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The Immigrant Experience in V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival and Z. Smith's White Teeth*: An Exploration of Homi Bhabha's Postcolonial Theory

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Additional information is available at the end of the chapter

Abstract

V.S. Naipaul and Z. Smith, prominent postcolonial authors, reflect the condition of the immigrants suffering from cultural shock, hybridity, fragmentation and mimicry in the postcolonial Western societies in their novels, *The Enigma of Arrival* and *White Teeth*. The former portrays the desperate condition of an author doing his best to create his work in the post-war West, in London and New York, trying to overcome his hybridity and adaptation problems due to his cultural background, and the latter sheds light on the cultural distress of two families from Bangladesh, immigrating to London, by stressing the conflicts between the Westerners and the Easterners and between the first and the second generations of immigrants. Thus, these two novels highlight the immigrant experience illustrating the impact of power relations between the former colonized and the former colonizer upon their relationship in the postcolonial era. In this study, the problems of immigrants in the post-war West in these novels will be analysed in the light of Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory, which puts forward such concepts as hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, cultural differentiation and otherness. In this regard, Bhabha's theory will be adapted into these novels to identify cultural problems of immigrants in these works.

Keywords: V.S. Naipaul, Z. Smith, Homi Bhabha, postcolonialism, immigration, orientalism, other, otherness, hybridity, mimicry, adaptation, multiculturalism

1. Introduction

Colonialism, determining the political, economic and social structure of countries from the beginning of the sixteenth century, had a great influence upon the social position and the

cultural values of the colonized. It is undeniable that England played a very significant role as the colonizer by controlling many Asian, African and American nations during the colonial age; so England, socially, economically and politically, dominated different countries whose social and cultural notions were replaced with the English norms. The personal identity of the colonized experienced a radical transformation, which resulted in otherness, fragmentation, hybridity and mimicry as a consequence of multiculturalism as put forward by the postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha. In this respect, the power of the English nation as the colonizer was dominant not only in the colonial era but also in the postcolonial period. In this sense, even after the independence of the colonies ruled by England, the conflicts between the former colonized and the former colonizer could still be recognized, particularly when these two opposite groups came together in the postcolonial age as a result of the former colonized's immigration to England.

In order to identify these conflicts in the light of Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory, two postcolonial novels will be analysed in this chapter. One of them is, Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul's the autobiographical novel, *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), which portrays the cultural trauma of an immigrant from Trinidad, especially in England but also in New York by referring to the enigma the novelist himself experienced when he immigrated from Trinidad to England. The character's dilemma due to his Trinidadian background in English culture clearly shows the author's inner conflict because of his hybridity. In this sense, the influence of Naipaul's own Trinidadian background and education in England upon the protagonist in his novel is obvious.

Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) also reflects the condition of the former colonized, the immigrants coming from Bangladesh to England by revealing the psychological trauma and the cultural conflicts these immigrants experienced in England in the post-war age. Especially Smith's coming from a multicultural family, her being torn between Jamaican and English heritage due to her mother's Jamaican nationality and her father's English origin, their years in the post-war England, contributed much to her effective portrayal of the immigrant trauma in her novel *White Teeth*. While dealing with the struggles of the in-between immigrants in these two works, Homi Bhabha's postcolonial philosophy will be explored and adapted into these novels.

Thus, one can clearly observe the same cultural torment, isolation and alienation the formerly colonized people suffered from during the colonial age and also in post-WWII England, the postcolonial West, in these two works. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to question the metaphorical practices of colonialism in the postcolonial era and its impact upon the immigrants in the postcolonial age by analysing the condition of the immigrant characters in *The Enigma of Arrival* and in *White Teeth.*

2. Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory

Analysing Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory, it should be stated that his emphasis, in his work, *The Location of Culture*, on concepts such as hybridity, ambivalence, otherness, cultural difference and mimicry played a significant role in refiguring postcolonial theory.

In Bhabha's postcolonial theory, the influence of Edward Said's postcolonial approach cannot be ignored. Said pays special attention to the discrepancies between the culture of the West and the East by introducing the term "Other" for the Easterners, which illustrates the gap between the "metropolitan culture" and the culture of the "Other." In other words, he asserts that the differences between the "centre" and the "peripheries" can effectively be explored by a "hybrid," who can combine his/her non-Western culture with the Western norms, so in his work *Orientalism*, Said defines "Orientalism" as a way of understanding the traditions and the habits practised in the Orient and accepting its distinctive position in the rise of Europe [1].

According to Said, the West should not ignore the special cultural position of the non-Westerners; the non-Westerners should not be defined as the "Other" and they should live in harmony together. The close interaction between the Orient and the Occident during the colonial period led to the diversity of cultures and brought different cultures together in an environment; however, it also caused the separation between these groups. Said's analysis of these cultural conflicts brought about his theory, "Orientalism," which is also explained by the author himself as the distinction between "the Orient" and "the Occident" [1].

The discrepancies between the Orient and the Occident, which have been discussed in literary, philosophical and political texts, were regarded as problematic issues causing the strict distinction between the East and the West. Analysing the living styles, social norms, daily habits and viewpoints of the Easterners, many writers questioned the gap between the two parts. Said's emphasis on these concepts influenced Bhabha and he elaborated his postcolonial theory owing to Said's philosophy, accordingly Bhabha also contributed so much to revising postcolonial philosophy. First of all, the term "hybridity" is put forward by Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture*. According to his remarks, "split-space" emerging in the postcolonial era led to an "international culture" [2]. When one considers the term "international culture," it can be asserted that it does not signify the official concept of multiculturalism, but diversity, plurality of cultures and cultural hybridity. Hybridity here refers to the "in-between space," in which contradictory cultures come together and clash. Thus, this concept may suggest a new position for the postcolonial subjects. Instead of just celebrating the mysterious sense of cultural plurality, Bhabha tries to understand the feelings of people, who are in-between hybrids, and identify their relationship with society in the postcolonial period.

Another term he suggests is ambivalence to emphasize the status of the postcolonial people in multicultural societies. The contradictory status of the immigrants in the postcolonial West and their conflicts due to their hybridity caused them to suffer from ambivalence. According to Bhabha, owing to ambivalence, colonial stereotype appears and the colonized's duality of identity comes to the fore [2]. The "colonial stereotype," the powerful position of the colonizer and the powerless status of the colonized, comes to the fore as a result of ambivalence, which determines the position of identities, their relationships with each other and their attitudes towards one another. Therefore, the contradictory approach portrayed towards the former colonized in the postcolonial era can also be defined as one of the reasons leading the immigrants, the ex-colonized, to cultural trauma. In this manner, the former colonized were also exposed to otherness

as Bhabha points out: "[…] colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an "other" and yet entirely knowable and visible" [1]. In other words, the colonized, during the colonial and even in the postcolonial period, were considered to be the "other," the stranger, the alien and the isolated, who suffered from their secondary position because of their cultural differences. These cultural differences brought about stereotyped roles, which intensified the trauma of the ex-colonized. In order to be accepted by the former colonizer in the post-colonial epoch, they had no choice but to mimic, imitate the manners of Westerners. Bhabha suggests that mimicry refers to the other's inappropriate and complex situation when he/she tries to be appropriate among the colonizer and it leads to the conflicts between the colonized and the colonizer due to the differences emerging between the two sides [2].

In this regard, the colonized people's mimicking the colonizer was a sign of rejecting their own identities and cultural values for the sake of acceptance in the postcolonial West, and consequently, they felt inappropriate due to their otherness and hybridity. Ironically enough, the more they tried to get rid of their personal identities, the more they suffered because of this rejection. Their being torn between their origins and the norms of the ex-colonizer turned out to be contradictory in this sense, as consequence Bhabha, in the "Introduction" part of *Nation and Narration,* asks: When did we become "a people"? When did we stop being one? [3], which proves that he supports cultural unity and rejects othering individuals due to their cultural differences.

3. V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival*

V.S. Naipaul, as a hybrid novelist, portrays the influence of colonialism on the ex-colonized even in the postcolonial epoch in his novel, *The Enigma of Arrival*. In the novel, the impact of Naipaul's own background upon the reflection of the protagonist's sufferings because of his hybridity can be realized. Considering the biography of the author, it is clear that his own experiences dominate his novel. Trinidadian author, having an Indian immigrant family, receiving his university education at University College, Oxford, suffered from hybridity. On the one side, as he was familiar with his environment and people in his homeland, it was easier for him to lead his life there. On the other side, since there was no opportunity for him to broaden his mind and enlarge his vision in his homeland, he wanted to move to England [4]. But, in the West, he was exposed to cultural trauma and adaptation problems because of his in-between status.

In this sense, one of the most significant novels of Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival*, is a striking reflection of his own hybridity and his experience of otherness and multiculturalism, the aspects that can be observed in Bhabha's postcolonial theory. In the autobiographical novel of the author, the protagonist trying to discover his personal identity through writing makes him recognize his own hybridity, otherness and dilemma due to his immigration from Trinidad to London and New York. Thus, in the novel, it is apparent that Naipaul reflects his own experiences as Barnouw highlights:

> *Quintessentially a traveler, Naipaul has inhabited a large part of the world, looking at its amazing variety and trying to imagine the strangeness of people in different places and times. The experience*

of cultural plurality moved him to seek out other's stories, and the symbiosis of recording and writing found already in his early texts reflects the responsibilities of writing out of others' articulated experiences, of transforming something already formed [5].

Naipaul's recognizing "variety" of people and "strangeness" of each individual in a plural and multicultural world shows that he achieved identifying the stories of different people in different cultures during his life and bringing them together with his own story. In the same manner, the protagonist in *The Enigma of Arrival*, like Naipaul himself, and those he observed throughout his life, can also be regarded as appropriate examples reflecting the sufferings of the postcolonial subjects. In the novel, the way how the protagonist describes his feelings when he first arrives in England shows that he does not belong to the land as a stranger and his "strangeness" makes him uncomfortable [6]. In this respect, in the very beginning, he is aware of his "strangeness" and the difficulty to adapt into the new environment as observed through his own words: "The idea of ruin and dereliction, of out-of-placeness, was something I felt about myself, attached to myself: a man from another hemisphere, another background. […]. I felt unanchored and strange" [6]. The character referring to "out-of-placeness" and his emphasis on his "unanchored and strange" position prove that he is in a cultural shock and thinks that his position in England is improper and absurd due to his Trinidadian background. The reason why problems between the immigrants and the natives occurred in the postcolonial age was that the native people in the West regarded the position of immigrants as a threat to cultural unity. In this respect, Bhabha's concept of hybridity can be defined as a challenge to authority, to the Westerners [7]. Because of their cultural differences, the hybrids would bring their own cultural values to the West and undergo cultural clash with the Westerners, so it might be regarded as a risk by the Western society; although the protagonist in the novel has not experienced a negative reaction from the English in this part of the novel, he assumes that his cultural norms and the living style he has adopted in Trinidad cannot be reconciled with those in England. As a result, when the character experiences the oddity of his own cultural values, together with his environment and its norms, he realizes that the process of adaptation will be hard to overcome. The more he feels inappropriate in the West, the more he begins to feel inferior, so even the house he begins to lead his life, in his own eyes, comes into view as the symbol of perfection, which is not suitable for an immigrant like him, as he emphasizes: "It could have been said that the perfection of the house in whose grounds I lived had been arrived at forty of fifty years before […]. Fifty years ago there would have been no room for me on the estate; even now my presence was a little likely" [6].

The house the protagonist begins to lead his life is perceived very magnificent by him, so he believes that the builder and the designer of the house could not have imagined that an immigrant from Trinidad with Indian heritage would stay in such a kind of splendid house. Fifty years ago, before the independence of the colonies, it could not have been possible for the former colonized to move to the West and live in houses in good conditions. Thus, it is not wrong to assert that the condition of the former colonies in the postcolonial period cannot be defined as totally good and this situation "would allow us to include people geographically displaced by colonialism such as African Americans or people of Asian or Caribbean origin in Britain as 'postcolonial' subjects although they live within metropolitan cultures" [8]. Here Bhabha's emphasis on the contradictory impact of cultural differences and otherness

upon the colonized can be recognized. The protagonist's feeling as the "other" in the postcolonial West because of his cultural difference is obvious in the novel. In this regard, Bhabha "argues that colonial discourse is agonistic, split and contradictory, so that it never fully manages to assert a fixed and stereotypical knowledge of the colonial Other as it sets out to do" [9]. This uncertainty leads the protagonist in the novel to feel uncomfortable. As a result, he feels like a "stranger" [6] despite the opportunities he has after his immigration to England. In this sense, it is hardly possible for an immigrant to forget his colonial past and the difficulties he/she was subjected to because of his position as the colonized during the colonial era. As the protagonist is aware of the impossibility to get rid of his former position, as the colonized, he indicates that his Trinidadian colonial past prevents him from achieving his ambition in writing and from being appreciated by the English [6].

His referring to his "peasant India, colonial Trinidad" shows that he is still under the influence of his Indian and Trinidadian background, which follows him even in the postcolonial period; even if he tries to begin a new life in England after the colonial age, it is hard for him to adapt into the new environment, which is defined "unaccommodating." However, in spite of his discomfort in England after immigration, he reveals his ambition to immigrate to England before his immigration and the dilemma he suffers from after his arrival: "I had dreamed of coming to England. But my life in England had been savorless, and much of it mean. I had taken to England all the rawness of my colonial's nerves […]" [6]. What he underlines is that the problem here is not with the English people but with his crisis of personal identity due to his cultural problems. Bhabha's focus on the identity crisis and otherness of the hybrid colonized in Western societies among the Westerners, the colonizer, comes into view in this part. In this respect, "[…] cultural hybridity has become instead a reflexive moral battleground between cultural purists and cultural innovators, a cultural 'thing' in itself, defined in a field of contestation" [10]; therefore, in this battleground, the protagonist is in a cultural conflict and tries to adapt into the culture of the host country.

The disillusionment of the protagonist after feeling lonely, isolated and alienated in England can also be linked with his cultural and racial difference and it can be observed in the novel; what he expects about England before his arrival turns out to be disappointment after his arrival, because he does not feel that he belongs to the country; the social life and traditions in the country are not compatible with his own, and therefore, he assumes that he is a stranger in a foreign land in which he is frustrated when reality and fantasy contradict with one another: "I had come too late to find the England, the heart of empire, which (like a provincial, from a far corner of the empire) I had created in my fantasy" [6].

His searching for size in England proves that he wants to discover a more magnificent and powerful country than his own. Since he is isolated in a small island like Trinidad, he wants to explore a glorious country in which he aims at discovering splendid places he has never seen. Nevertheless, when he observes the power of the Westerners, he feels inferior, so it would be worth mentioning that with the onset of migration, power relations between the ex-colonized and ex-colonizer dominated the Western societies [11]; consequently, after his visit, the protagonist becomes disappointed when he realizes that even if London is better than Trinidad, it is not as splendid as he imagined before his visit, and particularly, his cultural trauma and

loneliness cause him to define the city and his condition with negative phrases; therefore, he expresses his disillusionment by stating that he is "ignorant, joyless […], lonely" in London because of the cultural gap between himself and the English [6].

The reason why he feels so lonely is that he does not have anyone with whom he can share his feelings in London; in other words, he cannot find the society he can familiarize with due to his cultural background. This proves that problems occur when the cultural values of the immigrants are "transferred from small, closed societies, to large and complex ones" [12]. In this respect, Bhabha's referring to ambivalence in the colonial and postcolonial texts comes to the fore as Malpas and Wake also state: "Even in the most confident colonial text, Bhabha suggests that there are moments of ambivalence: moments when it is possible to discern that the argument is contradictory" [9]. Even if the ex-colonies achieved their independence, when they came together with the ex-colonizer, the identities of the former colonized could not exactly be defined.

Although the protagonist longs for being a part of the Western society, what he experiences is just frustration as he cannot get on well with the English as a consequence of cultural differences. One of the reasons why he cannot adapt into the culture of the English and feels inferior is his educational level, so he says: "But in spite of my education, I was under-read. What did I know of London?" [6]. No matter how much he has received education in Trinidad, he feels that it is not enough for him to prove himself among the qualified English. The more he has an interaction with them, the more he assumes that it is hardly possible for him to become familiar with the English, who are more qualified, talented and educated than himself, so he indicates: "I found a city that was strange and unknown" [6]. In this respect, he is torn between his illusionary world and real world that he really encounters; even if it is a fantasy for him to move to England, to improve himself and to make use of the opportunities in the West, after his immigration he is really disappointed because of his fragmentation, hybridity and cultural background as observed: "I lost a faculty that had been part of me and precious to me for years. I lost the gift of fantasy, the dream of the future, the far-off place where I was going" [6]. Ironically enough, though the world of fantasy that the protagonist expects to find in London is the greatest ambition for him, after leading his life there for a period of time he gets bored and feels exhausted due to his cultural shock and hybridity, and therefore, he stresses that he is under the "weariness" of his "social, racial, financial […] insecurity" in England [6]. Throughout the process of writing his work, the protagonist is bored not only because of his efforts to create his book, but also as a consequence of his adaptation problems in a multicultural society, London. In this perspective, Bhabha's portrayal of the conflicts experienced by the colonized because of their cultural differences can be described as one of the reasons bringing about adaptation problems of the immigrants in the postcolonial West. Therefore, it is obvious that "[d]escriptions of multiplicity of the self usually stress its variations over time and the discontinuities among the identifications forced upon us by rapid change" [13]. In such a kind of changing world, the differences regarding the identifications of the ex-colonizer and the ex-colonized dominated the multicultural societies in the postcolonial era as seen in Naipaul's work as well.

Together with his identity crisis in England, the protagonist also refers to his identity problem in New York when he first arrives in the city. While he is writing his work in England, he

re-examines his immigration to New York and emphasizes how he feels as a stranger not only in London but also in New York, as a consequence he stresses: "Was there some fear of travel, in spite of my longing for the day, and in spite of my genuine excitement? Was this reaching out to people a response to solitude–since for the first time in my life I was solitary? Was it the fear of New York? Certainly" [6]. The fear of adaptation and the anxiety of being rejected by the American come to the fore, and therefore, he indicates that although it is the first time he is solitary in New York, the reason for his discomfort is not his state of solitariness but his fear of the foreign city, which proves that leaving one's homeland and immigrating to a new environment result in cultural shock. Moreover, his plane's late arrival at the airport in New York and the British Consulate officer's leaving the airport before meeting him cause him to feel distressed. In this regard, Bhabha's theory asserting the otherness of the colonized is also dominant in the novel. The otherness of the protagonist makes him more vulnerable. Since he is so sensitive because of his loneliness and isolation in the big city, he begins to blame the man from the consulate as he leaves him alone in the big city, so he is deceived by the taxi driver [6].

His being subjected to alienation on the first day of his arrival and the taxi driver cheating him make him feel despised, oppressed and othered. In this regard, he begins to blame the Westerners who do not help him or protect him, and consequently, he cannot get rid of this feeling of humiliation for many years. Under the negative impact of his being an immigrant and a foreigner in a foreign country, he cannot escape from the "panic" dominating himself and he indicates that he is "lost" in New York [6].

Feeling lost in his hotel room in New York, he regards himself as "suppressed, half true," which justifies that he is culturally depressed. Even if there were multiculturalist policies in Britain for the immigrants from the ex-colonial countries, it did not mean that the sufferings of immigrants because of their hybridity came to an end [14]. Since Bhabha's concept of ambivalence is also prevailing in the novel, due to this contradiction the protagonist cannot overcome his cultural trauma and feel comfortable.

Furthermore, as an immigrant from Trinidad, he has also suffered from lack of social and educational opportunities. So in New York, when he sees the newspaper, *The New York Times*, for the first time in his life, he feels that he does not belong to the city and he thinks that it is too late for him to improve himself completely due to the chances he has missed till that moment:

> *But to read a newspaper for the first time is like coming into a film that has been on for an hour. To understand them [newspapers] you have to take knowledge to them; the knowledge that serves best is the knowledge provided by the newspaper itself. It made me feel a stranger, that paper [6].*

The extract above shows that the former colonized did not have the opportunity even to read a newspaper in his homeland due to insufficiencies. Moreover, he thinks that even if he has the chance to read the newspaper after the colonial period, he does not have the knowledge to grasp the issues indicated in the newspaper, so he feels like a stranger once more when he realizes his inability to respond to them, as a result as Bauman suggests, "[a]ll societies produce strangers, but each kind of society produces its own kind of strangers, and produces them in its own inimitable way" [15]. The state of being strange can also be associated with Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and otherness, which caused the colonized to feel incomplete. In particular, when they encountered, after immigrating to the postcolonial Western societies,

the opportunities the colonizer benefited from, they felt more and more othered. Thus, in the novel, considering lack of opportunities for the colonized people during the colonial era, one can refer to the protagonist not having seen a French film before despite his readings about French films [6]; therefore, what makes him desperate is the insufficiency of social and educational facilities as he says along these lines:

> So much of my education had been like that, abstract, a test of memory: like a man, denied the chance of visiting famous cities, learning their street maps instead. So much of my education had been like that: monkish, medieval, learning quite separate from everyday things [6].

Although he received education before, it does not mean that he feels qualified enough to stand on his own feet; as an ex-colonized, he feels that he could not make the maximum use of educational chances due to his status. On the other hand, despite the fact that he has all the chances in the post-war West, it does not enable him to feel fortunate due to his fragmented identity. How he describes his position in a bookshop in New York shows that he is unfamiliar with the names and titles belonging to the West and he wants to see the familiar so as to escape his cultural trauma [6]. Even being surrounded by innumerable books in the New York bookshop does not make him feel joyful and satisfied as he is not familiar with all of the authors, as a result he feels humiliated, incomplete and hybrid due to his background. Therefore, he points out: "Yet, with the humiliations of my first twenty-four hours of travel, my first twenty-four hours in the great world, with my increasing sense of my solitude in this world, I was aware [...] that I felt no joy" [6]. Feeling despised and inferior, it is impossible for him to overcome his anxiety and cultural shock, so he cannot escape from feelings of loneliness, isolation and inferiority complex. Therefore, "[w]henever the process of identity formation is premised on an exclusive boundary between 'us' and 'them', the hybrid, born out of the transgression of this boundary, figures as a form of danger, loss and degeneration" [16], so the protagonist regards himself as the other, as "them" due to his hybridity, as a consequence he believes he will be considered to be a "danger, loss and degeneration." Bhabha's emphasis on the cultural otherness is obvious through the expressions of the character, who regards himself as the outsider because of his hybrid state.

In the light of the issues discussed, it is obvious that the protagonist struggles not only with his writing process, but also adaptation problems in London and in New York. Trying to cope with his hybridity and cultural difference, the protagonist reveals his colonial background and his dilemma due to his Indian, Trinidadian background and Western experience. In this respect, Bhabha's postcolonial concepts can also be recognized in *The Enigma of Arrival*, which demonstrates the inner conflict of an author because of his former colonial and postcolonial identities.

4. Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*

Britain is a multicultural country, which consists of various nations within itself. In particular, the immigrants, who came to Britain from different countries after World War II, constituted a significant part of Britain. Most of the immigrants migrated to Britain with great expectations in order to improve their living conditions with better job opportunities; however, they were faced with insufficient conditions, humiliation, poverty and misery, so

particularly after World War II, they suffered too much as a consequence of cultural trauma, racism and problems of otherness in Britain.

In this sense, Z. Smith's novel entitled *White Teeth* reflects the situation of the immigrants in Britain by portraying the oppression imposed on them due to their race. When Smith's cultural origin is taken into account, it can be deduced that her biography is compatible with the background of her characters in her novel. She was born in the north London suburb of Willesden to a Jamaican mother and an English father [17]. Therefore, coming from a multicultural family, Smith experienced the cultural values of these two countries and found the opportunity to observe the differences between the Jamaican and the English cultures. As a result in her novel, *White Teeth*, she effectively highlighted the conflicts between the cultural notions of immigrants and those of belonging to the English.

After World War II, Britain suffered from a severe labour shortage, especially in unskilled jobs and in service industries; therefore, the more there appeared people who decided to move from the rural areas of England to the growing urban areas of the country to work in the industrial centres, the more the ethnic profile of Britain changed [18]. As a result, cultural contradictions and inequalities became obvious because of different cultural norms, religious doctrines and traditions in British society.

In *White Teeth*, Smith sheds light on the isolation and alienation of the immigrants in England by showing the psychological trauma and cultural conflict these immigrants experience in the foreign country. In the novel, the difficult conditions people from different countries in England had to cope with in the postcolonial English society can be observed. In the work, the couple, Samad Iqbal and Alsana, who came to England from Bangladesh, represent those who are faced with suffering, degradation and racism due to their cultural, social and religious differences. In the novel, Samad is humiliated in English society because of his origin and culture. While he is looking for a more appropriate job, he starts to work as a waiter; however, he experiences nothing, but humiliation [19].

In this sense, it is obvious that the *other* is doomed to be isolated and humiliated at work in England. As a consequence, cultural distinction appears between the British citizens and the *others*, which places a significant priority on differences of skin colour. So although the post-war immigrants came to Britain from the Commonwealth to fill vacancies and labour shortage, they suffered from unemployment or from the harsh manners of the British employers [18]. Here Bhabha's concept suggesting the "in-between" position of the colonized can easily be realized as seen along these lines:

> […] *the borders that are conventionally assumed to exist between colonizer and colonized, East and West, self and Other, are refigured in Bhabha's theory of hybridity. Bhabha argues that borders presuppose a no-man's land, an in-between space that simultaneously divides and connects two areas. This space, he suggests, is productive and enabling. Using the biological terms 'hybrid' to denote the liminal position of the migrant, Bhabha celebrates the intermingling of cultures and contests the idea of cultural purity [9].*

What is ironic here is that, according to Bhabha, this re-figuration and theory of hybridity would propose cultural unity and harmony among different cultures, but in the novel, *White Teeth*, the result is not so promising. Therefore, Samad is suffocated owing to the class

distinction in the areas of employment, so he wants to challenge cultural discrimination and racism by revealing his identity and social position with a "placard" in society among the Westerners [19]; however, as indicated in the novel, "[b]ut, no such placard existing, he had instead the urge, the need, to speak to every man, and, like the ancient Mariner, explain constantly, constantly wanting to reassert something, anything," this shows that he suffers from cultural and racial discrimination and he wants to prove his identity among the English.

Furthermore, as an immigrant in the West, Samad and his family undergo economic depression and find it hard to survive as narrated along these lines: "The matter was … what was the matter? The house was the matter" [19]. Apart from experiencing the cultural trauma, immigrants were also subjected to accommodation problems in that period. Smith also portrays insufficient living conditions of the immigrants, struggling with poverty and inadequacy of their needs being met. In the novel, Alsana quarrels with Samad because of their poverty and their struggle to make a living as immigrants in English society. Her worries about their situation in the foreign land can be recognized in her dialogue with Samad:

> What is the point of moving here - nice house, yes, very nice, very nice-but where is the food? You fight in an old, forgotten war with some Englishmen…married to a black! Whose friends are they? These are the people my child will grow up around? Their children-half blacky-white? But tell me, where is our food? […] [19].

The immigrants clearly hoped to lead a comfortable life in England, but what they experienced was incompatible with their expectations, because they were exposed to insufficient living conditions and experienced financial problems, class distinction and poverty in England. In this sense, when the rate of income in England is taken into consideration according to the figures released by the Department of Social Security in July 1990, it is clear that "income inequality widened between 1979 and 1988, becoming greater than at any time since the Second World War" [20]. Income inequality and inadequacy of living and working conditions caused the immigrants to suffer, and similarly, Samad Iqbal undergoes the hardship of being a stranger in England, so he is degraded in the restaurant he works.

The reason why Smith creates immigrant characters suffering from cultural differences in the postcolonial West is that she wants to portray the difficulty for the immigrants to adapt into a new environment and to express themselves. Similarly, Bhabha also reflects the problematic and contradictory status of the hybrids in his work *The Location of Culture*, which "[…] is concerned with these dynamics of cultural difference and with finding ways that the subaltern can have voice, can have representation" [21].

Together with the problems related to the inequality between the English and the minority groups in the post-WWII Britain, the cultural conflicts also come to the fore in England as a result of migrants coming from different cultures. In *White Teeth*, the conflicts in terms of religion draw attention because of some problems between the two different cultures. For instance, when one of Samad's sons, Magid, wants to participate in the Harvest Festival at school, Samad objects, because as a Muslim he does not approve of Christian festivals, so he does not let Magid participate in the festival and says, *"I told you already. I do not want you participating in that nonsense. It has nothing to do with us, Magid. Why are you always trying to be somebody you are not?"* [19]. Furthermore, Samad decides to send back Magid to their native

land, Bangladesh, in order to isolate him from the cultural norms and social habits of the English and to make him stick to his own culture and religion [19]. This proves that Samad fears the fact that if Magid accepts his hybridity, he will be subjected to the risk of losing his original background; so he tries to lead his son to be non-hybridic. In this way, [f]or Bhabha the non-hybridic […] is a commitment to "unitary" or "originary" identity, identity as "presence […]" [22]. Therefore, Samad aims at protecting the "originary," and "presence" of his son. In this sense, his ideas related to his desire to protect his own culture and religion by sending his son to their homeland [19] can be interpreted as his panic about his son being an atheist in the West.

In the light of Samad's hesitation, it is obvious that he is worried not only about losing his own religion and culture as a consequence of being culturally influenced by the English traditions, but he also fears the fact that his children may negatively be influenced by the English culture. In this respect, it should be noted that the second generation, who has a tendency to adopt the English culture, experiences intergenerational difficulties and cultural conflict in the post-WWII England. As they have been brought up in England, they are more flexible in terms of adopting the English culture, but they are torn between their own roots and the English life style, as a result their hybridity leads them to mimicry. In this regard, "[t]hrough the concepts of hybridity and mimicry, Bhabha suggests an effectiveness of cultural difference that both resists enclosures of culture and displaces the exclusive power of colonialist discourse" [23]. Such a kind of "colonialist discourse" is also dominant in Smith's work. When the worries of Samad about his children are taken into account, he is aware of the fact that "it is not easy to escape mentally from a concrete situation, to refuse its ideology while continuing to live with its actual relationships" [24]. Being exposed to these "actual relationships," the second generation is more adaptable to the English life style. In *White Teeth*, striking examples related to the situation of the second generation draw attention; for instance, the son of Samad Iqbal and Alsana, Magid, does his best in order to be accepted by his English friends; therefore, on his ninth birthday, when his friends ask for "Mark Smith" instead of Magid, Alsana says: "Mark? No Mark here. You have the wrong house" [19]. This situation shows the desire of the second generation to be regarded as a part of the English society by eliminating their original characteristics. On the other side, the first generation does not want to lose their cultural heritage; therefore, Samad says: *"I give you a glorious name like Magid Mahfooz Murshed Mubtasim Iqbal! […] and you want to be called Mark Smith"* [19]. As the representative of the first generation, Samad rejects the Western norms and shows his anger towards his son when he wants to get rid of his cultural origin. It is known that Britain had an enormous power and authority over the other nations even in the postcolonial era, "the British Empire was thus viewed as the highest stage of the social organization" [25]. So Magid changes his name in order to find a position among the English. In addition, his desire to reject his origin and to adopt the Western traditions can also be observed in the novel. He is ashamed of belonging to an Eastern family, and the narrator reflects his desire to be from a Western family so that he would have the chance to join in the Harvest Festival [19].

As portrayed in the novel, Magid wants to escape his origins, his family and their traditions in order to be regarded superior and respectable by the Westerners, so he wishes that he had a chance to have a Western family, who practised Western habits and who allowed him to be

involved in Western practices like the Harvest Festival. On the other hand, his father Samad is strictly against his children participating in Western social life and their insisting on mimicking the Western habits; consequently, his discomfort with Magid's insistence on being a part of the Harvest Festival and his asking Magid to come with him to haj can be related to his worries about loss of personal identity. No matter how much Samad tries to change the mind of Magid, he fails and Magid rejects the pilgrimage to Mecca [19].

Magid rejecting his father's proposal about going to Mecca and his challenge against his father's hatred to Western values show that the first and the second generations from the East struggle with each other in the West because of the former's fear of losing their cultural principles and the latter's desire to devote themselves to the Western values. There is no doubt that immigrants whether belonging to the first or second generations experience cultural trauma when exposed to the postcolonial West. While the former tries to resist the Western way of life due to fear of losing their own values, the latter tries to mimic the Western habits in order not to be rejected and be despised by the Westerners. In this manner, the vulnerable position of the immigrants in the post-war West is also explained in the novel. It is stated that immigrants in the West have a tendency to repeat the manners of the Westerners, as a result they cannot escape the cultural trauma [19].

Like Iqbals in the novel, many immigrants from the East experienced similar problems leading them to a cultural trauma. It is inevitable for these immigrants to suffer from the term "original trauma," which is defined in the extract above. As they cannot escape from this trauma, they are familiar with it, but find it hard to overcome it. Highlighting the cultural trauma undergone by the immigrants in the postcolonial West, Smith portrays not only the problems of the Iqbal family, but also the desperate condition of the Jones family with whom the Iqbal family has a close relationship. In this respect, when Samad Iqbal's friend, Archie's daughter Irie is taken into consideration, she can also be regarded as the representative of the suffering second generation. Irie's father, Archie Jones, is a working class English man, whereas her mother, Clara, is a black Jamaican immigrant. Consequently, as the daughter of a multicultural family, she has been brought up in England in accordance with her origins; nevertheless, she is surrounded by the English environment in which she desires to be involved. As a result, like Magid, she also tries to resemble the English by trying to change her original characteristics. In particular, one of the experiences she is exposed to in class leads her to be ashamed of her race and culture. After the sonnet entitled *The Dark Lady* is read in a course at school, Irie asks whether she is really black or not. Her teacher, Mrs Roddy, indicates that The Dark Lady cannot be defined as black, because there was no possibility to see slaves in England in that period and only slaves can be titled as black [19].

The reply of the teacher makes Irie uncomfortable and she feels inferior due to the colour of her skin. Considering the position of the black immigrants in England, it is doubtless that "[t] he history of Blacks in Britain and in the entire Black Atlantic expresses the kinds of themes indicative of the general fragmentation process of the world system as well as the intellectual cosmopolitan reaction to that process […]" [26]. Because of her fragmented identity, Irie finds it hard to overcome her cultural adaptation problems. Dwelling on the reference to slavery in the extract, it can also be defined as disturbing for Irie as the teacher implies that only the

black can be slaves. Furthermore, she also feels uneasy when she has the idea that the prefer-ence for women was to be excessively pale in 1660s, and she believes that the situation has not changed since those days. This shows the isolation and alienation of the black immigrants in postcolonial English society. Although Irie is born in England, she is treated as if she were a foreigner due to the colour of her skin; in this sense, racism appeared in English society in the post-war era. As racism is a reactionary conception and suggests that there are physical and psychological inequalities between human races, this reduces black and Asian people's chances of success in postcolonial Britain and forces them to survive with low incomes [27]. When the racial issue in Britain is taken into consideration, the 1976 Race Relations Act draws attention. Even though it was put into practice in order to create a more peaceful environment in which all the races were equal and independent, discrimination and inequality in the post-war British society still continued to some extent [28]. In this respect, it is not surprising to see that Irie wants to change her curly, black hair into straight, reddish black hair for the sake of acquiring the appearance of the English women [19]. Nevertheless, the result is a disaster and Neena makes fun of Irie, so "Irie couldn't say anything for a moment. She had not considered the possibility that she looked anything less than terrific" [19].

It is obvious that even if Irie aims at resembling the English, the Western women, the result is nothing but a disaster for her as another character in the novel, Neena indicates. Since Irie does her best to look like an English by changing the originality of her hair, she hopes that she will be respected and admired by the others; however, she merely becomes an interesting topic for the people around herself who would like to make fun of her. The situ-ation shows that Irie feels uncomfortable due to her hybridity and wants to be recognized and accepted by English society, which is the source of superiority and power as stressed in the novel: "There was England, a gigantic mirror, and there was Irie, without reflection. A stranger in a stranger land" [19]. Her feeling like a "stranger in a stranger land" proves that she is under the pressure of cultural trauma, which causes her to regard herself inferior and powerless in the "gigantic mirror." The situation of the second generation can be related to Homi Bhabha's ideas about the efforts of the "hybrid others" to mimic the "Westerners." In this sense, "[h]ybridity is a term that Bhabha uses to describe the notion of mixed or hybrid identities which encompass the contradictory history of colonization, in contradis-tinction to the concept of a pure identity" [29]. Therefore, the attempts of the second genera-tion to mimic the English in *White Teeth* show that the young generation lose their "pure identities" and are involved with the English identities. For example, Magid wants to study English law, which makes his father Samad worried about the loss of their own origins and religious views, so he emphasizes as follows:

> *"Allah knows how I pinned all my hopes on Magid. And now he says he is coming back to study the English law. […]. He wants to enforce the laws of man rather than the laws of God. He has learnt none of the lessons of Muhammad […]"* [19].

Samad's fear for the future of his sons proves that he does not want to be lost in English society, which has altered the attitudes of his sons, their tendencies and habits. However, the more his sons interact with the English, the more they are accustomed to the living style and customs of the English, which makes not only Samad but also Alsana uncomfortable as she indicates: *"The English are the only people … who want to teach you and steal from you at the same*

time" [19]. In this manner, the second generations being under the undeniable influence of the Western culture and turning into Western traditions can be explained by the perspectives of Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, who define culture as a transformation, an active construction and experience [30]. In this sense, it can be deduced that one gains the cultural knowledge through a conscious learning process, so there is much to be gained by observation or participation. As a consequence, observing the customs of the English and participating in English social life, according to their parents, Magid and Irie turn out to be more English than the English. In fact, why they tend to adopt the English values and try to escape their own values is that they do not want to be excluded from the English society, even if in Bhabha's theory the issue emphasized is that "[…] members of postcolonial societies and minorities should not regard their ethnic or cultural traits as a limitation but as a potential wealth" [31].

Thus, immigrants undergo a process of cultural conflict and psychological trauma in the foreign country. In the novel, one of the events regarding the cultural clash between the immigrants and the English can be recognized, for instance, while Alsana, Clara and Neena, before Irie's birth, are talking about the name of the baby. Alsana advises Clara to give the name, Sarah, which her husband Archie likes. So she recommends her to please her husband and to be an obedient woman. In this sense, Alsana's niece Neena protests against the submissive and passive role attributed to women as follows: "There's got to be communication between men and women in the West […]" [19]. In this respect, the difference between Eastern and Western women is stressed in *White Teeth*; as an Eastern woman, Alsana has difficulty to express her ideas and to stand on her own feet, so she submits to the wishes of men, in this case to the wishes of her husband. As a consequence, Neena reminds her of the environment where she is leading her life and underlines the incompatibility of her obedient nature with the independent nature of the Western women in England. Although Alsana begins to become a part of the English way of life, she cannot break her ties with her own culture. When the gender issue in the nineteenth and twentieth century Eastern societies is taken into account, it is clear that women suffered from lack of independence. In this sense, Alsana's obedient aspect reflects her own cultural origin. The English culture and the culture of the East are contradictory. Although "[…] for Bhabha hybridity is a site of subaltern cultural and epistemological resistance to colonialism" [32], as observed in the novel, in some respects hybridity brings about serious clashes between the Easterners and the Westerners.

Considering the reaction of Samad, one of the immigrants belonging to the first generation, being against the Western norms, it is clear that he does not want to lose his personal identity, so he is against adopting all of the western notions for the sake of overcoming the adaptation problems, as a consequence when Archie calls him Sam instead of Samad, he turns out to be angry and says: "*'Don't call me Sam,' […], 'I'm not one of your English matey-boys. My name is Samad Miah Iqbal. Not Sam. Not Sammy. And not – God forbid – Samuel. It is Samad'*" [19]. Samad's anger after hearing that Archie calls him Sam is a signal of his fear of losing his identity, which is one of the most significant characteristics of the immigrants in the post-war West.

Coping with all these conflicts in England, the representatives of the second generation were oppressed due to the pressure imposed on them by their families and by the norms of English society. As a result, while one of the twin sons of Samad and Alsana, Magid turns out

to be an atheist, Millat becomes a militant [19]. So the pressure of being a part of two differ-ent cultures makes them suffer as the character, Joyce indicates in the novel: *"The fact is both these boys have serious emotional problems. They've been split up by their religions, by their cultures. Can you imagine the trauma?"* [19]. The cultural conflict leads Magid and Millat to emotional suffering, which brings about the feeling of uncertainty about their origins. The increasing number of British-born children of immigrant families suffered from cultural alienation and isolation in the post-WWII Britain [27]. In order not to be alienated and isolated, they mimic the English, and thus, "[b]y differently repeating the 'original culture', the 'self' of colonial culture splits, revealing its requirement for difference and otherness in order to be estab-lished as superior" [33].

In this manner, Samad Iqbal believes that it is the corruption in England which has destroyed his family and their cultural roots. He says: *"I have been corrupted by England, I see that now-my children, my wife, they too have been corrupted"* [19]. Since the customs and lifestyle in England are not in accordance with his Eastern culture, he regards the English culture as corrupted. In this sense, multiculturalism in England resulted in some cultural problems among those who made an effort to survive there despite all cultural, traditional and religious discrepancies. As mentioned in *Resistance Through Rituals*, culture is made up of many competing and conflict-ing groups and each of them defines itself through its distinctive way of life [34]. Therefore, in *White Teeth*, as a Muslim immigrant from Bangladesh, Samad Iqbal cannot reconcile with the English owing to his Eastern perspective and traditions, so he says: "I am corrupt, my sons are becoming corrupt, we are all soon to burn in the fires of hell" [19]. Similarly, Alsana objects the pressure of English culture upon her family: *"I am saying these people are taking my son away from me! They're Englishifying him completely! They're deliberately leading him away from his culture and his family and his religion"* [19]. Considering Bhabha's views about the conflicting relationship between the colonized and the colonizer, it is undeniable that the colonized people leaving their cultural values behind in the postcolonial Western societies and their adopting the culture of the West, the practice of mimicry, disturb the colonizer in a sense, because "[i]n mimicry the colonizer sees himself in a mirror that slightly but effectively distorts his image – that subtly and unsettlingly 'others' his own identity" [35]. The cultural contradictions in the postcolonial period between the two parts resulted in the "in-between" position of the ex-colonized in the dominance of the Western norms. In this respect, the domi-nance of English culture, customs and lifestyle oppressed the immigrants who came to Britain in the post-war epoch; therefore, Smith aims at bringing various people together in order to display their efforts to live together despite their sufferings. In an interview by O'Grady, Smith highlights her interest in combining various cultures with one another and analysing the position of the hybrid [36].

Consequently, since Smith comes from a culturally mixed family as well, she is interested in people's origins and ethnic identities and focuses on this in *White Teeth* by shedding light on different understandings of different nations, which turned out to be a problematic issue in England after WWII. Applying Bhabha's concepts to the novel, the characters immigrating to London from the East reflect his ideas. Thus, the reflection of the multicultural English society in the novel shows that "[…] the postcolonial subject comes to proclaim the death of national

literature" [37]; consequently, with the rise of postcolonialism, the condition of the "postcolonial subject" in cultural plurality was the issue analysed by many novelists, including Smith.

As observed throughout the analysis, in *White Teeth*, Smith portrays the interaction between the English and the immigrants in England in order to emphasize the cultural, religious and social differences between these people. Furthermore, she concentrates on the inner conflicts and sufferings of the immigrants due to their adaptation problems and reflects on the contradiction between the English and the Eastern cultures by creating characters with different social and cultural backgrounds. Thus, Smith deals with the immigrants' problems of acculturation and integration in England by dwelling on the emotional and psychological problems of both the first and the second generations. In this sense, while the first generation fears that they will lose their cultural roots as a result of their interaction with the English, the second generation is obsessed with adopting the English culture in order to be accepted by the English. As a consequence, the struggle between the first and the second generation of immigrants can be observed. In other words, not only the conflict between the English and the immigrants but also the difficulties between two generations of immigrant families draw attention in the novel. In this regard, Bhabha's postcolonial terms and concepts can be applied to the work. Smith demonstrates the conditions of a culturally mixed society in post-WWII England by stressing the cultural conflict between the English and the immigrants in the postcolonial English society.

5. Conclusion

In the light of the issues discussed in this chapter, it is clear that in postcolonial Western societies, in this case in England, one could recognize the cultural and social contradictions between the ex-colonized and the ex-colonizer. The conflict between the two parts caused divisions and disorder in these societies, as a result of which, particularly, the former colonized suffered due to their "in-between" status. In this regard, the novels analysed in this chapter, *The Enigma of Arrival* and *White Teeth,* can be regarded as prominent examples portraying the cultural trauma undergone by the ex-colonized in the postcolonial Western areas. The analysis shows that under the influence of E. Said's concepts of "Orientalism" and "otherness," H. Bhabha put forward his postcolonial theory with new terms and his postcolonial concepts can also be recognized in these novels.

The Enigma of Arrival, shedding light on the hybridity of an author trying to adapt into the Western culture in London and New York, illustrates the cultural contradictions of this isolated and alienated Trinidadian man with Indian heritage, like V.S. Naipaul himself. The story proves that it was cruel and challenging to be a hybrid in the postcolonial era. In *White Teeth*, the cultural distress of immigrants from Bangladesh in postcolonial London reflects the hardships experienced by the Easterners in the West and demonstrates the difficulty for immigrants to overcome their adaptation problems and the intergenerational difficulties. Similarly, Z. Smith's hybrid position can also be identified in the novel through the sufferings of the culturally excluded characters, who feel that they are the "other."

To conclude, both of the novels effectively highlight Bhabha's postcolonial concepts such as hybridity, otherness, cultural differentiation and ambivalence by putting emphasis on the cultural problems of immigrants torn between their own cultural values and the Western norms. "The cultural hybrid is therefore a complex building that both resembles and differs from the colonising agent" [38]. In *The Enigma of Arrival*, the hybrid character's feelings of isolation and otherness in the West come to the fore as a result of his inability to reconcile his own culture with the cultural norms of the West. In *White Teeth*, on the one side, the first-generation immigrants want to maintain their traditions but experience cultural adaptation problems, feel lost, isolated and alienated due to their desire not to leave their own culture behind in the West. On the other side, the second-generation immigrants suffer because of their conflicts with their parents—the first-generation immigrants—who complain about their children's devotion to the cultural notions of the West. Since the second-generation immigrants do not try to maintain their cultural heritage, they do their best to resemble the ex-colonizer, but because of their different backgrounds when they imitate the Westerners, they experience many difficulties and also suffer. It is obvious that the two novels describe similar difficulties experienced by immigrants and the authors of these works voice the identity problems of culturally split people in the postcolonial era.

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