, but the details of history, and of what constitute facts and what fictions, are always subject to interpretation; the colonizer's interpretation is not always triumphant.

Both the United States and Britain were forced into re-imaginings of national identity by the September 11th attacks in the United States, the 2001 attempted destruction of a commercial flight over the Atlantic by the "shoe bomber," Richard Reid (a British citizen born in London just two years before <u>White Teeth</u>'s fictional Millat), and the July 2005 London bombings. Studies are now underway to rethink the way Britain's Muslim citizens can be helped in integrating their religious and national identities. Through the mutually constitutive process of literature, White Teeth helps develop understanding in Britain, and throughout the West, of possible reasons for some Muslims' attraction to fundamentalist religious-political groups. This positively influences the "social imaginary" and garners resistance against possible moves towards new exclusionary Nationalism. Recent studies in this area—which is particularly relevant given early twenty-first century history—substantiate Smith's narrative about

migrants and their offspring, who she grew up with in London, as they negotiated daily life and ways of being British.

White Teeth's exploration of the role of history and culture questions how presumptions of homogeneity and white superiority cause, or at least play into, racist philosophies in Britain; immigrants have to negotiate this historical posturing when forming British identities, particularly given the heightened ethnic tensions of the 1970s and 1980s Thatcherite racism. For her Indian-born Samad, as for the white British, "tradition was culture, and culture led to roots, and these were good, these were untainted principles. That didn't mean he could live by them, abide by them, or grow in the manner they demanded, but roots were roots and roots were good" (WT 161). Samad persistently takes refuge in traditional, idealized, past narratives at the expense of his present self. Like those who still hold onto a homogeneous notion of "Britishness," Samad fails to recognize that Britain has changed. The example of Samad allows Smith to satirize the reliance on a history—a history that is seldom the bedrock that one takes it to be; history can be variously comprehended. Samad serves to demonstrate that while history is relevant, it is also relative. History informs the present and the future; however, it always involves interpretation.

Samad's experience in colonial India, which led to him serving in the British army, initiated an extended process of British nationalization long before he set foot on British soil; as far back as 1945, he already referred to himself as "an Englishman" (WT 95). This process of nationalizing for a country other than that of his birth, however, complicated Samad's understanding of who he was and challenged his psychological framework as it had for Selvon's Londoners and Kureishi's Haroon. This sensation of rootlessness was made worse for many immigrants by the often negative response of the longer-resident British. The preface to Smith's "Samad" chapter alludes to racism within the British government when she quotes from Conservative MP Norman Tebbit's infamous "cricket test," which proposed that immigrants not supporting the English cricket team could not be judged truly "British." In addition to referencing institutional racism, and the divisive coupling of British and Anglo-Saxon identities, this allusion also reminds readers of the absurdity of Tebbit's 1990 model of Britishness which drew derision from the Scots, the Welsh, and the Northern Irish: all British nationals who

would not typically support English sports teams. While those confident of their "Britishness" could treat Tebbit's prejudice with the contempt it deserved, this was not so easy for immigrants. Because cricket was the great sport of colonialism, colonials understood that Tebbit was directly challenging the validity of their citizenship. British Nationalists understood this too, and used it to whip up racist sentiments. And as Stuart Hall proposes in "Minimal Selves," "Identity is formed at the unstable point where the 'unspeakable' stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of a culture. And since he/she is positioned in relation to cultured narratives which have been profoundly expropriated, the colonized subject is … doubly marginalized, displaced always *other* than where he or she is" (n.p.) Despite anti-racist legislation, ongoing institutional and civic bigotry continued to psychologically debilitate many immigrants.

As mentioned, Smith's Samad first began to struggle with his sense of cultural identity long before he went to Britain. In 1945, as he fought in the British army in Europe, he wondered if he would go "back to Bengal … or to Delhi" after the war, but wondered "[w]ho would have such an Englishman there?" (WT 95). Samad, then, as a result of his experience fighting as a British soldier in World War II, felt foreign in his own country because he felt too "English" and by extension not Indian enough. Yet, when imagining the alternative, he is left wondering about "[w]ho would have such an Indian" in England (WT 95). In 1973, Samad entered into an arranged marriage with Alsana, who had been betrothed to him more than ten years before her birth. Despite adhering to this Indian tradition, Samad pursues his dual identity when, shortly after his marriage, he migrates with his wife to Britain.

Samad, then, is different than Selvon's early migrants not only in that he has the support of and responsibility for a wife, but also in that she is a female companion from his native culture. He is also different in this respect from Kureishi's Haroon, who met and married Margaret in Britain. Samad had been apprehensive about his acceptance as an Indo-Bangladeshi, but he had not anticipated the level of racial abuse he would be subjected to in the "motherland" including the difficulty of finding employment. Yet, despite these unforeseen challenges and associated psychological stresses, Samad's mental fortitude is such that he refuses to be defeated by East London's racist violence. Attempting to negotiate the social difficulties of being an Indo-Bangladeshi in Britain, he

relocates to Willesden to be near his old army friend, Archie. Samad's sense of Britishness is such that he does not consider returning to the Indian continent and, attempting to find acceptance and a sense of home in Britain, he sees no reason not to look to a white Briton for support.

Facing restricted employment opportunities for immigrants, Samad, swallowing his pride, seeks help from his distant younger cousin, Ardashir. In The Myth of Return, Anwar Muhammad writes that the traditional Pakistani and Bangladeshi family system is "the joint and/or extended family" who have a "complex set of mutual obligations" (101). In choosing to link up with Archie, Samad attempts to exclude himself from this practice. His need to work, however, forces him back into the Indian extended family model, meaning that his reliance on his distant, younger relative is a blow to his cultural independence, to his masculine ego and to his assumption of Britishness.

Overjoyed to have his "older, cleverer, handsomer cousin" dependent upon him, Ardashir goes on to take protracted advantage of the situation, paying Samad poorly to work long, unsocial hours as a "curry shifter"—a waiter—in his Indian restaurant (WT 47). Samad works conscientiously, but the job is demeaning for him, and so his employment further injures his sense of self-worth. The restaurant can be seen as a metaphor for colony; dominion lies at the center with Ardashir, who enjoys his "power-over" status; the waiters' peripheral service jobs are essential to the running of the business, but the men are never appreciated nor offered opportunities for individual or professional development. In this reduced capacity, Samad, a philosophical intellectual, is constantly thwarted in his attempts to interact as an equal with the European customers. Similar to Selvon's Galahad, who knew he was identified only by his skin color, Samad experiences "heartbreaking disappointment" and becomes increasingly alienated because he is acknowledged as "only" an Indo-Bangladeshi waiter and not an authentic human being (WT 48-9). Samad struggles with this repudiation of his identity and feels irrelevant even among the other restaurant employees because they, too, abuse him. The ongoing experience of being belittled, undervalued, and voiceless results in Samad wanting "desperately" to proclaim to the world on a placard: "I AM NOT A WAITER. I HAVE BEEN A STUDENT, A SCIENTIST …" (WT 49). As we think of Samad's desperate situation, we might recall how Selvon's "boys" had internalized the colonial

Othering of them as inferior and how, while they were confused about the way Britain treated them, they never dreamt of voicing their frustrations in such strong terms. Samad seems slightly more liberated in this sense; yet his proclamation is no more than a dream.

Samad has felt denigrated since his early days with the British army when he lost the use of his hand, after being accidentally shot by a man whom Samad calls a "bastard Sikh" (WT 76). This display of religious bigotry from Samad, which he shows even as he complains of being discriminated against, is just one example of Smith's portrayal of people as psychologically complex and often contradictory. White Teeth both avoids absolute judgments and exposes the hypocrisy of using binaries to reduce and essentialize individual identities. Meanwhile, in Britain Samad is largely free from the Sikh groups he is prejudiced against, but is on the receiving end of racial discrimination, much of it from the customers he has to serve on a nightly basis.

At this point, although he is a Muslim, Samad's identity includes prejudice against India and, far from proud of his heritage, he advises his colleagues, "Never go to India … it is a place for fools and worse than fools. Fools, Hindus, Sikhs, and Punjabis" (WT 75). In Black Skin, White Masks, Frantz Fanon discusses the kind of identity trauma Samad has experienced as an emigrant who has left the country of his birth. For Fanon, as the migrant prepares to leave his homeland, "the amputation of his being diminishes as the silhouette of his ship grows clearer. In the eyes of those who have come to see him off, he can read the evidence of his own mutation his power" (23). While migrants often expect, and are expected to, easily find glorious lives in the "mother land," these dreams are challenged as the complexities of transforming identity often leave them devoid of a sense of home. We have seen, in Chapters One and Two, how this disassociation from home, together with the lack of acceptance and consequent feeling of not belonging in the "motherland," results in psychological trauma. Although mainstream Britain is more used to immigrants by the time Samad arrives in the mid 1970s, the racist activities of The National Front were at their height at that time and migrants like Samad were made to feel isolated, uprooted and confused. Like many Commonwealth migrants, Samad thought that he was leaving his past behind him and moving on to the guarantee of a better life in Britain. Disappointed and traumatized when he found a different reality, Samad's destabilization and dislocation led him to look to his cultural past to find a way

of (re)building a framework for his identity. Ambivalent about his own India, he looks back to the history of his ancestors including his great-grandfather with whose story Samad becomes obsessed. Having cut himself off geographically and emotionally from the land of his birth, and carrying this dissection symbolically in the form of his ruined hand, Samad's grasping at his mythologized heritage and religion becomes increasingly desperate. The novels in this study demonstrate the polyvalence of personality within migrant groups; while <u>Buddha</u>'s Haroon at least attempts to negotiate an identity in the present, Samad is representative of another type of immigrant who denies even this possibility.

In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Stuart Hall argues that for migrants, the notion of returning "home" is "a spiritual, cultural and political metaphor" that must remain forever "deferred." Samad, though, fails to recognize that "his" India is more metaphor than physical reality (231). As he gets older, Samad increasingly frames his life with what he understands as the concrete fact of his ancestral heritage and fails to negotiate the complex construction of his Indo-Bangladeshi British identity; he fails to find a way to make Britain "home." In his unresolved affiliation with Britain, Samad takes on a sort of victim role. While increasingly looking back to his Indo-Bangladeshi culture, he blames his adopted country for his own moral laxity when he enters into an adulterous affair with his sons' music teacher, the Anglo-Saxon, Poppy Burt-Jones. Diverting his guilt and refusing to take responsibility for his own weaknesses, Samad bemoans, "I never should have come here—that's where every problem has come from. Never should have had my sons here, so far from God" (<u>WT</u> 121). Samad feels his own pain so dramatically as to compare himself "with that other victim of Western corruption, Oedipus" (<u>WT</u> 124), and laments, "This country's no good. We tear each other apart in this country" (<u>WT</u> 167). At the same time, Samad's use of "we," his desire for a white woman (which mirrors his son's sexual propensity), and his self-association with Western literature expose his inner ambition to be accepted as British, and so reemphasize his inner conflict.

Samad feels British, but he falls short of being fully accepted as such within the nativist sentiment, not only because he is black but because he does not follow a conventionally British religion. Samad was not always religious, but his sexual

awakening and subsequent frustration following his arranged marriage, to "the small-palmed, weak-wristed, and uninterested Alsana," brings him into conflict with some of the tenants of the Muslim faith of his childhood, and he turns to the Mosque for advice (WT 115). Becoming more involved with Islam, Samad understands religion as central to his identity, and so his infatuation with Poppy brings him to "crisis point" (WT 116). A strong believer in fate, Samad refuses to accept Enlightenment rationalism and wants his sons to learn Islamic philosophy by cultural experience. And yet, despite his declared faith, he fails to keep to its doctrines. Unable to negotiate a way of reconciling his cultural and religious identities, Samad wonders about his sons: "how can I show them the straight road when I have lost my own bearings?" (WT 158). In The Wretched of the Earth Fanon writes, "Seeking to stick to tradition or reviving neglected traditions is not only going against history, but against one's people" (161). For Fanon, a character like Samad is a "creator, who decides to portray national truth [and who] turns, paradoxically enough, to the past, and so looks at what is irrelevant to the present. What he aims for in his inner intentionality is the detritus of social thought, external appearances, relics, and knowledge frozen in time" (161). Samad, crippled by rejection, fails to see that it is his own determination to follow a straight path, his insistence on being either this or that, that has led to this crisis.

While it might seem that Samad has a better chance of forming a stable identity than Selvon's Londoners because he not only has a permanent residence but a wife and family, life is rarely so simple. In his early days in Britain, Samad fulfilled his understanding of the male role when he took his wife, Alsana, first to Britain and then moved her to a better place within Britain. He fathered twins, and so proved his virility. Yet Alsana, as has been shown, is sexually indifferent to him, and so Samad is unable to construct a masculine identity around his sexual prowess. Further, he fails to earn enough money for his household, so neither does he succeed in the male role as provider. In The Encyclopedia of Diasporas, Melvin Ember et al. write that "[t]he overwhelming majority of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women do not participate in the workforce because of religious restrictions" (626). But Alsana, despite coming "from a respected old Bengal family," has to supplement the family income by working in their small kitchen "sewing together pieces of black plastic for a shop called Domination," even as she cannot fathom

the purpose of the finished garments (WT 52, 46). In addition to Alsana's isolation and alienation, her working compounds Samad's sense of masculine failing, while it also reminds him of others' sex lives. These several factors mean that Samad fails to live up to his own sense of manhood, even before he falls short of his own model of religious observance. Samad is cowed by his own sense of inadequacy in all these fields. He does not have the psychic strength to face up to the circumstances of his own life and, adding to his own shortcomings by failing to properly perform his fatherly role, he spends little time with his family.

Samad does not even have his evening meal at home but instead chooses to eat with Archie every day in O'Connell's café, his "home from home" (WT 184). Rather than make an effort to improve himself by struggling to negotiate his cultural, gender and paternal identities, Samad turns to history where, for him, the source of his glory and satisfaction lies in the oft-disputed tale of his great-grandfather, Mangal Pande. As discussed above, Smith makes clear from the outset that history is important, but Samad's reliance on history anchors him in the mythical past and constricts his developing other subjectivities. In keeping with Bhabha's theory that the myth of national identity is maintained by the constant repetition of "scraps, patches and rags of daily life" so that it becomes understood as quintessential, Samad constructs his own mythological India (Location 145). His constant repetition of his grandfather's story becomes pathologized as "repetitive syndrome" (WT 155), and he, to borrow Fanon's words, "renounces the present and the future in the name of the mystical past" (14). His refusal to accept what most historians believe to be the narrative of Pande's actions in the Great Revolt is compounded when Samad eventually finds one disregarded account that he understands as correlating with his own. Inveighing against "the English goldfish-memory for history," Samad thinks that the British misinterpret the facts about this case. While he believes that his brave ancestor "was the great hero of the Indian Mutiny … of 1857" (WT 75), British history records Pande as the player in a clumsy, drug-induced, attempt at mutiny. Samad's argument does have some credibility given the fact that British racism is largely rooted in the disregarding of historical fact, particularly about the horrors of colonization and the long history of migration that speaks against the notion of ethnic purity. Nonetheless, in White Teeth it is not necessarily historical "truth" that is at

issue, but rather the fact of Samad's obsession with history that supports the notion of immutable identity and prevents him living fully in the present and renders him incapable of self-actualization.

As his son points out, Samad's absence from the daily experience of his children's schooling suggests that, just as he is incapable of interrogating his own identity, he is not prepared for "[t]his thing of *knowing* children" (WT 105). Although he is not occupied on a practical or interpersonal level with his children, Samad, who earlier lamented the inability of the white British to comprehend him as a scholar, at last finds an opportunity for intellectual involvement in their education; he becomes a "*parent governor*" (WT 105). Samad has effectively abandoned his earlier dreams for recognition and takes on this role not because he seeks intellectual participation, but "because the pretty red-haired music teacher" asks him (WT 105). In "The Role of Muslim Identity Politics in Radicalisation," Tufyal Choudhury finds that in Britain "[a]ction around demands for the accommodation of religious needs played a significant role in the initial mobilization of Muslim communities for civic and political engagement" (par. 4). Choudhury believes that these campaigns are a sign of commitment by Muslims to make themselves more at home in Britain. As Selvon's West Indians failed to form a cohesive resistance group, and Kureishi's Haroon chooses to mix with the native rather than the Indo-Bangladeshi community, so Samad is not part of a Muslim social network. Despite the school's multi-ethnic population and variety of religious affiliations, he fails to make personal connections with parents or teachers other than Poppy and only crusades for petty, personal causes. Samad, in turning to the past, looks, in Fanon's words, "at what is irrelevant to the present. What he aims for in his inner intentionality is the detritus of social thought, external appearances, relics, and knowledge frozen in time" (161).

In Chapter One, I showed how Selvon's Londoners failed to form radicalized political groups and suggested the importance of such groupings for immigrants' identity formation and integration. Recently, studies have shown that "activism for ethnic and Islamic causes, even when it has been conflictual, has accelerated Muslim integration. Such participation provides a pathway into engagement in other forms of civic and political participation" (Choudhury par. 5). Samad, the figure of missed opportunity, fails to function fully in the present. This is partly because of his obsession with the past, but

also because he has no sense of belonging to an organized network in either the white or black communities. Samad fails to develop his political leanings into any worthwhile action. His alienation and his increasing ambivalence towards the present result in his settling into a life of routine and fixed identity, increasingly framed by history and myth. While he remains isolated between polarities of Britishness and his Bangladeshi-Indian identity, Samad fails to develop a meaningful hybrid identity. But the world around him changes.

In The Buddha of Suburbia, Haroon recognizes that he is unhappy and although he ultimately lacks the wherewithal to attain authenticity, he at least tries on a different identity. Individual efforts like his, when combined with the actions of many other immigrants, meant that the immigrant population eventually found ways of establishing British identity. This was not achieved in an unbending trajectory, but in a stop-start path marked, for individuals and the wider community, by detours, setbacks, and calamities. I suggest that Samad stagnates largely because he isolates himself from other Indo-Bangladeshis in Britain even as he strives for connection with his heritage. Samad's possibility for engagement is significantly better than Selvon's Londoners; he has a family, a permanent job, a permanent address, and multi-cultural associations. Yet his psychic rigidity sees him fixate his desires on the idea of rootedness and permanence. While Haroon makes deliberate, if futile, attempts to find ways of being British, Samad stagnates in his own idea of Britishness. His "home from home," O'Connell's Pool House is a microcosm of the eclectic Willesden where he lives and seems to coincide with Samad's own attitude to life. As Claire Squires writes, "it is a place where diversity is accepted in a jocular fashion," yet is not deemed worthy of real exploration (37). Rather, it is a refuge from the realities of family responsibility and a place where nothing changes.

While Samad longs for fixity, his sons are born into a world of shifting diversity. Magid and Millat have a father who is forty-seven when they are born and a mother who is twenty-one. Also, while their parents are Indo-Bangladeshi, the family has a close friendship with Archie Jones (who is of "[g]ood honest English stock"), his West Indian wife, Clara, and their mixed-ethnicity daughter, Irie (WT 99). Furthermore, young people with a range of ethnic backgrounds attend the twins' school in multi-racial Willesden.

Like Kureishi's Karim, Magid and Millat understand difference as not unusual but customary. Their sense of sameness and belonging is located partly in the other twin. Samad, obsessed as he has become with his own ancestry, while acknowledging their Indo-Bangladeshi heritage, fails to recognize that his sons are forming their identities in the Britain of their birth and in each other. While they too suffer racist antagonism, they have more options in the framing of their identities than did he. Additionally, Samad does not recall Archie's advice that "You must live life with the full knowledge that your actions will *remain.* We are creatures of consequence…. Someday our children will know it…. Our children will be born of our actions. *Our actions will become their destinies*" (WT 86-7). Refusing to "*know*[]*"* his sons, and focusing only on their differences, Samad chooses one of them over the other and forcibly bifurcates them when he sends nine-year-old Magid to Bangladesh. In his attempt to compel Magid to "return" to his ancestral roots, Samad destroys Millat's sense of grounding, the security that his twin's presence afforded him. And with this action, Samad has made his own son, Millat, Other.

Like Smith's fictional characters, many late twentieth-century immigrants in Britain lived in a state of alterity, surrounded as they were by a pervasive societal racism that was in some ways perpetuated by government as demonstrated in Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech. As Gilroy writes, the black presence in Britain was still portrayed as a problem or threat against which a homogeneous, white, national "we" could be unified (Gilroy 87 48). The popularity of Powell's stance was durable and, as Phillips and Phillips write, while his speech helped galvanize immigrants to action and led to the downfall of the Labour government in 1970, anti-racist sentiment persisted in the following decades, even after passing of the Race Relations Act of 1976 (254). In A Guide to the Twentieth Century, Paul Jones reports that thirteen years after his "Rivers of Blood" speech, Powell warned of racial "civil war" in Britain; for Gilroy, these "thirteen years have seen the representation of law and legality in the popular politics of race turned right around so that the police were now acting not in favour of the blacks but against them" (Gilroy. 87. 102).

Conservative nationalism, which through the Thatcher years in some ways continues to conceive of British citizens through the binaries of "them" and "us," blacks and whites, becomes increasingly indefensible towards the end of the twentieth century.

Unlike his father who thought in binaries, "Millat was neither one thing nor the other, this or that, Muslim or Christian, Englishman or Bengali; he lived for the in between" (WT 291). While he lives in a more diverse cultural world than earlier generations, Millat is still identified as Other because of his ethnicity. Ongoing racism and teenage existential angst increase his need to gain a sense of belonging; Millat can no longer deny his cultural heritage and must negotiate this side of his identity as British.

Burdened by history and cultural heritage, and struggling for self-definition, Millat feels limited within Britain. Regardless of his cultural heritage, racists essentialize him and have tried to inculcate him with abuse similar to, if in some ways more subtle than, what Karim faced in the more overtly xenophobic 1970s. Although he is British born, Millat is aware that because of his ethnic heritage he is considered to be

> a Paki no matter where he came from; that he smelled of curry; had no sexual identity; took other people's jobs; or had no job and bummed off the state; or gave all the jobs to his relatives; that he could be a dentist or a shop-owner or a curry-shifter, but not a footballer or a film-maker; that he should go back to his own country; or stay here and earn his bloody keep; [and] that he worshiped elephants and wore turbans. (WT 194)

In addition to being excluded in these ways, Millat is also aware that he never saw anyone who looked, spoke, or felt like him on the television news so that, in short, "he had no voice" in Britain (WT 194).

Millat, angry about losing his twin, is also angry about being forever on the receiving end of racism; here is the anger that Karim eventually came to, and which the lonely Londoners, Haroon, or Samad never reached. Millat's anger, in one phase, takes the form of sexual preference for "size 10 white Protestant women" (WT 306). As Fanon put it in an earlier time, the non-white man "who wants to go to bed with a white woman" evinces "a wish to be white," a wish inscribed in his "lust for revenge" (14). In Fanon's view, satisfying this lust proves to the non-white, Millat included, that "I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man. Her love takes me onto the noble road that leads to total realization … When my restless hands caress those white breasts they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine" (63). While this might seem somewhat over-determined in a more modern era, its relevance is to indicate how Millat's predilection for white women exposes his internalization of inferiority and a desire for a reverse power-over; his alterity in Britain informs his psychological makeup.

As Germaine Guex argues, the awareness of being the Other places people such as Millat in "a shaky position … always on guard, ready to be rejected and … unconsciously doing everything needed to bring about exactly this catastrophe" (qtd. in Fanon 76). Millat's licentiousness—which includes his cheating on his girlfriend with "only" three other women—(WT 306) is a manifestation of abandonment neurosis that makes him "insatiable … because he claims the right to constant amends" (Fanon 76). We see the extent of his unconscious desire for personal calamity when, at age fourteen, Millat "lowering himself down upon legendary sixth-former Natalia Cavendish … danc[es] with death," death here being contained within the HIV virus which she carries even as they have unprotected sex (WT 183). Millat's personal development is complicated by internalized racism, but his repressions increasingly find expression. As Haynes said, his generation felt more able than previous ones to vent their frustrations and to demand the right to attain personal fulfillment.

Millat, who has grown up in a society with endemic racism, is also suffering from his father's kind of inverted racism. When Samad chooses one of the twins, Magid, to send back to Bangladesh, to his "real" roots, he denies the other twin, Millat, this same opportunity. He thereby implies that Millat is inferior and unworthy of a return to the site of his Indo-Bangladeshi heritage. Further, his twin's enforced repositioning serves to emphasize the reality of Millat's Indo-Bangladeshi roots while at the same time stressing his physical and psychic distance from them. This makes Millat aware that he is not "properly" Bangladeshi, as he is not "authentically" British, and leaves him in some ways like his father, "schizophrenic, [with] one foot in Bengal and one in Willesden" (WT 183). But while Samad grasps at his ancestry, Millat, the un-chosen, the unloved, the Other, is forced to construct an identity that attempts to deny his familial roots because, albeit inadvertently, his father deemed him unworthy of those roots. As a further consequence, Millat increasingly has to suffer Samad's displaced disappointment, anger and wounded pride over the fact that Magid, as his letters attest, is becoming increasingly Westernized in Bangladesh. Again, Smith points to the individual nature of the migrant experience and culture. While Karim, in Buddha, found a way to benefit from his father's experimentation with identity, Millat's paternal influence offers him no such possibility, but rather sends him in other directions in his search for identity. As Squires suggests,

Millat inherits from a different kind of line than his father; against his new-found interest in religion, he models himself on secular idols, "Godfathers, blood-brothers, pacinodeniros" (qtd. 32).While this comparison speaks to the importance of reading the individual experience, it also suggests that the cumulative experiences and actions of earlier generations, and resultant changes in the political climate and in popular culture, enable Millat's resistance despite his family situation.

By the time he is thirteen, Millat's deteriorating behavior is a sign that he is, as Guex describes it, is "putting [him]self to the proof in order to prove something"(qtd. in Fanon 75). Because of this, he has become for his peers "some kind of hero;" Millat's rebellious behavior is rewarded with attention, which temporarily addresses his notions of abandonment (WT 226). In order to feed this desire for attention, Millat "had to please all of the people all of the time.... [but] underneath it all, there remained an ever-present anger and hurt, the feeling of belonging nowhere that comes to people who belong everywhere" (WT 225). As suggested, Millat's hurt is bubbling for expression, when "suddenly people like Millat were on every channel and every radio and every newspaper and they were angry, and Millat recognized the anger, thought it recognized him, and grabbed it with both hands" (WT 194).

Interestingly, in the April 2009 Prospects Magazine, Zadie Smith writes that, like Millat, she too felt voiceless as a teenager. This changed in 1990 when she read Kureishi's Buddha and, like her fictional character, Smith recognized someone "like herself":

> I'd never read a book about anyone remotely like me before. Kureishi's characters were not like traditional depictions of Asians either. They were as cocksure, streetwise and sexually charged as Kureishi himself. "I was a Paki," he says. "My family were Pakis. So there were lots of Pakis in my work. There were no representations of Pakistanis in films or novels in those days. Or not Pakistanis that I recognised."

Smith's novel is grounded in reality, even to the point where her situation as an author is strongly influenced by the writer of the second novel in the current study, and her fictional character operates accordingly. What brings about the change that inspires Millat is the Muslim reaction to the 1988 publication of Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses. This book was judged blasphemous by many Muslims and Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a fatwa that called for the death of its author. Muslims around

the world protested vociferously against Rushdie's book, including at a public book burning in Bradford, England. In "The Politics of Islamic Identity among Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in Britain," Yunas Samad argues that during the Rushdie affair "reaction to the increase in racial tension forced the [Muslim] community to close ranks," as they felt increasingly marginalized by commonly perpetuated essentialist notions of Indian immigrant identity, such as those internalized by the fictional Millat, even though he has had little previous interest in Islam (97). In his essay "The Pakistanis: Stability and Introspection," Roger Ballard identifies that the move of Indian subcontinent immigrants to identify themselves more with religion than ethnicity was a reaction to their external experience of racist rejection within the white British hegemony. Islam provided a vehicle for political mobilization that other forms of identification did not. For Millat, this was his first opportunity to be part of a political group with a voice; it was the first chance for a group expression of his anger about repressed racial abuse that might help him in his quest to build a respected British identity.

When Millat is at the train station on his way to Bradford, to take part in the public demonstration against The Satanic Verses, he is unpleasant to the ticket man, who then responds in a confrontational manner. Millat, after years of racist abuse, has been roused by the possibility of proactive resistance, so that when the ticket man resorts to a racial slur, Millat's anger surfaces and he "slam[s] his fist so hard on the glass that it reverberate[s] down the booths to the ticket man at the other end" (WT 192). Millat is not religious, but he recognizes that it is people "like him" who protest against Rushdie's book, and has adopted the mantle of his father's religion in order to feel included. Thus, although the ticket man's insults are aimed at Millat's ethnicity, Millat conflates this with his new religious identity. He now equates racist abuse with the religious prejudice Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini judged Rushdie guilty of, and shouts at the ticket man, "We're going to Bradford to sort out the likes of you" (WT 192).

Millat's "Ragastani" "crew" is a group of teenagers whose commonality lies not in a hobby or sport but in that they have each altered their conforming identities in response to racist abuse. This "new breed" has been born out of the fact that

> People had fucked with Rajik back in the days when he was into chess and wore V-necks. People had fucked with Ranil, when he sat at the back of the class and carefully copied all teachers' comments into his book. People had fucked with Dipesh and Hifan when they wore traditional dress in the playground. (WT 192)

For Millat and his "crew," being "fucked with" meant being abused en bloc as inferior, and as part of "the race problem." While Kureishi's teenage Karim protested ineffectively about racism, Smith's second-generation teenagers, in response to constant racial discrimination, behave more like Karim's friend, Jamila, and adopt aggressive identities to ensure that "no one fucked with any of them anymore" (WT 193). While this aggressive resistance in some ways contains promise, it also contains peril, as is explored below. In a recent interview, the writer Sukhdev Sandhu, like Smith, recalls how, through Buddha, Kureishi had changed the way many young Asian-British saw themselves. Asians "had previously been mocked for deference and timidity. We were too scared to look people in the eye. We weren't gobby or dissing." But "Kureishi's language was a revelation. It was neither meek nor subservient" (qtd. in Malik n.p.). Here is an example of how, like the characters in these novels, authors too build on what came before. As Smith claims her place in the British literary tradition, she hybridizes this tradition by drawing on contemporary black British literature. She, nevertheless, is politically opposed to identification as a "black" writer asking, "Why would you limit writers of any ethnicity or gender to be a sex or class politician and give freedom to white writers to write about absolutely anybody?" (qtd. in Squires, 19).

As Choudhury observes, until the 1990s, British "policy and research viewed immigrant groups within a Black/White dichotomy." This "culturalist model" has since been criticized for "pathologising Asian families, by presenting them as a source of problems and conflict" (n. 15). Smith's novel shows that for many young British Muslims, aggression is a response to rather than a cause of, racism. Deconstructing the notion of immigrants as the source of a problem, Smith elegantly expresses the view that race is a construct that arises out of racism and leads victims to internalize prejudice and construct their identities accordingly. The effective absorption of racist politics by the Conservative Government of 1979-1990 increased the insidious nature of this abuse by rendering it harder to identify and confront.

Although he takes part in the protest against it, Millat admits that he has not read The Satanic Verses, and the narrator adds that "Millat knew nothing about the writer, nothing about the book" (WT 194). Like hundreds of other Muslims, Millat is attracted to Bradford by the excitement of group identity which for him offers at least the possibility of a site of belonging wherein he could frame his identity. For the first time, Millat recognizes the strength of solidarity through a group of "us" who have collective reasons to resist "them." Both Millat and his father believe that the "Rushdie affair" is "the most important thing to happen to us [Muslims] in this country, ever. It's crisis point" (WT 195). For Millat it is also what Choudhury describes as a psychological "crisis point." Such a point occurs as an individual is exploring his identity, and happened to Samad when he met Poppy. This exploration creates a "cognitive opening," wherein "previous explanations are understood as inadequate in explaining an individual's life" (n. 8). It is in this sense that Pnina Werbner, in "Divided Loyalties," identifies the Rushdie affair as a key moment in the development of British Muslim identity politics, to the extent that we can view Smith's Muslim characters as allegorical instances of British Muslim men in general. When Millat insists that "you don't have to read shit to know it's blasphemous" (WT 194), he exposes his lack of "religious literacy," and this "appears to be a common feature among those who are drawn to extremist groups" (Choudhury n. 58). This is because those "exploring their faith for the first time are not in a position to objectively evaluate whether the radical group represents an accurate understanding of Islam" (Choudhury n. 11). It is interesting that Smith, as early as 2001, recognized this crisis as experienced by young Muslim men, for it has become even more relevant since the 7/7 London bombings. Take, for instance, the following statement from *Al-Muhajiroun's* terrorist leader Omar Bakri Mohammed, who is known for his "glorification" of terrorism ("Al-Muhajiroun"): "If there is no racism in the West, there is no conflict of identity … If there is no discrimination or racism I think it would be very difficult for us" (Wiktorowicz 90). It is important that the "social imaginary" comes to contain an understanding of the implications of his statement so that better ways can be found to provide healthy options for young British Muslims as they negotiate their identities.

The role of religion in identity formation among the Indian diaspora in Britain has long been evident. In a study prior to the Rushdie affair, Tariq Modood et al. show that

"Muslim identity was listed by 80 per cent of South Asian Muslims as an important identity item" (Choudhury n. 16). It might be considered surprising that Millat's deteriorating behavior parallels his increasing interest in religion, but here Modood, et al. make an important observation when their research shows that the "emergence of Muslim identification is not related to an increase in religiosity … but becomes prominent, paradoxically, as people become British" (17). Perhaps this is because migrants' increasing security in their Britishness grants them opportunity to explore other parts of their identities. Like many other British students, the children in White Teeth, attend a school that "organizes a great variety of religious and secular events: amongst them, Christmas, Ramadan, Chinese New Year, Diwali, Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, the birthday of Haile Selassie, and the death of Martin Luther King" (WT 129). As numbers of followers of Islam, among other religions, have increased in Britain, the forum for discussing different religions has broadened. Since the publication of White Teeth, the immediate reaction of some people to terrorist attacks saw increases in anti-Muslim feelings. In the most part, this unfortunate response was temporary and the resulting exposure has in some ways contributed to increased discussion and understandings and respect of difference in Britain.

The large turnout of young black British at the Rushdie book burning made clear continuing anger among Britain's black youth. While race relations had improved after the 1981 Scarman Report, which was commissioned by Parliament after the Brixton "race" riots, Gilmour still saw problems. For him, rather than properly understand the difficulties of young black British life, Scarman had blamed second-generation immigrants' identity crises on crime-ridden cultural and generational conflict and the resulting family breakdown (105). Indeed, as the BBC reports, Scarman, acknowledging missed opportunity, would later admit that he could have been "more outspoken about the necessity of affirmative action to overcome racial disadvantage" (BBC "The Scarman Report").

Millat's feeling of insignificance, created by his experiences of racism and by his separation from Magid, is energized by his involvement in the Rushdie affair, and he becomes susceptible to the influence of a Muslim fundamentalist "political group" which has "[n]othing to do with Islam proper" (WT 288). As Buddha's Anwar's absolutism was

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not stimulated by a genuine religiosity neither is Millat's. His interest is stimulated when Hifan, one of his old "crew," introduces him to Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation, KEVIN. It is neither politics nor religion that attracts Millat, though, but Hifan's suit which Millat covetously describes as "gangster stylee!" Ironically, then, Millat is drawn to this Eastern group less by familial cultural ideology than by his obsession with Hollywood gangster movies. Further, Millat is impressed not with the subversive promise of their group name, but by the "wicked kung-fu kick-arse sound" of it (WT 245). He is less enthusiastic about the notion of giving up drugs, as KEVIN demands, but thinks that "perhaps [he] should" think differently: Millat, as he tries to negotiate his cultural heritage and daily life in Britain, is in inner turmoil (WT 246).

Millat's sexual identity is formed on a framework of promiscuity, and he routinely engages in sex outside his relationship with his long term girlfriend; like Karim, sex for Millat is perfunctory. But as he matures, he comes to realize that his girlfriend "Karina Cain was different. It wasn't just sex with Karina Cain" (WT 307). KEVIN, however, does not approve of Karina, who wears Western fashions, and group members demonstrate their disapproval by giving Millat leaflets with titles like "Who is Truly Free? The Sisters of KEVIN or the Sisters of Soho?" (WT 246). Millat is challenged to replace his love for the "Western" Karina with KEVIN's version of Eastern faith, although the group is characterized by politics seemingly informed as much by the politically-charged lyrics of the American hip hop group Public Enemy as by the Koran. Meanwhile, Millat's lack of knowledge in his Muslim faith leaves him ill-equipped to judge the soundness of KEVIN's theological arguments, and this increases his susceptibility to their fundamentalist teachings. Millat is typical of the young men who are drawn to such groups—young men who are trying to negotiate ways of being Indo-British and who have not previously practiced religion nor been involved in political movements (Choudhury n. 8). While Millat is attracted by the style, the brotherhood and sense of belonging that KEVIN seems to offer him, his persona is informed by anger and mental turmoil, both at racists and now at his twin brother who is becoming increasingly Westernized. Desperate to find means of framing his identity, Millat is not particularly concerned that it is "an extremist faction dedicated to direct, often violent action, a splinter group frowned on by the rest of the Islamic community" (WT 390).

In <u>Race Masculinity and Schooling</u>, Louise Archer writes that Muslim masculinity is "constructed through various positioning of self and others, particularly through 'ownership' and 'control' of women" (qtd. in Choudhury n. 24). KEVIN's appeal to Millat to give up his Western girlfriend is directed toward his sense of masculinity as it is understood by the group's own teachings. Peter Hopkins has shown that when discussing gender, Muslim men tend to identify the home as the appropriate place for women. In an attempt to distance themselves from Western perceptions of South Asian culture as sexist, they incline toward representing men and women as equal under Islamic law. In reality, however, these males often adopt "contrary masculine subject positions." Hopkins finds that some Muslim men "simultaneously argue that men and women are equal in Islam whilst advocating sexist stereotypes about their expectations of Muslim women" (qtd. in Choudhury n. 26). Smith's KEVIN, espousing the "liberation of the veil," says that women who wear the veil are "*Free from the shackles of male scrutiny and the standards of attractiveness, the woman is free to be who she is inside, immune from being portrayed as sex symbol and lusted after as if she were meat on the shelf to be picked at and looked over*" (<u>WT</u> 310). Millat's sexually promiscuous history indicates that he has not previously thought along these lines, but after reading KEVIN's leaflets about women's role, he feels "peculiar" and finds that Karina "irritated him more than she had managed in [a] whole year…. And it was not clear to him why" (<u>WT</u> 307). Millat's confusion is the first sign that KEVIN's teachings are becoming part of his unconscious and the framework of his identity. Tyrone, aware of the advantage that KEVIN now holds, draws Millat in further by making a further direct appeal to his sense of masculinity: "at the moment you are half the man. We need the whole man" (<u>WT</u> 308). Millat's identity, similar to Kureishi's Karim, is framed not only by cultural heritage and generational difference, but by contemporary popular culture, gender and sexuality.

Tyrone's challenge evidently persuades Millat to further underpin his identity with KEVIN's philosophies, and through Millat's new subject position he begins to understand his girlfriend differently. He finds himself hiding the leaflet from her, "[w]hich was weird" because "[h]e usually showed Karina everything" (<u>WT</u> 308). Smith further represents Millat's changing subjectivity through his relationship with Karina,

who Millat was not interested in out of any religious inclination but because he was sexually attracted to her "at a local party when he saw a flash of silver pants, a silver boob-tube, and a bare mound of slightly protruding belly rising up between the two with another bit of silver in the navel" (WT 309). M. Macey has shown that "young Muslim men place importance on appropriate gender roles … [and] dress … as a method whereby they can control the freedom and choice of young women" (qtd. in Choudhury n. 25). Millat does not learn this attitude from his father or the mosque, but from KEVIN's teachings, for whom "the leaflets made things *clearer*" (WT 309). Millat now aligns his beliefs with KEVIN's and thinks that Karina is "'prostituting herself to the male gaze.' Particularly white males" (WT 309). Millat changes his mind because the appeals KEVIN makes to his masculinity are tied to the way he feels about the racist abuse he has suffered all his life, and this is in turn linked to religion. Fundamentalist groups typically use this tactic as a recruitment tool because they understand, often by experience, that the way individual Muslims feel they are excluded from society is an important factor in their potential to become radicalized as they negotiate their identities (Choudhury n. 7).

Millat then is representative of young Muslim men in Britain, particularly as they try to form their identities, and he demonstrates how they can, out of a need to feel included and valued, become involved with radical political movements. These behaviors come about as a response to their mistreatment by the dominant white society, particularly as they develop an awareness of their right to self-determination, and begin to demand it. The pattern of isolative mechanisms established against earlier immigrants like Selvon's "boys," Kureishi's Haroon, and Samad acquires new, more dangerous possibilities because of late twentieth-century fundamentalism, which presents itself as another space for negotiating identity. Immigrants, because of their mixed cultural heritages and dark skin, were marginalized as not "properly" British. When emergent fundamentalist political groups give them the opportunity to perform as an integral part of a group, it is not surprising that many, especially young, psychically flexible, Asian British youths are happy to try on this new, inclusive identity. The cosmopolitan tolerance that might have arisen out of the struggles of earlier immigrant generations failed to come to fruition and the pull of "the one," "the pure" started to push back uncannily.

Smith suggests that it is not only young Muslim men who become involved in groups like KEVIN. Several older men, flattered to have been asked for financial aid, join the group. Mo, the local halal butcher, joins them because he is looking for a way to respond to eighteen years as "a victim of serious physical attacks and robbery" (WT 391). He accompanies the group to the FutureMouse exhibition. It is, however, the involvement of young men that is particularly worrying, and it is these young disillusioned Indo-British who are the main targets of fundamentalist recruiters.

As Walter Benjamin says in "Theses on the Philosophy of History," the present must be understood as "the time of the now," which Homi Bhabha contrasts with an earlier concept of national identity as existing like "the dead hand of history that tells the beads of sequential time like a rosary, seeking to establish serial, causal connections" (Location 6). Following Benjamin, I think it evident that Samad's experience of immigration is situated in a different, albeit overlapping, temporal space than his sons', their diasporic experience is inevitably different. Original immigrants, as represented by Samad, although more than Selvon's poverty bound lonely Londoners, had little opportunity for forming groups, were less confident in claiming their rights and inclined to accept their marginalization. They were perhaps, as Samad was, more inclined to look back to their past to find ways of constructing their identity, whereas subsequent generations do not have that same connection with another country.

Smith paints a hopeful picture for contemporary multicultural Britain in her often hilarious novel but, in her study of Millat's radicalism, recognizes a deeper malaise that can be seen to prefigure events, such as the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the London train bombings, both occurring after the publication of White Teeth. When asked if the reaction to her novel has changed in light of 9/11, Smith responded that she had not done a public reading since then, but that White Teeth shows how ideology sometimes becomes "so twisted" around principles that people

> will sacrifice major parts of their own lives and other people's lives for that principle. To me that's an absurdity…. These things start small and they start in people's heads. To try and ignore that, or to try to ignore the human element of it doesn't seem to me particularly healthy. (PBS)

Poverty is a large factor in racism, which Smith demonstrates is the catalyst that sends some of Britain's young Muslim citizens, deprived as they are of an equal place in

society, into fundamentalist groups. Britain must play its part in freeing young Muslims from the racism that can lead to the breeding of fundamentalist groups and make it easier for them to find ways of feeling truly British. This, in turn, can facilitate the uprising of Muslims "against the obscurantist hijacking of their religion" (Lechner 358).

The turning of some of Britain's young Muslims to fundamentalist politics and religion is only one of the many themes explored in White Teeth, but this topic is worthy of individual attention because it has proven to be of great importance in developing Britain's twenty-first century "social imaginary" with regards to understandings of what it is to be British. By the 1980s, Britain's migrant communities were increasingly united in the fight for equality, but this unity was dealt a severe blow by the "Rushdie affair." In "Britain's Black and Asian Communities Have Squandered the Unity That Gave Us Strength" (2005), Yasmin Alibhai-Brown writes that in the public response to the burning of The Satanic Verses the "spirited and united resistance [was] ripped to bits" (Para 8). Britain's immigrant population was in danger of separating into disparate minorities, and of once again being regarded as "enemies within." As Alibhai-Brown suggests, to prevent such divisiveness the entire population must bear joint responsibility for continuing to find better ways of living together as British. This responsibility includes understanding difficulties that arise at points of intersection of cultures and the literature in this study aids this. White Teeth hints at possible causes of divisiveness, at some of the perils the "social imaginary" faces. Yet, while improvements must be ongoing, the benefits of a multicultural national identity are now widely recognized and "multiplicity is no illusion" (WT 385). As Smith writes, the twentieth century was "the century of strangers, brown, yellow, and white.… the century of the great immigrant experiment" (WT 271). Within fifty years of the arrival of the SS Empire Windrush at London, a multicultural population is evident even in peoples' names and "you can walk into a playground and find Isaac Leung by the fish pond, Danny Rahman in the football cage, Quang O'Rourke bouncing a basketball, and Irie Jones humming a tune" (WT 271). For, as Smith said in "An Interview with Zadie Smith," "This is what modern life is like"; the families in White Teeth offer, as Nick Bentley writes in Contemporary British Fiction, "a microscopic image of Britain at the end of the millennium" (53). By the end of the

twentieth century, despite the need to stay alert to challenges like those posed by fundamentalism, Britain's "social imaginary" can properly be considered multicultural.

The three novels in this study reappraise the myths of Empire and chart the development of multicultural Britain. We have seen how, despite Britain's intransigence, immigrants like Selvon's "boys" gradually made their mark on Britain's landscape and, step by painful step, began to lay the foundations of a new reality for future generations. They did this even as they psychically stagnated under the pressures of finding ways to survive in a hostile, nationalist Britain, and so failed to become self-actualized.

The determination and resilience of these early colonial migrants meant that those following could have different expectations. Kureishi's Haroon became part of the conservative establishment, and worked at the center of Empire, but as part of rather than in resistance to it. After conforming for years to an adopted British identity, Haroon experiences a coming of age alongside his teenage son, Karim. Haroon's transformation is not fully realized and, rather than construct his own identity, he adopts another ready-made one that panders to Western desires for Eastern spirituality. Especially because he sees his father negotiate his identity, Karim understands his own character as fluid. Compared to his father, he is more aware of racism, and through family experience and a variety of friendships and sexual encounters, he negotiates his own identity across traditional boundaries of ethnicity, sexuality, and gender among other things. Karim, who is born into an increasingly multicultural Britain, has a much stronger awareness of his right to be understood as "properly" British, and as he matures he develops the strength and mental elasticity to demand those rights.

We have seen how, in 1981, Lord Scarman explained blacks' identity crises largely on the "generation gap," and Zadie Smith does not shy away from this issue in White Teeth. She shows how this is just one part of the challenge, but that teenagers like Millat do find ways to frame their British identity through the negotiations of family life. Millat, even at a younger age than Karim, sees other migrants form radical groups to demand their rights. He has a sense of his entitlement to be accepted as fully British, and because he is brought up in a more radical time, instinctively grabs an opportunity to action when it is presented to him. As a result of his identity confusion, he joins a

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[11] Phillips, Mike. "As Racism Fades into My Memory."

fundamentalist political religious group that does offer him a sense of belonging and in this way forces Britain to acknowledge him.

Prejudice arises from a fear of the unknown. Through the novels in this study, Sam Selvon, Hanif Kureishi and Zadie Smith break down essentialized notions of immigrants. Through the popularity of these novels, the British "social imaginary" has expanded to include knowledge of West Indians and Asians as complex human beings with individual personalities. These novels and the dialogue that occurs around them have helped the British "social imaginary" to better accomodate difference. Britain is increasingly diverse and previously held notions of identity have been deconstructed and are now understood as more fluid. This study has shown that contemporary authors accurately reflect the experiences of individuals in the Black British community. Their writing has followed a trajectory that, similar to the larger community, has built on what came before; it has become increasingly confident and multicultural. Selvon's black male Londoners give way to Kureishi's mixed culture male and female characters and Buddha also addresses sexual identity. Smith's novel includes an even broader cultural range of characters with diverse sexualities. As previously acknowledged, the focus of this study has been on males and there is broad scope for many further investigations of culture, gender and sexuality, particularly in White Teeth. Smith's life among the community she represents in White Teeth gave her an insight into troubles that, at the time of the novel's publication, were still ahead, an insight that the British establishment seemingly lacked. She lends an understanding of at least part of the reason for Britain's Muslim youths' involvement in anti-Western radical fundamentalism. Reports used in the current study formalize some of Smith's suggestions.

Starting from Britain's nationalistic fear of hybridity in the 1950s, the novels in this study have shown the trajectory of how colonial immigrants found ways of being accepted as British. Britain has come to understand hybridity as being full of potential, and to recognize the huge import that the black and Asian communities have as an integral part of Britain. Dominic Casiani writes for the BBC that Trevor Phillips, now chair of the Commission for Racial Equality in the UK, acknowledges the UK as now being "a much changed place at ease with racial diversity—even if problems still remain" (para.5). In "As Racism Fades into my Memory, It Begins Yet Again for Others," Phillips

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writes that in Britain, "It is easy to note the contrasts with that other time, 50 years ago, in the ease with which most black people navigate the city" (n.p.).

As Claire Squires writes, <u>White Teeth</u>'s suggestion of Britain as "Happy Multicultural Land" (<u>WT</u> 384), is satirical and utopic, as signaled not only by the novel's tone and narrative, but by its compound noun and capitalization (465). Nevertheless, contemporary multicultural British literature shows that, since the arrival of the SS Empire Windrush, concepts of what Britishness is have changed. Contemporary British literature has facilitated better understandings of difference and the British "social imaginary" now encompasses understanding that, as Charles Taylor writes, "misrecognition can inflict harm" (25). The black and Asian populations are no longer treated as "*blank people*" (<u>WT</u> 384) but are valued and equal citizens in multicultural British society.

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