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Master's Thesis

Crossing Borders in Contemporary English
Fiction: Cross-Cultural Influence in The Buddha of
Suburbia and White Teeth

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ABSTRACT

CROSSING BORDERS IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH FICTION: CROSS-CULTURAL INFLUENCE IN THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA AND WHITE TEETH

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This thesis explores the representation of multicultural transformation in late twentieth-century Britain in Hanif Kureishi's **The Buddha of Suburbia** (1990) and Zadie Smith's **White Teeth** (2000) in terms of borders and border crossings. As a consequence of decolonisation and the Second World War, the border phenomenon has moved beyond its traditional meaning, and social, cultural and conceptual boundaries in multicultural societies have become the focus of border studies. Especially at the end of the twentieth century, borders started to be examined not as lines separating countries and societies but as contact zones where two different cultures merged and hybridised. **The Buddha of Suburbia** and **White Teeth** show that racial and cultural prejudices inherited from the imperial and colonial past draw invisible boundaries in contemporary Britain. Nevertheless, both novels imagine crossing the invisible borders through everyday cross-cultural dialogue, interaction and influence and are hopeful for Britain's multicultural future. This study examines the representation of borders and border crossings in multicultural Britain in light of the “postimperial melancholia” and “conviviality” that Paul Gilroy offered to multicultural studies. Presenting the border-making and border-crossing processes in society simultaneously, these multicultural novels appeal to mainstream English readers and diasporic readers. Thus, these novels, which enable the reader to empathise with the other by crossing the borders created by colonial history, and racial and cultural prejudices, contribute to the convivial multicultural transformation process.

Keywords: border, border crossing, postimperial melancholia, conviviality, multiculturalism

ÖZ

CROSSING BORDERS IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH FICTION: CROSS-CULTURAL INFLUENCE IN THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA AND WHITE TEETH

RUMEYSA OĞUZ

Bu çalışma, İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası eski sömürge ülkelerinden yoğun göç alan İngiltere'deki çok kültürlü değişimin yirminci yüzyılın sonlarında yazılan Hanif Kureishi'nin **The Buddha of Suburbia (Varoşların Buda'sı)** (1990) ve Zadie Smith'in **White Teeth (İnci Gibi Dişler)** (2000) adlı eserlerindeki temsilini sınır ve sınır geçiş olguları ışığında incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Yirminci yüzyılın ikinci yarısında sınır olgusu geleneksel anlamının dışına çıkmış ve çokkültürlü toplumlardaki sosyal, kültürel ve kavramsal sınırlar da sınır çalışmalarının odağına girmiştir. Özellikle yirminci yüzyılın sonlarında sınırlar ülkeleri ve toplumları ayıran olgular olarak değil iki farklı kültürün birleştiği ve melezleştiği alanlar olarak incelenmiştir. **The Buddha of Suburbia** ve **White Teeth** İngiltere'nin sömürge ve imparatorluk tarihinden bu yana ırksal ve kültürel önyargıların çağdaş toplumda hala görünmez sınırlar çizdiğini gösterir. Buna rağmen gündelik yaşamdaki kültürlerarası karşılaşmaların, etkileşimlerin ve etkilerin geçmişten bu yana ev sahibi toplumun ve sömürge sonrası diasporanın arasındaki görünmez sınırları aşacağı düşüncesiyle İngiltere'nin çokkültürlü geleceğine umutla bakarlar. Bu çalışma çokkültürlü İngiltere'deki sınır ve sınır geçişlerinin romanlardaki temsilini Paul Gilroy'un çokkültürlü çalışmalara kazandırdığı "postimperial melancholia" ve "conviviality" kavramları ışığında inceler. Toplumdaki sınır-oluşumu ve sınır geçiş süreçlerini eş zamanlı olarak sunan bu çokkültürlü romanlar hem ana akım İngiliz okurlara hem de sömürge sonrası diaspora topluluklardan gelen okurlara hitap eder. Böylelikle sömürge tarihinin, ırksal ve kültürel ön yargıların okurun zihninde oluşturduğu sınırları aşarak öteki ile empati kurmasını sağlayan bu romanlar çokkültürlü dönüşüm sürecine katkı sağlarlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: sınır, sınır geçişi, post-emperyal melankoli, conviviality, çokkültürlülük

PREFACE

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INTRODUCTION

The multicultural studies conducted in late-twentieth-century and early-twentieth-century Britain articulate the complexity of multiculturalism in Britain. In **The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain** (2000), also known as **The Parekh Report**, Bhikhu Parekh points out the role of conceptual boundaries in shaping the future of multiculturalism in Britain. In the report, Parekh proposes two possible visions for Britain's multicultural future. The first vision reimagines a Britain that will be at ease with its racial and cultural diversity and provide an interactive environment for cross-cultural relations. The second vision, on the other hand, states that future Britain will be a bordered environment for the minorities in society:

The futures facing Britain may be summarised as static/dynamic; intolerant/cosmopolitan; fearful/generous; insular/internationalist; authoritarian/democratic; introspective/outward-looking; punitive/ inclusive; myopic/far-sighted. It is the second term in each of these pairings that evokes the kind of Britain proposed in this report. (2000: xiv)

Nevertheless, as the report indicates, the vision that presents an optimistic expectation for the future of multicultural Britain was more dominant in the early twenty-first century than the vision that predicts a conflicted future. As Ulla Rahbek points out, Parekh's faith in cross-cultural dialogue is an important factor in re-imagining a future Britain where differences can cohabit without conflicts¹ (2019: 6). Likewise, John McLeod in **Postcolonial London** states that late-twentieth-century British society is hopeful for the multicultural future of Britain: "Although some contributors depicted British cities as conflicted spaces, divided and hostile, many looked to the future with optimism. The 1990s British city was linked to a transformative agency which might impact upon wider issues of cultural and national identity" (2004: 158). Likewise, Paul Gilroy in **After Imperialism: Melancholia or Conviviality** (2004) presents a similar vision to Parekh's binary vision for Britain's multicultural future. In the mentioned study, Gilroy draws attention to the cross-cultural conflicts in Britain emanating from

¹ In **Strangers at Our Door**, Zygmunt Bauman states that the main problem in the twenty-first century is the refusal of dialogue between different cultures. Therefore, faith in dialogue between cultures is an important distinctive aspect in approaching multiculturalism in the late twentieth century.

the imperial past and implies that the future of multiculturalism depends on how it is approached in the present:

The hidden, shameful store of imperial horrors has been an unacknowledged presence in British political and cultural life during the second half of the twentieth century. It is not too dramatic to say that the quality of the country's multicultural future depends on what is now done with it. The history of empire directs attention to the practical mechanisms of racial hierarchy and the ideology of white supremacy, but that is not its only value to contemporary debates. (Gilroy, 2004: 102)

The quote above states that the hierarchical relations between different racial and cultural communities in contemporary Britain stem from the imperial mindset based on categories of conceptual borders such as race, culture, nation, and class. It shows that the ways of thinking imposed by Western epistemology since colonial times are self-perpetuating and very powerful because even the multicultural transformation process in contemporary Britain depends on recognising and overcoming those conceptual boundaries. As can be seen, two possibilities are foreseen for multiculturalism in Britain in the late twentieth century. One of them is a bordered multicultural society, where invisible borders divide different ethnic, cultural and religious groups, and minorities always feel outside the host society. David Dabydeen's "cell metaphor", claiming that English society lives in cells that separate them from minority groups, does not propose a bright vision for multicultural Britain. Instead, the metaphor suggests that there are no alternative third spaces beyond the invisible borders for cross-cultural interaction and dialogue between host society and minorities.

This metaphor likens London to a hive with no passages between its cells. Although the English visit the spaces of the diaspora "to taste curried goats" or participate in their festivals and carnivals, they do not spend enough time in these spaces to appreciate the value of differences and return to "their own cells." Moreover, the English are not willing to invite the people of postcolonial diaspora in white-dominated spaces such as "banks", "universities", "Houses of Parliament", "museums", "art galleries", or "television studios." According to Dabydeen, despite cultural plurality and diversity, increased anxiety and tension due to racial and cultural prejudices hinder the necessary environment for positive and healthy cross-cultural interaction: "[London] is culturally diverse, but there is little cross-fertilisation of

cultures taking place. White people remain incarcerated in their own cells, afraid to venture out in case they are mugged by West Indians" (qtd. in McLeod, 2004: 159).

In other words, while whites can visit places of the diaspora, diaspora members are not welcomed in white hegemonic spaces. The double standard indicates that the traces of the imperial thought system are still visible in contemporary relations. As a consequence, the invisible walls of the cells obstruct the individuals from engaging in a cross-cultural dialogue that can contribute to bottom-up multicultural transformation. Hence, Dabydeen asserts a contrasting vision to the celebratory mode of multiculturalism that was dominant in late-twentieth-century Britain. Likewise, Paul Gilroy states that the factor that raises these invisible boundaries and produces a cell-like environment is racism and prejudices inherited from the imperial period and manifest primarily in British political discourses. According to Gilroy, particularly political discourses raise these invisible boundaries by reinforcing "differences" between the host society and the minorities. Hence mundane cross-cultural encounters, interactions, and exchanges should gain importance. Although imposed top-down boundaries encourage "angry white men", everyday practices in ordinary spaces such as school, workplace, and neighbourhood can transform society from the bottom up.

Therefore, in analysing these novels, the present study refers to Paul Gilroy's postimperial melancholia and conviviality that theorise the complex role of social borders in present and future Britain. Postimperial melancholia is associated with the top-down border-making process due to the manifestation of the imperial past in contemporary political discourses. On the other hand, conviviality as an alternative to postimperial melancholia suggests that social boundaries inherited from the colonial past can be crossed through daily cross-cultural encounters and interactions in urban areas.

In that regard, the English multicultural fiction written in the late twentieth century stands on the axis of these two binary visions suggested by Parekh because they aim to recognise the invisible social borders and seek ways to surmount them. The multicultural fiction produced in this period not only focuses on the representation of the issues emanating from the racial, cultural, and class differences between the host

society and the immigrants but also presents everyday relationships of different races and cultures as border crossing aspects. As **The Buddha of Suburbia** and **White Teeth** show, “this literature is bound up with the many complex aspects of the quotidian; that is to say, there is a notable focus on daily and ordinary encounters in public and private spaces, various multicultural exchanges, and diverse social contact between characters” (Rahbek, 2019: 11). Thus, the study considers multicultural novels as border-crossing fiction based on Black's definition of “border-crossing fiction” (2009: 6). For Black, border-crossing fiction is produced in the period covering the late-twentieth to the early-twenty-first century and reflects the complex role of social borders in a multicultural society.

In the first chapter, it is aimed to provide a theoretical background for the border phenomenon and a broader view of the role of borders in Britain's colonial era and multicultural period. Then, it explores “postimperial melancholia” as a top-down border-making process while scrutinising “conviviality” as a way of the bottom-up transformation process in British multicultural society. Finally, Chapter Two and Chapter Three examine **The Buddha of Suburbia** and **White Teeth** as border-crossing novels in light of postimperial melancholia and conviviality. Both novels are analysed under two main headings. The title “Borders and Border Crossings in British Society” examines the conflicts, tensions and dialogues in cross-cultural encounters and focuses on their representation in both novels. The part of “Border Crossings in the Narrative” focuses on the border-crossing narrative techniques in both novels. It asserts that the use of a humorous narrative, the hybrid narrator, the omniscient narrator, and the non-linear narrative technique, unsettle the historical and cultural boundaries in the reader's mind. Thus, border-crossing fiction can contribute to the multicultural transformation in a convivial way. In a time when social and imaginary boundaries are rising day by day, this study aims to approach “border-crossing” novels from a retrospective and prospective perspective because in a world and society where borders are becoming more palpable, it is important to remember that borders can be crossed.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORISING BORDERS IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH MULTICULTURAL FICTION

1.1. The Ambivalence of Borders in the Late Twentieth Century

Before examining multicultural Britain in light of postimperial melancholia and conviviality, it requires comprehending the notion of the social border in the late twentieth century to fathom complex multicultural relations and their manifestation in contemporary English novels **The Buddha of Suburbia** and **White Teeth**. The vision of “a borderless world” has dominated the political and social discourse in the world, particularly in Europe and the USA, at the end of the twentieth century (Newman, 2006: 170; Basu and Shahnaz, 2017: xi). In particular, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the most well-known symbol of the separation and discrimination between the West and the East in Europe, has led to the renegotiation of the border phenomenon in European societies. Along with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the borderless world ideal is associated with the permeability of geographical borders due to constant migration, travel and movement in the globalising world. With the influence of these global movements and advances in technology, societies that were invisible on the other side of the border during the colonial period and the societies in the former imperial centre have been intertwined (Black, 2009: 6). Therefore, the vision of a borderless world represents the permeability of not only geographical boundaries but also the social boundaries that separate one community from another, such as race, ethnicity, nation, and culture. For this reason, in the second half of the twentieth century, the concept of the border has gone beyond its traditional meaning. It has become an important subject in social, cultural and political studies as well as in geographical studies:

The term "borders," in the context of cultural and political history, refers to the construction, mobilisation, and negotiation of difference(s), within or without constitutional or legal parameters. "Borders," in this sense, signify both internal hierarchies within an ethnicity, community, or nationality, as well as the ways in which cultural differences may be used to define intra-group and transnational differences and gradations. (Basu and Shahnaz, 2017: xii)

In this context, “transformation in border studies” involves recognising borders as institutions rather than lines on the map (Newman, 2003: 14). As David Newman

points out, the border phenomenon has begun to be regarded as a social institution that determines one's social position rather than spatial lines in the globalised world.

Since the border phenomenon has gained new meanings and explored through new perspectives, many contemporary border studies produced in the late twentieth-century approach borders as flexible and porous phenomena during the late twentieth century. Ulla Rahbek defines the affirmative and optimistic approach to borders in this period as “the celebratory mode of border theory” (2013: 426). The celebratory mode of borders is also closely related to the optimistic expectations for the future in the 1990s and early 2000s. Barbara Korte and Laura Lojo-Rodriguez dwell on the 1990s as an era when borders were there to be crossed, where what connects and unites people appeared to be more important than divisions (2017: 2). Then, they point out the social and cultural theories of the period foreground border-crossings: “Postmodernity in the 1990s was inclined towards mixing and fluidity; likewise, social discourse, cultural production and theory emphasised diversity, hybridity and third spaces of encounter” (2017: 2). Nevertheless, although concepts such as “hybridity” and “liminality” have come to the fore in border studies, the studies put emphasis on the ambivalence of borders. Hence, David Newman deliberately states that “a borderless world” is a utopic vision because the encounter of differences not always leads to border-crossings but also the reproduction of new invisible social boundaries in society because of historical and cultural prejudices (2003: 19). Another point Newman draws attention to is that politics and other power elites carry out the border-making process in society. As Diener and Hagen state, borders are central “to the human interaction and the exercise of power” (2012: 24). Therefore, the border is an ambivalent concept that can lead to either interaction or division. In this respect, Newman emphasises that multicultural transformation is possible from the bottom-up through intercultural interaction and cultural hybridity between people in daily life: “To study borders as dynamic institutions, it is therefore important to study ‘the bottom-up’ process of change, emanating from the daily practices of ordinary people living in the borderland region, as much as the traditional ‘top-down’ approach which focuses on the role of institutional actors” (2003: 15). Thus, it is necessary to adopt an

approach that considers everyday social relations rather than the traditional top-down approach to understanding the multicultural transformation process in society.

The shift in the scope of the border phenomenon has been reflected in postcolonial and multicultural studies. While traditional border studies have discussed colonialism over geographical borders, contemporary studies have reconceptualised the border in postcolonial and cultural studies by drawing attention to the epistemological, conceptual, social, and cultural boundaries on the basis of colonialism. One of the main themes of postcolonial and multicultural studies produced in this period is that geographical or social borderlands² are zones of interaction and hybridisation for different cultures. Gloria Anzaldua's significant study **Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza** (1987) contributes to conceptualising the border as a porous aspect in contemporary postcolonial and multicultural studies. In her study, Anzaldua explores the everyday cross-cultural exchanges and interactions on the USA/ Mexico border that lead to racial and cultural hybridisation. One of the most important features of Anzaldua's study is that she distinguishes border-making as a top-down process from the border-crossings that contributes to the sociocultural transformation from below. In other words, the boundaries that separate countries are considered a spatial manifestation of the perception of difference imposed on societies from the top-down by state and power elites:

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. Gringos in the U.S. Southwest consider the inhabitants of the borderlands transgressors, aliens-whether they possess documents or not, whether they're Chicanos, Indians or Blacks. ... The only "legitimate" inhabitants are those in power, the whites and those who align themselves with whites. (1987: 3-4)

Anzaldua's statement on the function of borders, in a way, evokes Georg Simmel's argument that "the boundary is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that forms itself spatially" (qtd. in Rosello and Wolfe, 2017:2).

² "The transition zone is not found only in the geographical areas next to the boundary. Migration creates transition zones and borderland spaces in the heart of the 'other' polity. The inner-city areas of large cities are a form of transition zone or borderland where a great deal of hybridisation takes place" (Newman, 2003: 19).

Hence, it brings to the fore the idea that the border is a social construction, as suggested by contemporary border studies. Another important issue that comes to the forefront in Anzaldua's work is that the cultural exchanges and interactions of the communities living in the borderlands have changed both cultures and produced hybrid identities and cultures that have an important place in border theory. In other words, borders do not just represent separation because they also provide a "transition" space. In her study, Anzaldua defines mestiza³ as a border personality, a product of cross-cultural interaction and exchange on the borderland. Since a mestiza is a person with a hybrid race of indigenous or Spanish descent, her hybridity liberates the mestiza from the limitations of singular social and historical perspectives:

*"A Struggle of Borders"*⁴
Because I, a mestiza,
continually walk out of one culture
and into another,
because I am in all cultures at the same time," (Anzaldua, 1987: 77)

The short poem by Anzaldua shows the reader that the borders of cultures and races are open to change through the mestiza identity consisting of different cultures. In particular, Anzaldua takes a stance against the idea of racial and cultural separation imposed by the colonialists for centuries. In this respect, the border, symbolic and in the spatial sense, has become a space of interaction rather than a division line in Anzaldua's work.

In **Border Writing: The Multidimensional Text** (1991), D. Emily Hicks, starting from Anzaldua's idea of border subject and border culture, argues that multicultural works produced by writers with hybrid identities can convey the voice of each culture to the reader since they can see both sides of the border. In other words, a writer with two or more cultures becomes a mirror that reflects each culture to provide a liminal space. In this way, Hicks suggests that these works -also called "border writing"- can contribute to the multicultural transformation by going beyond the conceptual boundaries of the reader (1991: xxiii). Hicks foregrounds the concept

³ " ... la mestiza is a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another. Being tricultural, monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, speaking a patois, and in a state of perpetual transition, the mestiza faces the dilemma of the mixed breed" (Anzaldua, 1987: 77-78).

⁴ A poem written by Anzaldua in **La Frontera** to describe her mestiza identity.

of the cultural border; therefore, she suggests that "the sensibility that informs border literature can exist anywhere including European countries in which the country of origin does not share a physical border with the host country" (1991: xxv). Hence, as Basu and Shahnaaz state, although border studies in and literary fields are influenced by the USA/Mexico culture and history, the border phenomenon can be applicable to European and other multicultural societies as well (2017: xiii). Since multicultural societies consist of two or more cultures living in the same social space, social boundaries have become more evident in such societies and have been the subject of discussion. In this respect, while traditional multiculturalism tends to consider individual cultures, border theory helps explore "the intersection of culture and the resulting effects" in multicultural societies (Basu and Shahnaz, 2017: ix).

1.2. Colonialism and Borders

In the context of multicultural Britain, social borders stand for racism and cultural prejudices inherited from the imperial past. Therefore, it requires to fathom the role of social and epistemological borders in colonialism. The expansion of colonialism is closely related to the Enlightenment philosophy, which was dominant in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Enlightenment philosophers put the white man on a pedestal and claimed that people of other races, gender, and culture are inferior to white men. British Enlightenment philosopher David Hume puts forward the European man's ideology by asserting that black people are inferior to white men in every aspect:

I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilised nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. ... Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men. Not to mention our colonies, there are NEGROE slaves dispersed all over EUROPE, of whom none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity; though low people, without education, will start up amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession. In JAMAICA, indeed, they talk of one negroe as a man of parts and learning; but it is likely he is admired for slender accomplishments, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly. (1748: 86)

Hume's thoughts demonstrate that Enlightenment thinking considers white men, even the most uncivilised white societies, superior to human beings of other races. While

Western epistemology identifies concepts such as reason, power, logic and civilisation with the West, it claims that colonised societies lack these distinguishing features. In other words, the binary thinking system inherent in Western epistemology has determined the position of the coloniser and colonised according to certain categories such as race, nation, and class. As a consequence of social borders, these categories produce internal hierarchies in colonial spaces by reinforcing differences. Therefore, the forms of boundaries and border-makings have become central to colonial relations:

Boundaries of various kinds and forms of boundary-making are central to the colonial relationships, from the most material forms of spatial enclosures to the most abstract modes of Western thinking. None of these boundaries is easy to ignore, and the ultimate force of imperial hegemony lies in their invisibility, for boundaries, erected as forms of conceptual enclosure and social regulation, become ways of understanding how things are. (Ashcroft, 2001: 182)

As seen, Bill Ashcroft draws attention to the functionality of borders in establishing and managing the colonial order. He emphasises the social and symbolic role of borders as well as the spatial manifestation of boundaries. In addition, Ashcroft states that the border-making process is a top-down process carried out by the coloniser to establish his hegemony in colonial society. Since colonialism is an implementation of Western thinking, it becomes a must to consider “the prominence of boundaries of race and ethnicity, nation, and class” as well as binaries of centre and margin “to see how deeply the trope of border embeds itself” in Western epistemology and colonialism (Ashcroft, 2001: 164).

Edward Said's well-known book **Orientalism** is one of the most prominent postcolonial studies that put forward how prepotent epistemological and conceptual boundaries were in establishing colonialism. According to Said's argument, Western empires deriving their power from racial and cultural boundaries exerted their power over colonised societies through epistemological boundaries that divided the world into certain categories based on the differences:

Orientalism can also express the strength of the West and the Orient's weakness – as seen by the West. Such strength and such weakness are as intrinsic to Orientalism as they are to any view that divides the world into large general divisions, entities that coexist in a state of tension produced by what is believed to be radical difference. (Said, 2019: 45)

As seen, **Orientalism** explores the epistemological and imagined boundaries separating the East and West. Since creating a powerful and authoritarian image of the West requires an image of a weak East, Western discourse based on binary oppositions encodes the East as inferior to the West. In other words, the epistemological boundaries imposed by Western epistemology separate the East from the West rather than geographical boundaries. As Newman states, the categorisation of borders in social and cultural context through binary oppositions such as “here/there”, “us/them”, “include/exclude”, and “self/other” provide a space to manage and control the other side (2006: 176). Therefore, the European settlers exercise their power through binary opposition, putting the culture, customs, epistemological, and racial differences of the colonial other in an inferior position to the imperial subjects.

The function of borders is to make the other side of the border invisible so that authoritarian powers can impose their views on both sides. Likewise, imagined and epistemological boundaries make the East invisible in Western societies. Since Eastern societies do not have the opportunity to present themselves and their cultures, the West shapes the image and culture of the colonial other in line with their thoughts and profits. According to Ashcroft, Western intellectuals take advantage of the lack of written work in English in colonised societies to elaborate theories about the colonial other (Ashcroft, 2001: 191). By making English a global language through colonialism and other political relations, the English disseminated their thoughts and judgments about themselves and colonial others as the prevailing reality. On the other hand, indigenous societies, which have written or oral literature in their local languages, had difficulty making their voices heard and subverting prejudices until the postcolonial period. In other words, the West has used the power of language and writing to establish its political and intellectual hegemony both in the metropolises and overseas. Therefore, non-fictional texts such as history books, newspapers, and magazines and fictional texts such as novels and poems in English have become mediums to sustain imperial power all over the colonies. For example, along with the Enlightenment philosophers, utilitarian thinkers such as James Mill and John Stuart Mill introduced natives to English readers as equal to children who needed English education and manners to become civilised (Ahmed, 2010: 124). In this respect, they are able to

illustrate a universal civilised image of the white man whose duty is to bring civilisation to the barbaric lands. Hence, the Victorian historiographer John Bruce defines the colonisers as “philanthropists” who aim to take English education and culture to the uncivilised societies (Ahmed, 2010: 124). In addition to the English thinkers, Edward Said points out the role of literary works in constituting the fundamental distinctions between the coloniser and colonised people by examining the image of philanthropic men through Rudyard Kipling's well-known poem “The White Man's Burden.” The image of the White Man in Kipling’s poem is “an idea, a persona, a style of being” that seems to have helped and served many English colonisers in colonial lands to distinguish themselves from the natives by the colour of their skin. Moreover, for the English coloniser “who circulated amongst Indians, Africans, or Arabs there was also the certain knowledge that he belonged to, and could draw upon the empirical and spiritual reserves of, a long tradition executive responsibility towards the colonial races” (Said, 2019: 226). In other words, the idea of the white man’s superiority contributes to drawing racial boundaries to maintain imperial hegemony in the native societies. In **The Promise of Happiness** (2010), Sara Ahmed expresses that the utilitarian thinkers seek to justify colonial aims by illustrating imperialism and colonialism as “a happy mission” (2010: 123). As the notion of “burden” in the poem implies, white men are portrayed as philanthropists and heroes who bring happiness - English civilisation and education- to the doors of the uncivilised natives at the expense of leaving their homes behind and sacrificing their own comfort. Similarly, Said states that the purpose of creating orientalist thinking is to legitimise colonialism in the eyes of Western societies and to convince the East of the universality of Western civilisation (Bertens, 2013: 177).

As mentioned, boundaries helped the imperialists exercise their powers and authority over the colonised nations. The other reason for reinforcing borders is to protect the racial and cultural purity of Englishness. As Hans Bertens remarks, the West has always believed that its existence abroad has significantly impacted indigenous people. However, it has always been uncomfortable with the thought that its people could be affected by the cultures they encountered (2013: 181). Similarly, Sara Ahmed articulates that although the image of British imperialism is portrayed as

a happy diversity both by the Victorians and the contemporary politics, the Empire was not willing to mix with the other races and cultures (2010: 129). Rudyard Kipling's short story "Beyond the Pale" (1888) delineates the strictness of racial and cultural boundaries in colonial and Hindu cultures through the forbidden love of a coloniser and an Indian woman. The story's opening is significant to demonstrate the boundaries that imperialism and colonialism built upon: "A man should, whatever happens, keep to his own caste, race and breed. Let the White go to the White and the Black to the Black" (1987: 47). As Kipling's story points out, cultural and racial boundaries are closely related to protecting the purity of English identity and the desire to preserve the white homogeneity of British society. Hence, it would not be wrong to assume that creating the idea of a fixed English identity in the nineteenth century was a reaction to the rapid transformation in both colonial societies and the metropole (Young, 1994: 3). Thus, many critics focus on the destructive impact of colonisers on native cultures and disregard the transformation of Western cultures. Bill Ashcroft brings criticism to this unilateral approach by exploring that the interaction of two cultures ends up with the transformation of both cultures. As a result of the interaction and cultural exchange in daily life, the culture of the colonialist, who represents the imperial culture, has also entered the process of change: "... colonised cultures have often been so resilient and transformative that they have changed the character of imperial culture itself. This 'transcultural' effect has not been seamless or unvaried, but it forces us to reassess the stereotyped view of colonised peoples' victimage and lack of agency"⁵ (2001: 2). In other words, although the colonists resist the idea of change, there is no way to escape it. Nevertheless, the realisation of this change is possible by recognising these boundaries and creating alternative spaces to overcome them. Therefore, Ashcroft

⁵ Ashcroft's comment on the interchange process in the colonial sphere is similar to Homi K. Bhabha's theory of "mimicry." Bhabha explains the process of change in the colonial space by referring to the concept of mimicry, which Jacques Lacan uses in the same context as camouflage in psychoanalysis. Colonial powers strive to create a colonial subject similar to themselves with their behaviours, customs and languages. Thus, imperial forces will be able to dominate colonised societies. However, according to Bhabha, the colonised person may resemble the coloniser but will never be the same as the coloniser. No matter how much the colonised subject changes, s/he goes through a transformation process by adding elements from their own culture and identity. Thus, a new hybrid identity emerges, which resembles neither the coloniser nor the colonised but carries the characteristics of both cultures. Anzaldua's example of *mestiza* refers to a similar process of change. According to Bhabha, mimicry includes both the coloniser's domination and the colonised's resistance. See Homi K. Bhabha's "Of Mimicry and Man" (1984) for further and detailed information.

proposes the term “horizon”, which represents an alternative cultural space where colonised and coloniser encounter and change each other. In this perspective, the border continues to be central to Western epistemology, but the horizon “with its merging of location and possibility” proposes itself “as the most productive principle of postcolonial subjectivity” (Ashcroft, 2001: 184). It means that the horizon does not disregard the role of boundaries but offers an alternative space to “inhabit them [borders], utilise them, incorporates them in a different way” (Ashcroft, 2001: 184). As can be seen, according to Ashcroft's vision, boundaries are not always divisive and fixed; instead, they are flexible phenomena that can transform, unite, and provide an alternative field of interaction and change for both sides.

Homi K. Bhabha's studies stand out when it comes to the permeability of borders and alternative third spaces beyond. Homi K. Bhabha is one of the major postcolonial theorists who explores that the encounter of colonised and coloniser always affects each culture: “Said's Orientalism analyses the process by which Orientalist discourse sets up a binary opposition between Europe and the Orient, between coloniser and colonised, but Bhabha sets out to deconstruct that opposition, at least on the level of the subjects involved” (Bertens, 2013: 181). As Bertens points out, Bhabha's studies are mainly about how the encounters of individuals of different cultures can provide a space to move beyond the boundaries of Western epistemology. Bhabha's **Location of Culture** is a significant study in terms of exploring the fundamental notions such as “beyond”, “cultural hybridity”, and “third space” that asserts the porousness of racial and cultural boundaries. In the introductory chapter to his study, Bhabha states that “the trope of our times [is] to locate the question of culture in the realm of *beyond*” (1994: 1). According to Bhabha, “we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (1994: 1). In other words, for Bhabha, the present relations of different cultures cannot occur independently from the past, but the present can create new transitional spaces beyond the boundaries of the past. Hence, the notion of beyond is about moving beyond the boundaries of race, culture, and ethnicity, which are productions of differences and creates hierarchies between self and other. Bhabha mainly points out that the

intercultural interaction in the colonised countries creates new hybrid cultures (third space) and identities (mimicry) beyond the strict boundaries that the coloniser wants to draw and explains that every culture undergoes change as a result of colonisation. Bhabha's argument is based on the idea of "cultural difference", which is also reinforced by Western epistemology, and focuses on the border crossings of cultural difference: "The borderline engagements of cultural difference may as often be consensual as conflictual; they may confound our definitions of tradition and modernity; realign the customary boundaries between the private and the public, high and low; and challenge normative expectations of development and progress" (1994: 2). As the following chapters of the study will indicate, border crossing processes lead to conflicts and transformations in multicultural Britain. This transformation process, which Bhabha calls "cultural hybridisation", takes place within in-between areas called the "third space", where borders are crossed. The third space is not always a spatial but a symbolic space that offers an alternative to the concept of the border that governs the superior/inferior relationship between the colonial society and the colonised society. In this context, Bhabha's approach to the border phenomenon is an outcome of the celebratory border perception of the 1990s. Bhabha considers cultural differences and the boundaries produced by them not as immutable and fixed entities but as permeable entities that are open to change.

As mentioned, imperialism and colonialism are built on the borders inherent in Western epistemology. The boundaries are manifested in the colonial discourse that argues that the colonised people should be separated from the coloniser to prevent racial and cultural mixing because of their differences. This mindset offering a top-down view of colonial societies, excludes everyday and individual experiences from consideration. Therefore, as seen in the works of Anzaldua, Bhabha, and Ashcroft, the transformative power of everyday cultural exchanges has gained an important place in postcolonial and multicultural studies. Contrary to studies that reinforce borders, these studies affirm border-crossing aspects such as hybridity and liminality, which refer to cross-cultural interaction and transformation.

1.2.1. The Presence of the Colonial Other in Imperial Britain

As stated, the encounters between colonisers and colonised societies have changed not only cultures in colonial spaces but also in imperial centres because colonialism always ends up with immigration. As Gretchen Gerzina states in **Black London**, historians mark 1555 as the date of the first presence of African people in Britain (1995: 3). By 1596, the black population in England had increased so much that Queen Elizabeth I was disturbed and asked them to leave the country. During the Victorian era, the zenith of British imperialism, as the British colonies developed overseas, the black population in Britain increased at the same rate (Gerzina, 1995: 4-6). In this respect, the change in Britain's social, cultural, and demographic structure dates back to British imperialism. As John Ruskin states, urban areas of England have already become a space of cultural diversity by the presence of the subjects of the other nations (Baucom, 1999: 20). Wordsworth's "Residence in London" (1850) also refers to the increasing black population in imperial London. Likewise, in **Culture and Imperialism**, Edward Said brings attention to the undeniable impacts of imperialism in forming English society during the Victorian Era. For Said, Victorian novels reflect the impact of imperialism on the social and economic dynamics of English society (1994: 62). While the Victorian novels point out the presence of the colonial other in Britain, English characters' relations with oversea colonies are often included⁶. Those novels demonstrate that the imperial power can only continue by means of the income derived from colonial lands, besides the characterisation of the colonial other as inferior to the white people. In other words, the Victorian texts are significant to demonstrate that colonial societies have a significant role in the economic, social, and political transformations in the British Empire.

However, despite the undeniable ties with colonial nations, the English nation is uncomfortable with the presence of the colonial other in the imperial centre. Moreover, since the colonial races and cultures are considered less evolved than the European cultures, Britain was also concerned about the possibility of degeneration in case they encountered the peoples of the colonial periphery (Dawson, 2007: 7). Paul

⁶ Pip's benefactor in **Great Expectations**, who make a great fortune in Australia and Mr. Rochester's visit to the West Indies to marry Bertha Mason in **Jane Eyre**, can be examples.

Gilroy explains the negative approach towards the newcomers in Britain through imperial melancholia. The presence of the other, and national anxieties triggered imperial melancholy that emerged toward the end of imperialism:

Victorian melancholy started to yield to melancholia as soon as the natives and savages began to appear and make demands for recognition in the Empire's metropolitan core. The change was complete when the limits of the political project involved in subordinating colonial peoples were communicated to their apprehensive racial betters by baffling ingratitude and a stubborn appetite for independence. (Gilroy, 2004: 99)

As the above quote shows, newcomers from colonial societies cause anxiety, tension and melancholy in British society due to the concerns mentioned earlier. According to Ashley Dawson, eliminating these ideologies of difference and innate superiority was much more difficult than imperialism's political and economic system. After losing its colonies, Britain continued maintaining a sense of cultural superiority. As Britain lost power on the global stage after the collapse of imperialism, some English have become attached to the misleading status symbol of white skin and the cultural difference it represented (2007: 6).

The immigration of colonial subjects to Britain in the post-war period forced the British to come to terms with their long history of imperialism and racism. This state of clinging to the white English identity in contemporary British society and avoiding confrontation with the colonial past is defined by Paul Gilroy as "postimperial melancholia." As will be examined in the next section, conceptual boundaries inherited from the imperial past find their place in contemporary British politics and cause conflicts in cross-cultural relations.

1.3. The Top-Down Border-Making Process: Postimperial Melancholia in Multicultural Britain

As explored in the previous chapter, borders and border-making are inherent in the imperial and colonial past that has shaped contemporary multicultural Britain. Though the terms "postimperial" and "postcolonial" imply that the ideological bearings of imperialism and colonialism have been left behind⁷, Britain's inability to

⁷ Ania Loomba is one of the postcolonial critics who found the term "postcolonial" contestable. According to Loomba, "the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased," so a country can be both

detach from the imperial past and its ideologies still reproduce boundaries in modern Britain. Hence, these boundaries have an important role in constructing multicultural British society, and multicultural transformation is closely related to the acknowledgement of boundaries such as “race”, “class”, and “nation” that still categorise society through differences.

As mentioned before, Britain has hosted people from different races and cultures since the imperial period. However, Britain has received mass migration from the former colonies during the post-Second World War period, and the cultural differences and diversity in the country have increased since then. Hence the notion of multiculturalism is begun to be used to define the contemporary multicultural society since the 1980s⁸. As Wise and Velayutham’s definition of conventional multiculturalism indicates, it is a top-down process. They define conventional multiculturalism as a set of policies related to the management and restraint of diversity and plurality by nation-states, focusing on group-based rights and cultures, multicultural education and legislation (2007: 2). In the process of Britain’s management of multicultural society, traditional multicultural policies and studies mainly highlight the differences between communities and lead to polarisation; hence, they have not paid attention to the role of individual experiences that provide a different perspective for the multicultural transformation process (Turner, 2003: 214; Wise and Velayutham, 2007: 20). For Paul Gilroy, who explores the future of multiculturalism in Britain, the main reason for polarisation in Britain is the attachment to the imperial and colonial past. The contemporary political discourse particularly reinforces xenophobia in the white dominant societies by asserting plurality, diversity, and differences as synonyms for chaos and conflicts. As can be seen, these thoughts are associated with the imperial thinking that aims to preserve the whiteness of European societies. Therefore, Gilroy suggests that when political disputes that shape

“postcolonial (in the sense of formally independent)” and “neo-colonial (in the sense of remaining economically and/or culturally dependent)” (1997: 12). Loomba’s critique covers formerly colonial countries and societies and draws attention to the lingering effects of colonialism. In this context, the word “postimperial” does not mean that the imperial ideologies that defended the privilege and superiority of the English subject have been left behind.

⁸ As Ashcroft et al. state, Western countries have used the term multiculturalism since the 1980s to define the multicultural sociocultural structure and population (2013: 163).

multicultural societies are understood in the context of imperial and colonial history, they may take on a completely different aspect (2004: 2). Because, as in the case of multicultural Britain, it is the imperial and colonial past that shaped multicultural societies in the first place.

When Britain's history of post-war immigration is taken into consideration, it is seen that contemporary multicultural Britain is the most evident consequence of imperialism and colonialism. As it is well known, the British Empire decolonised during the post-war period leading to Britain entering a period of political, social, and cultural transformation like many other European countries. Although Britain triumphed over the Nazis in the Second World War, it lost a great deal of economic power and labour force during this period due to the war and the significant number of immigrations from Britain to other countries. Especially the lack of cheap labour had become a prominent issue due to the economic downturn; therefore, the British government decided to obtain a cheap labour force from the former colonies. Thus, the former colonial nations were united under "the Commonwealth Nations" by the British government. Furthermore, with the British National Act of 1948, formerly colonial others were given British citizenship and the right to settle and work in Britain. Thus, this law made it easier for immigrants to cross Britain's geographical borders. Hence, the mass migration experienced during this period considerably changed the social, demographic, and spatial structure of Britain:

At least half of the exuberant infants playing outside the pre-fab day nursery were café noir or café au lait in colouring. And there were coloured men and women wherever I looked, shopping, strolling, or gossiping on the sunny street-corners with an animation that most Londoners lost long ago. (Patterson qtd. in McLeod, 2004: 1)

Patterson's writing belongs to the early 1960s and shows that Britain had already entered the multicultural transformation phase. Nevertheless, it is always more difficult to cross social and cultural boundaries in society than cross spatial boundaries. Thus, despite the vision of a borderless world in a decolonised and globalised age, Newman states that a world without borders is not possible in a world in which people wake up to new borders everyday:

We discovered that these borders are not confined to the realm of inter-state divisions, nor do they have to be physical and geographical constructs. Many of the borders that order our lives are invisible to the human eye, but they nevertheless impact our daily life practices strongly. They determine the extent to which we are included, or excluded, from membership in groups, they reflect the existence of inter-group and inter-societal differences with the 'us' and the 'here' being located inside the border while the 'other' and the 'there' is everything beyond the border. The practices through which borders are demarcated and delimited reflect the way in which borders are managed and self-perpetuated to the benefit of political and economic elites, but to the detriment of many others. The management of the border regime determines the relative ease or difficulty with which borders are crossed, or alternately the extent to which the borders still constitutes a barrier to movement of people, goods and ideas. (2006:175)

Newman's inferences reveal the connection between contemporary multicultural societies' internal and external dynamics. Internal boundaries and hierarchies determine individuals' belonging to groups, and the groups to the host society. Thus, society can be categorised, polarised and more easily managed. In other words, borders between different communities are governed by state authorities and power elites. Another issue Newman draws attention to is the management of country borders. Since border control determines who can enter a country, it becomes a mechanism to arrange internal dynamics. Therefore, understanding Britain's border control and immigration policies since the post-war period are vital for understanding the top-down border-making process.

Immigration policies implemented in Britain's border control and facilitating the entry of Commonwealth immigrants to the country have changed over the years. In **Mongrel Nation** (2007), Ashley Dawson states that "the increasingly restrictive immigration laws" have been construed as "a response to popular racism" (2007:8). This interpretation, however, leads to disregarding the power of institutional racism that pioneered "popular antipathy" to the presence of postcolonial immigrants (2007: 8). Since the changes in these policies aim to restrict the entry of immigrants to Britain, they have effectively shaped the country's social borders. Hence, in "The Border as a Filter: Maintaining the Divide in the Post-Imperial", Evan Smith and Marinella Marmo point out that the immigration policies are closely related to the top-down border-making process in multicultural British society. Smith and Marmo also reinforce the role of the imperial past in the multicultural present in terms of the border-making

process: "... the modern immigration control system in Britain was born out of a wave of decolonisation which coincided with large-scale migration from the Commonwealth to Britain" (2014: 47). According to them, besides social, economic, and political concerns, the main purpose of the immigration control system of the British government is to protect "the whiteness of the British people" by preventing the entry into the country of large numbers of former colonial migrants (2014: 46). In other words, the border control system in contemporary Britain still reflects the ongoing role of imperial epistemology in the political and social realm. Because on the one hand, the English power elites consider the former colonial immigrant with a less favourable racial, cultural, social, and economic background inferior to the white man. Therefore, they think the former colonial immigrant will disturb Britain's sociocultural order. On the other hand, as the discourse of politics since the 1950s demonstrate, the English are concerned that the black population will be a threat to white racial homogeneity in English society. Therefore, the laws controlling the entry of immigrants into the country have become more rigid over the years, and the entry of non-white immigrants into the country has been restricted⁹. Gilroy calls this situation "institutional racism" and thinks that racist and nationalist approaches that are initiated by populist opposition to the Commonwealth immigrants during the 1950s and 1960s are the main obstacles before convivial multiculturalism in Britain (2004: 336).

The most famous speech that articulates the discomfort about the increasing immigrant population is Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech in 1968, which has become a motivation for the racist activities of the National Front in daily life. Powell articulates in his speech his fear that the black population would take over England in about 20 years: "In this country in 15- or 20-years' time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man" ("Rivers of Blood"). For Iain Baucom, Powell's concerns about the question of racial and cultural identity in postimperial Britain can be considered a manifestation of "the border anxiety" inherent in the discourses of Englishness and empire (1999: 23). Hence, it is one of the political speeches that officially ignited the anti-immigrant actions in the country. Paul Gilroy, therefore

⁹ See Avtar Brah 1996: 24 for further information

chiefly focuses on the content of Powell's speech that expresses the anxieties related to the imperial past:

As is well known, Enoch Powell's notorious speeches on immigration played with these powerful feelings of aggression, guilt, and fear and articulated them as violent racist politics. We should think back to his memorable imagery not of the "rivers of blood," which in 1968 he predicted would be the catastrophic outcome of all Britain's mistaken attempts to mix the races, but of the even more terrifying prospect of a wholesale reversal of the proper ordering of colonial power. (2004: 111)

As Gilroy points out, Powell's speech reveals the primary concern of the English is to be "colonised in reverse" by the formerly colonial subjects. In addition to losing the old imperial power and prestige, the idea of losing racial and cultural homogeneity has caused anxiety, fear, and conflicts in the English. Therefore, the prominent issue of conservative political discourse, which triggers anxiety, tension and conflicts among British subjects, is the growing problem of immigration. Alongside Powell, Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher expressed her concerns that the growing immigrant population of different races and cultures would "swamp the country" (1978) and articulated her nostalgia for the old "Great Britain" ("TV interview for Granada *World in Action*"). Since "the old Great Britain" refers to the former imperial power and prestige lost after decolonisation and the Second World War, Thatcher's preference to use this term demonstrates that Thatcher's regime aimed to "make Britain great again" by reviving the national spirit ("1950 General Election"). As seen, according to both politicians, the increase in the immigrant population means the disappearance of the former imperial power. Therefore, they pioneered the anti-immigrant actions in the country by highlighting the specious status represented by white skin in political discourses.

1.3.1. Postimperial Melancholia in Multicultural Britain

Paul Gilroy defines the nostalgic attachment to the imperial past as "postimperial melancholia" and criticises the English power elites' inability to confront the loss of imperial power and acknowledge their colonial crimes:

I want to show that since then the life of the nation has been dominated by an inability even to face, never mind actually mourn, the profound change in circumstances and moods that followed the end of the Empire and consequent

loss of imperial prestige. That inability has been intertwined with the apprehension of successive political and economic crises, with the gradual breakup of the United Kingdom, with the arrival of substantial numbers of postcolonial citizen-migrants, and with the shock and anxiety that followed from a loss of any sense that the national collective was bound by a coherent and distinctive culture. Once the history of the Empire became a source of discomfort, shame, and perplexity, its complexities and ambiguities were readily set aside. Rather than work through those feelings, that unsettling history was diminished, denied, and then, if possible, actively forgotten. The resulting silence feeds an additional catastrophe: the error of imagining that postcolonial people are only unwanted alien intruders without any substantive historical, political, or cultural connections to the collective life of their fellow subjects. These extraordinary failures have obstructed the arterial system of Britain's political body in many ways. They deserve the proper name "postimperial melancholia" in order simultaneously to underline this syndrome's links with the past and its pathological character. (2004: 98)

Paul Gilroy's argument for postimperial melancholia is based mainly on the research by German psychologists Alexander and Margaret Mitterlich on the reaction of the German people to Hitler's death in the social and political spheres in post-war Germany. According to the Mitterlichs, the German people's inability to mourn their leader and confront the war crimes in the post-war period put them into a phase of melancholia¹⁰. According to Paul Gilroy, the English nation's inability to mourn the loss of the British Empire, imperial power and prestige has caused collective melancholia in English society. Britain has avoided facing the loss of the empire, which was once arguably the epitome of power and prestige in the world. The fundamental reason for avoiding is that confronting means acknowledgement of colonial crimes. So instead, they prefer to remember and idealise the Empire as a happy period with a sense of nostalgia (Gilroy 2004:132; Ahmed, 2010:123). In other words, postimperial melancholia demonstrates that Britain still seeks to legitimise the colonial mission by claiming it was a philanthropic movement to civilise the indigenous societies instead of accepting the consequences of colonialism both in the metropolis and overseas.

¹⁰In the Freudian context, mourning represents the process of consciously coping with the loss of a loved one. On the other hand, melancholy is about the inability to confront the loss of the object of love. According to Freud, for the mourning process to be completed without turning into melancholy, the subject must identify with the object of love for a certain period after losing it, but then the libido must be transferred to an external object. Otherwise, the subject remains identified with the object of love. (Freud, 1994: 243-258)

In addition, since the imperial period is identified with the idea of a white homogenous Britain, the contemporary English nation remains attached to this idea. As a consequence of the country's complex relationship with its colonial past and nostalgic vision of imperial Britain, the immigrants from the former colonies are perceived as strangers and intruders whose aim is to destroy the racial and cultural homogeneity of the English. This view disregards the imperial and colonial ties with the non-white immigrants. As the aforementioned speeches of Powell and Thatcher reveal, Britain "seizes the position of the victim" by asserting the presence of immigrants endangers racial homogeneity and social cohesion. Furthermore, in Ashley Dawson's words, "British political leaders have repeatedly resorted to the scapegoating of so-called ethnic minority groups for the nation's social problems" (2007:6). In other words, the non-white population in Britain is considered the primary cause of "the nation's woes" and "the nation's economic and social ills" (Gilroy, 2004: 126; Dawson, 2007: 6). They are held responsible for the inner issues of the country, such as increasing poverty, economic problems, and the issue of unemployment. In particular, the common belief among the working and lower class is that immigrants have taken away their job opportunities and therefore, the English have difficulty finding proper jobs. As such, the economic decline is a significant factor in increasing hostility towards postcolonial minorities. Whereas, as Avtar Brah points out, the postcolonial immigrants with lower social and educational backgrounds are generally employed as a cheap labour force for heavy work that no one wants to do because of poor working conditions and low wages (1996: 21). In addition to the economic issues, English parents object to immigrant children's intake in schools because of the perception of losing educational opportunities to the non-white population, which they consider less intelligent than white society (Brah, 1996: 21). This hostile attitude together with the economic problems have manifested in the immigrants' settlement choices. As a result of economic and social anxieties, the diasporic communities established settlements separately from the middle-class and privileged members of the host society, often in impoverished areas on the city margins. Brah articulates that immigrants' tendency to settle in the rundown sections in working-class areas is related to their need for cheap housing. In particular, Brah foregrounds issues such as "housing shortages, inadequate social services, high levels of unemployment and poor educational

facilities” were common in these areas before the arrival of immigrants. However, these issues became related to the immigrants, in the mind of the English residents inhabiting these areas. Instead of accepting the role of social institutions, they held the presence of immigrants responsible for the ongoing problems in the country (Brah, 1996: 22). As can be seen, the settling of immigrants in impoverished and working-class areas has led to the concern of losing housing opportunities to immigrants as well as job opportunities and has been a factor that fosters everyday racism. Although this situation indicates that the economic and housing problems in these areas stem from the class issue in Britain, immigrants with less desirable social, cultural, and historical backgrounds are still held responsible for the inner problems rather than the authorities. This situation shows how effective the imperial past is in English society’s race relations. In addition, the negative approach toward postcolonial minorities is considered a symptom of postimperial melancholia because it shows that Britain does not acknowledge the historical ties with the immigrants and considers them mere strangers, as if Britain’s colonial history is not the reason for postcolonial immigrants’ presence in Britain today. As seen, institutional racism, cultural prejudices inherited from the past, and current anxieties have led to the rise of invisible borders between different communities that even have manifested spatially to determine who is included or excluded in society.

As shown, Britain has a long history of institutional and popular racism that “legitimizes harsh treatment of those who are not perceived as ‘native’” (Dawson, 2007: 7). Sara Ahmed, who explores the impacts of the long colonial history of victimage and ongoing institutional and everyday racism on contemporary immigrants, highlights that the politics reinforcing the racial and cultural differences between the English and the diaspora have created the figure of the melancholic immigrant:

The figure of the melancholic migrant is a familiar one in contemporary race politics. The melancholic migrant holds onto the unhappy objects of differences ... which ties it to a history of racism. Such differences become sore points or blockage points, where the smooth passage of communication stops. ... The melancholic migrant’s fixation with injury is read not only as an obstacle to his or her own happiness, but also to the happiness of the generation to come, and to national happiness. (Ahmed, 2010: 48)

According to Ahmed, because of the hostile attitudes towards the immigrants in politics, media, and the remnants of colonial thinking manifest in social dynamics, the immigrant internalises the idea of difference and thinks that s/he will never be accepted in the host society. Therefore, the immigrant continues to attach to the idea of difference that puts him behind invisible walls. The idea of difference and not being accepted causes the immigrant to position himself apart from the host society. It prevents the immigrant from interacting with the host society and culture because of these anxieties. For this reason, the environment for the interaction and dialogue necessary for the convivial multicultural transformation cannot be provided. As can be seen, politics, history, and media are functional in the border-making process in society.

Hitherto, the relationship between the imperial past and postimperial melancholia has been explored. According to Gilroy, another underlying cause of postimperial melancholia is Britain's defeat of the Nazis in the Second World War. In his famous speech, Winston Churchill, British prime minister (1940-45 and 1951-55), defines the Second World War as “the finest hour” of recent British history because of Britain’s victory over the Nazis and fascism. In other words, the war has become “the last heroic stance” in the recent history of Britain, which has lost its power and prestige due to the devastating effects of the Second World War and decolonisation. Hence, post-war Britain holds on to the idea of heroism produced by the war narratives. Dennis Dworkin points out that even though the majority of the English citizens have no first-hand experience of the war, they still attach to its memory. Gilroy, who questions the undiminished impact of the war on the present society, states that the idea of war recalls “the desirable forms of togetherness” (2004: 95). The phrase refers to the togetherness of the white English people because the war is presented as “the last heroic stance prior to multiculturalism” in Britain (Dworkin, 2009: 533). The war is a nostalgic period when immigrants had not appeared in Britain yet, and Britain heroically defeated the Nazis. Therefore, Margaret Thatcher especially focuses on recovering the nationalist spirit evident in wartime to achieve the aim of the Great Britain ideal (Gilroy, 2019: 01:33). In addition to the political approach, modern war movies about the Second World War are based on English heroism in the war, just like the period movies that nostalgically idealise the imperial period to resurrect the

nationalist spirit (Gilroy, 2004: 95-7; Baucom, 1999: 165). Moreover, the war narratives that aim to restore the sense of Englishness tend to exclude the role of colonial soldiers on the battlefields (Jackson, 2006:1). In other words, contemporary Western films and other forms of grand narratives, still dominated by Western epistemology, are very effective in determining social relations and national belonging. Therefore, rethinking the Second World War from different points of view is a part of the convivial multicultural transformation in Britain.

As the present part explores, the imperial epistemology continues to erect boundaries between the English and the diaspora. Both Ahmed and Gilroy draw attention to the content of the visions and speeches of the political figures and reinforce that the border-making process is a top-down process. Furthermore, the majority of conventional multicultural studies carried out for Britain do not provide space for intercultural interaction by highlighting the polarisation and differences between cultures. In this respect, it would not be wrong to assume that the top-down approach to multiculturalism in Britain strengthens borders. Hence, the negative approaches of the British government to immigrants produce invisible top-down borders in British society and lead the English and diaspora communities to be imprisoned behind their own walls. Ulla Rahbek states that the discourse of British multiculturalism is “a crowded and complicated discursive terrain where terms such as ‘parallel societies and parallel lives’, ‘tribes’, ‘ghettos and gangs’, ‘cells’, ‘segments and self-segregation’, ‘borders’, ‘walls’, and ‘fences’ jostle for explanatory space” (2019:131). Thus, contemporary multicultural scholars in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century draw attention to the power of cross-cultural encounters and interactions in mundane life that can lead to a bottom-up change process for Britain’s multicultural future.

1.4. Crossing Borders: Conviviality in Multicultural Britain

1.4.1. Cross-Cultural Dialogue in the Urban Areas

The last part of the study emphasises the effects of Britain's imperial and colonial history on contemporary England. After the Second World War, the immigrant population from the former colonies has changed Britain’s demographic, social and cultural structure. Besides, the loss of imperial power and prestige has been

effective in shaping Britain's internal and external political structure and immigration policy. In the process of coping with this loss, racism and cultural prejudices inherited from the imperial period found a place in the political discourse. Hence, they have caused the formation of invisible borders between the different communities from the top-down.

Accordingly, changing the perception about “the other” is not “a top-down” but “a bottom-up” process that is possible through daily interactions taking place in mundane public and private spaces (Newman, 2006: 20). In this respect, Paul Gilroy offers the term “conviviality” to contemporary multicultural studies to describe “[the] pressure from below [that] has enriched and expanded the country’s public sphere” (2004: 108). Etymologically, conviviality is derived from Latin and means “living with” (Back and Sinha, 2016: 522). In terms of multicultural Britain, conviviality refers to cohabiting with differences through cross-cultural encounters in daily life, unlike the postimperial melancholia that reinforces differences between communities through politics and grand narratives of imperialism. It suggests transforming invisible boundaries between different cultures by providing a space to recognise racial and cultural differences as something valued rather than feared. Therefore, convivial culture carries hope for Britain “to discover a new value in its ability to live with alterity without becoming anxious, fearful, or violent” (2004: xi). As stated, the bordered environment in Britain has led to defining multiculturalism in terms of melancholia and unhappiness. Nevertheless, Gilroy and Ahmed suggest that the future of Britain can be “a happier multicultural environment” in case of “building bridges” between differences through interaction: “Happiness is projected into the future: when we have ‘cracked the problem’ through interaction, we can be happy with diversity” (Ahmed, 2010: 122). Their view is mainly based on the idea of dialogue, which will enable both sides to become acquainted with each other. Dialogue offers an alternative to multicultural coexistences that fosters either discrimination or assimilation. It allows people to comprehend differences are nothing to be afraid of but reference points to recognise each other: “Such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched” (Bakhtin, 1986: 7). Likewise, Parekh’s optimistic vision for

multiculturalism also demands cross-cultural dialogue and interaction. According to this vision, the two prominent conditions of cross-cultural dialogue for each side are facing their prejudices from the past to the present and being open to change. For Rahbek, intercultural dialogue requires that each side should be open to the influence of other cultures and be eager to learn from them

A dialogue between cultures requires that each should open itself up to the influence of and be willing to learn from others, and that in turn requires that it should be self-critical and willing and able to engage in a dialogue with itself. (qtd. in Rahbek, 2019: 7)

The cross-cultural dialogue is a bilateral process that focuses on both “the minority’s and the wider society’s way of life” (Rahbek, 2019: 176). In the context of Britain’s multicultural way of life, dialogue with the racial and cultural other is possible by being self-critical about institutional and everyday hostility towards immigrants stemming from its colonial history and being open to change. As stated earlier, minority communities also have problems of belonging due to the differences that keep them apart from the host society due to the effects of the colonial past. As can be seen, racial and cultural prejudices in both communities have led to polarisation and separation. As Hans Georg Gadamer states, people evaluate each other within the framework of past and present preconceptions. Nevertheless, in the process of knowing, the preconceptions about the Other can change through recognising the other person in terms of the present conditions. The recognising process can be possible through engaging in a mutual dialogue between the two sides of society. In other words, Parekh and Gadamer express that the present can be formed by confronting the prejudices inherited from the past. Likewise, conviviality does not foreclose racism and cultural prejudices emanating from the imperial past as seen in the case of postimperial melancholia; nevertheless, through establishing a cross-cultural dialogue in daily encounters in urban areas, a convivial multiculture can be established:

I use [conviviality] to refer to the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculture an ordinary feature of social life in Britain’s urban areas and in postcolonial cities elsewhere. I hope an interest in the workings of conviviality will take off from the point where “multiculturalism” broke down. It does not describe the absence of racism or the triumph of tolerance. Instead, it suggests a different setting for their empty, interpersonal rituals, which, I suggest,

have started to mean different things in the absence of any strong belief in absolute or integral races. (2004: xi)

As seen, Gilroy particularly dwells on conviviality in urban areas such as London, which is considered “a contact zone” and “a meeting place” for different communities. The emphasis on the urban areas stems from the distinction between the countryside and the city in English culture. The rural spaces in Britain, a representation of white homogenous society, have become a reminder of the imperial past in contemporary Britain:

The representation of the English countryside as epitomising the unspoiled essence of Englishness has a long history and – coupled with postwar initiatives in the so-called ‘heritage industry’ – has made a pastoral vision of England a major aspect of English national culture, which has continued to the present day. (McLeod, 2004: 17)

The metropolis is not included in the idealisation of the imperial past because the city, with its racially and culturally diverse population, is located opposite the countryside. Thus, conviviality can occur in urban areas that have turned into a contact and transition zone. The city provides a space for the proximity of individuals of different cultures that eventually alter the social and cultural structure of minorities and the wider society. **The Buddha of Suburbia** and **White Teeth** both are set in London, the most cosmopolitan metropolis in England. Although Britain does not share a geographical boundary with the hometowns of the immigrants or diasporic population it hosts, London functions as a borderland where different cultures encounter and interact with each other. As stated earlier, traditional British multiculturalism has not paid attention to producing interaction and relations across differences in society; hence, conviviality focuses on the public and private spaces in the metropolis in which individuals of different races and cultures previously separated by geographical distances can encounter. Particularly, public spaces such as schools, workplaces, parks, restaurants, and markets provide a space for the encounter to establish a dialogue beyond differences. As Gilroy points out, although the consequences of this proximity in mundane spaces can be disharmonious from time to time, every concept of culture is broken, changed, and dispersed in the postcolonial world due to cross-cultural interactions (Gilroy, 2004:78-9). Similar to Gilroy, Wise and Velayutham state that even the small everyday practices can lead to “hybrid identities” (2009:7). In

addition, friendships or marriages across cultures and races contribute to racial and cultural hybridisation, enabling society to overcome racism and related cultural prejudices. Interracial love and marriage blur the boundaries of ethnicity and race, so the social acceptance of interracial marriage can be considered a traditional narrative of reconciliation (Gilroy, 2004: 39; Ahmed, 2010:145). In this respect, everyday encounters and interactions can produce third spaces beyond invisible boundaries and contribute bottom-up transformation of multicultural societies.

1.4.2. The British Youth, Popular Culture and Music

In addition to cross-cultural dialogue and interaction in private and public spaces in the urban areas, Gilroy dwells on the contribution of cultural elements to convivial transformation. In his argument, convivial culture mostly emerges among the British youth who grow up together and are exposed to the same aspects of popular culture. For Gilroy, British youth functions as “a bulwark” against the intrigues of racial politics despite growing social and economic divisions in Britain (2004:132). Since the children of immigrants and host society grow up together, the racial differences have become a more ordinary aspect of their relations and a less discriminative aspect among British youth. Although it does not mean that racism does not exist among the young generation, as in the case of the Skinheads, the features of popular culture such as music, dance, and even smoking provide new cultural codes determining the modes of cross-cultural relationships. In Gilroy's study, popular music especially becomes prominent in providing a less conflicted atmosphere by overcoming racial and cultural differences. In the introduction to **The Faber Book of Pop**, Hanif Kureishi also highlights that popular music was “a method of communication” for young people from different segments of society in the late sixties and early seventies. Popular music refers to the previously unspoken “fringes of the respectable world” such as “marijuana, generational conflicts, clubs, and parties” that were at the centre of British youth life during this period (1995: xviii-xix). In this context, Kureishi states that popular music is at the centre of post-war British culture, where issues such as race, gender and class intersect, as it is a perspective that presents an alternative history of the present time.

Other music genres that emerged in the following years and became popular among young people also exhibited similar motifs. For example, the rock music culture that eventually led to Rock Against Racism (RAR)¹¹ in 1976, was not only involved in the anti-racist movements in the country but also provided them with a musical ground for white and black youth in multi-racial areas to interact. As David Renton points out, RAR took place at a significant stage in black British history when “the first mixed black-and-white generation of British youth reached adulthood” (2018: xi). It held carnivals and gigs in collaboration with the Anti-Nazi League¹², intending to stand out against the increasing racist attacks by the National Front in the country (Renton, 2018: 169). The carnivals were mainly organised in London and Britain’s other vibrant multicultural and multiracial places to bring together white and black youth. Thus, rock music has become an important third space where young people produce new cultural codes to surmount racism in this period.

In addition to the contribution of rock music to creating a dialogical multicultural environment in the 1970s, Paul Gilroy chiefly focuses on popular music as an important aspect of convivial formation during the millennium in Britain. His approach to the role of music as a reconciliatory medium to create a hopeful atmosphere is significant to comprehending the optimistic visions and approaches for future multiculturalism in late twentieth-century Britain. Popular music in this period, represented by The Streets in **After Empire**, “built upon the aftershock of Rock Against Racism, which was a very formative experience for the post-1968 generation” (Gilroy, 2004:104). According to Gilroy, The Streets and other similar voices present racial differences as an ordinary feature of daily life: “Exposure to [racial difference] is not ethnic jeopardy, but rather an unremarkable principle of metropolitan life” (2004: 105). Moreover, their music influenced by “Jamaican reggae, British two-tone ska, European electronic dance music, British jungle and American hip hop” is highly

¹¹ RAR emerged in 1976 following the photographer Red Saunders’ response to Eric Clapton’s support for Enoch Powell at the Birmingham Odeon concert and was very influential in the history of anti-racism in Britain (Renton 2018:51). In his response, Red Saunders points out the great influence of blues and other forms of black music on British rock music and accuses Clapton of being a musical colonist. Then, he calls for anti-racist people’s support for the Rock Against Racism movement.

¹²The Anti-Nazi League (ANL) was established in 1977 with the aim of opposing the rise of extreme right-wingers in the United Kingdom.

significant in terms of representing the hybridity of British culture: “In combining distinct and disparate elements into harmonic coordination, the music of The Streets and other music along the convivial continuum is able to provide a ‘grass roots’ or ‘bottom-up’ articulation of social formation that disrupt essentialised racial categories” (Boothby 2020:205). In other words, the hybrid nature of popular music that constitutes an alternative space for cross-cultural encounters “have promoted a spontaneous and ordinary hybridity” (Gilroy, 2004: 132).

As seen, popular forms of music have evolved along with the white and black British youth and provided them with a space to interact despite the ongoing racism in society. In this respect, Gilroy suggests that the impact of popular music and popular culture among the younger generation can contribute to “the pressure from below” that enriches the public sphere in Britain.

1.4.3. Healing Humour and Conviviality

The other aspect that becomes prominent as fostering conviviality is the use of humour in **After Empire**. Gilroy points out the role of humour and laughter in the subversion of cultural prejudices and provides a space to cross conceptual and imagined boundaries between communities. As Ilott states, “comedy has both a political role – mimicking, commenting on, or transparently embedded in hierarchical structures of power – and a psychological one, giving voice to taboo subjects and revealing socially repressed desires or fears” (2015:134). In that regard, it requires to explore the main uses of humour in postcolonial and multicultural humour.

The function of humour is various; sometimes, authoritarian powers can use it as a weapon to highlight differences between communities, and in some cases, it can build a bridge between differences. In terms of postcolonial comedy, three features explained in detail by John Morreall in **Comic Relief** (2009) come forward: incongruity theory, superiority theory, and relief theory. In incongruity theory, the incidents unfold contrary to expectations in the way to create comic situations; therefore, they unsettle the hierarchies through laughter. Superiority theory is based on

Plato's argument of laughter¹³ and extended by Thomas Hobbes' theory of comedy that counts on hierarchies (Morreall, 2009:6). According to Hobbes, people laugh at differences in people considered inferior; therefore, there is a distinction between the other and the self in superiority theory. In incongruity theory, the incidents unfold contrary to expectations in the way to create comic situations; therefore, they unsettle the hierarchies through laughter. Relief theory focuses on the psychological effects that lead to laughter in the audience. According to this theory, humour is a tool that relieves the tension in society through laughter (Morreall, 2009: 16). When English humour is considered in accordance with these three theories, the superiority theory is more applicable to explain traditional English humour because humour and laughter play a vital role in constructing a sense of English national identity (Pfister, 2002: viii; English, 1994: 29; Ilott, 2015: 134). Traditionally, English national identity has been bound up with a series of hierarchies that determine one's social position through inclusion and exclusion or superiority and inferiority. In terms of post-war British society, the political role of humour becomes prominent, and it has been used to highlight differences between minorities and the host society. In this context, politics use elements of comedy to alienate immigrants and reinforce social and cultural polarisation. The stereotypical immigrant image produced during the colonial period is still perpetuated through comedy and laughter. Racist jokes not only strengthen the anti-immigrant support in white society but also seeing the immigrant in a comical situation helps to reduce the tension in the society (Çelikel, 2017: 60-1). For this reason, humour, laughter, and jokes have always been used by the power elite to sustain invisible boundaries in society. According to Gilroy, postimperial melancholia is associated with the political role of comedy: "postimperial melancholia invites [the English] to pass the time ... by laughing at immigrants and strangers" (2004: 144). The immigrants as the object of laughter enable the English people to postpone the confrontation of the uneven results of Britain's transition process to cultural diversity.

¹³ John Morreall points out that thoughts on laughter and humour begin with Plato in Western culture. Morreall associates Plato's comment on humour in **Philebeus** as the cornerstone of superiority theory: "Then our argument shows that when we laugh at what is ridiculous in our friends, our pleasure, in mixing with malice, mixes with pain, for we have agreed that malice is a pain of the soul, and that laughter is pleasant, and on these occasions we both feel malice and laugh" (Plato qtd. in Morreall, 1987: 13)

In other words, presenting the immigrant as the object of laughter helps the power elite manage multicultural tension and anxiety in white society through laughter and jokes. Mass media, T.V. shows, and tabloid newspapers particularly contribute to creating the comical and stereotypical immigrant figure by presenting them in terms of racial and cultural prejudices inherited from the imperial mindset (Gilroy, 2004: 144). As Homi K. Bhabha states in “Of Mimicry”, colonialism repeatedly exercises its power through “the figures of farce” (1984: 126). The figures of farce include racist stereotypes and jokes that aim to put the colonial other in an inferior position to the colonialist. In contemporary multicultural Britain, a similar mindset maintains the hierarchical relationship between the English and the minorities by reinforcing differences through racial stereotypes and jokes.

As a result, comedies produced from the perspective of the postcolonial other generally aim to reverse this image. However, Gilroy is not interested in the “laughing back paradigm¹⁴” but focuses on humour and laughter's conciliatory function. As Mark Stein and Susanne Reichl articulate in **Cheeky Fictions**, “laughter is not always used as a weapon; it can perform a conciliatory function” (2005: 12). According to them, “the uncertainty of whose cultural values are being ridiculed, and whose position is being laughed at” is a distinguished aspect of multicultural laughter and comedy to constitute conciliation (2005: 14). Thus, this kind of humour may contribute to a convivial sociocultural transformation. Likewise, Gilroy asserts that subversive and healing humour can help surmount racial hierarchies and change prejudices about others. In this respect, the subversive use of humour is a condition for sustaining convivial multiculturalism in Britain.

Paul Gilroy describes the convivial function of laughter by exemplifying it through the fictional character Ali G, that approaches multicultural British society in the early 2000s with a humorous and critical narrative. Gilroy emphasises the ambiguity of Ali G.'s cultural identity that is functional to reverse prejudices toward black culture in British society. As the name of Ali indicates, the character leads the

¹⁴A phrase used by Mark Stein and Susanne Reichl in **Cheeky Fictions** to define the reversing function of humour in postcolonial literature.

audience's expectations to see a non-white character on the screen. However, Ali G stands for Alastair Leslie Graham; therefore, it subverts the general expectations of the audience even at the beginning. Ali G. is a white Briton whose way of speaking and manners are similar to the representation of black men in British media. In this respect, it can be said that the characterisation of Ali G. is a reversal of the colonial man's mimicry of the white man¹⁵. The contradictions between Ali G.'s ethnic identity and behaviours create an ambiguous situation: "no one knew for certain what Ali G. was" (2004:148). According to Gilroy, hostile responses to the character are associated with his capability to perplex the ethnic and racial classifications that held contemporary British society stable (2004: 148). Therefore, Gilroy defines him as "an ambassador from the emergent, multicultural Britain that exists, largely unnoticed and always unvalued, alongside its better-known, official counterpart" (2004: 148). Then he states that the impact of comical elements in Ali G. stems from the ambiguity of his identity:

Some would have been laughing at what they took to be his imitation or ridicule of blackness, others at one further remove, were probably laughing at the black parts of his monstrous hybrid. They could do this safely because they knew perfectly well that he was not really black. Nonetheless, their laughter existed far beyond the reach of any simplistic suggestion that it could be contained by its origins in a racist point of view. This incomplete inventory does not exhaust the possible sources of that laughter, but I have no doubt that many people would also have been laughing at what Ali G showed us about British culture. They laughed louder and longer because he revealed it to be alien, eccentric, and absurd in its snobbery, stupidity, and perverse attachment to numerous forms of destructive hierarchy—class, race, religion. Those dismal qualities were not being exposed from the outside by a stranger but explored from the inside in a daring act of patriotic love. By imagining himself as a stranger in his own country, Ali G refined a systematic estrangement from local habits and turned it into an art. (2004: 148-149)

The subject emphasised here is that Ali G. embodies both the stereotypical features of British culture and the prejudices against black culture and ridicules them. Thus, it appeals to different segments of society and causes laughter in every group, regardless of their ethnic origin. Moreover, Ali G. approaches multicultural British society from both inside and outside, from a hybrid point of view. In this respect, not only the

¹⁵According to the mimicry theory, the colonial other creates a new identity by adding his own culture to the culture of the white man. In this case, as a white man, Ali G. introduces a new British identity by adding elements from Black British culture to English culture. The character criticizes the ongoing racism by showing the hybridization in British identity and culture.

immigrant's culture but also the English culture turns into an object of laughter. Thus, his character “might have helped to break laughter’s complicity with postcolonial melancholia and to locate new sources of comedy in a remade relationship with our heterogeneous selves, working through the aftereffects of empire in a self-consciously multicultural nation” (Gilroy, 2004: 149). As seen, humour and laughter can be a healing and conciliatory step for relationships with otherness and differences that are not distorted by anxiety, violence, and fear.

As explored, everyday multiculturalism in Britain is different from conventional multiculturalism because it demands “hospitality, conviviality, tolerance, justice, and mutual care” for each side of the society (Rahbek, 2019:108). As will be seen in **The Buddha of Suburbia** and **White Teeth**, humour, popular culture and music, and other youth subcultures are very effective in establishing a dialogical environment for British youth.

1.5. Crossing Imaginary Borders: Multicultural Novel as Border-Crossing Fiction

The multicultural transformation in British society and culture is also reflected in the literary works produced in the late twentieth century. Many of the distinguished writers of contemporary British literature are of immigrant origins and have provided different perspectives on the connection between the multicultural change and the imperial past. Thus, they are able to bring different perspectives about history and contemporary society to the forefront and contribute to the cultural hybridisation of society by unsettling the imaginary and symbolic boundaries shaped by Western grand narratives in the reader’s mind. According to Ulla Rahbek, multicultural literature can help reimagine Britain’s future in a hopeful and convivial way (2019: 92). Hence, the argument pursued in the present study is that English multicultural novels can contribute to a convivial multicultural transformation by inviting the reader to realise and surmount the historical and contemporary prejudices that lead to the emergence of invisible boundaries in society. The scope of the study is late-twentieth-century multicultural novels that contribute to reimagining Britain in terms of Bhikhu Parekh’s visions for Britain’s multicultural future. As mentioned in the previous chapters,

Bhikhu Parekh states that future Britain will be either a conflicting environment or comfortable with its inner plurality and diversity. Multicultural novels in this period tend to illustrate the cross-cultural conflicts to seek alternative ways of cohabitation to overcome invisible boundaries.

The study intentionally focuses on the novel genre because it brings diverse and sometimes conflicting perceptions together thanks to its multivocality:

The traditional commitment of the [novel] genre to many voices and many styles, as evoked in Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of polyphony and heteroglossia, allows competing points of view within the space of a single novel or story that can encourage active perspective taking across social boundaries. While novels have been blamed for fostering images of cultural constraint, they have also been credited with helping shape expanded views of human potential. (Black, 2007: 9)

As stated in the previous chapters, colonial novels written in the imperial era led to the emergence of imaginary and conceptual borders between the English and the colonial others by reinforcing their racial and cultural differences. Nevertheless, novels can be functional to cross conceptual and imagined borders inherited from the past. Accordingly, starting from Bakhtin's theory of polyphony in the novel, Black states that multicultural novels present different perspectives in society to the reader and therefore play a role in expanding the reader's horizon. Black particularly focuses on multicultural fiction in the late twentieth century for it echoes the paradoxical roles of social borders in constituting sociocultural relations in this period. Thus, the study categorises contemporary English multicultural novels that reflect cross-cultural debates and interactions simultaneously as "border-crossing fiction" through two criteria outlined by Shameem Black: "... first, [border-crossing fiction] foregrounds a dramatic dissonance between the subject and object of representation; second, it seeks to surmount these productions of social difference" (2007: 3-4). The dissonance in these novels comes out as cross-cultural conflicts due to reinforced social differences between the minorities and the English, as explored in the previous chapters. The novels provide a space to acknowledge the role of imperial history and politics in the production of invisible boundaries between the different racial and cultural communities in the country. On the other hand, they foreshadow the possibility of a convivial Britain by presenting plural and mundane cross-cultural relations in

everyday life. As Rahbek states, multicultural literature is bound up with quotidian experiences, which means there is a particular focus on ordinary cross-cultural encounters in public and private spaces in this literature. In this respect, English multicultural novels both represent cross-cultural conflicts and alternative ways of multicultural cohabitation.

In addition to bringing different voices together, multicultural novels written by hybrid writers provide an opportunity to “practice a multidimensional perception” for the reader (Hicks, 1991: xxiii). The multidimensional perception enables the reader to see both sides of the border in a society. As mentioned in the previous chapters, a social border, such as a physical border, prevent one from seeing the other side; therefore, one continues to consider the other according to inherited prejudices and presuppositions. In **Truth and Method**, Hans Georg Gadamer foregrounds that the reader approaches the text with presuppositions and prejudices inherited from the past. Then, in the process of reading and understanding, the reader engages in dialogue with the text and her preconceptions are challenged by the text; thus, her horizon is expanded and transformed. (Gadamer, 2004: 304-5). In a way, a literary text provides a space for the reader to comprehend the situation of the other by changing one's perception about the other. It means that literature can stimulate people's minds and encourage them to realise ongoing problems in society.

In terms of multicultural Britain, “racial difference obstructs empathy and makes ethnocentrism inescapable. It becomes impossible even to imagine what it is like to be somebody else” (Gilroy, 2004: 70). Fostering the idea of racial and cultural differences, as illustrated in the example of postimperial melancholia, leads to raising fences between the host society and minorities. Moreover, since the idea of racial difference is closely related to historical binary oppositions such as superiority/inferiority, familiar/stranger, prejudices and presuppositions create barriers in the way of understanding and empathising with each other. In this context, multicultural novels that appeal to both the mainstream English reader and the diasporic reader provide a space for the English reader to confront the prejudices and traces of imperial history while offering the diasporic reader the opportunity to observe the host society from a different perspective. Hence, English multicultural novels not

only represent conflicts but seek alternatives to cohabit together without fearing alterity. Furthermore, with its multivocality, the novel genre effectively stimulates the reader's empathy for the other. In **Empathy and Novel**, Suzanne Keen conveys that a significant part of the readers considers novel reading a way of opening their minds “to experiences, dilemmas, time periods, places, and situations that would otherwise be closed to them” (2007: ix). Likewise, Rahbek points out that multicultural literature can help the reader comprehend social complexities and expand the reader’s horizon by introducing different ways of life:

[Multicultural literature] helps its readers understand and make sense of increasing social complexity and, perhaps, to encourage readers to sympathise with a multitude of different human beings through literature’s capacity for stimulating empathic identification between character and reader. (2019: 207)

It means that literature can stimulate people's minds and encourage them to realise ongoing problems in society. Although it does not awaken a sudden effect on the reader, it can still provide a liminal space to question their prejudices. Hence, multicultural literature can play a significant role in developing skills that eventually maintain a bottom-up approach to multiculturalism, “that, in turn, can help to foster a convivial climate of tolerance and civility in a superdiverse society, a climate that involves citizens on both sides of the minority-majority divide and that relies on the desire to want to live peacefully together” (Rahbek, 2019: 212).

As will be explored in the following chapters, **The Buddha of Suburbia** and **White Teeth** present the borders and border crossings in British society to the reader. Despite conflicts, debates, and anxieties emerging in communities, both novels reimagine convivial and hopeful multiculturalism for future Britain.

CHAPTER TWO

BORDERS AND BORDER CROSSINGS IN THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA

The Buddha of Suburbia is a portrayal of late-twentieth-century multicultural Britain. The novel will be considered in terms of reflecting the border-crossing aspects in post-war British society and culture. The term border refers to both conceptual and temporal boundaries, such as cultural prejudices and racism, produced by a colonial mindset and continue to affect cross-cultural relations in contemporary British society. There have been immigrant writers like Salman Rushdie and Sam Selvon who describe the difficult living conditions of immigrants coming from the former colonies of the British Empire to post-colonial England in their novels since the mid-fifties. When compared to the works of these writers, the place of **The Buddha of Suburbia** is significant in British literature because Hanif Kureishi is the first British-Asian writer who speaks for the descendants of immigrants born and raised in England¹⁶. Zadie Smith, who read the novel as a teenager, points out that Karim, the protagonist, was different from the other characters she read at that time. Since Karim represents the young generation, he was a familiar character for her and her friends who grew up in a multicultural environment (Smith, "Zadie Smith on **The Buddha of Suburbia**"). Furthermore, the novel does not only address the diasporic communities but English readers at the same time. Sarah Illott noted that **The Buddha of Suburbia** is about minority cultures, but its projected audience is "largely white, middle-class and mainstream" (2015: 95). It depicts the difficulties and changes experienced by diasporic groups, moreover the reaction and stance of English society to the change. Thus, the novel opens a new space for different cultures to think and comprehend "the Other" in British society:

If there is to be a serious attempt to understand Britain today, with its mix of races and colours, its hysteria and despair, then, writing about it has to be complex. It can't apologize or idealize. It can't sentimentalize and it can't represent only one group as having a monopoly on virtue (Kureishi qtd. in Hall, 1996: 450).

¹⁶ Hanif Kureishi is the first British-Asian playwright to be staged in the Royal Court.

As Kureishi's statement indicates, the novel is a multi-voiced representation of contemporary multicultural Britain. It does not ignore the ongoing boundary-making process between cultures; nevertheless, it emphasizes the potential of boundaries turning into horizons¹⁷ in which people can encounter, interact and contribute to the change of multicultural society. Kureishi is also aware of the function of spatiality in terms of revealing the socio-cultural changes that take place in Britain. The title of the novel indicates the importance of locations for the narrative. Therefore, the narrator is a hybrid figure who wanders in the city and encounters characters from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. During his journey, Karim conveys both socio-cultural conflicts inherited from the imperial past and cross-cultural interactions that pose the ongoing change in Britain.

2.1. Border-Crossings in Narrative: Hybridity and Humour

2.1.1. The Narrative Function of Hybrid Gaze in *The Buddha of Suburbia*

The aim is to examine the function of hybridity in conveying the multicultural social structure in this chapter. Karim's point of view, or "hybrid gaze", will be considered as a narrative function while scrutinizing the imperial history and multicultural society of Britain in the following chapters. The narrator of ***The Buddha of Suburbia*** is Karim Amir, a seventeen-year-old British-Asian teenager. The novel is set in postcolonial London and depicts the social, cultural, and spatial changes due to immigration in contemporary Britain from the perspective of a hybrid character. Hybridity has been used in the postcolonial context to define "cross-cultural exchange" and usually refers to the formation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone¹⁸ (Ashcroft et al., 2013: 134-135). Mikhail Bakhtin reinforces that hybridity in a language represents "the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present" (qtd. in Allen, 2000: 29). From the beginning, Karim frequently puts an emphasis on the engaging of past and present within the

¹⁷"The concept of 'horizon' proposes a theoretical principle for that movement beyond epistemological, cultural and spatial boundaries to which post-colonial discourses aspire" (Ashcroft et al., 2001: 16).

¹⁸ "... social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination — like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today." (Pratt, 1992: 4).

contemporary discourse that is displaying xenophobia and other cultural prejudices. Nonetheless, he draws attention to the reconfiguration of biases within the social context. Therefore, as Kureishi points out, Karim conveys the contradictions within society. When Karim is taken into consideration in light of these approaches, he stands on an axis where the past and present intertwine and shape cross-cultural relations. His self-introduction at the beginning of the novel displays his hybridity in both a cultural and historical context.

The beginning of the novel indicates that it is in the form of bildungsroman. Bildungsroman describes the moral development of the individual and the construction of identity with the change of society. For Mikhail Bakhtin, bildungsroman is related to “the emergence of a new human being” and therefore it represents the socio-cultural transformation of society (1986: 23). For Mark Stein, **The Buddha of Suburbia** is a “novel of transformation” that tells “the formation of its protagonist but, importantly, it is also about the transformation of British society and cultural institutions” (2004: xiii). The beginning of the novel confirms Stein’s statement and informs the reader about both Karim and the present socio-cultural situation of Britain:

My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don’t care – Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London suburbs and going somewhere. Perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored. (Kureishi, 1999: 3)

Karim Amir is a strange name for the mainstream British audience; however, Karim defines himself as “an Englishman born and bred” (Kureishi, 1999: 3). In the first sentence, he declares the socio-cultural change in British society. Karim represents plurality and diversity and invites the reader to realise that “their culture is only one amongst a plurality of ways of conceiving of reality and organizing its representations in art and social practice” (Ashcroft et al., 2002: 154). He is the biracial, bicultural, bisexual protagonist of this novel, which takes place in London, the old imperial centre. Karim deconstructs the historical construction of the marginal Other and Western men. It indicates that “the silenced Other” on the margins has decentralized the white heterosexual male in Western grand narratives (Hutcheon, 1988: 12; Said, 2019: 6). When he adds “almost” to the end of the sentence, he emphasizes the

ambiguity and plurality that he represents in the society. According to Stein, adding “almost” at the end of the sentence underscores “the condition of an ambivalent cultural attachment. It reveals the status of the insider who simultaneously knows the perspective of an outsider” (2004: xii). It resembles Homi K. Bhabha’s interpretation of hybridity that is associated with ambiguity, “a difference within, a subject that inhabits the rim of an ‘in-between’ reality” (1994: 13). In other words, Karim’s hybridity is an in-between position that allows him to see and evaluate multicultural Britain from different perspectives existing in the society. Another aspect that reinforces hybridity is his emphasis on the shared history that brings them together in Britain today. Karim describes his hybridity as “a new breed having emerged from two old histories” and the statement about history refers to the shared past of England and India. This shared past is directly associated with imperialism and colonialism and reminds of the asymmetric power relationship between the two nations. This history still infiltrates the contemporary relations within multicultural British society and shapes intercultural relations in negative ways.

The negative attitude is also evident in politics and immigration policies. Avtar Brah states that the late twentieth-century in Britain is a period in which the government enacts anti-immigration laws, showing that immigrants are unwelcomed by the host society. This approach is an undeniable factor that obliges the first-generation immigrants to confine in social and cultural barriers. However, the British-Asian youth have begun to make their presence more visible than their parents’ generation in social and cultural spheres in Britain in this period (1996: 26-27). In other words, while the anti-immigration laws are associated with increasing racial tension, the presence of the Asian and black youth considering themselves British shows there is an irreversible change within society. Inevitably, it is a very complex period in terms of cross-cultural and -racial relations in Britain; therefore, Brah’s statement approves Kureishi’s idea about contradictions that echoed throughout the novel. **The Buddha of Suburbia** presents complexities in society through the characters that represent the different parts of society in terms of race, culture, and religion. The main reason for the ongoing racial conflict in British society is its inability to admit that they have lost the Empire. The novel puts forward this

postimperial melancholia as an obstacle for healthy cross-cultural relationships: “The whites will never promote us,’ Dad said. ‘Not an Indian while there is a white man left on the earth. You don’t have to deal with them – they still think they have an Empire when they don’t have two pennies to rub together” (1999: 27). Kureishi also emphasizes this situation through Karim's interpretation of racism through Gene, a parallel character for Karim to reinforce the change in immigrants’ socio-cultural position, who wants to be an actor but eventually committed suicide for not getting a proper role because of his race:

... the English told him they hated him; they never let him forget they thought him a nigger, a slave, a lower being. And we pursued English roses as we pursued England; by possessing these prizes, this kindness, and beauty, we stared defiantly into the eye of the Empire and all its self-regard – into the eye of Hair Back, into the eye of the Great Fucking Dane. We became part of England and yet proudly stood outside it. (Kureishi, 1999: 227)

That paragraph is an indication that the remains of the British Empire still induce phenotypical racism. For Ash Amin, phenotypical racism “brackets certain subject categories as inferior, dangerous or alien, and questions the fragile accommodations of convivial coexistence” (2013: 5). Amin’s description of racism overlaps Sara Ahmed’s definition of “melancholic immigrants” who cannot go beyond the imposed boundaries on them by society. In Ahmed's words, the melancholic immigrant clings to “unhappy objects of differences” that are connected to the history of racism and that reinforce the distinctions of the immigrant from the host society (Ahmed, 2010: 61). Society's categorisation of Gene as inferior and a stranger, and its approach to him regarding his racial and cultural differences, depresses him and eventually drives him to suicide. Kureishi wants to reverse the mindset considering Gene as a stereotype by narrating his talent from an English woman's perception:

Gene was a young West Indian actor. He was very talented and sensitive, thin and kind and raunchy, with this beautiful face. He knew a lot about poetry, which he’d declaim wonderfully aloud at parties. And African music was his speciality. He worked with Matthew once, a long time ago. Matthew says he was the best mime he ever met. But he never got the work he deserved. He emptied bed-pans in hospital programmes. He played criminals and taxi-drivers. He never played in Chekhov or Ibsen or Shakespeare, and he deserved to. He was better than a lot of people. So he was very angry about a lot of things. The police were always picking him up and giving him a going over. Taxis drove straight past him. People said there were no free tables in empty restaurants. He lived in a bad world in nice old England. (Kureishi, 1999: 201)

Marlene, the English woman, points out that Gene lives in difficult conditions in “nice old England” to highlight things are different and more hopeful in new England compared to the situation in the early years of post-war migration. The phrase “nice old England” refers to a period in which the effects of imperialism were strong when non-white people were socially and culturally excluded. Therefore, the word “nice” creates an irony, considering that Gene’s troubles due to racism drive him to suicide. On the other hand, emphasizing that this period as “old” indicates a change in the approach towards people from different cultures and races in contemporary Britain. Therefore, Kureishi strengthens the transformation process from old to new through the absence of Gene. Karim never meets him but listens to stories about his suffering. In this sense, Gene stands as a parallel character to Karim, who eventually gets a proper role in a soap opera at the end of the novel. The soap opera which Karim is given a role refers to the contemporary problems that Gene has suffered from: “I was being given a part in a new soap opera which would tangle with the latest contemporary issues: “[T]hey meant abortions and racist attacks, the stuff that people lived through but that never got on TV. If I accepted the offer I’d play the rebellious student son of an Indian shopkeeper” (Kureishi, 1999: 259). Furthermore, the coverage of the previously unspoken subjects such as racism and discrimination on television indicates the visibility of the minority population in the social and cultural spheres in Britain.

The Buddha of Suburbia, on the one hand, represents Britain that still deals with the imperial past. It, on the other hand, poses alternative ways to cross the conceptual boundaries through “the new breed” Karim, who establishes dialogue and relationships with individuals from English and other ethnic origins. Karim's presence and relationships with others function as a crack in the invisible wall built by the past, as he was born into an interracial love marriage: “My mother told me that she loved him, her little man, from the first moment she saw him. He was sweet and kind and utterly lost-looking, which made women attempt to make him found-looking” (Kureishi, 1999: 25-26). This statement is significant for it shows that Margaret did not see Haroon through the lens of historical prejudices but as another ordinary man around her. Therefore, the relationship of Haroon and Margaret opens another way to live together beyond prejudices. The emphasis upon love and interracial marriage

shows a break in the established figure of Asians and other immigrants as the archetypal alien. It displays the fact that cross-cultural encounters within social life can create new spaces for interactions apart from the tension of the past. In other words, Karim's presence, as an individual and protagonist, indicates a new “convivial” route for British society. In the opening, he immediately declares his boredom with the long-repeated histories of colonialism and imperialism. It is an assertion that his journey is going to lead him to new possibilities in society.

Then, hybridity is associated with the blurring of the ethnic and cultural boundaries inherited from the past in the novel. The hybrid subject is an intersection of different and ethnical referential codes, and the hybrid gaze can provide “a multidimensional perception” (Hicks, 1991: xxiii). Multidimensional perception symbolizes the ability to see and convey different cultural sides of society rather than focusing on a cultural group. Since Karim Amir was born to a British-Asian family, he can observe both cultures from a distance and proximity at the same time. It enables him to see the porousness of boundaries between English and minor cultures. During the novel, Karim is on both a metaphorical and literal journey, and he encounters people from different backgrounds who represent different responses to the multicultural turn in British society.

The concept encounter is significant for this study to understand cross-cultural relations, which take place in **The Buddha of Suburbia**. In **Strange Encounters** (2000), Sara Ahmed highlights that the concept of encounter means a meeting that contains conflict and surprise (2000: 6). Her argument mainly pivots on the formation of the Other as a stranger in daily life and the discourse. She asserts that the host society perceives strangers as “the origin of difference” who cannot assimilate into the larger society and its social order (Ahmed, 2000: 4). As stated earlier, the term difference is critical to state the limits for both host and immigrant groups. She criticizes that the emphasis upon difference among the host society and minorities causes division and separation because the idea of difference implies incommensurable gaps between groups. Brian Fay and Paul Gilroy also state that reinforcing differences can cause the danger of erecting borders instead of dissolving them. The emergence of the tendency towards intercultural dialogue and interaction is related to that concern. Brian Fay

suggests interactionism as an alternative to focusing on the points of contact between different groups, and, in particular, on thresholds that function as areas of reciprocation (1996: 340). His suggestion of reciprocation also contains conflict within, similarly to Ahmed's description of encounters. This study focuses on the cross-cultural encounters in the novel in light of two aspects of encounters asserted by Ahmed. Firstly, she states that “encounters are meetings, then, which are not simply in the present: each encounter reopens past encounters” (2000: 8). The interracial and intercultural encounters in multicultural societies reopen colonial encounters and refigure them. Secondly, differences can be comprehended through contemplating the role of cross-cultural encounters in the shaping of social space (Ahmed, 2000: 9). In other words, encounters between people of different cultures in everyday life help to refigure the past ideas and historical prejudices for the other in the present. Ahmed insists on the consideration of cross-cultural encounters should not exclude the effect of historicity (Ahmed, 2000: 9-10). **The Buddha of Suburbia** concerns the intervention of colonial history in the everyday encounters.

Ash Amin remarks that multicultural writing neglects to admit that the everyday encounters with difference is a complex process (2013: 5). The complexity of the everyday encounters is about the host society's response to the presence of different races and cultures. The society is either at ease with differences or uncomfortable about the presence of the Other in the country. **The Buddha of Suburbia** maintains to convey the conflicting multicultural environment in Britain under the concepts postimperial melancholia and conviviality. Postimperial melancholia and conviviality are two concepts Paul Gilroy presented to British multicultural studies. Postimperial melancholia is associated with the negative and conflicted response to racial and cultural differences. Conviviality, on the other hand, is an optimistic approach that contributes to the idea that differences can cohabit together. They are represented through Karim's encounters and experiences, which are associated with the imperial past and present British society, and depict the social and cultural changes from different perspectives. Hybridity provides a neutral space for Karim to observe and criticize both cultures in relation to prejudices in the changing British society.

2.1.2. Humour, Laughter and Reversing Borders in Narrative

As stated in the previous chapter, the study aims to examine **The Buddha of Suburbia** regarding its border-crossing aspects while conveying the socio-cultural change in post-war Britain. The humorous narrative of the novel serves as another border-crossing aspect because it helps to make visible and unsettle the conceptual boundaries that define multiculturalism in Britain. The humorous narrative is integral to Karim, the narrator, who observes both English society and diasporic societies in Britain thanks to his hybrid identity. As mentioned previously, Karim's hybrid identity corresponds to the expectations of neither English nor Indian society. Since Karim is unable to position himself in established socio-cultural codes, he considers himself funny in the context of socio-cultural understanding of an individual in society. As Brian Fay and Shameem Black note, humour simultaneously requires distance and proximity to the object of laughter (Fay, 1996: 58; Black, 2007: 102). Then, it is possible to say that while hybridity gives Karim an in-between position in British society to observe both the host society and minorities, humour enables him to protect his critical perspective: "Kureishi tells his story through a narrator's point of view – but as immediately, the author also provides the reader with an objective point of view of the incidents. Humour is integral to both Karim's story and Kureishi's truth; contradiction becomes inherent in the novel as well" (Kaleta, 1998: 68). Kaleta, then, means that humour is the essential element in the novel to protect critical perspective in the narrative while conveying the incidents and complexities due to cultural differences in multicultural Britain. The boundaries mentioned earlier mostly refer to the historical prejudices in the host society and minorities regarding the other culture. The prejudices manifest themselves either as phenotypical or as cultural racism in the context of English society. According to Black, the use of humour more positively and constructively, as in some examples of multicultural literature, may unsettle the cultural and social boundaries between different groups. Likewise, Gilroy states that laughter can relieve the tension between the two sides by confronting their inherited mindset from the colonial and imperial past. While Gilroy points out the postimperial melancholia in the host society, Ahmed examines that the imperial past manifests itself as melancholia in diasporic communities. Hence, the way of constituting a convivial

multiculture, in which people from different cultures are in dialogue, is possible through breaking this melancholia through laughter and humour (Gilroy, 2004: 145).

In order to defuse the conflicts between different groups, Gilroy asserts that multicultural media and writing should create an alternative narrative to maintain social cohesion in contemporary Britain. In that regard, the novel turns into a liminal space in which both English and minority readers can encounter and overcome the boundaries created by history. Moreover, the humorous narrative in **The Buddha of Suburbia** presents an alternative use of humour to change the discriminative approach toward the immigrants in society. Sukhdev Sandhu's review of Kureishi's ability to use humour indicates that he is aware of not only the anxieties of the diaspora but also the power of humour; therefore, Kureishi reverses the immigrant's position from the object of laughter to the teller of jokes in his narrative:

Kureishi's work not only captured [our] anxieties, but offered for the first time a recognizable portrait of British Asian life. Previously we had made do with sitcoms such as *It Ain't Half Hot Mum* and *Mind Your Language*, in which Asians wore comical headwear and were the butts rather than the tellers of jokes. (qtd. in Ferretter, 2003: 107)

Karim Amir's humorous narrative supports Sandhu's argument because he has become “the teller of the jokes” in the novel rather than the object of laughter. The shifting in these roles implies another border crossing that shows the change in Britain's cultural environment. Besides indicating and crossing borders within the socio-cultural sphere, Kureishi is also disturbed by the politicalness of the jokes that are the “reduction of racial hatred” (1996: 76). Kureishi tells his uneasiness about the representation of Pakistanis on the television comedy shows as comic figures because of their ethnic origin and traditions¹⁹. For Kureishi, the political jokes about immigrants express the collective view of English society. According to him, these jokes have also influenced the increasing tension between the host society and minorities in 1970s Britain as much as Enoch Powell's racist speeches (1996: 76). Nevertheless, as Luke Ferretter states, “Kureishi recognizes that if comedy can reinforce racism in this way, it can also be

¹⁹As will be examined in the next part of the study, the humour in this novel does not only criticize the English humour based on othering. It also humorously portrays the diaspora. Social conflicts are caused by the prejudices of both groups.

used as a critique of racism and as a form of protest against it” (Ferretter, 2003: 107). Therefore, Kureishi addresses the social position of the immigrant as the object of laughter. In the novel, Kureishi uses humour while depicting Anwar's character to criticize comedies' contribution to the racist mindset and bring a critical perspective to the representation issue in diasporic narratives. When Karim wants to use Anwar, Karim's Indian relative who goes on hunger strike to force his daughter to accept an arranged marriage, as a reference for his character in Pyke's play, a black actress named Tracey criticizes Karim because he will only feed English people's prejudices and racial hatred about South Asian people:

Your picture is what white people already think of us. That we're funny, with strange habits and weird customs. To the white man we're already people without humanity, and then you go and have Anwar madly waving his stick at the white boys. I can't believe that anything like this could happen. (Kureishi, 1999: 180)

Since the colonial mindset classifies black people as inferior to white men because of their traditions and custom in order to justify Europeans' assimilation movements, Tracey thinks that portraying an Indian man as “funny, with strange habits and weird customs” on stage will only support white men's prejudices about the diasporic subjects. As her statement shows, Tracey's first concern is that Karim's character will be “funny” and “the object of laughter” for the mainstream English audience. Hence, the novel denounces the political jokes that serve racial hatred in society. Therefore, Kureishi also uses the power of humour to display the concerns in the South Asian and black diaspora about the representation of the Other in mainstream white society. Through Tracey's concerns and Karim's persistence about deriving his character from Anwar, the novel points out “the burden of representation” in the black movies and narratives (1996: 443). According to Hall's view, black film-makers make an effort to represent the black subject in a good manner as a response to the black subject's negative representation in white movies and narratives. Hall criticizes that the purpose of representing “all blacks as good” serves the essentialism of the black subject in a different way. It means that if “all black people are good”, then “all black people are the same” (1996: 445). Tracey's statement covering diasporic communities under the umbrella term black shows that she essentialises the diasporic subjects instead of

considering them different individuals. In spite of Tracey's concerns, Karim insists that Anwar's behaviours just show that he is an old Indian man whose behaviours are irrational (Kureishi, 1999: 176). It means that Kureishi knows that there are people who share the same mindset with Anwar in the South Asian diaspora. Although Kureishi is against old-fashioned traditions, he thinks that Anwar is a part of Indian society and he also should be represented. Therefore, Anwar is a multi-functional character to comprehend inner and outer problems in Britain's host society and minorities. However, like how Tracey criticises Karim for his will to depict Anwar on the stage, some South Asian readers criticise Kureishi for his way of representing their community in his works (Yousaf, 1996: 16). According to their opinion, Kureishi may contribute to perpetuating the South Asian stereotypes in society. In this respect the responses to representation of reality creates another irony in the novel. Therefore, the dialogue between Karim and Tracey shows the conflicts within the minorities in terms of representation and brings criticism to their approach²⁰. When Tracey says that she cannot believe that a man such as Anwar can be real, her statement points out that the burden of representation can draw attention away from the multiple black experiences in a multicultural society.

Anwar's comical representation is also associated with his refusal to broaden his horizon by rejecting interaction with English people. He clings to the Indian culture because he is concerned that his daughter will be corrupted by English culture. Anwar's fear can be associated with colonial history, built upon the corruption and exploitation of Indian society and culture²¹. However, Karim emphasizes that Anwar has always been "happy to live like Englishmen" (1999: 64). Moreover, it is Anwar's indifference that provides a free space for Jamila to escape through the fire escape outside her room and do things that even some of her white peers cannot imagine, such as drinking, smoking, and sexual intercourse for years (1999: 64). Hence, Karim becomes surprised

²⁰Tracey is a microcosmic illustration of the diaspora annoyed of stereotypical representations in mainstream narratives. However, Kureishi knows that there are people who share the same mindset with Anwar.

²¹ His fear can be interpreted as the fear of hybridity. In the colonial period, hybridity is welcomed by neither the coloniser nor the colonised societies because they think their racial purity would be spoiled by the Other. In particular, colonised societies are mainly worried about assimilating into the colonizer's culture and losing their origins. Therefore, Anwar's fear can be considered as an expression of this mentality inherited from the colonial period.

when he finds out that Anwar goes on a hunger strike to force Jamila to accept the arranged marriage with an Indian man: “It was certainly bizarre, Uncle Anwar behaving like a Muslim. I'd never known him to believe in anything before, so it was an amazing novelty to find him literally staking his life on the principle of absolute patriarchal authority” (1999: 64). As the emphasis upon “patriarchal authority” demonstrates, Anwar's behaviours are associated with protecting his authorial position at home more than the urge of reattachment to his homeland roots. His restrictive behaviour towards his wife and daughter highlights women's subaltern²² position in minority communities. As Gayatri Spivak points out, the colonial or immigrant women have no right or choice to speak on their behalf but have to follow the authorial figure's orders at home (Teo, 2014: 595). Eventually, Jamila has to accept the marriage in order to prevent his father's death. On the one hand, Anwar's hunger strike is a criticism that addresses the old-fashioned customs of the Indian diaspora, which can be restrictive for the young generations' inner and outer relations in society. On the other hand, Karim criticizes Anwar's insistence on clinging to the negative and restrictive aspects of the colonial past, which are associated with the idea of an imaginary homeland²³. When his son-in-law Changez arrived in London with his disabled hand, Anwar has to accept that India has changed too. Because Changez's disability symbolises the vanishing of the male's authoritative position at home. However, Anwar cannot confront his mistakes; therefore, he confines himself within cultural and conceptual boundaries that put “him and Indian culture into a ridiculous and a narrow-minded position” (Kureishi, 1999: 71). The purpose of humour is, in this case, to show how the remains of the past limit the present relationships and emphasize that the change in perspective can lead to a socio-cultural transformation. His refusal of dialogue is the main reason why the unhappiness of Anwar and puts him in the position of the object

²² “Subaltern, meaning 'of inferior rank,' is a term adopted by Antonio Gramsci to refer to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. ... It is used in Subaltern Studies 'a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office or in any other way’ (Ashcroft et al., 2013: 244-45)

²³ “Imaginary homeland” refers to the perfect and uncorrupted image of homeland in the diasporic subject's mind. See also **Imaginary Homelands** by Salman Rushdie for further and detailed information.

of laughter. If he would cross his conceptual boundaries, he can break the image of the melancholic immigrant and become a part of multicultural happiness.

In that regard, while Tracey provides an angle for race relations in terms of national history and politics, Karim considers the incidents around him from an individual's perspective. On the one hand, Karim's distance to politics is associated with his opportunist personality that wants to use any opportunity putting him in a privileged position. On the other hand, the distance provides him to evaluate cross-cultural relations from an individual's point of view. Steven Vertovec also emphasizes that there is “a swing from ascribed, group-based attributes to self-attributed, individual characteristics” in late multicultural studies (qtd. in Rahbek 2019: 12). In this respect, Karim also represents the change in the structure of multiculturalism that has been focused on group relations rather than individual problems. Towards the end of the novel, Karim's brother Allie states the main concern of the novel is getting over former experiences to accept, change and to continue:

‘I hate people who go on all the time about being black, and how persecuted they were at school, and how someone spat at them once. You know: self-pity.’
‘Shouldn't they – I mean, we – talk about it, Allie?’
‘Talk about it? God, no.’ Clearly he was on to a subject he liked.
‘They should shut up and get on with their lives. At least the blacks have a history of slavery. The Indians were kicked out of Uganda. There was reason for bitterness. But no one put people like you and me in camps, and no one will. We can't be lumped in with them, thank God. We should be just as grateful we haven't got white skin either. I don't like the look of white skin, it -’ ... ‘Let me say that we come from privilege. We can't pretend we're some kind of shitted-on oppressed people. Let's just make the best of ourselves.’ (Kureishi, 1999: 267)

Tracey is concerned about how mainstream English audiences perceive Anwar. However, the conversation between Karim and Allie addresses the self-apprehension and the need to overcome melancholia due to past experiences in the diasporic communities. While Jamila and Tracey stand for what Ahmed called “unhappy racism” and embrace the idea of the right representation of the Other in Western publicity, Allie refers to the “multicultural happiness” that is possible in the case of getting over the melancholic mood (2010: 123). Nevertheless, Allie's offer not to talk about the problems of racism and colonialism indicates that his approach to cross-

cultural relations disregards the first condition of overcoming melancholia is to talk about it. In this respect, the novel represents different responses among the diaspora to the burden of colonial history. Therefore, the novel is able to address minorities as well as the host society in Britain and deals with the boundaries that separate them both in terms of inner and outer reasons associated with the imperial past. Hence, Anwar's comical representation is significant to unsettle these boundaries in the diaspora by questioning the reasons that created them in the first place. In this case, humour helps unsettle the cultural barriers that define not only the English perspective about South Asians but the concern of minorities about their self-representation in the larger society.

In the novel, Auntie Jean, Margaret's sister, is another character who refuses to establish a dialogue with the Other due to her historical prejudices. Thus, Karim also criticizes Auntie Jean, who considers herself superior to immigrants. Karim likens her “an Ealing Comedy character” entering “an Antonioni movie” in her first encounter with Haroon's Buddhist performance (Kureishi, 1999: 33). Her discourse displays the traces of imperialism while mentioning Haroon: “We've always quite liked your dad, and we never had any objections to him marrying Margaret, though some people didn't like her marrying a coloured – ...” (Kureishi, 1999: 44). Even though she considers herself superior to the other ethnicities because of her white identity, Karim deliberately puts emphasis on her personal problems, which makes Auntie Jean the object of laughter. When she appears at his father's performance and has to sit down on the floor, Karim humorously says that it must be the first moment Auntie Jean is near the ground except when she is drunk (Kureishi, 1999: 33). He touches upon his aunt's alcohol problems that puts her into comical situations in the novel. By doing that, Karim indicates that her aunt's sense of superiority is only a legacy of the colonial past. The crucial point in Jean's behaviours is also her denial to establish a healthy dialogue with the Other and people around her. Her attitude also causes her to end up living within uncrossable boundaries. In other words, although Anwar and Auntie Jean represent different social groups in Britain, they create a bordered environment by interiorizing the imperial past and refusing the change both in private and social lives. Eventually, while Anwar's death occurs after his son-in-law's self-defence with a sex

toy, Auntie Jean disappears towards the novel's end. Both indicate the necessity of interaction for the continuation of a multicultural society.

In the novel, Anwar is presented to acknowledge the anxieties in the black and Indian diaspora in the context of cross-cultural relations. Haroon, unlike Anwar, is an Indian man who is open to cross-cultural interaction. Hence, his interaction with English people as a “Buddhist performer” helps to interrogate the different responses in English society to the immigrants in contemporary Britain. In the novel, his first performance, consisting of yoga and spiritual speeches, takes place in Eva's house, an English woman Haroon has an affair with, which has become a contact zone for Haroon, Karim, and the English people who attend Haroon's performance. Although English people's interest is mainly related to consumer culture, which includes exploitation of exotic aspects, both their interest and Haroon's enthusiasm to engage in dialogue with them also imply that there are people on both sides open to change and interaction in socio-cultural life. In other words, Haroon's Buddhist performances and speeches demonstrate the contradictions in terms of plurality and difference in multicultural Britain. In his performance at Eva's home, most of the attenders show attention to Haroon; however, two white men consider Haroon the object of laughter because of his ethnicity:

'Why has our Eva brought this brown Indian here? Aren't we going to get pissed?'
'He's going to give us a demonstration of the mystic arts!'
'And has he got his camel parked outside?'
'No, he came on a magic carpet.'
'Cyril Lord or Debenhams? (Kureishi, 1999: 12)

In the novel, Karim doubts whether his father is disingenuous in his purpose of the Buddhist performances; therefore, he frequently criticises and mocks Haroon. When Eva says that “Haroon will show them the Way” during his performance, Karim finds her expression ironic, for his father cannot find “his way to Beckenham”²⁴ (1999: 12).

²⁴ Although this study does not focus on Karim and Haroon's father-son relationship, it is still important to note that Karim has a complicated relationship with his father. According to Kenneth C. Kaleta, Karim's sarcastic approach toward his father stems from his adolescence which is a phase of life where sons get into a complex relationship with their fathers: “Kureishi characterises [Haroon] in a pithy way. ... and the reader, made to see Haroon, and made to see Haroon as Karim sees him ...: proud, haughty, pompous – perhaps a bit ridiculous. The paragraph also characterises Karim. The son finds his father

Nevertheless, these men's behaviour enrages him because their dialogue reflects the worries stated by Jamila and Tracey in the case of Anwar. These English men laugh at Haroon because he demonstrates an aspect of Indian culture. Karim's enragement corresponds to Kureishi's comment about the use of humour as a reduction of racial hatred. Since the reference to the camel and the magic expresses that the Oriental perspective still exists in the Western discourse, the dialogue between the Englishmen at the performance highlights that the Other's cultural aspects are considered funny and inferior to the dominant cultural system in society. In other words, it reflects the cultural prejudices connected to the imperialism that delineates Eastern cultures as uncivilized and funny in contrast to the civilized and superior Western customs. In the postcolonial context, the feeling of superiority corresponds to Gilroy's idea of postimperial melancholia, which is associated with the legacy of empire (2004: 97). In other words, as Gilroy asserts, it is English men's imperial mindset that puts Haroon in the position of the object of laughter and sustains the conceptual boundaries between host society and minorities. Therefore, Gilroy underlines the need to change the immigrant's image of being the object of laughter and turns it into a mirror reflecting English society. **The Buddha of Suburbia**, on the one hand, presents how the diasporic subject has been placed as the object of laughter in the mainstream narrative. On the other hand, while the English men in Eva's house think that exotic Indian culture is funny, Karim reveals that the English people's tendency to vanity about exotic cultures also puts them in a comical position. Edward Said defines exoticism as "an amateur or professional enthusiasm for everything Asiatic" (2019: 51). When Haroon and Karim arrive at Eva's house, Karim sees that "[t]he only thing she [Eva] wore was a full-length, multi-coloured kaftan, and her hair was down, and out, and up. She'd darkened her eyes with kohl so she looked like a panda" (1999: 11). Eva's dress choice implies that she intends to wear Indian clothes for the Indian night. However, as Çelikel points out, a kaftan is a dress associated with Ottoman sartorial culture

embarrassing and foolish – what boy of seventeen does not? ...The author further characterises the relationship between father and son by using the narration as an ironic commentary on the plot and characters. Thus, ...Karim expresses his awareness of his dad's attitude, and perhaps of his creator's – "he easily became sarcastic, Dad" (1998: 69). In this respect, Haroon can be considered the only character Karim is unable to evaluate objectively in the novel. As seen in this scene, Eva encourages Haroon to speak about Buddhism, yet Karim sarcastically criticises his father.

(2017: 127); therefore, a knowledgeable person about Indian culture, such as Karim, immediately grasps Eva's ignorance about the Indian culture. In terms of the superiority theory, Eva has become the object of laughter for the minorities and the mainstream reader through Karim's emphasis on her look. A few pages later, he mentions his father's clothes for the performance, which are inappropriate for a cold London night and might seem funny to not only the mainstream reader but also to the readers from the Indian diaspora:

It was indeed his fault, for under his car coat my father was wearing what looked like a large pair of pyjamas. On top was a long silk shirt embroidered around the neck with dragons. This fell over his chest and flew out at his stomach for a couple of miles before dropping down to his knees. Under this he had on baggy trousers and sandals. But the real crime, the reason for concealment under the hairy car coat, was the crimson waistcoat with gold and silver patterns that he wore over the shirt. If Mum had caught him going out like that she would have called the police. After all, God was a Civil Servant, he had a briefcase and umbrella, he shouldn't be walking around looking like a midget toreador. (Kureishi, 1999: 29)

In his book, Çelikel expresses that the protagonist, who comes from a hot country to cold London in light-coloured clothes in Sam Selvon's **The Lonely Londoners**, is an object of laughter for the mainstream audience (2017: 61). His ignorance about the weather conditions in London makes the English reader feel superior to him. Haroon always behaves as if he has just arrived in England even though he is in England for years, his clothes evoke the newcomers in the postcolonial English narratives. In a sense, he indicates the historical preconceptions about the immigrants. However, he has been in England for twenty years and the dress choice that makes him look like a “midget toreador” creates a funny image of him both in the mainstream and minority culture. The emphasis upon Haroon's being a civil servant shows him as a member of contemporary Britain rather than a stranger to the country. The representation of Haroon and Eva as objects of laughter within the framework of different cultures in society shows that not only the immigrant but also the host culture sometimes turns into the object of laughter. It, as Gilroy emphasizes, creates a transition point between cultural boundaries and contributes to the maintenance of social cohesion.

According to Black, stereotypes function as boundaries that determine the expectations about a person in the context of ethnicity, culture, and religion (2007:

117). Thus, the use of stereotypes provides rich scope for highlighting and reshaping social prejudices about a cultural or ethnic group. While Anwar highlights the boundaries in terms of stereotypes, Haroon points out the instability and porousness of these boundaries. At the beginning of the novel, Haroon is introduced as a Muslim Indian man who gives basic Buddhist performances such as yoga and makes speeches about the necessity of spiritualism in the materialist world²⁵. On the one hand, since there are no English who pay attention to Haroon's Muslim identity, it demonstrates that they do not know about Indian history. On the other hand, the inconsistency in Haroon's identity disturbs Karim, who frequently expresses his doubts about his father's disingenuousness²⁶ about Buddhism. Besides his Muslim background, Haroon is used to carrying a dictionary to practice English to impress English people, but he starts to practice on his Indian accent just after beginning the Buddhist performances (Kureishi, 1999: 21). Haroon is introduced at the beginning to stress that ethnic identities, particularly in a multicultural society, are not stabilized. Karim describes him as "a renegade Muslim masquerading as a Buddhist" who wails "Christian curses" (Kureishi, 1999: 16). Thus, Haroon's slippery identity supports the postmodern idea of fluid identity that is open to change and shaped by the different socio-cultural norms in society. Therefore, Karim calling his father the Buddha of suburbia creates a comical image of Haroon by Karim touching upon the inconsistency in his father's identity. Moreover, Haroon's postmodern identity reinforces Kureishi's belief in the diversity and plurality of people as individuals: "But because the characters are written as people rather than as conforming to previous racial or sexual stereotypes, they also convey the human potential for hope in their contemporary struggles" (Kaleta, 1998: 177). Since the novel stresses "the potential for hope" in future cross-cultural relationships, the critical stance of the novel corresponds to Paul Gilroy's idea that conviviality can be conveyed through laughter in media and textual works. Kureishi

²⁵ In the 1970s in Britain, consumer culture becomes so prominent that Haroon's performance has become a part of this materialistic social order. Carl and Marianne, the English couple who pays a visit to India, and their house where Haroon performs, represent the domestic consumer culture that covers exotic elements from the other cultures: "the sandalwood Buddhas, brass ashtrays and striped plaster elephants which decorated every available space" (1990: 32). The inconsistency between the content of the speeches and the materialistic interest in Buddhism creates another irony in the novel.

²⁶ Despite his hybrid identity, Karim implicitly is critical about father's culturally hybrid identity. As Kaleta states, "Karim's ambiguous feelings for his dad ... hints at the racial conflicts within Karim's hyphenated identity" (1998: 69).

indicates the necessity of laughter for each part of society to relieve the tension rooted in the imperial past. While Karim calls his father the Buddha of suburbia, he criticises his English relatives, Uncle Ted and Auntie Jean, by calling them “Gin and Tonic” (Kureishi, 1999: 34) because they deny recognizing his father’s Indian identity and mentions him as Harry instead of Haroon. Since giving somebody a name is associated with the colonial mindset based on domination and refusal of identity, Karim responds to their behaviour by using funny names. As it is seen, Karim uses humour in order to reveal the double-sided nature of British society. Also, humour enables a different perspective to consider the impacts of the imperial past on society and shows a new path to establish a convivial culture. The sense of humour will be considered in the following chapters while examining Karim's experiences and encounters.

2.2. Borders and Border-Crossings in British Society: Melancholia and Conviviality

In this part, **The Buddha of Suburbia** is considered in terms of postimperial melancholia and conviviality. Since Kureishi deals with the problems that emerge from both sides’ preconceptions, he explains the problems and boundaries between different communities as “the failure of connection” (1996: 95). Zygmunt Bauman's definition of “the refusal of dialogue” is similar to Kureishi's concerns. For Bauman, the refusal of dialogue causes a mutual alienation in society and leads to a bordered environment (2016: 21). Therefore, in contrast to the dialogue of conviviality, postimperial melancholia can be associated with the refusal of dialogue.

For Gilroy, this situation is a visible sign of postimperial melancholia that casts its shadow over the impulse of living with difference along with political anxieties (Back and Sinha, 2006: 522). Nevertheless, the plural and diverse urban areas that enable different cultures to meet and encounter in everyday life may lead to conviviality. Sara Ahmed also points out that Britain can be projected into happier and reasonable multiculturalism through interaction (2010: 122). **The Buddha of Suburbia**, which sets in London and the suburbs and has a British-Asian protagonist who wanders between public and private spaces, conveys melancholia and conviviality simultaneously.

2.3. Cross-Cultural Conflicts: Postimperial Melancholia

2.3.1. Politics, Violence, and Melancholia in the Suburbs

The novel's division into two parts, "In the Suburbs" and "In the City", indicates the importance of spatiality in grasping the socio-cultural environment. Karim's journey begins in the suburbs, which has become the symbol of unhappiness for Karim: "In the suburbs people rarely dreamed of striking out for happiness. It was all familiarity and endurance: security and safety were the reward of dullness" (1999: 8). According to Karim, the reason for unhappiness in the suburbs is people's fear of change. Since the idea of change means the loss of racial purity as well as the loss of economic opportunities to the immigrants for English people, a major part of the suburban residents defends the idea of national cohesion supported by the important political figures of the period. Despite his limited but encouraging interactions with people from the younger generation, Karim's experiences in the suburbs mostly delineate poverty and other class problems that make people behave angrier than people in the city. The anger, which manifested itself violently as everyday racism, was partially caused by the period's politics and increased day by day. In addition to being a place where the lower class or working-class lives, suburbia is one of the regions that has received the most immigration during and after the decolonisation process (Pope, 2015: 145). For Gilroy, "the backbone of the resistance to convivial culture" is rooted in racist and nationalist reactions, initiated by widespread antagonism to commonwealth immigrants during the 1950s and 1960s (2004: 112). Although there are activities carried out for immigrants to have a place in society, the influential political figures of the period, such as Powell and Thatcher, have targeted immigrants by implying that immigrants threaten the nation-state understanding, which is associated with protecting the cultural and ethnic hegemony of the country. While both political figures aim to regain the prestige of the imperial era, as Gilroy states, they see immigrants as a threat rather than a part of the imperial past. In other words, the social and economic anxieties are projected onto race and immigration as the main reason for the nation's distresses (Gilroy, 2004: 126). Therefore, Gilroy states that political conflicts in multicultural British society should be considered in terms of imperial and colonial history in order to provide new insights into contemporary

multicultural debates (2004: 2). The melancholic situation is an obstacle to Britain's connection to its departed imperial past and dwells on its specific memory of the Second World War. He considers melancholia the pathological variant of mourning (Gilroy, 2019: 18:04-18:30), and it is impossible to secure Britain's multicultural future without mourning for its loss. The psychological description of mourning is “the reaction to the loss of a beloved person, or an abstraction taking the place of the person such as fatherland, freedom, an ideal and so on” (Freud qtd. in Ahmed, 2010: 140). In the case of Britain, the beloved abstraction is imperialism and its prestige. Yearning for the imperial past creates a melancholic atmosphere in English society because they are unable to confront the consequences that create a multiracial and multicultural Britain. The ambiguity in the boundaries of contemporary racial and cultural identities leads English society to cling to the happy image of imperialism related to a racial and cultural homogenous England (Gilroy, 2004: 116). The other reason to hold on to imperialism's prestigious and powerful image is to avoid the uncomfortable and perplexing history of colonialism (Gilroy, 2004: 98). Hence, there is an attempt to justify imperialism by creating a happy image of the imperial past: “In ‘Life in the UK’ the imperial past is mentioned on few occasions and in all of these is represented in positive terms” (Ahmed, 2010: 130). Both critics point to Britain's complex relationships with the imperial past and the need for confrontation. Since colonial history has become a discomfort for contemporary Britain, they categorise immigrants as unwanted strangers in their land. Inevitably, the perspective about immigrants reflects initially in political acts, then in everyday life. In the novel, the suburbs are where political tension has been increasing, and postimperial melancholia is visible in people's actions:

The area in which Jamila lived was closer to London than our suburbs and far poorer. It was full of neofascist groups, thugs who had their own pubs and clubs and shops. On Saturdays, they'd be out in the High Street selling their newspapers and pamphlets. They also operated outside the schools and colleges and football grounds, like Millwall and Crystal Palace. At night they roamed the streets, beating Asians and shoving shit and burning rags through their letter-boxes. Frequently the mean, white, hating faces had public meetings, and the Union Jacks were paraded through the streets, protected by the police. There was no evidence that these people would go away – no evidence that their power would diminish rather than increase. The lives of Anwar and Jeeta, and Jamila were pervaded by fear of violence. I'm sure it was something they thought about every

day. Jeeta kept buckets of water around her bed in case the shop was firebombed in the night. Many of Jamila's attitudes were inspired by the possibility that a white group might kill one of us one day. (Kureishi, 1999: 56)

The quotation above demonstrates two features of melancholia indicted by Gilroy. Firstly, it delineates the desire to have an ethnic and culturally homogenous English society, as was in the imperial past. As Andrew Blake remarks, "the concept of race [is] produced out of slavery and empire; it is still important within current political discourse" that produces racism (2007: 121). Therefore, the political discourse is partly responsible for the production or promotion of ethnic absolutism. Karim's emphasis upon the police protection for the neo-fascist groups and their protests can be associated with the anti-immigrant policies of the period. The police, as the state representative, protect the "white, hating faces" that appeared in the public meetings instead of the minorities in danger because of racial hatred. Karim's earlier personal experiences in the suburbs also show the impacts of the imperial mindset on social life. While Anwar and his family live in constant fear of racial attacks by neo-fascist groups, Karim is called "Shitface" and "Curryface" and comes home "covered in spit and snot and chalk and wood-shavings" (Kureishi, 1999: 63). His brother named Amar, also "call[s] himself Allie to avoid racial trouble" (1999: 19). The foul-mouthed words are related to Karim's race and culture and display cultural differences as negative and insulting. The words are reflections of the ongoing colonial mindset in Britain: "As was the case during the British Raj, it was Asian cultural practices which first came under attack. According to the stereotype, the Asian was an undesirable who 'smelled of curry,' was 'dirty,' wore 'funny clothes,' lived 'packed like sardines in a room,' practised 'strange religions,' and so forth" (Brah, 1996: 22).

Karim's experiences at the suburban school, where the lower-class children attend, show that violence is not only about racial issues but also the economic downturn in the period. Karim mentions that the school administration ignores the physical abuse he and his friends experienced. Moreover, students do "a lot of woodwork at the school because they [school administration] didn't think we [the students] could deal books" (1999: 63). Although Charles Taylor asserts that multicultural recognition should begin at school (1994: 91), the unfair distribution of income and poverty trigger racism in post-war Britain. As Brah notes, many white

parents begin to demand that local schools restrict the intake of these students as the number of immigrant-origin children in schools has increased (1996: 22). Because these parents believe that the Asian and black children that are “not clever enough” will lower the education level in the country (Brah, 1996: 73). Karim's friends at school admire Charlie for his fame and wealth; however, they do not have “high expectations” for their future (1999: 68) because their class and economic conditions do not make room for a bright future in the suburbs. Moreover, although his father thinks that becoming a doctor in such a hostile environment can be an opportunity for a better future, Karim drops out of school. Brah also remarks that immigrant parents want a qualified education for their children to have better opportunities than first-generation immigrants (1996: 22). Therefore, the expectations of immigrants and the fear of English society are tangled and make it more challenging to solve the problems in a bad economic environment. It shows that schools are the points of junction of political demands and public responses to political acts; therefore, Karim's school provides a perspective to comprehend the complex social and political atmosphere in the 1970s.

2.3.2. Rewriting Postcolonial Gothic and The Desire of Racial Homogeneity: The Encounter with Hairy Back

Karim's encounter with Hairy Back is significant in comprehending how the anti-immigrant political speeches have negatively shaped cross-cultural relations. The encounter is presented as an ironical retelling of postcolonial gothic stories that foreground that the colonial past remains to haunt the present day (Ilott, 2015: 54). Ilott's description explains that postcolonial gothic fiction reopens the past in contemporary social and political relations to interrogate the impacts of imperialism in the present time. Julie H. Azzam describes postcolonial gothic fiction as writing back to the empire; “a palimpsestic echo articulates the unspeakable, lost, or shared historical narratives” of colonialism. In this respect, postcolonial gothic helps to interrogate temporal borders that shape contemporary cross-cultural relations (2007: 2). The British gothic has usually expressed the fear of cultural corruption and the anxiety of forfeiting racial purity through interacting with the racial other since the imperial period. Therefore, the nineteenth-century gothic novels usually depict the racial other at *home* as uncanny, or in other words, “as the return of something long-

repressed” (Azzam, 2007: 7). In this case, the long-repressed thing is the presence of the Other in the homeland. Her study deals with how the presence of people from colonial spaces triggers the fear of colonisation in reverse²⁷ in Britain, the former imperial metropole. The gothic aspects in Victorian fiction, such as in Charles Dicken's novels, highlight that the uncanny things are not in “some dark corner of the globe” but “already present *within the home*” (Azzam, 2007: 26). In other words, his novels draw attention to the urban areas where strangers have become a part of daily life. Therefore, spatiality is another crucial aspect of gothic fiction. According to Azzam, the imperial mindset has constructed England as the home while the colonised places are described as unhomely and foreign. Therefore, the unhomely and stranger figures at home have created a sense of fear in English society. British postcolonial gothic fiction, hence, is a “form of racial discourse” that “defines the borders of what is British and what is not British” (Azzam, 2007: 37). Inevitably, “a pervasive mood of melancholy” has become one of the main features of gothic fiction (Azzam, 2007: 6) because it refers to the unrevealed fears that society cannot confront. Likewise, for Ilott, postcolonial gothic fiction demonstrates that the colonial past haunts the present multicultural society; hence, it reveals the connection between imperialism and contemporary politics in Britain (2015: 54). Despite the emphasis upon breaking Britain's connection with the imperial past in contemporary political discourse, the attempts to revive the understanding of the nation-state show that ethnicity and race are subjects that still maintain their importance. Ilott refers to Gilroy's idea of postimperial melancholy and states that nostalgia still has an important role in constructing national identity (2004: 56). From this perspective, the increase in migration from former colonies becomes a problem that reopens the imperial past in contemporary life. Since the imperial gothic is “a vehicle for the expression of fears of foreign invasion of the self and/or nation,” contemporary gothic fiction is narrated from “a migrant’s eye perspective” (Ilott, 2015: 57). Thus, the migrant-origin character

²⁷ Reverse colonialism is a phrase used to describe the former coloniser countries that received many immigrants from former colonies. England, the former colonial centre, has filled up with people from South Asia and South African countries, and the word colonisation remark the fear of invading by the newcomers. Louis Bennet-Coverley's poem “Colonization in Reverse” refers to the change in the balance in the contemporary world. The poem is about a Jamaican who comes to England for better opportunities, and the poet resembles the situation of colonisers who come to use the resources in the colonised countries.

dealing with everyday racism can demonstrate the everyday reality of racism first-hand. In this respect, Karim's encounter with Hairy Back reflects the concerns presented by postcolonial gothic fiction. Karim wants to see Helen, an English girl he met at his father's Buddhist performance. The relationship between Helen and Karim is an allegory for the romance that is frequently seen in the imperial gothic. For Doris Sommer, the "national romance" is functional for "the reconciliation of parts of a nation or region internally divided by class, caste, race, or ethnicity" (qtd. in Azzam, 2007: 10). However, the gendered discourse of British gothic fiction tends to construct Englishness as a woman "who is threatened by an outside, foreign threat" (Azzam, 2007: 37-38). Therefore, it is significant that the encounter is constructed around Karim, the foreigner; Helen, the English woman; and Hairy Back, the father trying to protect his daughter from the foreigner. Before the encounter, to underscore Hairy Back's opposition to Karim and Helen's relationship due to his racism, Helen's house is depicted as a neglected place similar to the ruined houses in Gothic tales. It symbolically likens the haunted/ruined houses surrounded by untamed gardens and high fences in which the princess is imprisoned by a beast that aims to prevent the hero's entrance into the house and encounter with the princess. Therefore, as will be mentioned in detail, the depiction reinforces Hairy Back as a beastly figure in this encounter while putting Karim into the hero's position:

Helen lived in a big old place set back from the road. Everyone I knew, Charlie and the rest, seemed to live in big places, except us. ... But Helen's place hadn't been painted in aeons. The bushes and flowerbeds were overgrown, there were dandelions coming out of the path. The shed had half collapsed" (Kureishi, 1999: 39)

Furthermore, the depiction of Helen's house contrasts to other houses in the area; hence foreshadowing the presence of a situation that disturbs the easeful atmosphere for Karim. In contemporary gothic fiction, the spaces belonging to the English are usually represented as "unhomely and unwelcome to migrants" (Ilott, 2015: 75). In imperial gothic, the gothic representation of public and private spaces indicates the presence of the racial other as threatening to the socio-cultural order and racial homogeneity in society. In this respect, contemporary postcolonial gothic fiction reveals the unhomeliness of Britain from immigrants' perspective in order to express the experiences of racism. Therefore, the house immediately signifies that Karim will

encounter a problem in this place²⁸. The fences surrounding the house represent the conceptual borders between the host society and the immigrants. Along with the fences, a broken bell symbolises that Karim is unwelcomed in the house. Since Karim has to jump over the fences, he finds himself in the position of an intruder, both literally and figuratively. Bhabha thinks that blurring the border between the private and public spaces is an initial point to understand the concept of unhomely. For him, the blurring shows the connection between politics and mundane life events. The encounter, however, takes place in the garden, which is neither a public space nor a private space. It is significant to reveal the complexity in the nature of cross-cultural relations in contemporary Britain because the garden has become a liminal space to convey the influence of politics on everyday life. When Karim calls Helen, she appears nervously on the window upstairs, and Karim likens her behaviour to “Juliet business” (1999: 39). The reference to **Romeo and Juliet**²⁹ reinforces the unwanted romance between Karim and Helen. It is not Helen but her father Hairy Back who opens the door. Karim portrays Helen's father as “a big man with a black beard and thick arms” (1999: 39-40). Furthermore, Karim imagines his shoulders and his back as hairy, so he refers to him as “Hairy Back” (Kureishi, 1999: 39-40). In this encounter, Hairy Back's description from Karim's point of view is significant to delineate the Englishman's stance in socio-cultural context in terms of postimperial melancholia. On the one hand, the emphasis upon his hairiness is an aspect that highlights his masculinity, which is an important concept to define the melancholic process in contemporary Britain. On the other hand, it is Karim's imagination of this man having a hairy back because “excessive growth [of hair] or hirsutism can be viewed as unappealing and beastly” in gothic fiction (Conrich and Sedgwick, 2017: 112). Therefore, the hirsute body “can bring into question the boundary that separates human from animal and the civilised

²⁸The depiction of the neighbourhood implies that it is a middle-class area. Therefore, Karim is an outsider twice here as an immigrant from a working-class family. In addition, it is a neglected house in a neighbourhood full of new and well-maintained houses. Hence, the situation of Hairy Back's house also indicates that he has economic problems – from the working class who has a house in a good neighbourhood. Economic and class issues cause him to be frustrated; however, as Gilroy points out, he thinks that immigrants are responsible for the ongoing problems in the country instead of criticising authority. Therefore, Karim encounters racism in his house rather than in another place in the novel.

²⁹**Romeo and Juliet** is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare in sixteenth-century. It is about Romeo and Julie's love, whose families are enemies for years. The play ends with the death of Romeo and Juliet.

from the wild and monstrous” (Conrich and Sedgwick, 2017: 118). Since the colonial mindset tends to categorise black people as “less human” than white men, they are usually represented as beastly or animal-like figures in gothic fiction. Therefore, Hairy Back, as an Englishman, embodies the repressed features of the imperial past as a beastly man from Karim's perspective. In addition to that, Karim cannot remember Hairy Back without remembering his dog, the Great Dane, that has become a symbol of his beast-like character: “I went white, but obviously not white enough, because Hairy Back let go of the dog he was holding, a Great fucking Dane, and it padded interestedly towards me, its mouth hanging open like a cave. It looked as though a jagged wedge had been ripped from the lump of its head to form its yellow-toothed, string-spittled mouth” (Kureishi, 1999: 40). The dog is in the position of the guardian of the house and is expected to attack Karim. However, its attempt to copulate with Karim makes the experience humiliating for him, and he cannot share the encounter with any of his friends.

As suggested earlier, the encounter is an ironic retelling of postcolonial gothic to highlight the problems inherited from the imperial past. Karim's calling Helen's father Hairy Back is an aspect to point out the European's dehumanisation of its others. The encounter takes place at home, where traditionally Karim is considered the Other, the dehumanised figure; however, at that moment, Kureishi puts Hairy Back into the position of dehumanised other by preferring not to give a proper name to him but instead name him by considering his physical appearance. In a sense, the former masculine and authoritative character on the outside has become what he feared to be at home: the Other. Thus, his fear of losing cultural and racial purity by encountering the Other increases when he finds out that Karim comes to see his daughter. As stated earlier, Englishness has been associated with femininity that should be protected from the foreigner; hence, Helen has become a metaphor that stands for England in this encounter:

“You can't see my daughter again,' said Hairy Back. 'She doesn't go out with boys. Or with wogs.' 'Oh well.'
'Got it?'
'Yeah,' I said sullenly.
'We don't want you blackies coming to the house.'

'Have there been many?'
 'Many what, you little coon?'
 'Blackies.'
 'Where?'
 'Coming to the house.'
 'We don't like it,' Hairy Back said. 'However many niggers there are, we don't like it. We're with Enoch. If you put one of your black 'and near my daughter, I'll smash it with a 'ammer! With a 'ammer!'" (Kureishi, 1999: 40)

Although Karim is the breed of an interracial marriage which has become an ordinary aspect in everyday multicultural Britain, Hairy Back's reaction to Karim and his daughter's relation points out the internalised everyday racism. Everyday discourse is still dominated by phrases that aim to humiliate non-English people through skin colour or cultural aspects. Hairy Back's vulgar language expresses his inherited colonial mindset that considers the Other in terms of race. According to Azzam, "the violence of everyday, racialised life occurs in where and how we live, who we are allowed to love, and what we are allowed to learn" (2007: 24). The novel expresses how internal racism sets borders between people through the infertile encounter between Karim and Hairy Back. The emphasis on Enoch Powell's name puts forward that politics has a crucial impact on creating the bordered environment by casting a shadow over interpersonal relationships in everyday life. Although Hairy Back represents the anxiety of losing racial purity, his cockney accent³⁰ indicates that he is from the working-class. Hence, he is another character that shows the inner conflicts in English society are not only based on racial conflicts but also class struggle. In a way, Hairy Back has become a symbol for the postimperial melancholia by his refusal of dialogue with the Other. The conversation between Karim and Hairy Back does not establish a dialogue between them that enable them to listen to and understand each other³¹. On the contrary, the encounter strengthens the conceptual borders that divide Karim and Hairy Back in a social context. However, although the encounter with Hairy Back is the most evident incident in which Karim comes across racism in the novel, humour is more dominant than anger in his narrative. As mentioned earlier, humour

³⁰ Cockney is a kind of English dialect traditionally spoken by working-class Londoners.

³¹ "Dialogue can be instrumental. It can get you somewhere. A conversation is not about getting you somewhere; it is about being together with you and then we will see where we go. That means that it is never over. If you are in conversation with people then, as problems arise, you can have dialogues about how to solve them" (Appiah qtd. in Rahbek 173-74).

releases the tension between different social groups in a multicultural narrative. Hairy Back has partially become a comical figure for the reader by his physical appearance and the name Karim has used to describe him. In this respect, the encounter is another border-crossing aspect in the novel because Kureishi has played the traditional roles of the characters. Eventually, Karim and Helen have a short-term relationship despite Hairy Back's concerns and restrictions. Their relationship also confirms Gilroy's idea that the young generation is able to establish a dialogical society more than their parents' generation (2004: 131).

Nevertheless, Karim remembers this encounter whenever he feels uncomfortable about the social and political situations in Britain:

Practically the first thing I saw when I got off the train and walked along those roads again was Hairy Back and his dog, the Great Dane. Hairy Back was smoking his pipe and laughing with a neighbour as he stood at his gate. I crossed the road and walked back to examine him. How could he stand there so innocently when he'd abused me? I suddenly felt nauseous with anger and humiliation – none of the things I'd felt at the time. ... I knew it did me good to be reminded of how much I loathed the suburbs, and that I had to continue my journey into London and a new life, ensuring I got away from people and streets like this. (Kureishi, 1999: 101)

In spite of being a secondary character, Hairy Back has a significant influence on Karim throughout the novel. Hairy Back and his dog Great Dane represent all negative and unhappy aspects that create a melancholic Britain. The encounter, hence, is significant to demonstrate that the refusal of dialogue creates a hostile environment. In other words, the minorities will be outsiders and strangers as long as there are prejudices that prevent their interaction.

2.3.3. Football, The Second World War, and Racism: The Train Journey with Uncle Ted

For Gilroy, the nostalgic stance of the Second World War is another feature of postimperial melancholia. In the novel, the Second World War has been presented as memories told by either Margaret, Englishwoman who has experienced the war at home, or Anwar and Haroon, who are immigrated from India in the post-war years. It is significant that the war is told by a woman and immigrants, whose social roles have

changed since the war, instead of an Englishman who considers the war a heroic experience. The post-war immigrants Anwar and Haroon confront that post-war Britain is abandoned after being bombed and wrecked during the war, and the English population struggles with poverty and hard living conditions to survive in this destroyed environment. Margaret also remarks that the physical remains of the war are still visible in the everyday spaces:

But for Mum, the Second World War was still present in our streets, the streets where she'd been brought up. She often told me of the nightly air-raids, her parents worn out from fire-watching, houses in the familiar streets suddenly plunged into dust, people suddenly gone, news of sons lost at the Front. What grasp of evil or the possibilities of human destruction could we have? (Kureishi, 1999: 73)

All three characters emphasise that the war has been a devastating and destructive experience for the English nation. Especially Margaret considers the war an unhappy aspect associated with the past, which continues to invade present Britain. Since Margaret is the only character who does not show any sign of racism and is married to an Indian man, she underlines that the past should be overcome through present cross-cultural relations. Yet, there is an undeniable tendency to think of the Second World War as the last finest hour in recent English national history as the social function of football demonstrates in the novel. Football is a sport that is often associated with masculinity, and it is one of the fields where the impact of current politics on daily life can be seen most clearly. The undeniable effect of politics in football games often manifests itself as uncontrollable collective anger or happiness. For this reason, football in post-war England is closely related to the effects of the Second World War in the country and is one of the areas where racism is most common. According to Gilroy, football fanaticism is linked to the idea of heroism that is associated with the Second World War:

Rather like that other epochal phrase, "There ain't no black in the Union Jack," which served a similar function in various British sports grounds for a while, the explicit linkage of war to football provides a rare window from which all the remorseful processes of Britain's vanished imperial status can be observed. In this light, the phrase "two world wars and one World Cup" becomes a means through which to consider the bewildering effects of England's postcolonial melancholia. (Gilroy, 2004: 117)

Paul Gilroy thinks that the anthems and phrases singing at football matches reveal the important position of the Second World War in the subconscious of British society. As the phrase “two world wars and one World Cup” shows, winning the world cup is seen as equivalent to winning two world wars. Marc Auge also states that football organisations held by England in the post-war years support the idea of “England vs Rest of the World” (1992: 10). As such, to glorify the war as a victory becomes an escape from ignoring the radical changes caused by world wars. Since immigration from the former colonies is one of Britain's most important demographical and spatial changes, “the romanticising of the Second World War is associated with the nostalgia for an ethnic and racial homogenous society” (Dworkin, 2009: 539). Hence, chanting the phrase “[t]here ain't no black in the Union Jack” at football matches is an indication that football and racism are connected at some point. Kureishi also notices that English people are frustrated with the idea of the immigrants' interference in politics and sports (1986: 13). In the novel, Karim's memory of a train journey to a football match with his Uncle Ted shows the relationship between postimperial melancholia and football. Karim's mother objects to this journey because she “[has] convinced that the Shed boys would ensure [Karim] a sharpened penny in the skull” (Kureishi, 1999: 43). Margaret's concerns are the expression of the racism seen in the football matches. Nevertheless, Karim has dreamed of being the first “Indian centre-forward to play for England” (Kureishi, 1999: 43) until this train journey. His dream shows that football is a national constitution dominated by English people. Kureishi is aware of the problems situated in football and other national sports; hence, the novel foregrounds the fact that the absence of Indian-origin football players is associated with the inner conflicts inherited from the imperial past. Therefore, Karim's dream is partially linked to being recognised by the host society as well as his desire to be a famous person in Britain.

The train journey is symbolic in terms of depicting change and the reaction to the change by English people. While the references to the spatial and demographic changes in the margins of the suburbs, Uncle Ted's frustrating actions in the train can be interpreted as a complicated reaction to the ambiguity of the change:

Before crossing the river we passed over the slums of Herne Hill and Brixton, places so compelling and unlike anything I was used to seeing that I jumped up,

jammed down the window and gazed out at the rows of disintegrating Victorian houses. The gardens were full of rusting junk and sodden overcoats; lines of washing criss-crossed over the debris. Ted explained to me, 'That's where the niggers live. Them blacks.' (Kureishi, 1999: 43)

The slums of Herne Hill and Brixton are where black immigrants settled down when they arrived in England. The neglected and decaying Victorian houses inhabited by the immigrants represent the spatial and demographic change in post-war Britain. Since the Victorian Period is the heyday of British imperialism, the “disintegrating Victorian houses” have become a palimpsestic echo that points out the shadow of imperialism in present Britain. The spatial borders that have formed colonial maps and caused the epistemological divisions between the coloniser/colonised subjects have been symbolically blurred by the immigrants who live in the old Victorian houses. In a way, despite Britain’s unwillingness to confront the fact that the immigrants are connected to the imperial past, the everyday experiences frequently make the connection between imperialism and post-war immigration visible. The other important point in Karim's depiction of the slums is that the black people live in poverty. Considering that one of the main causes of racism in British society is the concern of losing job opportunities and privileges to immigrants, Karim’s emphasis on the fact that the black diaspora lives in the impoverished areas reveals that immigrants are trying to survive in difficult economic and living conditions. This poverty stems from the fact that immigrants often have to work in low-paying and poor working conditions that whites do not want to work. As can be seen, Karim draws attention to the ironic difference between prejudices against immigrants and reality and underlines that immigrants are not responsible for the economic problems in the country. Significantly, Kureishi prefers to delineate the challenging living conditions during the train journey taken by the football fans. On this train journey, Uncle Ted turns into a very aggressive man, which is the opposite of his calm and timid character in the rest of the novel: “[Ted] was a born coward, and nervous as hell. He was shit-scared of confrontations or arguments of any kind” (1999: 42). Karim states that Ted is mostly under his wife's influence, who has fixed prejudices about minorities; therefore, Ted's opinions about other ethnicities in Britain are mainly based on his wife's ideas. Thus, Karim's depiction of Ted breaks the traditionally macho, powerful, and authoritative image of the Englishman. However, his fanatic football fan image

contradicts his calm image in daily life. In other words, the change in Ted's established calm character during the journey supports Gilroy's statement about the connection between masculinity, football fanaticism, and postimperial melancholia:

All the latent violence, all the embittered machismo, all the introjected class warfare articulated by defeated victors (mostly men and boys who were baffled and bewildered by a new postwar world that refused to recognise their historic manly qualities) is coded here in a dynamic and still explosive form. (Gilroy, 2004: 117)

Ted's frustrated and violent behaviours on the journey summarise the social, economic, and political motives behind racism in the 1970s Britain:

The next time I looked at Ted he had a knife in his hand. He jumped on to his seat and smashed the lightbulbs in the carriage. Glass flew into my hair. We all watched as Ted carefully unscrewed the mirrors from the carriage partitions ... Ted stabbed the seats and tore the stuffing out of them. Finally, he thrust an unbroken lightbulb at me and pointed at the open window. 'Go on, enjoy yerself, it's Saturday.' I got up and flung the lightbulb as far as I could, not realising we were drawing into Penge Station. The lightbulb smashed against a wall where an old Indian man was sitting. The man cried out, got up and hobbled away. The boys in the train jeered racist bad-mouth at him. (Kureishi, 1999: 43)

Ted's exaggerating unheroic character creates a comical image of him to show the changing of the boundaries that define Englishman. Karim also points out that Ted's unhappiness and melancholia root in his inability to confront and change his life conditions shaped by his wife. Thus, he has to express his repressed feelings through anger, and football provides a space to show his frustration. The violence and vandalism are also expressions of the hidden anger within in English society that suffers from postimperial melancholia. The Indian man on the station and "[t]he boys in the train jeered racist bad-mouth at him" symbolise that the anger has been projected onto the immigrants because there is no other space that English people can direct their disappointment in economic and political situations in the country. Ted's inability to take responsibility to change in his life also can be associated with the English nation's inability to accept the changes due to the imperial past. Hence, from this perspective, postimperial melancholia is related to the fear of change. In the novel, Haroon stresses the problem is clinging to the past: "We cling to the past' he said, 'to the old, because we are afraid. ... 'Our lives become stale, they become set. We are afraid of the new, of anything that might make us grow or change" (Kureishi, 1999: 89). Ted, unlike

Hairy Back, is able to accept his unhappiness in his life after his dialogue with Haroon. He leaves his life behind, which is influenced by his wife's racial prejudices, giving him nothing but sorrow, through Haroon's direction and has become a happier man: “[Ted] had completely changed ...; Ted had lost his life in order to find it. So Ted was Dad's triumph; he really was someone Dad had freed” (Kureishi, 1999: 101). In this respect, Haroon is another border-crosser for turning Ted's borders into a horizon beyond prejudices. Ted and Haroon's friendship shows that daily interactions can sustain a hospitable atmosphere for a more convivial multiculturalism.

2.3.4. Postimperial Melancholia in the City: The Conversation with Shadwell

London is delineated as a changing place that is adequate for cross-cultural interactions and dialogue compared to the suburbs. Karim likens London to “a house with five thousand rooms, all different; the kick was to work out how they connected, and eventually to walk through all of them” (Kureishi, 1999: 126). In other words, in Karim's point of view, London is a plural and diverse place where the borders are crossed, reconfigured and create liminal spaces through encounters. Furthermore, London gives “pleasure” to Karim, unlike the unhappiness of the suburbs: “So this was London at last, and nothing gave me more pleasure than strolling around my new possession all day” (Kureishi, 1999: 126). Nevertheless, as Gilroy remarks, conviviality does not foreclose racism; hence, postimperial melancholia continues to manifest itself in the form of epistemic violence in the city. The previous chapter points out that racism is seen in the violent acts of English people towards the immigrants and their descendants. In the city, as the encounter between Karim and Shadwell demonstrates, racism is visible in the discourse of the host society rather than as aggressive behaviours. The discourse that produces racism is associated with Western epistemology:

Epistemology, in aiming to define the nature of knowledge, is highlighted as a paramount power/knowledge system by postcolonial and feminist critics, who highlights in particular the constitutive role that colonist expansion has played in the formulation and the implementation of Western epistemology and in the marginalisation of suppression of the other discourses of knowledge. (Teo, 2014: 598)

Edward Said is one of the prominent scholars who utters Western epistemology's power in creating asymmetrical and unfair power relations between the Western and Eastern cultures during colonialism in his well-known work **Orientalism**. According to Said, Western epistemology still has a significant influence on contemporary cross-cultural relationships. Gayatri Spivak, who has studied subaltern studies, defines the use of epistemology to dominate the marginalised groups as “epistemic violence”: “The clearest available example of such epistemic violence is the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other. This project is also the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subjectivity” (1994: 76). Spivak emphasizes that imperialism has produced a violent kind of knowledge to gain dominance over marginalised groups. According to Spivak’s argument, epistemic violence has obliged the Other to accept Western knowledge as the truth. Consequently, “[t]his results in a denial of the possibility of self-representation for the ‘subaltern’” (Bartels, et al. 2019: 153). The encounter between Shadwell and Karim shows how epistemic violence continues to shape cross-cultural relations and contributes to the production of racism in contemporary Britain. Karim describes Shadwell as an educated man but thinks he is boring like “many spectacular bores, his thoughts were catalogued and indexed” (1999: 137). The emphasis on Shadwell’s thoughts being categorised implies that his mindset has already been shaped by imperial discourse. The other aspect that demonstrates that Shadwell's inherited imperial mindset is that he puts Rudyard Kipling’s **The Jungle Book**³² on stage. **The Jungle Book** represents the imperial gaze because it reflects that imperialism considers the colonised nations childlike and animalistic figures who should be tamed and civilised by Europeans. Inevitably, **The Jungle Book** is one of the most discussed books by postcolonial scholars in the twentieth century. Furthermore, Shadwell demands Karim to cover his body with a mud-like colour because Karim is not dark enough to play Mowgli in his view. Shadwell’s demand creates another irony because he is unable to see Karim’s identity because of his prejudices. Besides, Karim is forced to speak English with an Indian accent by

³² The Jungle Book was written by Rudyard Kipling in 1894. It is a collection of stories that Kipling wrote while he was in India. The postcolonial critics, such as Edward Said, remark that it is written in an Orientalist perspective.

Shadwell, who ignores Karim's objections to this representation. The situation is reminiscent of Spivak's argument about epistemic violence, which demonstrates "Western knowledge of the Other as truth" (Bartels, 2019: 158). In other words, as the hegemonic intellectual, Shadwell leaves no space for self-representation for Karim, or the subaltern in this case. Instead, he tries to reflect the Indian stereotype in his mind by establishing a sense of superiority over Karim's body and language. As Bill Ashcroft notes, postcolonial reality is still ordered powerfully by the epistemological suppositions of history inherited from imperialism (2001: 99). It shows that Shadwell is not open to new information but prefers to repeat what he has already known. Thus, Shadwell stands for "the hegemonic elite" or the intellectual subject of epistemic violence. At the same time, Karim represents "the subaltern", the object of epistemic violence in this encounter. Hence, their conversation provides a space to observe the production and articulation of imperial knowledge in present Britain. In their meeting to discuss the play, Shadwell utters some Urdu words in order to see Karim's knowledge about Indian culture and becomes surprised when he finds out that Karim has not been to India or cannot speak Urdu:

"What a breed of people two hundred years of imperialism has given birth to. If the pioneers from the East India Company could see you. What puzzlement there'd be. Everyone looks at you, I'm sure, and thinks: an Indian boy, how exotic, how interesting, what stories of aunties and elephants we'll hear now from him. And you're from Orpington." (Kureishi, 1999: 141)

Shadwell's statement addresses the postmodern concerns of the period about identifying people regarding their race, ethnicity, and culture. The emphasis upon the representation is, hence, an important subject to understand the ongoing socio-cultural change. Besides, the conversation reinforces that establishing a dialogue with the Other is the way to gain knowledge about other ethnicities and cultures in society. Nevertheless, Shadwell refuses to listen to Karim's counter-arguments and responses in aiming to express his ideas. Shadwell interrupts him whenever Karim tries to explain his identity and involvement in English society and culture: "Christ, he was a nippy little questioner. He could have slain people with his questioning, except that he never listened to the answers. He didn't want answers but only the pleasure of his own voice" (Kureishi, 1999: 142). As Eva's comment on Shadwell points out, Shadwell is

closed to other people's thoughts and opinions. Hence, the unfruitful conversation shows that the change is not possible without listening. Shadwell's attitude can also be explained by epistemological ignorance, which is produced and sustained by dominant groups in society on purpose (Teo, 2014: 598). It has a strategic role to perpetuate racism and white privilege in society. Shadwell is ignorant about the immigrants and descendants' lives in Britain, and he is persistent on not changing his assumptions about them: "She [Eva]'s trying to protect you from your destiny, which is to be a half-caste in England. That must be complicated for you to accept – belonging nowhere, wanted nowhere. Racism" (Kureishi, 1999: 141). Despite Karim's statements about his English identity, Shadwell ignores him and says that he will be a "half-caste" in Britain. The term he uses shows his imperial mindset that categorises the immigrants as the Other and outsiders instead of a part of British society.

Different forms and reasons of racism are revealed through different characters in the novel. Hairy Back shows that the impacts of the imperial past create a tense and conflicted socio-cultural atmosphere in Britain. He sees the immigrants as the source of the problem instead of questioning the other reasons. Therefore, he feels nostalgia for the former homogenous British society. Uncle Ted's unhappiness is an expression of the economic problems in the country. Therefore, he turns into a happier person when he puts aside his financial apprehensions and exhibits a positive attitude toward the Other. In the case of Shadwell, he represents that the imperial mindset still operates in the diverse and plural environment of the city. Since he is a man of intelligence, he is expected to be an open-minded person. However, his mindset is shaped by the imperial discourse reflected through his interaction with Karim during the staging of **The Jungle Book**. He shows that refusal of dialogue is the main reason for the ongoing postimperial melancholia in society. Therefore, as the following chapter will explore, convivial change can be possible by accepting Britain's multicultural environment through a dialogical relationship with the Other.

2.4. The Convivial Turn in The Buddha of Suburbia

The previous part of the study focuses on the postimperial melancholia in **The Buddha of Suburbia**, which is a negative response to the socio-cultural changes due

to post-war immigration. Nevertheless, the host society has already been affected by the newcomers' culture despite English society's concerns about the change because, as Bhabha points out, an encounter of two cultures always affects both (Bertens, 2013: 181). Hence, the novel presents that conviviality as the other way to respond to the ongoing socio-cultural changes and emphasises that it is possible through cross-cultural interactions and dialogue in everyday life. For Parekh, "a dialogically constituted multicultural society both retains the truth of liberalism and goes beyond it...It cherishes not static and ghettoised, but interactive and dynamic, multiculturalism" (qtd. in Rahbek, 2019: 6-7). In terms of **The Buddha of Suburbia**, the dialogical relationship implies a multicultural society behind the binary oppositions of inclusion/exclusion and deconstructs the historical understanding of self and the Other that the Western mindset has traditionally been based upon. Besides Karim's hybrid identity, which symbolises a new individual for future Britain, his journey between different ethnic groups and social spaces supports the idea of blurring the boundaries created by the binary thought system. The idea of the journey is "involved in dialogue, in exchange and interrogation. The abstract idea of difference dissolves to subsequently reappear in diverse, sometimes radically distinct, histories" (Chambers, 1994: 37). The abstract concept of journey and dialogue are associated with each other in order to show plurality and diversity. Hence, Karim's journey and encounters help him to convey the diversity in contemporary multicultural Britain. He highlights the spatial changes that support the ongoing change from the imperial past to the convivial present during his journey. The references to the new places that emerge after immigration also show the spatial changes due to immigration. Haroon, a civil servant, working for the government, buys "kebabs and chapatis" on his way home or Karim can eat kebabs at Anwar's store where both English people and minorities do the shopping (Kureishi, 1999: 3; 80). These all have become ordinary aspects of everyday life and are evident examples of cultural hybridisation in Britain. Besides the new places, Karim also adopts a palimpsestic approach towards the suburbs with the intent of showing the aspects of the colonial past in daily life and the ongoing change since then. Orwell also states that the suburbia, which has begun to take shape in the Victorian era, "becomes a confusing palimpsest, revealing traces of the past ... overlaid by present conditions" (qtd. in Pope, 2015: 123). Palimpsest, in

this context, means “transformation is approached retrospectively, rather than being opened as a future possibility” (Rosello and Wolfe, 2017: 18). In other words, a palimpsestic approach towards everyday spaces allows Karim to perceive the old imperial traces in the new multicultural environment to analyse the socio-cultural transformation:

So the three of us left the cul-de-sac which was Victoria Road. We walked through the gloomy, echoing streets to the pub, past turdy parks, past the Victorian school with outside toilets, past the numerous bomb-sites which were our true playgrounds and sexual schools, and past the neat gardens and scores of front rooms containing familiar strangers and televisions shining like dying lights. (Kureishi, 1999: 74)

Three different but relational historical phases that have shaped contemporary Britain are delineated spatially in the depiction of the Victorian Road, which is significant in conveying the transformation process retrospectively. The area they walk through consists of “the Victorian school”, an indicator of the shadow of the imperialism in present Britain, and “the numerous bomb-sites”, which are reminiscent of the Second World War's destructive effects in the country, which ends up in decolonisation and mass immigration from the former colonies. However, the places have turned into playgrounds for the young generations, and the “familiar strangers³³” have become the new neighbouring residents in the area. The walking is a symbolic journey that depicts the ongoing change that led to multicultural diversity. In present Britain, Karim, British-Asian, Helen, English, and Jamila, Indian, are trying to solve Jamila's problem together in this area. The three characters' ethnic identities strengthen the idea of conviviality because they show the ability to live with otherness and difference without fear, tension, anxiety, or violence (Gilroy, 2004: xi). Later that night, Karim and Helen have sexual intercourse in the same area (Kureishi, 1999: 77), foreshadowing that the future can be a less bordered environment. Helen's willingness to see Karim despite her father Hairy Back also implies change is possible through interaction. The spatial description of the suburbs reveals the crossing of the spatial and temporary borders by dialogue and interaction. As Rahbek remarks, “black people and their white allies” should reclaim their past to assure a convivial future for the country and have a less

³³ According to Sara Ahmed, the term familiar stranger refers to the Other inhabiting in the neighbourhood but s/he is still a stranger to the host society.

bordered environment (2019: 122). Stuart Hall also states the importance of understanding the past to reconcile present relations:

There can, therefore, be no simple 'return' or 'recovery' of the ancestral past which is not re-experienced through the categories of the present: no base for creative enunciation in a simple reproduction of traditional forms which are not transformed by the technologies and the identities of the present. (Hall, 1996: 449)

Both Rahbek and Hall's statements emphasise understanding the past through present experiences. For Ahmed, the present encounters reopen the past encounters to comprehend multicultural dynamics in a post-colonial society. Karim's encounters with different people reveal the impacts of the imperial past on cross-cultural relations. When these encounters lead to cross-cultural dialogue, it breaks the negative connotations of the imperial past. In these interactions, racial or cultural differences turn into creative potentials rather than restrictive aspects. As Hans-Georg Gadamer explains in **Truth and Method**, prejudices are starting points for people's encounters. In his view, the present cannot be formed without the past; hence, every encounter is based on the prejudices tested in present relationships (Gadamer, 2006: 305). Therefore, if there is a mutual understanding, a fruitful dialogue can be developed in multicultural societies. The novel implies a Gadamerian dialogue that leads to a "fusion of horizons" between different groups. The fusion of horizons, as Rahbek puts into words, "is something that inevitably occurs in the encounter between our present cultural preconceptions and those of the past, and it leads to increased understanding of the present position" (2019: 84). In other words, when people encounter, they consider each other according to prejudices that come from the past, but in the knowing process, prejudices can change. One, therefore, recognises the Other according to present conditions. The relationship between Haroon and Eva corresponds to the idea of the fusion of horizons. While Karim describes the essence of their relationships, he remarks his father's astonishment before such a mutual interest: "It wasn't until he met Eva that he had someone to share his China-things with, and it surprised him that such mutual interest was possible" (Kureishi, 1999: 28). It is their mutual interest in Eastern mysticism that brings them together in the first place. The first time Eva is introduced in the novel, she hosts Haroon's Buddhist performance and wears Eastern-inspired

clothes (Kureishi, 1999: 8). Her dress choice and tendency to Eastern mysticism are associated with exoticism. Ironically, it is mostly Eva's interest that encourages Haroon's interest in Buddhism. Later in the novel, Eva has become disinterested in Buddhism while it has become a lifestyle for Haroon. Despite losing her interest in Buddhism, Eva is able to see Haroon and Karim as mere individuals beyond their *exotic* Indian identities. In other words, their prejudices and differences have become a productive cultural space in which their horizons are fused. Their relationship, moreover, provides a mutual space for their sons, Karim and Charlie, to become friends without being infiltrated by racism or cultural prejudices.

2.4.1. Popular Culture and Theatre

According to Gilroy, the main aspect that creates a convivial space rather than a melancholic atmosphere for the younger generation is their common interest in popular culture. David Bowie's influence over the younger generation is touched upon by Charlie's Bowie-like representation. Charlie has become a famous singer and is admired by his peers at school (Kureishi, 1999: 68). Three Tuns, a pub in which Karim and his friends meet, has become the third space³⁴ where young people from different backgrounds come together thanks to their interest in popular culture:

The pub was full of kids dressed like me, both from my school and from other schools in the area. Most of the boys, so nondescript during the day, now wore cataracts of velvet and satin, and bright colours; some were in bedspreads and curtains. The little groovers talked esoterically of Syd Barrett. To have an elder brother who lived in London and worked in fashion, music, or advertising was an inestimable advantage at school. (Kureishi, 1999: 8)

The pub as a mundane space is functional for young people to encounter and broaden their horizon. The new generation has a common language consisting of aspects of popular culture that shape their everyday encounters. The dialogues between Karim and Charlie mostly include aspects from contemporary musical trends. Karim often refers to the popular records such as "The Beatles" or "Pink Floyd" and mentions that they listen to the popular records whenever they are together: "He put on a record by

³⁴ "Third Space" is a term presented to postcolonial studies by Homi K. Bhabha. The third space is a liminal space where different cultures encounter. During the encounters, conceptual borders are crossed and new cultural identities are constantly formed and reformed (Homi K. Bhabha, 1994).

the Pink Floyd called *Ummagumma*. I forced myself to listen while Charlie sat opposite me and rolled a joint, sprinkling a dried leaf over the tobacco” (Kureishi, 1999: 14). Karim buys a Jimmy Hendrix record from a boy at school who needs money to go to an “Emerson, Lake and Palmer concert” (1999: 68). As seen, popular culture functions as a third space in which the younger generation has come together to share their interest without considering ethnic origins.

Nevertheless, racism can be seen among British youth because of economic conditions and class differences. Especially, young men from the working class do not have high expectations for their future because their class and low economic income shape their future as an extension of the working class. The other pub, the Chatterton Arms, where Karim, Jamila and Helen visit, demonstrates the other side of society manifesting their anger as racism:

And there were a couple of skinheads with their girls, in brogues, Levi’s, Crombies and braces. A lot of them I recognised from school: they were in the pub every night, with their dads, and would be there for ever, never going away. They were a little startled to see two hippies and a Paki walk in; there was some conversation on the subject and several glances in our direction, so I made sure we didn’t eyeball them and give them reason to get upset. (Kureishi, 1999: 75)

The skinheads³⁵ are also from Karim’s school, which is an important space to analyse multiculturalism in Britain. Karim realises that their presence in the pub has disturbed the skinheads, hence he feels nervous. The atmosphere in this pub is very different from the atmosphere in Three Tuns. In the novel, Kureishi prefers to use parallel spaces to underscore the complex multicultural environment in 1970s Britain. The most important difference in the depiction of these two places is that while Three Tuns is a pub where young people meet and interact for their interest in popular culture, the other one is where the skinheads hang out with their fathers. Karim’s emphasis upon the fathers and the fact that skinheads will always be there can be interpreted as a

³⁵ The skinhead subculture emerges among working-class youth in the 1960s in Britain. The traditional skinhead subculture is a counter-response to the upper-class’ distinguished living conditions. A vast majority of the skinheads consider the skinhead movement “as a proper outlet for their aggression” (Borgeson and Valeri, 2018: 21). Racism becomes a prominent motive of the skinheads during the late 1970s and 1980s because they project their anger onto the immigrants. Violence against black people is common in these years. Since the skinhead movement and style have been influenced by Jamaican “rudeboy” tradition (Borgeson and Valeri, 2018: 5), racist motives in their behaviours engender another irony in social and cultural context.

reflection of postimperial melancholia. Since the fathers stand for the generation that witnessed the Second World War or the earlier period before the war, they represent the imperial mindset that defends a pure and homogenous English society as opposed to Britain's contemporary multicultural environment. Their sons, in this case, have become the extension of the imperial mindset that stands for English nationalism increasing in the late twentieth century. The emphasis upon the father-son relationship is also significant to comprehend the masculinist obsession with awakening national unity³⁶. In addition to that, the skinheads are another feature of daily life that demonstrates the connection between racism and economic problems in the period. Therefore, while Karim and Haroon are comfortable in Three Tuns, Karim calls himself “Paki” after realising the skinheads in the other pub. From this perspective, Kureishi points out that racism cannot be over as long as the imperial past involves the present relationships. Thus, the novel suggests that popular culture can sustain a dialogical environment for the future generations.

The people Karim encounters in London provide a perspective into upper-class people who are interested in the performing arts. Karim's encounters in London mostly manifest that racism is an epistemological incident that can be seen among upper-class Londoners as well as the suburban people. In the novel, along with Karim's mundane life experiences in the city, theatre is another everyday space where people can encounter from different cultures. The novel brings the problem of representation of the Other in twentieth-century art and culture in Britain up for discussion. Since theatre has always been a significant space in English history of art and culture, it symbolises English society and provides a critical point to observe the socio-cultural change in the novel: “I was on stage alone in the full glare of the lights, with four hundred white English people looking at me” (Kureishi, 1999: 228). However, as the representative of the Other in the eye of English people, Karim is on the stage, and his Indian relatives come to see his performance that night. Although there are just a few Indians, it foreshadows that the intellectual authority of English people will change, and they will

³⁶ Charlie and Karim have problematic relationships with their fathers. Especially, Charlie is out of touch with his father. When Charlie and Karim are considered critical characters for conviviality in the novel, the skinheads represent the continuation of postimperial melancholia among the young generation.

share the stage with people from different backgrounds. As the first British-Asian playwright, Kureishi puts emphasis on the change through theatre because he believes in the transformative power of artwork.

The first play in which Karim starred in **The Jungle Book** supports the argument about Shadwell's prejudices about the Other. The only aspect that breaks the epistemological borders reflected by **The Jungle Book** is Karim's use of humour while staging the play. Although he is painted a dark colour and pretends an Indian accent, he suddenly changes his fake-Indian accent to a cockney accent: "I sent up the accent and made the audience laugh by suddenly relapsing into cockney at odd times. 'Leave it out, Bagheera,' I'd say" (Kureishi, 1999: 158). Karim's behaviours can be read in two ways. Firstly, it is an example of the effect of laughter, expressed by Gilroy, in textual and media work to break the tension between different ethnic groups. In this scene, English people do not only laugh at Karim but also at a cultural aspect of Englishness in daily life. Since the cockney accent refers to the working class, Kureishi points to that there are asymmetric power relations within English society apart from the immigrant problems. Therefore, Kureishi can combine two different historical and cultural images to demonstrate the problems in society. Karim's playful acting creates an ambiguity that causes both sides to laugh, as Gilroy mentions when explaining the function of laughter³⁷. Secondly, Karim breaks the stereotypical image of immigrants associated with the notions of outsider and stranger by presenting himself as an ordinary British boy who speaks with a cockney accent. Therefore, Karim reverses the conceptual borders of English society about immigrants by using English culture. Huggan states that "[s]taged marginality is not necessarily an exercise in self-abasement; it may and often does, have a critical or even a subversive function" (qtd.

³⁷ In **After Empire**, Paul Gilroy describes the convivial function of laughter by exemplifying it through the fictional character Ali G. Ali G. approaches British society in the early 2000s with a humorous and critical narrative. The contradiction between Ali G.'s ethnic identity and behaviours create an ambiguous situation. Ali G. looks like an English man whose way of speaking and manners are similar to the representation of the black men in British media. Gilroy mentions that this uncertainty causes society to laugh, regardless of their ethnic origin. However, it is obvious that the English who laughs at this character also laughs at elements taken from British culture. Karim's accent when playing Mowgli creates a similar ambiguity to this situation. **The Buddha of Suburbia** was written about ten years before Ali G, but its timespan covers the 1970s. For this reason, racial motives are much more dominant in the novel. Still, as a narrative, it is a significant work to open a place for future works such as Ali G. (2004: 148-49)

in Ilott, 2015:105). Theatre, hence, functions as both a social and cultural space that demonstrates the socio-cultural transformation.

As seen, the contemporary restaging of **The Jungle Book** is directly associated with the influence of the imperial mindset on contemporary artwork. Besides the use of humour during Karim's performance in **The Jungle Book**, Karim's second play provides a different perspective to the cross-cultural relations from his experiences with Shadwell's theatre group. The second theatre group includes a diverse actor cast that aims to address the marginal groups as well as the mainstream audience:

There were six actors in Pyke's group, three men and three women. Two of us were officially 'black' (though truly I was more beige than anything). ... There was a red-haired woman called Eleanor, in her early twenties, ... And there was a nineteen-year-old black actress, Tracey, with firm but peculiar views. The other two men, Richard (gay) and Jon, were those solid, cynical, jobbing actors ... (Kureishi, 1999: 167)

The director Pyke, in contradiction to Shadwell, is open to the other voices apart from himself. In their first encounter, he listens to Karim without interruption to understand Karim as an individual rather than considering him an exotic stereotype:

And he looked at me with full concentration. I had no choice. I began to talk rapidly and at random. He said nothing. I went on. I thought: I am being psychoanalysed. I began to imagine that Pyke would understand everything I said. I was glad he was there; there were things it was necessary to say. So I told him things I'd never told anyone – how much I resented Dad for what he'd done to Mum, and how Mum had suffered, how painful the whole thing had been, though I was only now beginning to feel it. (Kureishi, 1999: 163)

Talking to Pyke has a considerable impact on Karim in terms of having a satisfying dialogue that relieves Karim emotionally. In this sense, Shadwell and Pyke stand as opposite characters to reinforce the importance of interaction to comprehend the concerns of the Other. Moreover, instead of using the historical Western narratives, Pyke requests Karim to write his character inspired by his real-life experiences. Pyke's approach is a considerable step showing the transformation in terms of the visibility of the Other in society. Hence, establishing a cross-cultural dialogue is the way to maintain a convivial multicultural society. Although Karim has to give up on his dream to be the first Indian-origin football player, theatre provides him with a space to express himself through overcoming cultural hegemony. As mentioned before, in

addition to the theatre, Karim's character in the soap opera, in which he agreed to take a role towards the end of the novel, is also important in terms of expressing the changes in social and cultural areas. He is offered to play an Indian shopkeeper's rebellious son in the shows. In other words, this role gives him a broad space to speak and be seen in British society. Therefore, London has become a hopeful place for the change as Karim expected.

2.5. The Buddha of Suburbia: Postimperial Melancholia or Conviviality

The Buddha of Suburbia presents the social, cultural, and political changes due to immigration during late-twentieth-century Britain. As a novel written in 1990 that depicts Britain's social, cultural and political situation in the 1970s, it adopts a retrospective perspective that enables Kureishi to evaluate the problems that have created conceptual borders between English society and the minorities. Hence, the novel both presents the conflicts because of immigration and indicates the importance of cross-cultural dialogue to solve the conflicts to maintain multiculturalism in Britain. The importance of interaction and dialogue has been highlighted by the studies of important intellectual figures such as Brian Fay, Paul Gilroy, Bhikhu Parekh and Stuart Hall during the 1990s. Kureishi is also one of the most important writers who reinforces the importance of dialogue during times of change. Thus, the novel delineates the transformation process in terms of the complexities that are seen in cross-cultural encounters. Since immigration means a mutual change for both host society and newcomers, the response to the change can be anxiety and fear, as discussed in Karim's encounters with the Englishmen Hairy Back, Ted, and Shadwell. The earlier parts of the novel mostly describe the postimperial melancholia, which manifests the fear of the change in racial and cultural purity. Nevertheless, the racial tension still maintains its position towards the end of the novel:

Changez had been attacked under a railway bridge ... It was a typical South London winter evening—silent, dark, cold, foggy, damp—when this gang jumped out on Changez and called him a Paki, not realising he was Indian. They planted their feet all over him and started to carve the initials of the National Front into his stomach with a razor blade ... The police, who were getting sick of Changez, had suggested that he'd laid down under the railway bridge and inflicted the wound on himself ... The National Front were parading through a nearby Asian district. There would be a fascist rally in the Town Hall; Asian

shops would be attacked and lives threatened. Local people were scared. We couldn't stop it: we could only march and make our voices heard. (Kureishi, 1999: 224–25)

On the one hand, as the case of *Changez* suggests, racism is a serious problem that has its roots in the historical and national consciousness. However, the irony in that attack is that attackers are unable to distinguish an Indian from a Pakistani; they just act upon their prejudices against minorities. On the other hand, the English people sharing the house with Jamila and *Changez* help him recover and demonstrate against the racial attacks and discriminations to defend *Changez* and minorities' human rights (Kureishi, 1999: 225). Although the protesters live in the margins of the city and society, their stance is significant to establish a proper environment for change. Since English people come to help him and held a protest against racism, it indicates the aspects of conviviality also becomes intense towards the end of the novel.

Jamila's baby, born to a British-Asian relationship in the communal house, is another strong aspect of border-crossing in the novel. The communal house is another contact zone where everyone “[has] to take part in the communal life of the place” (Kureishi, 1999: 216). *Changez* calls the baby “a communal baby” that belongs to “the entire family and friends. They all share in it” (1999: 231). Mostly *Changez* takes care of the baby and speaks to her in Urdu. Then, the baby symbolises the new Britain that consists of different languages and cultures. Hence, its future depends on every social and cultural group in the country. The ending of the novel also suggests that multiculturalism can be accomplished through everyday cross-cultural interaction. The novel ends on the election night when Margaret Thatcher, the first woman leading a major party in Britain, has been elected as the president of the Conservative Party. Her election is connected to the change in the social position of British women³⁸ in the novel. However, Margaret Thatcher stands for the anti-immigrant mindset that is the cause of inner conflicts in Britain. Nevertheless, the impact of the election on the country is discussed by people from English society and different cultures who gather

³⁸ The female characters in the novel become more independent at the end of the book. It is emphasized that Eva has become a stronger woman after the divorce while Anwar's wife Jeeta becomes a happier woman after her husband's death. In various sources, it is stated that Eva is a manifestation of the change that Margaret Thatcher brought to the social position of women.

around a table in a restaurant in London. The gathering also indicates dialogue and suggests that the future of Britain depends on each part of society inhabiting the country regardless of their origins.



CHAPTER THREE

BORDERS AND BORDER CROSSINGS IN WHITE TEETH

White Teeth begins in Britain in 1975, and hence, the novel begins at the time when **The Buddha of Suburbia** ends. **White Teeth** is a microcosmic representation of multicultural Britain in the late quarter of the twentieth century. It is a contemporary novel that presents the multicultural change due to immigration in Britain after the Second World War through the intersection of families of different races and their histories in daily life. The encounter of individuals from different racial and cultural backgrounds involves both conflicts and interactions. Thus, the novel will be examined regarding the borders and border-crossing features in multicultural Britain. The study considers the borders a reflection of racism and cultural prejudices that manifest spatially, temporally, and conceptually in social and cultural spheres. It nevertheless suggests that **White Teeth** proposes a hope to cross or transform the boundaries between English society and the diaspora through cross-cultural dialogue and interaction in everyday spaces. As Ulla Rahbek points out, “re-imagining Britain is attached to the notion of hope” for Britain’s hybrid and multicultural future (2019: 93). In this respect, **White Teeth** reimagines Britain in terms of hybridity, diversity and dialogue in contrast to the homogeneity, fragmentation and lack of cross-cultural communication.

White Teeth, similar to **The Buddha of Suburbia**, provides a liminal space for the reader to confront the conceptual borders in society. As a border-crossing novel, the novel is able to delineate multicultural change from a bilateral perspective. Zadie Smith, like Hanif Kureishi, grew up in a social and cultural environment where Asian, Jamaican and English children were friends who experienced similar social incidents and cultural aspects. Since she grew up in a hybrid family in a transforming Britain, Smith has witnessed the transformation process and has seen the potential of everyday encounters and relations to reproduce a new way of cohabitation for different cultures. Hence, her novel simultaneously addresses diasporic groups and English society by telling the multicultural transformation from a multidimensional perspective (Ilott, 2015: 95). Therefore, instead of focusing on the experiences of a singular character,

the novel focuses on the mundane relationships of families of different origins living in the late twentieth century. Thanks to this network of relations, the transformation process of Britain in the post-war period is expounded through the experiences of characters from different races and cultures. While adult characters like Archibald and Samad provide a perspective of the change from the war to the present, their children stand for the contemporary multicultural transformation. Thus, Mark Stein categorizes **White Teeth** as a bildungsroman that is a genre telling the social and moral transformation of society through a character's development from childhood to adulthood (2004: xiii). The focus on the daily relationships then helps demonstrate a microcosmic representation of Britain, which has a transformative power as much as a macrocosmic representation. As Wise and Velayutham state in **Everyday Multiculturalism**, multiculturalism has been usually considered a macro-theoretical and top-down process. In their view, everyday lived multiculturalism helps to explore the socio-cultural transformation from a bottom-up perspective in super-diverse spaces and cities (2009: 2). This view corresponds to Gilroy's idea of conviviality, which suggests that multiculturalism can be reshaped from the bottom-up through the daily cross-cultural interaction in postcolonial metropolises. As **The Buddha of Suburbia**, **White Teeth** is set in London, a heterogeneous and diverse place to provide liminal spaces for proximity between English society and the diaspora. The change in British society's social and cultural structure is explained through movement and dialogue in public and private spaces. Nevertheless, the novel does not overlook the anxieties, tensions and conflicts involved in everyday multiculturalism. Though the novel has been defined as a “celebration of multiculturalism” by many critics, the novel also points out how the colonial past, the cultural and ethnic differences, and everyday racism continue to create borders in society. As Mark Stein states, the transformation process, especially when it involves such a complex network of relationships and histories, cannot be free from conflicts and tension; however, it is still possible to move beyond the disputes through everyday relationships:

The novel helps us imagine a world where “Indian” and “English” do not refer back to an essentialized identity, but where, in fact, there is “no one more English than the Indian, no one more Indian than the English.” Such cultural hybridity does not come without its tensions, tensions which energize *White Teeth* (and

cultural production more generally), but which also stimulate racist violence, as the excerpt acknowledges. *White Teeth*, however, believes not only in the possibility of change, it also possesses a Utopian quality that suggests the multicultural clock cannot be turned back. (2004: xii)

Stein's statement clearly articulates the porousness of the borders that define ethnic and cultural identities and underscores the reality of hybridity in multicultural Britain. However, racism and prejudices are still a part of that transforming hybrid country. Likewise, in her essay written in the post-Brexit period, Smith uses the metaphor of the fence in order to define the re-emerging political and social divisions between English society and minorities in post-Brexit Britain³⁹. Smith criticizes the growing discrimination and racism over newly built fences around a school where every community used to send their children. In other words, fences represent ongoing prejudices that turn into spatial boundaries. Nevertheless, she admits that **White Teeth**, as a pre-Brexit novel, is a sanguine novel written with the intention and hope of having a borderless Britain for anyone who lives in Britain. As Smith articulates in her essay "Fences: A Brexit Diary", there was tension, conflicts, and "mortifying moments of social comedy or glimpses of domestic situations bordering on tragedy" back in the years *White Teeth* was written, yet people were willing to walk into the lives of the other people and interact with them (Smith, "Fences"). In other words, Smith indicates that England has always had problems with immigrants, but the mentioned period was promising in terms of overcoming the tension in the society. In this respect, both Stein and Smith state that the last quarter of the twentieth century is a period when people are aware of borders and are hopeful of crossing them to establish a multicultural life.

In the context of the novel, several aspects support the idea of a borderless Britain. The omniscient narrator helps narrate the transformation process internally and externally in order to emphasize that there are different reasons and responses to the change. Furthermore, it explores while the immigration process causes

³⁹ Smith puts emphasis on that there are traces of imperial thinking as well as economic and class problems in the decision-making processes of the English during the Brexit period. In the article "Racism, Crisis, Brexit", Brendan McGeever and Satnam Virdee articulate that the nostalgia for imperial period, the racist and discriminatory thinking inherited by Powell, and the conflicts on English national identity emerged in Brexit. (2018: 2-3)

melancholia as a result of boundaries in the English and the diaspora, establishing cross-cultural dialogue foreshadows a prospect of becoming a convivial society. Therefore, the non-linear narrative method provides a space to move forward and back in time with the aim of revealing the present problems related to the colonial past and offers that confronting the past is the only way to move beyond borders.

3.1. Border Crossings in the Narrative: The Non-Linear Narrative, Rewriting History, and Healing Humour

The concept of multiculturalism has been defined through conflicts and borders in the political, social and literary context since the post-war period. On the other hand, the novel presents multiculturalism in the context of interaction and happiness. As discussed in the previous chapter, **The Buddha of Suburbia** presents the conflicts in British society in terms of cultural prejudices and racism, which erect conceptual borders and eventually cause postimperial melancholia for English society. The incidents in **The Buddha of Suburbia** are portrayed from Karim Amir's point of view, a seventeen-year-old British-Asian boy who is able to observe both English society and the South Asian diaspora. He refers to daily activities and encounters between people from different backgrounds and portrays how class issues and politics continue to reshape contemporary relations. Karim's daily encounters promise hope for rather a convivial socio-cultural transformation for Britain despite the conflicts. In **White Teeth**, the novel mainly focuses on the domestic lives and personal histories of three families, the Bangladeshi Iqbals, half-Jamaican Joneses and half-Jewish Chalfens, representing different social, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. The mundane lives of these families and their daily encounters with each other and the other people support the idea of a convivial multicultural Britain, which means the ability to live together with differences. However, as Gilroy asserts, conviviality does not mean there will not be tension or conflicts between host society and diaspora: "convivial coexistence is always enmeshed in mediated by a shadow of colonial history and enduring racism" (Gilroy, 2019: 38: 05). In this respect, **White Teeth** prefers to portray the Second World War and colonial history, which are the main reasons of conflicts in society and deeply linked to the personal histories of people in post-war Britain. Imperial history

and the Second World War are mainly considered nostalgic by English society because these periods are associated with the idea of a society of white people happily cohabiting with other white people (Ahmed, 2010: 121). Hence, the novel challenges the nostalgic vision of homogenous Britain by a retrospective and humorous narrative to widen its scope and underline the irony within the idea of racial and cultural purity. Çelikel articulates that a transformation⁴⁰ creates changes and hybridisation in the coloniser culture as well as in the native culture because colonialism always results in immigration (2017: 37-38). Furthermore, the same histories have become unhappy memories for the post-war diaspora, mainly immigrated from former colonies such as Jamaica or South Asia. In the novel, English colonist Sir Glenard, who is in Jamaica during the colonial period, enables the reader to adopt a double perspective on the colonial period. For instance, while the English think of Sir Glenard as a philanthropist who had accomplished great things during the colonial period, Jamaicans remember him as the reason of their suffering:

... though it may have dismayed him, Glenard's influence turned out to be personal, not professional or educational: it ran through people's blood and the blood of their families; it ran through three generations of immigrants who could feel both abandoned and hungry even when in the bosom of their families in front of a mighty feast" (Smith, 2001: 307)

As can be seen, the colonial past is considered a manifestation of English philanthropy for the English, while it is a stage of suffering for others. Therefore, the stance of history determines the connection of both sides with contemporary society. The novel proposes to come to terms with their past in order to overcome the current problems that stand in the way of convivial multiculturalism in Britain. In this respect, the novel connects the characters through history and it builds the story around the families of Archibald Jones and Samad Iqbal, two men who met in the Second World War and became best friends in contemporary Britain. The friendship story of Archibald and Samad indicates the sense of irony in the novel, which is necessary for the narrator to protect the critical perspective. Accordingly, contemporary encounters reopen past

⁴⁰ Transformation refers to the cultural transformation in the colonized lands and societies as a result of colonization. Çelikel highlights that the transformation is reciprocal because colonization triggers immigration.

encounters. The encounter of Samad and Archibald in the war; the encounter of Ambrosia Bowden and Sir Glenard in colonised Jamaica; and Archibald and Samad's encounter with Doctor Sick, who would later become Marcus Chalfen's master, continue to have an impact on the daily relationships of the characters in contemporary England. In other words, Smith examines the reasons behind the everyday conflicts between different races and cultures in contemporary England through past relationships. The novel implies that while the idea of a homogeneous and heroic past puts the English into a "cell"⁴¹, the experience of marginalization and victimization causes postcolonial immigrants to feel melancholic and unhappy in contemporary Britain.

The following section will examine the function of the non-linear narrative method. As the adoption of new perspectives on the past can lead to change, the method provides a space for retelling history to cross the conceptual boundaries created by colonial and wartime stories in British history. Therefore, **White Teeth** addresses both sides of society to make them realize their boundaries. Awareness of boundaries can enable society to constitute an interactive socio-cultural space to pave the way for a convivial transformation.

3.1.1. The Function of the Non-Linear Narrative Method in **White Teeth**

The omniscient narrator and the non-linear narrative method are two aspects that make **White Teeth** a border-crossing novel because it helps the reader look in two directions of society. While Karim Amir in **The Buddha of Suburbia** is a hybrid character that observes society, the omniscient narrator of **White Teeth** is able to convey the change in British society from multiple perspectives:

⁴¹ In **White Teeth**, Samad's difficulty in finding a job and having to work as a waiter as a university educated Bangladeshi is a manifestation of Dabydeen's metaphor of the cell. Although this situation is given in the background in the novel, these walls increase Samad's melancholy. Millat's participation in the riot for Salman Rushdie's novel also articulate this situation. The narrator explains that Millat feels invisible in English society and feels like he and other South Asians have become visible through the book, and the riot (234). In other words, he feels as if he has crossed the boundaries of the cell that separates the diaspora and the host society. Although the implications of social and cultural boundaries, Smith does not support the idea of cell but thinks of the possibility of transition between borders through movement and interaction, and the novel is generally about these transitions.

The narrator in the third-person story, by contrast, has no limitations of age, education, experience, or access to informants. This narrator knows about events occurring at any time or place, in complete detail, and not just about public events but also about the private thoughts and feelings of the characters. (Morreall, 1994: 430)

The omniscient narrator of the novel depicts the multicultural transformation from the perspectives of the Bangladeshi Iqbals, half-Jamaican Joneses, and half-Jewish Chalfens, whose lives are interconnected both in the colonial past and multicultural present. None of them is privileged or authoritative, but their presence refers to the multiplicity of the voices in contemporary Britain. While **The Buddha of Suburbia** covers a period of Karim's lifetime and conveys the past and present relations through his hybrid identity, **White Teeth's** narrator is able to go through different times and spaces and delineate the personal and national histories of the characters as much as their present conditions and feelings regarding the change in contemporary Britain. In other words, the novel establishes a dialogical relationship between past, present and future. The novel's division into four parts indicates the dialogical relationship: "Archie 1974-1945", "Samad 1984-1857", "Irie 1990, 1907" and "Magid, Millat and Marcus 1992, 1999". Each part refers to specific characters and the years that are important to form their present condition in multicultural Britain. As the parts of the novel show, the novel consists of characters from different ethnicities and generations. In order to emphasize the interconnectedness between past and present, the novel has a non-linear narrative that interrupts present time narratives with histories and provides a multidimensional perspective to the colonial past. For Hicks, the non-linear narrative is a method to make the reader a part of the story by referring to their borders conceptualized by European history and culture. In other words, she considers the non-linear narrative as a border-crossing narrative technique that provides a multidimensional perspective for the reader to see both sides of a multicultural society. As Derrida points out, dominant Western historiography is teleological and one-dimensional and "it imposes a meaning on the past and does so by postulating an end (and/or origin)" (Hutcheon, 1988:97). Hence, for Hicks, the non-linear narrative method is a counter-narration to the European dominant linear narrative method that tells the story between a beginning and end point. It provides a different and multidimensional narrative that helps the reader "to look at things differently, to shift

the level of [the readers'] analysis out of traditional disciplinary divisions” (Hicks, 1991: 97). In other words, the novel's non-linear narration challenges the readers' expectations and prejudices rooted in the imperial past and tries to provide a new and plural perspective. Hicks also refers to Jameson's idea of Bakhtinian dialogic, which is seen as an alternative for linear narrative; “as rupture of the one-dimensional text of the bourgeois narrative, as a carnivalesque dispersal of the hegemonic order of a dominant culture” (Jameson qtd. in Hicks, 1991: xxviii). In other words, the one-dimensional text is associated with the grand narratives of the West. In contrast, the multidimensional and non-linear text is a counter-narrative that opens new windows for the past and deconstruct grand narratives through multiple voices. In this respect, **White Teeth** can be considered “a carnivalesque⁴² dispersal of the hegemonic order” of dominant English culture and history in multicultural England. It does not have any central figure or community representing a particular part of society but considers each character important in maintaining multicultural cohesion. It questions the hegemonic and heroic position of imperialism, colonialism and the Second World War in contemporary discourse and deconstructs them to imply that the way for a dialogic and convivial multicultural society depends on crossing the temporal and conceptual borders created by history.

3.1.2. Rewriting the Second World War: Heroic Narratives and Archibald Jones

White Teeth provides space for this confrontation by critically approaching traditional war narratives and imperial history that political figures and the media have praised during the post-war period. It is therefore significant that the novel deconstructs the myth of the heroic Englishman who is the intersection of war and imperial thought and still holds a prominent place in contemporary Britain. The novel humorously explores different masculinity experiences not only in contemporary

⁴² “Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all people. ... It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part” (Bakhtin, 1984: 7). For Bakhtin, the carnival concept is associated with mundane life rather than politics. He offers this concept to draw attention to the power of everyday life encounters that can transform society from the bottom-up. **White Teeth** also suggests that encounters, relations and interactions in daily life contribute to multicultural transformation in a sanguine way.

Britain but also during the war by using the non-linear narrative method. In a way, it also deconstructs the war myth that the media and other social narratives present to the audience. Ashley Jackson points out that, for a long time, the war had been recalled as a European struggle in Britain (2006: 1). Although the imperial forces have not been excluded entirely from the war narratives, they are not remembered as a part of Britain's war but as forces in the wars in the Mediterranean or in other distant parts of the globe. Therefore, the effort and the presence of colonial soldiers during the war have mostly been disregarded in the war narratives in order to highlight Britain's white and homogenous victory. Thus, the purpose in **White Teeth** is not only criticism but also a desire to transform the boundaries created by old stories in the mind of the reader.

In the novel, Archibald Jones is the essential character to deconstruct the myth of the heroic Englishman. The title of the first part of the novel, "Archie 1974-1945", refers to two dates in Archibald's life. The first date, 1974, refers to his life in multicultural Britain, while the other refers to the Second World War to show his connection to the war. As mentioned, the war spirit contributes to the reproduction of English masculine identity in post-war England. For Stefan Horlacher, "On a collective and more abstract level, these allegedly homogenous [masculine] identities function as a continual historic remembrance and repetition of seemingly timeless traditions and myths in order to create a bulwark against relentless historical changes" (2016:15). Horlacher's argument supports the idea that the heroic stance of imperial and war history has created a cell-like environment for the English against multicultural change. Hence, the war narratives exclude alternative images and realities that happened on the battlefield and home front and create a particular image of the Englishman as a hero. The image has played a vital role in reconstructing English national identity during the postimperial/war period. Thus, the image of the masculine, heroic and, physically strong Englishman is associated with the war in post-war English society. In addition, Dawson states that the history of masculinity related to war culture was not explored in depth until the 1980s. In order to highlight and deconstruct the ongoing mindset about the male figure, Smith portrays Archibald Jones, an unconventional Englishman who fought in the war but became an

insignificant man in contemporary Britain. In this respect, the reason for portraying Archibald Jones as a comical and peculiar man is to re-explore the concept of masculinity in the context of wartime stories. As the first pages of the novel indicate, Archibald is not a saviour or hero but an insignificant Englishman who can only decide whether to commit suicide by tossing a coin and then being saved by a Muslim British butcher called Elvis-Ishmael Hussein. Hence, Smith immediately breaks the reader's expectation about the Second World War as a heroic story by representing Archibald as an unheroic figure:

Archie Jones is a born and bred Englishman, and is the antithetical representation of "masculinity" as defined by England's colonial Empire ... Archie is the epitome of rootlessness and indecision. Unable to live up to the ideals of reason and rationality at the heart of English masculinity (every decision he makes is based on the flip of a coin), Archie represents a "failed" masculine identity. (Beukema, 2008: 4)

Beukema's analysis of Archibald Jones also supports the argument that Archibald is a counter-representation of the image of heroic English men. Archibald's encounters, relationships, and friendships throughout the novel reinforce his unconventional masculinity.

Archibald's encounter with a multiracial group of youth at the beginning of the novel helps in understanding the unpopularity of wartime stories in contemporary society. As the encounter demonstrates, **White Teeth** approaches the conventional war story as an unpleasant memory rather than a nostalgic aspect through its multicultural structure: "God help him if [Archie] mentioned the war ... No one really wanted to know" (Smith, 2001: 14). When Archie gets involved in the multiracial group consisting of "[t]wo black guys, a topless Chinese girl, and a white woman wearing a toga" at The End of the World Party, the conversation topic comes to the war, and they immediately want to change the subject:

... He felt so close to them that he was confused when around midday their relationship suddenly soured, and he found himself stabbed by a hangover and knee-deep in an argument about the Second World War, of all things.

'I don't even know how we got into this,' groaned Wan-Si, ... 'Let's not get into this. I'd rather go to bed than get into this.'

'We are into it, we are into it,' Clive was ranting. 'This is the whole problem with his generation, they think they can hold up the war as some kind of-' (Smith, 2001: 22)

As the quoted dialogue shows, war stories may not be as popular in contemporary multicultural Britain. On the contrary, these stories have become tedious for the new generation and make it difficult for men from the war generation to establish intercultural dialogue in daily life. The conversation about the war draws a temporal line between Archibald and the young multicultural group as it constantly does between immigrants and the host society. The party in the book is held on the New Year's Eve night of 1 January 1975 by British youth from different races and cultures, and Archibald is the oldest person among them. The group foreshadows a young, dynamic, and culturally and racially diverse multicultural Britain, which leaves the baggage of the past behind and focuses on the future. Hence, it is significant that Archibald, an Englishman, and Clara Bowden, a Jamaican girl, meet at the party and marry six weeks later. Their marriage is not only a sign of racial and cultural hybridity but also significant to underscore Archibald's unmanly representation. Since colonial narratives present the Englishman as a superior and a saviour for the colonised female subject, the novel attempts to reverse this inherited mindset. In the novel, Archibald is described as a physically weaker person compared to Clara's strong and healthy body. For example, when they move to a new house, Clara can easily carry three boxes at a time, while Archibald has difficulty carrying even a single box (Smith, 2001: 47). As it can be seen, Archibald and his marriage to Clara are constructed to cross the temporal and conceptual borders in British society.

Mr. Hamilton, who represents the traditional masculinity in the novel, is the opposite of Archibald Jones. Mr. Hamilton is an older man who was a soldier in the war and encounters Millat, Magid and Irie in a small part of the novel. The children visit Mr. Hamilton as a part of the Harvest Festival, a charity event held at the school. The conversation about the Second World War between Mr. Hamilton and the children during the visit shows that he still considers the war a heroic experience for the English nation. As such, his presence highlights Archibald's unconventional character. His house is decorated with old Victorian objects that represent his position in the social

and historical context. He also does not describe the war heroically but in the context of violence (Smith, 2001: 172). However, he does not admit that the Pakistanis⁴³ were fighting for Britain:

“My dad was in the war. He played for England,” piped up Millat, red-faced and furious.

“Well, boy, do you mean the football team or the army?”

“The British Army. He drove a tank. A Mr. Churchill. With her dad,” explained Magid.

“I’m afraid you must be mistaken,” said Mr. Hamilton, genteel as ever. “There were certainly no wogs as I remember though you’re probably not allowed to say that these days are you? But no ... no Pakistanis ... what would we have fed them? No, no,” he grumbled, assessing the question as if he were being given the opportunity to rewrite history here and now. “Quite out of the question. I could not possibly have stomached that rich food. No Pakistanis. The Pakistanis would have been in the Pakistani army, you see, whatever that was. As for the poor Brits, they had enough on their hands with us old Queens” (Smith, 2001: 172)

Since Mr. Hamilton stands for the traditional Englishman, and the children represent the minorities, the encounter in question is important to understand how the Western narrative has shaped history and how the voices of minorities have been ignored. On the one hand, Mr. Hamilton’s insistence that Pakistani soldiers did not participate in the war is accurate because Pakistan was formed due to the Partition of India, which occurred after the Second World War. Since Britain played an important role in the Partition, there is criticism of Britain’s imperial history in the novel. On the other hand, though there were no Pakistani soldiers yet at this period, colonial soldiers from India or other colonial countries fought in the war. Hence, this insistence shows that the colonial soldiers and their efforts were invisible to the British and often excluded by

⁴³ The emphasis on Pakistani soldiers in this conversation is significant in two respects. First, Millat and Magid are Bangladeshis, not Pakistani. It is an indication that the dominant culture does not recognize the plurality and differences among minorities. In addition, Pakistan was established due to the Partition of India after the Second World War. The role of Britain in the Partition of India is a matter of debate. Moreover, the mass migration in the post-war period is mainly related to the Partition: “Millions who feared being a minority in their new country left their homes. Hindus and Sikhs to India, Muslims to Pakistan. I say it is a British story not just because of the 400-year-old connection between the Indian subcontinent and Britain, but because some of the people who had suffered and witnessed this violent birth of two nations migrated to post-war Britain – and their children and grandchildren are part of the fabric of contemporary British society” (Kavita Puri “The Partition of India and Migration” 131). Therefore, the novel draws the reader’s attention to the contemporary problems of Britain rooted in British imperial history.

the grand narrative of the war. Maria Abi-Habib states that India contributed the largest number of volunteers, over 2 million soldiers, in the British army. However, their presence and efforts are usually ignored by history books (“The Forgotten Colonial Forces of World War II”). Through Mr. Hamilton, Smith criticizes the war narrative in contemporary Britain and draws attention to the irony. While the English centralize the victory in the Second World War as a homogeneous heroic narrative to ignore the historical relevance of the presence of strangers in their country, Smith draws attention to the presence of the Other as a *British* soldier who helped win the Second World War. In other words, the war, which English society sees as a national and white homogeneous space, is the common story of both the English people and the postcolonial diaspora, despite their unequal position in the war. However, as Mr. Hamilton shows, the war is positioned as a determinant in British history and contributes to the racist discourse in contemporary Britain. Inevitably, Mr. Hamilton and the children are unable to engage in intercultural dialogue because Mr. Hamilton neither recognizes nor listens to them but only focuses on the accuracy of what he says. Therefore, the conversation between them ends before it evolves into a dialogue.

As mentioned earlier, the novel not only demonstrates the impacts of the Second World War on contemporary society but also rewrites the war experiences humorously. Since the novel refers to the conceptual boundaries between societies, it aims to remind English society that they fought in the war with the colonial soldiers. In addition, the novel represents the Second World War in an ironic way as a response to the efforts of contemporary Western writing and media to portray war as a heroic experience: “... usually via Hollywood, is still required to use expensively manufactured surrogate memory of World War II as the favored means to find and even to restore an ebbing sense of what it is to be English” (Gilroy, 2004: 96). Gilroy highlights that Western societies continue to redefine Englishness with its connections to the war. Dawson also admits that media continue to shape society by representing the war as a heroic experience: “Growing up, there were the war stories of boyhood culture: the heroic films of land, sea and air war on TV, and my weekly comic, *The Victor*, whose staple ingredient was Second World War combat stories celebrating manly deeds of British military prowess” (1994: v). In that regard, it is significant

that **White Teeth** rewrites the Second World War by focusing on the ex-centric figures in English society rather than heroic English subjects. In other words, the novel presents the unheroic part of the war.

The war described in the novel is quite different from Mr. Hamilton's violent battlefield experiences. The war in the novel takes place away from the battlefields in a tank called Churchill, moving from Athens to Thessaloniki. As the chapter progresses, it becomes clear that all tank members represent groups considered marginal by the dominant discourse. Samad represents the colonial soldier who fought for the British Empire in the Second World War. Samad's greatest passion is to return to his hometown as a hero from this war. However, a Sikh accidentally shot him while standing in a trench and his hand is disabled⁴⁴. This accident is not the heroic turn Samad expected but rather an ironic experience⁴⁵. Samad's presence in the war can be read in two ways. First, he wants to be a hero because colonial history consists of white heroes and black/brown victims. He always mentions proudly his great-grandfather, Mangal Pande, who tried to start the Indian Mutiny. According to Samad, Pande is a hero who has been misrepresented by history as a traitor⁴⁶. Second, Samad's presence in the war is a response to Mr. Hamilton's statement. He embodies the invisible effort of the colonial soldiers. In this respect, Samad's failure to become a hero symbolically represents the lack of recognition of the Other in contemporary Britain's war discourse.

In addition to that, the image of the soldier hero is destroyed throughout the novel. Dawson states the importance of the war narratives to reconstruct contemporary

⁴⁴Samad's disability is similar to Changez's disability in **The Buddha of Suburbia**. Both of them represent the change in the diasporic male subject's social position.

⁴⁵It is ironic because he is not wounded while fighting an enemy as he always imagined, but a Sikh shoots him accidentally while standing in a trench. It is a reference to the inner conflicts of India that led to a violent partition in 1947.

⁴⁶Samad can find only one item of research that confirm his claims about Mangal Pande's heroic position in Indian history. Other resources, which are written by Western writers, represent Pande as a rebellious Indian soldier and this situation contributes to Samad's melancholia in the novel. Through Samad's obsession with Pande, Smith not only criticizes the lack of multiple perspectives on history but also points out the need of diasporic men to reconstruct the male identity as well. As a colonial soldier, his masculine identity is in a problematic position and he wants to reverse his position from colonial soldier to soldier hero.

male identity. Moreover, he admits that there is not a singular war or soldier experience but plural experiences, and they should be acknowledged in order to comprehend and reconceptualise the post-war masculinities in Britain. Similar to Dawson's idea of multiple masculinity experiences in the war, Smith draws attention to the outsider figures in the Second World War:

So Samad had ended up in the unfeted bridge-laying division of His Majesty's Army with the rest of the losers; with men like Archie, with men like Dickinson-Smith (whose government file included the phrase "Risk: Homosexual"), with frontal lobotomy cases like Mackintosh and Johnson. The rejects of war. As Roy affectionately called it: the Bugged Battalion. (Smith, 2001: 89)

As seen, the army also excludes some of the English soldiers because they do not correspond to the image of the soldier hero. For example, Dickinson-Smith is the highest-ranking soldier in the battalion. As his surname symbolizes, he represents the traditional English man. Moreover, his family's historical background parallels the country's war history. He is expected to lead his battalion successfully when his background is considered. However, he is a failed soldier who is unable to use his authority to manage the other soldiers: "Even Roy's Polite Gesture was a sign of Dickinson-Smith's failure. In those other tanks, in the Shermans, Churchills and Matildas dotted over the waste of Europe like resilient cockroaches, there was no question of respect or disrespect" (Smith, 2001: 85). Furthermore, although Dickinson-Smith stands for the historical conception of the Englishman, he is excluded by the army because of his sexual orientation. Through Dickinson-Smith, the novel criticizes English history consisting of the wars:

Killed by the Hun, the Wogs, the Chinks, the Kaffirs, the Frogs, the Scots, the Spies, the Zulus, the Indians (South, East and Red), and accidentally mistaken for a darting okapi by a Swede on a big-game hunt in Nairobi, traditionally the Dickinson Smiths were insatiable in their desire to see Dickinson-Smith blood spilled on foreign soil. And on the occasions when there wasn't a war the Dickinson-Smiths busied themselves with the Irish Situation, a kind of Dickinson-Smith holiday resort of death, which had been going since 1600 and showed no sign of letting up. But dying's no easy trick. And though the chance to hurl themselves in front of any sort of lethal weaponry had held a magnetic attraction for the family throughout the ages, this Dickinson-Smith couldn't seem to manage it. Poor Thomas had a different kind of lust for exotic ground. He wanted to know it, to nurture it, to learn from it, to love it. He was a simple non-starter at the war game. (Smith, 2001: 90)

Unlike his ancestors, this Dickinson-Smith does not want to be in the war but discover the rest of the world with a sense of curiosity and admiration rather than the desire of conquering. However, his destiny is built upon wars and colonization. Hence, when the soldiers are attacked in the absence of Samad and Archie, Dickinson-Smith shoots himself and becomes the first Dickinson-Smith who is killed by “an English hand” (Smith, 2001: 92). In other words, he is not going to breed and not transfer his “commanding genes” to the next generations. Thus, symbolically, the traditional image of the Englishman has come to an end with the death of Dickinson-Smith in the Second World War.

It is also significant that the only Englishman who survives among the English soldiers is Archibald Jones. Unlike Dickinson-Smith, who can trace family history through national history, Archie only knows his father and mother and describes himself as an insignificant part of national history: “To have a bit of history in your blood like that. Motivates you, I'd imagine. I'm a Jones, you see. "Sluke a "Smith". We're nobody. My father used to say: "We're the chaff, boy, we're the chaff." Not that I've ever been much bothered, mind” (Smith, 2001: 100). Archibald's statement shows that he comes from the working class and considers himself insignificant because of his social position. On the other hand, Samad is a member of a wealthy family and has a college education. Smith underscores Archibald's unheroic stance by shifting his and Samad's historical position. When the Russian soldiers come to take Doctor Sick to their country to judge him for his war crimes, Samad wears Dickinson-Smith's uniform and introduces himself as having a higher rank than Archibald. On the other hand, Archibald is surprised and cannot decide how to act in front of the Russian soldiers. Samad's determination and self-assurance makes him a hero for Archibald:

Archie had never had a hero: he was five when his father went out for a proverbial pack of fags and neglected to return, and, never being much of a reader, the many awful books written to provide young men with famous heroes had never crossed his path ... Here was a raving lunatic standing on a tank, here was a friend, here was a hero, in a form Archie had never expected. (Smith, 2001: 109)

In addition to that, while Samad is very passionate about killing Doctor Sick to defend his honour and England, Archie does not feel any kind of revenge for this man. Hence,

when Samad forces Archibald to kill Doctor Sick, a scientist who works for the Nazis, Archibald decides not to kill that man after tossing a coin. It is a critical reference to Britain's focus on the victory over the Nazis in the war because Doctor Sick continues to work with Marcus Chalfen on genetic coding, as revealed in the last chapter of the novel.

Moreover, Archibald is the only one who is able to establish a dialogue with Samad while the other soldiers otherize Samad by calling him “Sultan” or implying he is a feminine figure⁴⁷ (Smith, 2001: 83). It is evidently seen that English soldiers feel superior to Samad because of their English national identity. Smith subverts their sense of ontological superiority by portraying them as characters already excluded by dominant social discourse. None of them corresponds to the image of the White Man created by imperial epistemology, and eventually die. Smith creates a tragicomic scene to emphasize the fact that the Empire comes to an end and foreshadows that the future will be different for each side. In this respect, Archibald represents an alternative for the melancholic white man. Moreover, he shows the potential of a positive transformation through his friendship with Samad: “These were strange times, strange enough an Iqbal and a Jones strike up a friendship” (2001: 92). When Samad and Archie find themselves alone on a border somewhere between Turkey and Greece⁴⁸ and do not have any information about the end of the war, they try to fix the wireless radio to get in touch with the army. As a multicultural literature researcher, Rahbek draws attention to the importance of discourse and language in restructuring the mentality about the Other (2019: 67). The development of new vocabulary can contribute to articulating and recognising differences. Therefore, this scene is important in emphasising the necessity of abandoning the old imperial discourse and producing new vocabularies for cross-cultural dialogue. When they collaborate to fix

⁴⁷“Bengali men in colonial India were characterized as 'effete' or 'feminine in contrast to the macho self-image of the self-assured and heroic British male' (Brah, 1996: 153). However, in **White Teeth**, this understanding is subverted through shifted power relationship between Samad and Archie. In their story, Samad has become the hero for Archie.

⁴⁸It is significant they establish their friendship away from their lands. This region sustains a liminal space for them. Moreover, being distant from their countries' borders enables them to leave their differences and prejudices to have cross-cultural dialogue.

the radio machine, with Samad's mechanical knowledge and Archie's hands⁴⁹, they have a new language:

It was awkward, an Indian telling an Englishman what to do but somehow the quietness of it, the manliness of it, got them over it. It was during this time that Archie learnt the true power of do-it-yourself, how it uses a hammer and nails to replace nouns and adjectives, how it allows men to communicate. A lesson he kept with him all his life. (2001: 93)

The quote shows that Archibald's masculinity is reshaped through his relationship with Samad; therefore, his masculine identity provides an alternative for the traditional masculinity. Moreover, while they are trying to get in touch with the army, they participate in the everyday activities of the village. In this period, they talk about the differences in their cultures that are very unusual for Archibald. Although Archibald finds some aspects of Indian culture strange, such as arranged marriage, he is able to go beyond his prejudices about Samad. Their encounter at war is similar to Sara Ahmed's definition of the strange encounter, including surprise and conflict. Since Samad and Archibald are open to dialogue, their friendship develops around dialogue, not despite their differences but through their differences. They only know each other in a foreign land, and their conversations "cement [their] friendship" (Smith, 2001: 102). As seen, both Samad and Archie are able to converse across borders and engage in cross-cultural dialogue, creating a horizon that foreshadows the possible changes in Britain's future socio-cultural structure. Thus, their friendship that "crosses class and colour" is an important motive for the novel's structure to move forward and back in imperial and multicultural times. Archie's comical and unheroic representation, a Hamletian figure who cannot make decisions and relies on the coins, does not change in post-war England. He first gets married to Ophelia, an Italian woman, then Jamaican Clara; becomes best friends with a Bengali; has a Swedish pen-pal. Hence, when Samad immigrates to London with his wife and finds Archie, their families' lives intermingled. Their reunion in Britain symbolizes the dialogic relationship between past and present that will reshape multicultural Britain.

⁴⁹Since traditional binary oppositions associate the white man with the mind while associating the Other with the body, it is significant that while Samad stands for knowledge, Archie stands for the handwork. It is another subversive aspect in the novel.

As discussed so far, the aim of the novel is to deconstruct the heroic stance of the Second World War in recent English history. The novel asserts that approaching the past from different angles is the only way to overcome the boundaries the past has created in the present.

3.1.3. Rewriting (Un)Happy Colonialism

The novel rewrites the colonial period to deconstruct the happy image of imperial mission created in the nineteenth century to justify colonialism. According to Gilroy, besides the unheroic stance of the Second World War, Britain can overcome inner conflicts and tension through “facing its colonial phase, its colonial crimes, its colonial reach, its imperial conceit” (Gilroy, 2019: 20:40). Hence, the novel presents the colonial period through the colonial encounters in order to explore the idea of happy imperialism. For Sara Ahmed, contemporary multicultural discourse tries to contribute to the happy image of colonialism by claiming that the British Empire was a happy multicultural diversity willing to “mix, love and cohabit with others” (2010: 130). However, the emphasis on the happy and diverse image of imperialism is related to avoiding confronting the unhappiness created not only in the colonised lands but also in contemporary British society. Thus, the concept of (un)happiness is vital for determining the relationship between the colonial past and multicultural present. Smith presents colonialism as a stance of unhappiness because “nothing that happens upon stolen ground can expect a happy ending” (Smith, 2001: 361). The novel, on the one hand, focuses on the unhappy memories of colonialism that cause immigrant characters to suffer from melancholia or unhappiness. The immigrant-origin characters such as Samad and Hortense remember the colonial past in agony; therefore, they are unable to situate themselves in multicultural Britain. Samad defines himself as “the foreign man in a foreign land caught between borders” (Smith, 2001: 181) while Hortense objects to Clara and Archibald’s marriage because she thinks that the union of white and black people will never have good consequences (Smith, 2001: 394). She is also a hybrid character who was born during colonialism and her hybridity is forced hybridity unlike Irie’s hybridity that happened on purpose (Moss, 2003: 13). The novel continues to reflect the racism and sense of superiority in contemporary British society

through the Chalfen family. The Chalfen family is an Anglo-Jewish family, and their relations with Millat, Irie and Magid from the second half of the novel are important in terms of showing conflicts, problems and changes in the structure of multicultural relations in British society. Joyce and Marcus Chalfen's marriage is described as “a very happy marriage” (Smith, 2001: 310). The family is portrayed as a traditional, perfect, happy family that only keeps in touch with the other Chalfens, has no friends, and considers their family superior to everyone else:

Bottomline: the Chalfens didn't need other people. They referred to themselves as nouns, verbs, and occasionally adjectives: *It's the Chalfen way, And then he came out with a real Chalfenism, He's Chalfening again, We need to be a bit more Chalfenist about this. Joyce challenged anyone to show her a happier family, a more Chalfenist family than theirs.* (Smith, 2001: 314)

As seen, the Chalfens are always defined in relation to happiness. However, this is another irony because their happiness is actually a result of ignoring their unhappiness. Joyce always wants to be needed by the other people in order to satisfy herself and protect her authority over others. Her conversations with her younger son Oscar demonstrate that she does not have the healthy communication with her family as she always assumed:

“But everybody loves Millat, don't they, Oscar! It's so hard not to, isn't it, Oscar? We love him, don't we, Oscar?”
“I hate him.”
“Oh, Oscar, don't say silly things.”
“Can we all stop talking about Millat, please.”
“Yes, Joshua, all right. Do you hear how he gets jealous? I try to explain to him that Millat needs a little extra care, you know. He's from a very difficult background. It's just like when I give more time to my peonies than my Michaelmas daisies, daisies will grow anywhere ... you know you can be very selfish sometimes, Joshi.” (2001: 330)

As seen, Joyce does not confront the fact that her children are unhappy. When the school administration sends Millat and Irie to the Chalfen house to be successful in their studies, Joyce begins to ignore her family completely. When Millat and Irie come for the first time, she likens her house “a missionary vessel” (Smith, 2001: 323), indicating the desire to change the children. Furthermore, she considers Millat and Irie

as problematic kids she can assimilate into Chalfenism⁵⁰. As seen, Joyce's approach to children in this relationship bears the traces of a mentality inherited from the imperial period. The so-called benevolent intentions reveal the desire to change and control the Other. Hence, the Chalfens' (un)happiness is a reference to British society's ignoring the real reasons behind the conflicts and unhappiness that the past has created in the present. **White Teeth** directs a criticism towards this situation through past encounters. Reminding the reader of colonial history as the beginning point of today's multiculturalism is a significant step to move beyond the national amnesia of the homogeneous English society that existed in imperialism.

The other criticism towards English colonisation in the novel is that dominant narratives present it as a philanthropic movement. Sir Edmund Flecker Glenard, whose name was given to the public-school Glenard Oak, is defined as "an educational philanthropist" (Smith, 2001: 304). The word philanthropist is deliberately chosen to underline the irony between the concept and the intention in colonialism. Sir Glenard earns a significant amount of money thanks to tobacco farming in Jamaica. The Jamaican workers, whose lands are colonized by Europeans and forced to work in their old fields with very low wages, rise against the hard conditions. However, he thinks they lack work ethics: "One was impressed by the Jamaican's faith but despairing of his work ethic and education. Vice versa, one admired the Englishman's work ethic and education but despaired of his poorly kept faith" (Smith, 2001: 304). After this illumination, to educate people's lack of work ethics and belief, he sends some Jamaican workers to England; however, "Sir Edmund had always had difficulties retaining enthusiasm and interest" (Smith, 2001: 306). He forgets his responsibility towards those Jamaicans and causes their sufferings in England. The function of Sir Glenard's short but significant story in the novel is to demonstrate not only Jamaicans' suffering because of the colonial aims but also the presence of the Other in Britain grounding on the colonial time, a long time ago before post-war immigration. Due to

⁵⁰ This situation is especially reflected in her relationship with Millat. She takes exceptional care of him as he is a "wounded" and traumatized child. However, she never listens to Millat and does not understand his actual problems. Millat, on the other hand, exploits Joyce's care, constantly borrows money from her and reverses the give-and-take relationship in traditional English benevolence.

the problems experienced by the colonial generation, contemporary immigrants suffer from melancholia as well.

The other philanthropic man in the novel is Captain Durham, an Englishman who is essential to understand the Bowden familial history. It is stated in the novel that understanding British-Jamaican Irie's dilemmas in contemporary Britain is possible through knowing her great-grandmother Ambrosia's story in colonised Jamaica (Smith, 2001: 356). Captain Durham represents the ideal image of the white man described by Kipling in "White Man's Burden." However, he is a colonizer who sexually assaults Ambrosia, Irie's great-grandmother and gets her pregnant with "the cleverest Negro boy in Jamaica" and then decides to educate her:

Even Ambrosia Bowden, a capricious, long-legged, maga village-child who had not seen a schoolroom in all of her fourteen years, knew this advice was mistaken. When an Englishman wants to be generous, the first thing you ask is why, because there is always a reason. ... As the months flicked by, Ambrosia learnt a lot of wonderful things from the handsome captain. He taught her how to read the trials of Job and study the warnings of Revelation, to swing a cricket bat, to recite "Jerusalem". How to add up a column of numbers. How to decline a Latin noun. How to kiss a man's ear until he wept like a child. But mostly he taught her that she was no longer a maidservant, that her education had elevated her, that in her heart she was a lady, though her daily chores remained unchanged (Smith, 2001).

As Ahmed states, "the history of uncultivated nations uniformly represents the women as in a state of abject slavery, from which they slowly emerge as civilization advances" (2010: 127). In the case of Durham and Ambrosia, Durham believes that Ambrosia is an educated and cultivated lady thanks to English education, not a maid anymore. It reminds of Spivak's statement about white men's so-called saviour position for colonized women from cultural and social oppression⁵¹. From this perspective, Durham considers her culture inferior and wants to cultivate her according to English culture. Spivak also adds that colonized women do not have any space to speak for

⁵¹ In "Can Subaltern Speak", Spivak puts a critique forward through the Sati suicide, which is a religious ritual in India and prohibited by English colonisers. Sati suicide means that the woman whose husband died commits suicide by burning herself. The English colonizers abolished this practice because it is an uncivilized ritual in their opinion. In other words, the English remove the concept of Sati from its religious context, presenting themselves as a saviour to Indian women. Spivak criticizes the saviour role of the Englishmen through the sentence "white men save brown women from brown men" but they actually do not provide a free space for women (1994: 92). By marginalizing Hindu practices, the English colonizers actually present themselves as civilized compared to the uncivilized Other.

themselves in European society. Hence, the white man's saviour and heroic position is reversed again through Ambrosia's rejection of Captain Durham:

If this were a fairy tale, it would now be time for Captain Durham to play hero. He does not seem to lack the necessary credentials. It is not that he isn't handsome, or tall, or strong, or that he doesn't want to help her, or that he doesn't love her (oh, he loves her; just as the English loved India and Africa and Ireland; it is the love that is the problem, people treat their lovers badly) all things are true. But maybe it is just the scenery that is wrong. Maybe nothing that happens upon stolen ground can expect a happy ending. (2001: 361)

After the earthquake, Captain Durham finds Ambrosia, but she prefers to stay with the Jehova's Witnesses, and Ambrosia's daughter Hortense states that they never obey any men but God after this incident. Ambrosia's decision to be a member of a Christian doctrine is the result of English education. However, as a result of the education she received, she gained her agency instead of obeying the Englishmen. In this respect, Ambrosia's stance against Captain Durham provides a different perspective for the colonizer and colonized relationships. Furthermore, the presence of Hortense, as a hybrid character in the colonial period, is another reminder of cultural and racial hybridization rooted in colonialism due to white men in those lands.

Although Ambrosia is able to constitute a life separated from Captain Durham, the ghost of the good English education still haunts the present encounters of Ambrosia's granddaughter Clara and Clara's daughter Irie living in contemporary Britain. When Clara goes to the Chalfen house to meet Joyce, she cannot see herself as equal to Joyce. Moreover, when Joyce asks her if Irie gets her intelligence from the Jamaican side or English side, Clara says that she gets it probably from her English great-grandfather Captain Durham: "He taught my grandmother all she knew. A good English education. Lord knows who else it could be" (Smith, 2001: 355). However, she regrets it immediately because she inwardly knows that Clara, Hortense, and even Ambrosia are smarter than Captain Durham, who puts a thousand people's lives in danger just to save one woman he barely knows (Smith, 2001: 355). However, as the dialogue between Clara and Joyce proclaims, despite the pain and difficulties that Captain Durham has brought to the Bowden family, Clara cannot put past unhappy colonial experiences into words. Clara is aware that all the women in her family are more brilliant than Durham, but the imperial epistemology still prevents her from

acknowledging their intellectual superiority. Therefore, both Joyce's superiority and Clara's contradictions erect invisible boundaries and prevent a dialogue between them. This encounter only contributes to Clara's unhappiness. Through Clara's dilemma, the novel aims to show how colonial epistemology draws boundaries between the two communities and how it is still affective in everyday relationships. Therefore, it not only addresses the ongoing prejudices in the host society but also reveals that colonial epistemology remains an obstacle for the diaspora in daily life. For this reason, it recontextualises the past as the story of Ambrosia instead of Captain Durham and offers different views on the past. In other words, the novel offers different perspectives for both English society and the diaspora to reconsider the past in order to overcome the inherited boundaries in the present.

3.1.4. Healing Humour in White Teeth

Humour is a prominent border-crossing aspect in **White Teeth** because it provides a liminal space to demonstrate and unsettle social and cultural boundaries in multicultural British society. According to some critics, the characters in the novel “have too much comic affect to have an existence beyond stereotype” (Squires, 2002: 73). As a multicultural writer, Smith is aware that portraying stereotypes with humorous aspects can reveal social anxieties and relieve those anxieties and fears through laughter. The role of the pyrotechnic storyteller is important in crossing boundaries in the novel. For Paul Dawson, a pyrotechnic storyteller not only accesses the thoughts of the characters but also interprets the incidents in a humorous and satiric manner (2013: 111). Thus, the narrator enables the reader to switch between different characters instead of being involved in the events. The representations of Joyce and Marcus Chalfen, and Samad Iqbal are important to comprehend the humorous stereotypes in the novel. The Chalfen family is depicted as a stereotypical English family with an essentialist mentality based on binary oppositions. The household roles of Joyce and Marcus indicate that they do not go beyond the social boundaries and maintain the traditionalist gender roles. For example, while Joyce defines Marcus as cleverer than her, she describes her role in terms of reproduction: “Marcus created beings. And Joyce was his wife, industrious in creating smaller versions of Marcus” (2001: 312). The hierarchical thinking in the Chalfens is also manifested in their

relations with the immigrant-origin people. Their encounter with Millat's cousin Neena and Maxine, her girlfriend, exposure the stereotypical characterization of the Chalfens. Clara and Alsana insist that Neena visit the Chalfens because they want to get to know them better, so Neena goes to the Chalfens' house for dinner. In the encounter, Joyce and Marcus Chalfen are represented as stereotypical orientalist Westerners through their approach towards Bangladeshi Neena and her relationship with a woman. The cultural and ethnic labels of Neena are enough for Joyce and Marcus to get an idea of Neena as seen in their approach toward her. Although Neena does not correspond to the traditional figure of South Asian Muslim woman, Joyce persistently asks her if it is difficult to bake "while wearing those long black sheets" for Muslim women (Smith, 2001: 351). Joyce's question shows that she is unable to realize there can be different identities in South Asian and Muslim society. Marcus Chalfen also evaluates her through sexuality⁵²:

I can't help thinking," said Marcus, unheeding, 'that a Chalfen man and an Iqbal woman would be a hell of a mix. Like Fred and Ginger. You'd give us sex and we'd give you sensibility or something. Hey? You'd keep a Chalfen on his toes you're as fiery as an Iqbal. Indian passion. Funny thing about your family: first generation are all loony tunes, but the second generation have got heads just about straight on their shoulders. (Smith, 2001: 346)

Marcus' statement about the role of Indians and Westerners in a relationship reflects his thought structure based on binary oppositions. He associates the Chalfens with mind while associating the Iqbals with sexuality and passion. Furthermore, Marcus thinks that the Iqbals are a deranged family, and in the continuation of the conversation, he tries to dominate Neena with his intelligence by saying that the Iqbals are not academically successful and by correcting Neena's grammatical errors. The sexual orientation of Neena and Maxine also does not correspond with the Chalfens' normative understanding of relationship structures. In particular, it is difficult for Joyce to comprehend this relationship: "Joyce understood why men would love men;

⁵² In **Orientalism**, Edward Said speaks of Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian dancer named Kuchuk Hanem during his journey to the East. Said mentions that during this encounter, Flaubert could not capture the real character and identity of the woman, and he evaluated her through the texts written about the East that he had read before. Flaubert considers this woman a prototype and introduces Eastern women as machines that demand nothing from the other through their sexuality. Therefore, defining Marcus to Neena through "the Indian passion" is closely related to the Orientalist point of view.

she had devoted her life to loving men, so she knew how it felt. But the idea of women loving women was so far from Joyce's cognitive understanding of the world that she couldn't process it" (Smith, 2001: 348). Joyce's conventional mindset shows that she embodies a binary mindset that privileges men over women. Therefore, she is unable to comprehend the homosexual relationship between women. Furthermore, she asks them strange questions about their sexual life:

"Do you use each other's breasts as pillows?"

Neena's fork, which was heading for her mouth, stopped just as it reached the tip of her nose. Millat choked on a piece of cucumber, tried to struggle to bring her lower jaw back into alliance with the upper. Maxine began to giggle.

...

"It's just, in a lot of Indian poetry, they talk about using breasts for pillows, downy breasts, pillow breasts. I just just just wondered, if white sleeps on brown, or, as one might expect, brown sleeps on white? Extending the the the pillow metaphor, you see, I was just wondering which ... way" (Smith, 2001: 350)

Although their conversations shock everyone else at the table, as the narrator emphasises, neither Marcus nor Joyce is aware of the situation. The narrator states that Joyce does not think her question is inappropriate and likens her self-assurance and sense of superiority to the coloniser women who did not step back even in the most challenging conditions in the colonised lands (Smith, 2001: 350). In other words, the narrator points out that the connection between colonial epistemology, which is the outcome of Western binary oppositional mindset that created hierarchies, and the Chalfens' superiority complex. Thus, Smith points out that the Chalfens display stereotypical behaviours through their Orientalist approach to immigrants. Hence, she digs out the cultural prejudices inherited from the imperial mindset that still negatively influence cross-cultural interactions. Their sense of superiority reveals the cross-cultural conflicts that prevent dialogue, and it puts them into the position of the object of laughter. The humorous depiction of them enables to draw the reader's attention to the underlying problems; therefore, it aims to unsettle the cultural and conceptual boundaries.

As mentioned previously, the novel presents incidents from the frames of the English and the diaspora. Therefore, the novel also provides an insight into the Bangladeshi Iqbals. Since Marcus describes the relationship between the Indian and the English from an imperial point of view (Indian passion/English brain), he says it

would be an ideal match. However, for the immigrant characters, the interracial relationship means assimilation. Alsana Iqbal, a South Asian woman who is married to Samad Iqbal, is very concerned about the possibility of her sons marrying English women:

But it makes an immigrant laugh to hear the fears of the nationalist, scared of infection, penetration, miscegenation, when this is small fry, peanuts, compared to what the immigrant fears dissolution, disappearance. Even the unflappable Alsana Iqbal would regularly wake up in a puddle of her own sweat after a night visited by visions of Millat (genetically BB; where B stands for Bengali-ness) marrying someone called Sarah (aa where 'a' stands for Aryan), resulting in a child called Michael (Ba), who in turn marries somebody called Lucy (aa), leaving Alsana with a legacy of unrecognisable great-grandchildren (Aaaaaaa!). (Smith, 2001: 327)

The narrator reveals the immigrants' anxieties that lead them to create boundaries against the host society. Although those fears are associated with tragedies of the colonial past, it is depicted humorously. Despite all her concerns and anxieties, Alsana tends to cross the boundaries between different cultural groups in the novel. On the other hand, her husband Samad Iqbal is bound up with cultural and social boundaries in spite of his friendship with Archibald. The Chalfens are portrayed as stereotypical English people with an enduring colonial mindset, while Samad is represented as a stereotypical diasporic South Asian Muslim man who is firmly attached to his own hegemonic cultural codes. Samad's dialogue with the school principal at the parent-teacher association meeting also provides a different perspective in order to draw the reader's attention to the reasons behind the cross-cultural conflicts. During the meeting, the topic of discussion stems from cultural conflicts in society; therefore, the narrator provides insight into the thoughts of both Samad and the English principal and parents in order to reveal the reasons behind those conflicts. In the meeting, Samad opposes the celebration of the Harvest Festival because it is based on pagan beliefs, not Christianity: "This Harvest Festival is *not* a Christian festival. Where in the bible does it say, *For thou must steal foodstuffs from thy parents' cupboards and bring them into school assembly, and thou shall force thy mother to bake a loaf of bread in the shape of a fish?* These are pagan ideals!" (Smith, 2001: 130). According to Samad, the large numbers of Christian festivals in the celebration list do not leave enough time to

celebrate Muslim holidays. He also criticizes the Western education system because it does not privilege the development of the soul and mind as much as it privileges the development of the body. Samad's objection to the Harvest Festival and the domination of Western education in the curriculum actually reveals the fear of being corrupted by the West in religious and ethnic minorities⁵³. Similar to Anwar in **The Buddha of Suburbia**, Samad's holding onto the Bangladeshi and Muslim culture in order not to lose his control over his household puts him in the position of object of laughter. In this respect, Samad is a humorous representation of stereotypical South Asian Muslim man in the novel. Tracey in **The Buddha of Suburbia** states that white people consider immigrants funny because of their strange customs and habits (Kureishi, 1999: 176). Moreover, Samad's traditionalism represents a hegemonic culture like the English colonial understanding. Therefore, Smith prefers to depict Samad in a humorous way to reveal the conceptual boundaries in the diasporic communities as well. Moreover, in the following chapters, it is indicated that his behaviours are the direct opposite to his concerns revealed in the school assembly. The incongruity in Samad's behaviours reinforces his comical and melancholic representation simultaneously. Eventually, he sends his son Magid to Bangladesh to get an Eastern education in his hometown; however, Magid comes back as an Englishman from Bangladesh. When Samad confronts that his hometown has changed as well as his culture in Britain, he becomes a melancholic immigrant in the novel. Due to his rigid ideas about his culture, Samad's concerns comply with the logic of neither his wife nor the other parents and turn him into a comic character for the reader. Therefore, there is a criticism towards the refusal of dialogue and the anxiety of change in the diasporic communities through Samad's representation. On the one hand, Samad's concerns show that that kind of fear is an obstacle for the immigrant's adaptation to daily life in the new society. On the other hand, society's approach to him in the meeting reveals

⁵³ A few pages later, Samad meets the English music teacher and has an affair with her. His affair with the English woman contradicts his arguments and create incongruity in Samad's character. Eventually, he is convinced that England has seduced him and decides to send his son Magid to Bangladesh to protect him from Western influence. However, Magid completes a Western education in Bangladesh while Millat joins a radical religious group called KEVIN in England. The conflicts Samad experiences in his inner world are reflected in the outer world as contradictions. The results of these conflicts position Samad as the object of laughter. The failure of his sons to meet his expectations is also an ironic manifestation of global change, not only for immigrants but also for the English.

that the major society does not completely understand the concerns of minorities. The thoughts of the school principal reveal these boundaries:

She wanted to check that it was not her imagination, that she was not being unfair or undemocratic, or worse still racist (but she had read *Colour Blind*, a seminal leaflet from the Rainbow Coalition, she had scored well on the self-test), racist in ways that were so deeply ingrained and socially determining that they escaped her attention. (Smith, 2001: 126)

The narrator provides insight into the principal's thoughts in order to reveal the other reason for conflicts. As the quote demonstrates, there are difficulties comprehending Samad because they consider Samad not an ordinary parent but a representation of the Other in society. In other words, racism may not be seen in conscious acts, but it is still in the mind of the English. Besides the principal and parents, even Archibald, who is the most unprejudiced character against racial and cultural differences in the novel, emphasises that they are not like the others while talking about Clara and Samad: “Samad and Alsana Iqbal, who were not those kinds of Indians (as, in Archie's mind, Clara was not that kind of black), who were, in fact, not Indian at all but Bangladeshi” (Smith, 2001: 54). Archibald's thoughts show that there is still a particular image of the Other in the English mind, and he unconsciously tries to justify his relationships with Clara and the Iqbals. In other words, stereotyping immigrants continues in society. For example, Samad and Alsana argue in the meeting because Samad wants her to vote for him about his Harvest Festival objection, and eventually, he makes Alsana raise her hand. Thereupon, the English parents “Janice and Elle looked over to [Alsana] with the piteous, saddened smiles they reserved for subjugated Muslim women” (Smith, 2001: 130). Although Samad's behaviours conform to the English people's prejudices, the narrator conveys their argument humorously to indicate that Alsana is not a subjugated Muslim woman: “Samad pressed Alsana's hand. She kicked him in the ankle. He stamped on her toe. She pinched his flank” (Smith, 2001: 130). As seen, in contrast to the stereotypical silenced Muslim woman image, which Edward Said discusses in **Orientalism** in detail, Alsana never hesitates to show her anger against Samad in the novel⁵⁴. As Alsana's image does not meet expectations for the

⁵⁴ Alsana is a parallel character for Princess Jeeta, who is silenced and subjugated by Anwar in **The Buddha of Suburbia**. Jeeta's voice is almost absent in this novel; her experiences are conveyed to the

idea of immigrant and Muslim women, an inconsistency emerges that will make the reader laugh. Instead of depicting a serious argument on the subjects that cause conflicts in inter-group relationships, it is preferred to present a humorous argument to provide a horizon to think about the invisible boundaries between different groups. The principal also uses humour to relieve the tension between Samad and the rest of the parents: "I'm afraid," said Mrs. Owens, ..., 'removing Christian festivals from the face of the earth is a little beyond my jurisdiction. Otherwise I would remove Christmas Eve and save myself a lot of work in stocking-stuffing" (Smith, 2001: 130). In the introduction of **Cheeky Fictions**, Susanne Reichl and Mark Stein state that "the complex relationship between centre and margin are far from humorous"; however, in various situations "laughter and humour can release some of the tension and relieve some of potential aggression" (2005: 9). Their argument is similar to Gilroy's conviviality which can be maintained through humour. Therefore, the humorous narrator does not involve in discussions but functions as a mediator between the different communities to reveal and defuse the conflicts.

The strange encounter between Archibald Jones and Muslim butcher Elvis-Ishmael Hussein also enables the reader to shift between different perspectives in society and provides a perspective for healing humour in the novel. According to Ulrike Erichsen, humour "can function as a means to alert the reader to cultural barriers that need to be overcome in order to fully understand the text, and thus can encourage intercultural communication and understanding" (qtd. in Reichl and Stein, 2005: 32). In other words, the humour that ambiguates the boundaries between the object of laughter and the audience urges the audience or reader to shift their perspectives between two frames of reference. Hence, the pyrotechnic narrator of **White Teeth** employs humour to highlight the bilateral point of view involved in cross-cultural encounters. When the representation of multicultural Britain in the novel is considered, the humour that emerged in everyday encounters and dialogues reinforces multicultural cohesion. The novel begins with Archibald Jones' suicide attempt. After flipping a coin, he decides to commit suicide by gassing himself (2001: 3). A suicide

reader through Karim or Jamila. Therefore, Alsana presents the prejudices about immigrant women in two frames of reference and represents intra-group and inter-group border crossings.

attempt is usually considered a tragic event for every culture; however, the humorous narration turns his suicide attempt into rather a comic element for the reader:

He lay forward in a prostrate cross, jaw slack, arms splayed either side like some fallen angel; scrunched up in each fist he held his army service medals (left) and his marriage licence (right), for he had decided to take his mistakes with him. A little green light flashed in his eye, signalling a right turn he had resolved never to make. He was resigned to it. He was prepared for it. He had flipped a coin and stood staunchly by its conclusions. This was a decided-upon suicide. In fact it was a New Year's resolution. (Smith, 2001: 3)

The quote indicates that Archibald is an English man who failed to fulfil societal expectations because he neither could manage his marriage life successfully nor behave like a proudful former soldier. Therefore, he considers both his marriage licence and army service medals as mistakes. Therefore, the novel signals that it will reverse the sense of superiority traditionally attributed to the English in traditional English humour. The prevention of his suicide by a Muslim butcher resembling Elvis Presley reinforces the humorous rather than tragic aspect of this suicide attempt. The Muslim butcher named Elvis Hussein-Ishmael prevents Archibald's suicide attempt because his shop is a halal place:

"Do you hear that, mister? We're not licensed for suicides around here. This place halal. Kosher, understand? If you're going to die round here, my friend, I'm afraid you've got to be thoroughly bled first." Archie dragged his head off the steering wheel. And in the moment between focusing on the sweaty bulk of a brown-skinned Elvis and realizing that life was still his, he had a kind of epiphany. (Smith, 2001: 7)

Elvis Hussein-Ishmael has become a comical character for the reader because of the incongruity between his physical depiction (brown-skinned Elvis) and his cultural representation (Pakistani/Muslim). The narrator draws attention to the code-switching between different cultures through cross-cultural influences. As Gilroy states, popular culture has an important role in forming plural identities in multicultural societies. Since Elvis Presley is a well-known American singer⁵⁵, he has had a great impact on the diaspora as well as on the English and provides a cultural connection between different cultures and transforms boundaries into a horizon. Especially in the 1960s,

⁵⁵The impact of Elvis Presley on British youth culture also indicates that America is very effective in the globalised cultural market.

Elvis Presley has greatly influenced British youth. Hussein-Ishmael was probably a young Muslim in England during this period and was influenced by Elvis Presley. Therefore, when intercultural conflicts and racist discourses have become widespread in this period, music, as a popular culture element, functions as an intercultural bridge. Therefore, on the one hand, Elvis Hussein-Ishmael's culturally hybrid identity shows the transformative influence of Western culture on the diasporic subjects. On the other hand, his presence points out that people of different races and cultures have altered the social and cultural structures in British society. He has a butcher in a thoroughfare that highlights his social position in mundane life. Furthermore, the concept of halal belonging to Muslim cuisine traditions has become a familiar concept for the English through cross-cultural interactions; nevertheless, the concept still implies that the cultural differences can be comical for the host society. Therefore, the strange encounter between Archibald and Elvis Hussein-Ishmael is significant to show the border-crossing function of humorous narrative. Both characters do not correspond to the expectations of either the English or the diaspora and become an example of incongruity theory. Moreover, humour and laughter provide an emotional distance between the audience and the incident. The strange encounter does not occur according to certain patterns; moreover, it contains a tragic aspect such as suicide. However, the narrator's perspective presents the incongruity through laughter; therefore, it has become a humorous element for the readers of different communities. Moreover, the narrator's distance to the characters do not sustain cultural or social boundaries; instead, it blurs the boundaries between the English and immigrants by presenting both of them as comical figures. The use of humour abolishes the line between the one who laughs and the one who is being laughed at during this encounter through addressing different cultural codes. The two men stand for "healing humour" that has the potential to bridge the gap between different communities in a multicultural society because the humour does not lean on the conflicts but aims to provide a dialogical atmosphere for each frame of reference.

Finally, in addition to its border crossing feature in daily encounters, the use of humour in historiography will be mentioned in this chapter. Since the contribution of rewriting history from different perspectives to the narrative structure has been

discussed in detail in the previous section, the section will briefly touch upon the healing function of humour in rewriting history. According to Hayden White, history is neither tragedy nor comedy; the narrator's perspective attributes tragedy and comedy to past events (2001: 9). Therefore, as discussed in the previous chapter, historical events such as colonialism and the world war have become heroic stories for the English while they are tragic stories for the immigrants. Samad's dedication to the story of Mangal Pande is related to this. Samad constantly emphasises that Mangal Pande is a hero and insists Western writers misrepresent him. However, while his insistence turns him into a melancholic immigrant due to his commitment to the past, it turns him into an object of laughter for both the people around him and the reader:

“Go on, Sam,” said Archie with a wink. “Give us the one about Mangal Pande. That's always good for a laugh.”

“The story of Mangal Pande,” Samad protested, ‘is no laughing matter. He is the tickle in the sneeze, he is why we are the way we are, the founder of modern India, the big historical cheese.’ (2001: 225)

As seen, the story of Mangal Pande aims to draw attention to the difference in the perspective of the colonised people against the authoritarian values of English historiography. The humorous narrator of **White Teeth** depicts history neither as a heroic story nor a series of tragic events. As Eva Gruber states in her article “Humorous Restorifications: Rewriting History with Healing Laughter”, “[a]s a kind of Trojan Horse, humour sneaks up on readers unnoticed. It may therefore subvert Western epistemologies and historiographic representation from within and align the reader’s empathy with Native viewpoints”⁵⁶ (2008: 235). In other words, humour can be a positive aspect in order to cross the boundaries inherited from colonial history. In terms of **White Teeth**, the reason for using humour is to make the mainstream English readers question their knowledge of history. For example, the novel ironizes the coloniser/colonised relationship through Captain Durham's love for Ambrosia. In general, love is a concept with positive connotations and includes hopeful

⁵⁶ In the article, Gruber argues the use of humour in terms of Native and non-Native perspectives of colonial history in multicultural Canadian literature. When her argument is taken into consideration in the context of postcolonial British literature, humour can bring attention to colonial history from the Other's perspective that the English or European perspective tends to ignore.

transformations; however, Durham's love for Ambrosia is related to colonial purposes. For this reason, there is a firm contradiction between the real meaning of the word and the meaning used in the novel. Therefore, it leads to irony and satirical laughter. Thus, the reader is expected to see national history and the history of the Other from different perspectives rather than adopting a particular point of view. The marginality of the English soldiers is also reinforced through comedy. The comic depictions of the English soldiers, who were excluded by the army, break their authoritarian colonialist image for minorities while subverting the soldier hero image for the English. In other words, the soldiers become objects of laughter because of the inconsistency between traditional expectations and their representations in the novel. Therefore, the humorous narrative method breaks the hierarchies that stem from imperial epistemology and provides a border crossing space for the reader. In other words, laughter and humour can provide space to pass “cheerfully from the past” when used in a conciliatory way. (2005: 12). In this respect, humour in **White Teeth** neither glosses over tensions and conflicts nor understates prejudices inherited from the imperial period. Nevertheless, humour and laughter lead the reader into a space to address the confrontational issues without foreclosing further possibilities of cross-cultural dialogue. Therefore, using humour to sustain conciliation contributes to the potential of hope that the novel suggests for future multicultural Britain.

3.2. Borders and Border Crossings in British Society: Melancholia and Conviviality

The novel presents the multicultural change in British society through cross-cultural conflicts and interactions. The previous section emphasises that the conceptual and invisible borders existing in society result from racism, prejudices, and xenophobia inherited from the imperial period. The manifestation of these problems in social life is scrutinised in the light of Paul Gilroy's concept of postimperial melancholia. According to Paul Gilroy, postimperial melancholia is closely related to Britain's tendency to hold immigrants responsible for the problems experienced in the country after imperialism and the Second World War. Both periods are almost enshrined as a white homogeneous temporal space in postimperial Britain. Hence, the problems in contemporary society such as “economic decline, the impact of

privatisation and consumerism, the steady debasement of political culture, the evacuation of hope and meaning from everyday life, the erosion of family and household intimacy, and the increasing poverty of communicable experience” (Gilroy, 2004: 126) are not seen as the consequences of these two periods but as the problems brought by the immigrants to Britain. In **The Buddha of Suburbia**, postimperial melancholia is frequently manifested in the context of political and economic issues. In addition, the effects of the imperial period and war on the contemporary mindset about the Other are presented through people's daily interactions. On the other hand, as analysed in the previous section, **White Teeth** mainly deals with the relations between postimperial melancholia and the aforementioned periods in a historical and cultural context. In addition to contemporary Britain, the novel depicts colonised Jamaica and the Second World War through its non-linear narrative method and an omniscient narrator. Thus, it underlines that neither imperialism nor the war period is as sacred as reflected in the political and cultural discourses. In this part of the study, multicultural transformation in the novel will be examined in light of the concept of conviviality. Conviviality is defined as “happy togetherness [of different cultures]” (Rahbek, 2019:14) and offers an alternative to realities such as racism, xenophobia, and prejudices represented by postimperial melancholia. Hence, when the representation of London in **White Teeth** is considered, despite the conflicts in everyday relations, the promise of conviviality is more dominant in cross-cultural relations.

The cross-cultural encounters in the novel provide an opportunity to examine more closely the multicultural transformations in Britain. **White Teeth** depicts the interaction and cohabitation of different cultures as an urban novel. By representing everyday multiculturalism, it refers to the possibility of making multiculture a mundane feature of Britain's social life (Gilroy, 2004: x). For Maya Jaggi, **White Teeth** “offers its own corrective to England's distorting mirror” (qtd. in McLeod, 2004: 161). The statement “England's distorting mirror” refers to the vision of racially homogenous nationhood in English society; the mirror that Irie, as a half-Jamaican

British, cannot find her reflection⁵⁷. Therefore, multicultural London in the novel functions as an alternative to the distorting mirror through its heterogenetic and diverse population. However, conviviality does not disregard the conflicts and tensions in everyday life relations. As an urban novel, **The Buddha of Suburbia** is divided into “In the Suburbs” and “In the City” to distinguish life experiences in different parts of London. While the suburbs mainly stand for where racist attacks and cultural prejudices occur, the city is more associated with cross-cultural interactions and conviviality than the suburbs. **White Teeth** also points out that some parts of London are safer than the other areas. The novel reveals the concepts of safe and dangerous through the immigrant-origin characters’ perspectives. For example, “Samad was moving out of East London (where one couldn't bring up children, indeed, one couldn't, not if one didn't wish them to come to bodily harm, he agreed), from East London with its NF [National Front] gangs, to North London, north-west, where things were more ... more ... liberal” (2000:59). As seen, the novel distinguishes East London from North London as an area where racism is more visible in the actions of people. Furthermore, it underscores the relationship between economic problems and racism and points out that cross-cultural conflicts are increasing in the poor areas compared to the areas where the populations’ income is adequate to afford a good life. The passage that conveys the multicultural environment in Willesden from Alsana’s point of view is significant to understanding the conflicts and interactions that are ongoing simultaneously:

But all the same, she reflected, slamming the door behind her, it was true: it was a nice area; she couldn't deny it as she stormed towards the high road, avoiding trees where previously, in Whitechapel, she avoided flung-out mattresses and the homeless. It would be good for the child, she couldn't deny it. Alsana had a deep-seated belief that living near green spaces was morally beneficial to the young, and there to her right was Gladstone Park, a sweeping horizon of green named after the Liberal Prime Minister (Alsana was from a respected old Bengal family and had read her English History; but look at her now; if they could see what depths ...!), and in the Liberal tradition it was a park without fences, unlike the more affluent Queens Park (Victoria's), with its pointed metal railings. Willesden was not as pretty as Queens Park, but it was a nice area. No denying it. Not like Whitechapel, where that madman E-knock someoneoranother gave a speech that

⁵⁷ In her search of identity and belonging, Irie is unable to identify anyone neither in English history nor in present society; therefore, she describes England as “a gigantic mirror” in which Irie could: “There was England, a gigantic mirror, and there was Irie, without reflection. A stranger in a stranger land” (Zadie Smith, 2001: 266).

forced them into the basement while kids broke the windows with their steel-capped boots. Rivers of blood silly-billy nonsense. Now she was pregnant she needed a little bit of peace and quiet. Though it was the same here in a way: they all looked at her strangely, this tiny Indian woman stalking the high road in a mackintosh, her plentiful hair flying every which way. Mali's Kebabs, Mr. Cheungs, Raj's, Malkovich Bakeries she read the new, unfamiliar signs as she passed. She was shrewd. She saw what this was. "Liberal? Hosh-kosh nonsense!" No one was more liberal than anyone else anywhere anyway. It was only that here, in Willesden, there was just not enough of any one thing to gang up against any other thing and send it running to the cellars while windows were smashed. (Smith, 2001: 62)

As seen, East London is associated with impoverishment, and the racist attacks are increased due to Enoch Powell's well-known "Rivers of Blood" speech. Hence, it indicates that the underlying postimperial melancholia causes Samad and Alsana to move to another part of the city. Nevertheless, racist attacks or riots are presented in the background of the novel through the experiences of the secondary characters. The main reason for not violently depicting racism or prejudices is to highlight the hope of establishing multicultural cohesion but not ignoring the everyday reality of cultural conflicts. Compared to East London, Willesden is presented as a threshold where people from different cultures live together. Zadie Smith, who grew up in Willesden, states that North London has a microcosmic structure that always captures the changes and developments in England (Korte, 2019:25). Alsana's perspective reflects the changes and developments in Willesden in terms of multicultural coexistence in the region. The names of shops or restaurants refer to cultural and topographic change and hybridisation in everyday spaces. The Indians, the Asians, and other Easterners have brought their cuisine traditions to Britain, and English people frequently go to their places to taste different meals.⁵⁸ The comparison between the parks is also important in showing the class distinctions and intercultural boundaries in society. For example, Alsana stays away from trees in Whitechapel because homeless people stay in this

⁵⁸ Although Indian and other Eastern restaurants and shops represent the commodification of Eastern cultures in the globalising world from a macrocosmic perspective, they offer an environment conducive to dialogue in the context of daily relations. According to everyday multicultural researchers, cross-cultural encounters in mundane places such as shops or restaurants can lead to the "dialogic construction of lived identities" through exchanging daily dialogues (Wise and Velayutham, 2009: 6). In this respect, the places belonging to the Indians not only refer to cultural hybridisation in the urban areas through contributing to the local culture; but also provide a space to establish cross-cultural dialogues. For example, the Palace, the restaurant where Samad works, is located in the centre of London's theatre area. English actors, directors, or audiences come for dinner after the plays at the Palace.

area. It refers to the poverty in the area where racism is more common in people's aggressive behaviours. Therefore, although she does not directly refer to a park, her preference to stay away from trees can be interpreted as not feeling safe in common areas such as parks as well. On the other hand, Queen's Park, located in a better area than Willesden, is surrounded by fences. In her article "Fences: A Brexit Diary", Smith states that the fences that rise around communal areas are a metaphorical indicator of cross-cultural problems and boundaries in society. Therefore, although it is a public park, the fences around it create a sense of separateness. Thus, the park in Willesden without fences that stretches like a horizon reinforces the liminality of Willesden. The Kilburn Park in the area also later turns into a liminal place where Alsana, Clara and Neena go every day, eat, talk about their lives, and chat with a Jewish man. However, despite all connotations about the liminality and hybridity of Willesden, there are still glances that reinforce Alsana's strangeness in the city; therefore, it implies that racism is still felt in every corner of the society. For example, a few years after Alsana's night out for a walk in Willesden, Millat, Magid, and Irie take a bus trip from Willesden to Harlesden. On this journey, the adults on the bus are disturbed by the noise they make, and then these men talk among themselves that the immigrants should return to their homes: "If you ask me," said one disgruntled OAP to another, 'they should all go back to their own.' But this, the oldest sentence in the world, found itself stifled by the ringing of bells and the stamping of feet, until it retreated under the seats with the chewing gum" (Smith, 2001:170). As seen, postimperial melancholia reaches deep into the spheres of popular and local culture, passing through the field of political conflict (Gilroy, 2011:199). However, the narrator points out that "this is the oldest sentence in the world" and its disappearance in the street noise is associated with the hope of leaving the past behind. In this respect, London presents the conflicts and interactions simultaneously to acknowledge the inner problems and bring solutions to those problems.

3.2.1. Everyday Border Crossings and Conviviality in White Teeth

Gilroy also spotlights "the tension between public and private values" in multicultural London, manifested in the representation of public and private spaces in cultural and literary works (2004: 128). London stands for heterogeneity and diversity

in the novel, while public and private places in the city provide more detail to view ongoing conflicts and interactions. According to Gilroy's theory, white male writers usually depict London indoors or do not include cultural and racial diversity in public areas (2004:128). He calls this situation "the Notting Hill effect"⁵⁹ by referring to Richard Curtis' novel **Notting Hill**. In addition to depicting Notting Hill a white-homogenous site, a dialogue between the main characters in the film adaptation of the novel also reveals the negative attitude towards multicultural change. In the film, William Thacker (Hugh Grant), the white male protagonist of **Notting Hill**⁶⁰ suggests a book to Anna Scott (Julie Roberts) and emphasises that the book is "none of those childish kebab stories you find in so many books these days" (**Notting Hill**, 1999: 09:06). The "childish kebab stories" refers to the works depicting London in terms of its racial and cultural diversity. Although this sentence is not directly hostile, it still reveals the sense of postimperial melancholia. The use of the word childish in this expression highlights the prejudices against immigrants in two ways. Firstly, it implicitly indicates that the colonial mentality still persists in contemporary discourse, as indigenous communities were considered by Westerners as children in need of education and civilization. Secondly, the adjective indicates an implicit discomfort mixed with disdain for the presence of immigrant-origin writers who have played an important role in shaping contemporary British literature. In **Imagining New Britain**, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown defines "New Britain as the new multicultural location", which is "more reflected in multiracial families, curry, and the fiction of Zadie Smith than in the Royal, fish and chips, and Shakespeare" (qtd. in Moss, 2003: 13). Alibhai-Brown's statement corresponds to **Notting Hill**'s protagonist William's repressed anxieties and discomfort which are symptoms of postimperial melancholia. The representation of London through cultural aspects of South Asian or Afro-American cultures in the national and international areas foreshadows the irreversible multicultural transformation in Britain. **White Teeth**, hence, vividly presents public and private

⁵⁹ In his article examining the contribution of Black British films to the representation of multicultural transformation in Britain, Iain Christie points out the evident absence of immigrant communities in the street life portrayed in Notting Hill (2017: 248). Tony Reeves also criticises the "whitewashing" of Notting Hill in the movie because Notting Hill is an area known for its Afro-American population (2017: 251).

⁶⁰ **Notting Hill** is a 1999 film based on the novel of the same name by Richard Curtis.

spaces where people of different races and cultures encounter. In addition to parks, schools, workplaces and restaurants, private spaces are constantly portrayed as spaces where different cultures come together and change each other. One of the most important examples of this is the Iqbal and Jones families visiting each other and performing daily activities together. For example, both families watch the fall of the Berlin Wall together on TV at the Jones' house (2001: 240). Since the Berlin Wall is the most well-known physical symbol of the separation between the East and West, it is symbolic that they watch the moment of its fall together. It points out that the borders in Britain as well as in Europe are not as rigid as they used to be and that daily life interactions contribute to overcoming these borders. In addition to the daily relations of the Jones and Iqbal families, the frequent visits of Irie and Millat to the Chalfen house, Clara's visit to the Chalfens, and Joyce's visit to the Iqbal house indicate that the private spaces have become a part of multicultural British life. The visits between the Chalfen family and others reveal intercultural conflicts and offer an opportunity for interaction to understand these problems. The cross-cultural interaction changes not only the Iqbal and Jones families but also the Chalfen family. For example, the narrator describes Irie's entry into the Chalfen house as a kind of border crossing: "When Irie stepped over the threshold of the Chalfen house, she felt an illicit thrill, like a Jew munching a sausage or a Hindu grabbing a Big Mac. She was crossing borders, sneaking into England; she felt like some terribly mutinous act, wearing somebody else's uniform or somebody else's skin" (Smith, 2001: 328). As the quote suggests, Irie's first visit reveals her desire to assimilate into Englishness and she feels like crossing a border. However, just before she crosses the threshold, the narrator states that she is not aware that Chalfens also needs her and Millat. It implies that the multicultural process involves both sides in need of each other; therefore, her border crossing affects both sides. These encounters are parts of Irie's *Bildung* and eventually help her establish her identity. As a result of his family's close relationship with Irie and Millat, Joshua Chalfen also abandons the family mentality and creates a new identity for himself apart from Chalfenism. In other words, it is emphasised that this change is a two-sided process. In addition to the changes in families, Ulla Rahbek states that "border crossing [in **White Teeth**] is not descriptive of entry into enemy territory" (2013:436). For Rahbek, when Irie visits the Chalfen house, "she crosses

into a potentially friendly and desirable territory” (2013: 436). In other words, despite all conflicts and cultural prejudices between families, the Chalfens do not show her or Millat hostility and welcome them to their home. Eventually, the border-crossing result in the change of individuals and families. As seen, **White Teeth** presents private spaces as microcosmic meeting spaces in order to break the idea of homogenous white private spaces. Therefore, their encounters foreshadow the possibility of border crossing and hope for turning into a convivial society.

In addition to inter-family relations of different races, the Glenard Oak School provides a liminal public space for the proximity of children of different backgrounds and demonstrates the transformation in the multicultural demography of British society. Before the analysis of cross-cultural encounters and hybridisation between different races, the history and spatial structure of Glenard Oak should be examined. The school building, as mentioned earlier, was built by Sir Glenard, the Victorian philanthropist. The school's palimpsestic spatial description reveals traces of the colonial past that continue in the present. As Ged Pope states, the idea of palimpsestic London, “layer upon layer of accreted historical details, local tradition, cultural memory, the ghost of traumatic events, the elucidation of a previous literary tradition, now all partly erased and barely legible, but still adding up to an esoteric meaningful connectivity” (2005: 182). The building, a school with a multicultural student population in contemporary Britain, was built for Jamaican and English workers to work together in the Victorian period. Afterwards, it has changed over time with various additions and has taken its present form. Temporal and spatial connections at school are constantly established in the novel, and cultural and past traumas are revealed through these connections. For example, the narrator states that the students smoke so much at school that if people who had stocked the chimneys in 1886 came back, they would not feel like strangers here (Smith, 2001: 292). The emphasis on smoking here is ironic because the school was initially founded as a tobacco factory in the Victorian Age, but this tobacco factory did not bridge the gap between the English and the Jamaicans sent to work; on the contrary, it has been merely a painful experience for many Jamaicans. However, smoking has turned into a social activity where students communicate across social boundaries in multicultural Britain. Thus,

the representation of the school in the novel is a bridge between the past and the future and is a representative of multicultural transformation.

The novel also emphasises that the effects of the past are more restrictive among first-generation immigrants and the English people who witnessed the war and the mass migration: “It is only this late in the day, and possibly only in Willesden, that you can find best friends Sita and Sharon, constantly mistaken for each other because Sita is white (her mother liked the name) and Sharon is Pakistani (her mother thought it best less trouble)” (Smith, 2001: 326). As seen, while the children of different races can be best friends across borders, their parents – especially immigrant parents - are worried that differences can be trouble for them and their children. Boundaries between second-generation immigrants and English children are more likely to be crossed because they have similar cultural and social experiences. Thus, the representation of the demographic structure of the Glenard School in the novel is significant to comprehending the multicultural transformation. The narrator states that, according to a school report, there are “67 different faiths” and “123 different languages” at this school; therefore, it likens the students at Glenard Oak to “Babelians” due to the variety and plurality of students’ ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Smith, 2001: 262). As seen, the Glenard Oak functions as another microcosmic space where different races and cultures encounter each other. Furthermore, unlike the other encounters involving adults, the interactions here are not defined through social hierarchies based on cultural and racial differences. Instead, what determines one’s status at school is one’s attractiveness, and the most attractive person at the school is Millat. Millat is adored and is considered a hero by each cultural and racial group. The narrator likens Millat’s popularity to the Beatles’ popularity:

He was so big in Cricklewood, in Willesden, in West Hampstead, the summer of 1990, that nothing he did later in his life could top it. From his first Raggastani⁶¹ crowd, he had expanded and developed tribes throughout the school, throughout North London. He was simply too big to remain merely the object of Irie’s affection, leader of the Raggastanis, or the son of Samad and Alsana Iqbal. He had to please all of the people all of the time. To the cockney wide-boys in the

⁶¹Raggastani is “a person of Asian origin who talks with a Jamaican/Anglo African accent as they have abandoned their own cultural identity and so adopt black/African culture as their own. A marriage of the words Ragga and Pakistani. Commonly found in London” (Urban Dictionary). Raggastanis are an important example of cultural hybridisation in British culture.

white jeans and the coloured shirts, he was the joker, the risk-taker, respected lady killer. To the black kids he was fellow weed-smoker and valued customer. To the Asian kids, hero and spokesman. Social chameleon. (Smith, 2001: 269)

As seen, Millat has become the most popular boy among London youth in the 1990s; therefore, the novel indicates that the social and cultural belonging of the new generation is determined through their own popular cultural codes rather than the imperial mindset. However, it does not mean that young people do not experience discrimination, borders, or identity crises. While Irie has a problem with belonging due to her hybridity, Millat feels lonely despite his popularity and struggles with identity problems. Joshua, the white character parallel to Millat and Irie in age, also questions his family's Orientalist way of thinking, sense of superiority, and struggles for his own identity. On the one hand, despite their different backgrounds, their feeling of loss and identity problem is similar to every teenager. On the other hand, the problems they all face are top-down due to history, politics, and cultural norms. Their multicultural environment at school shows the interactive space provided by daily life and indicates a bottom-up transformation process. In other words, racial and cultural differences have become more ordinary aspects of the daily relations of young people. When Joshua and Millat's social status is compared, it becomes clearer that factors such as ethnicity, race, and culture do not define boundaries among young people at the Glenard Oak. Millat is the most popular boy at the school that everyone wants to be friends with, even though he comes from a family of Bangladeshi descent. On the other hand, Joshua is an unrecognised character despite coming from a white middle-class family. Hence, Joshua thinks being friends with Millat will make him more popular at school. As seen, ethnicity or cultures do not define boundaries here, so crossing these boundaries is easy for Millat but difficult for Joshua. For this reason, the most promising place for the future in the novel are the encounters and dialogues at the Glenard Oak. Paul Gilroy says that one of the issues that dominant discourse blames immigrants is the erasure of hope from daily life; however, **White Teeth** expresses that the real hope for society is the settlement of multiculturalism through the hopeful convivial school environment.

3.2.2. The Role of Hybridity in Crossing Borders: Millat, Magid and Irie

Along with Millat and Irie's everyday encounters with people from diverse backgrounds, it is important to examine their conflicts and experiences, as individual representations of culturally and racially hybrid British youth, to understand their role in crossing social and conceptual boundaries in the novel. As mentioned, while Archibald and Samad's storyline covers the sociocultural transformation process from the war to the present and provide an angle to evaluate struggles in this process, their children Millat, Magid and Irie present the complex but irreversible change in contemporary multicultural Britain. Since hybridity is mainly considered a consequence of "cross-cultural exchanges" in postcolonial and multicultural context (Ashcroft et al., 2013: 136), their presence shows the significant role of cross-cultural interactions in crossing racial and cultural boundaries between different communities living in the same social space. In that regard, as Hanif Kureishi prefers to illustrate contemporary Britain through "the new breed" Karim Amir, who was born to a British-Asian family and represents a less borderless British society, Zadie Smith's preference to portray contemporary society through hybrid children has the aim of showing Britain has entered a new sociocultural phase due to cross-cultural interactions in the aftermath of mass immigration:

This has been the century of strangers, brown, yellow and white. This has been the century of great immigration. It is only this late in the day that you can walk into a playground and find Isaac Leung by the fish pond, Danny Rahman in the football cage ... Children with first and last names on a direct collision course. Names that secrete within them mass exodus, cramped boats and planes, cold arrivals, medical checks. (Smith, 2001: 326)

The quote clearly shows the children with hybrid names that can be encountered frequently in daily life constitute a significant part of the British youth. Despite the ongoing rigid racial and cultural prejudices mainly imposed by the power elites on society, the children's hybrid identities indicate that cross-cultural interactions ending up with interracial marriages are able to overcome those prejudices in everyday life. As Gilroy points out, "intermarriages" blur the "lines of demarcation formerly produced by racial or ethnic markers" (2004: 39). It means that the essentialised notions of race and ethnicity have become more changeable and flexible through

hybrid identities in the contemporary world. In addition, the fact that these children play together in cohesion points out that everyday practices can lay the groundwork for convivial multiculturalism. In that regard, it is not unexpected that Smith prefers to portray contemporary Britain through culturally and racially hybrid protagonists, Bangladeshi-origin Millat and Magid Iqbal and British-Jamaican Irie Jones, and their relationships with their parents as much as their white and non-white peers. The novel presents the period from their childhood to adulthood and focuses on Britain's multicultural transformation through the growth process of the children; hence, **White Teeth** can be considered a bildungsroman (Stein, 2004: xiii). As a bildungsroman, it includes the children's conflicts in social life stemming from their parents' history, the issue of belonging due to the ongoing impacts of the imperial past that create boundaries in search of their identity during their adolescence as much as their promising presence that shows the possibility of crossing borders to establish a convivial society. As the quote above points out, the names of the children not only refer to everyday hybridity but also bear traces of immigration experiences. Though the novel chiefly envisages roots that function as boundaries that determine people's social position will be less important in future as a consequence of racial and cultural hybridisations, it does not disregard that "the roots" of the youth coming from a mixed background will "always be tangled" (2001: 80). Alsana Iqbal, the mother of Magid and Millat, states in her conversation with Clara, who is pregnant with Irie, that "one leg [of their children] will be in the present and one in the past" (Smith, 2001: 80). Hence, Millat, Magid, and Irie's hybrid identities reopen the past experiences and demonstrate both borders inherited from the colonial past and border crossings in contemporary Britain.

Since the omniscient narrator can access the thoughts and conveys each character's experiences in the novel, it provides space to portray different experiences of the second-generation immigrants from different perspectives. As this part will examine, all three characters represent different forms of hybridity. As mentioned, Millat and Magid are twins born in England to Alsana and Samad Iqbal, a Bangladeshi immigrant family. Therefore, they mirror a different experience of hybridity than Irie, who is racially mixed. Firstly, their names, like Karim Amir's, highlight their identity,

which is different and new to British society. However, their names also reflect the urge to preserve their cultural aspects among ethnic-minority parents against the influence of the host culture while showing the children's struggles between the English culture they were born and raised in and the culture they inherited from their parents. For example, Magid, who wants to be in "some other family", introduces himself as "Mark Smith" to his friends at school. Samad enrages when he finds out about this situation: "I GIVE YOU A GLORIOUS NAME LIKE MAGID MAHFOOZ MUBTASIM IQBAL!... AND YOU WANT TO BE CALLED MARK SMITH!" (Smith, 2001: 151). The conflict between Samad and Magid reveals the most prominent generation gap that led to invisible boundaries between the parents and children in the diasporic communities. Eventually, when Samad decides to send one of his sons to Bangladesh to raise in Eastern and Islamic culture, he sends Magid to Bangladesh. However, Magid returns as "more English than English" due to his education in Bangladesh. Contrary to the "proper Bangladeshi Muslim" image his father expected, he became a young man dressed and thinking like the British and believed in science rather than religion. Thus, cultural hybridisation as a result of Western influence in former colonial countries is shown through Magid. This situation also deconstructs the nostalgic perception of immigrants who think everything is as they remember in their hometown. While the change created by the Western influence in the former colonies is given through Magid, the effects of the eastern and religious cultures brought by the immigrants on the former imperial metropolis Britain are given through Millat.

Since he grew up in England, Millat represents the cultural hybridity that his generation experienced in the complex and challenging transformation process in Britain. As Magid, his name also gives an idea about his "in-between" identity and the issue of belonging in multicultural Britain: "Millat was neither one thing nor the other, this or that, Muslim or Christian, Englishman or Bengali; he lived for the in between, he lived up to his middle name, Zulfikar, the dashing of two swords" (Smith, 2001: 351). Not only Millat but also his peers coming from South Asian families do not correspond to their families' expectations in terms of their manner of life (2001: 218). Therefore, they feel they do not belong to the host society and feel alienated from their

parents' culture. Nevertheless, despite all conflicts with the major and their own culture, they continue to shape the youth culture in society. Millat, hence, conveys the new youth subcultures and cultural codes that emerged due to the hybridisation of Eastern and Western cultures as well as the changing socio-cultural structure in multicultural Britain. For example, the South Asian youth has formed a youth cultural group called "Raggastani", which is described as "a new breed" and reflects the ongoing changes in British culture:

It was a new breed, just recently joining the ranks of the other street crews: Becks, B-boys, Indic kids, wide-boys, ravers, rude-boys, Acidheads, Sharons, Tracies, Kevs, Nation Brothers, Raggas and Pakis; manifesting itself as a kind of cultural mongrel of the last three categories. Raggastanis spoke a strange mix of Jamaican patois, Bengali, Gujarati and English. Their ethos, their manifesto, if it could be called that, was equally a hybrid thing (Smith, 2001: 231)

Hybridity in their manifesto refers to the variety and plurality of cultural elements in shaping this group. As it is pointed out, young people in this group are influenced by popular cultural elements such as mafia films or Bruce Lee films and important movements of the period such as the Black Power (Smith, 2001: 231). More importantly, they aim to make people of South Asian origin more visible in society. In particular, the immigrant-origin children, who have been bullied especially due to racial and ethnic discrimination in social life, have thus created a "third space" where they can belong. Therefore, as Avtar Brah states, the younger generation, who come from immigrant families and are active in social and cultural spheres, is very influential in shaping the multicultural British culture. These children from South Asian families were born and raised in England and influenced by Jamaican and other diasporic cultures. Hence, their cultural hybridity that has become an ordinary aspect of everyday life is one of the most prominent examples of social and cultural transformation in Britain.

In addition, Millat provides an angle on the issues of belonging and identity that led to the emergence of Islamic subcultures affecting Britain's social structure in the late twentieth century. Although Millat is a teenager who smokes, has English girlfriends, and lives like English youth at the beginning, he joins an extremist Islamic organisation called KEVIN because he wants to belong somewhere. However, in

addition to the need for belonging, the other reason Millat for joining KEVIN is the influence of the popular mafia films on him (Smith, 2001: 444). Since he is respected among members of KEVIN as a leader, being a member of this organisation makes him feel like he is in a gangster movie: “Millat loved clans. He had joined KEVIN because he loved clans (and the outfit and the bow tie), and he loved clans at war” (Smith, 2001: 442). In that regard, on the one hand, Zadie Smith draws attention to the irony in Millat’s motivations and his real-life actions. Millat’s inner conflicts and the need to be in a group lead him to be in an extremist group rather than his faith. On the other hand, it points out the extent of cultural hybridity in the contemporary world. Because while Islamic culture has impacted Britain’s cultural structure, Western culture continues to affect British youth from diasporic communities. Eventually, while Millat becomes a member of an extremist Islamic group in Britain, Magid becomes a non-religious person with English education in Bangladesh. Hence, Smith shows how the consequences of colonialism and imperialism, and immigration have changed each side. Not only geographical but also social, cultural and religious boundaries have shifted and reshaped due to ongoing interactions since imperial times.

Irie Jones, the daughter of English Archibald and Jamaican Clara, represents “the new breed” in the society like Karim Amir. Her name directly implies that she comes from a mixed family. Irie is a Jamaican name that means “hope and peace”; therefore, just at the beginning, the presence of Irie indicates the hope of having a convivial multicultural society. As mentioned before, hybrid identities show the permeability of the borders of both cultures; thus, hybrid individuals can construct an identity separate from the constraints of both cultures (Anzaldua, 1987: 77). However, this freedom can bring with it the problem of ambiguity and belonging. For this reason, Irie, who likens England to “a gigantic mirror” in which she cannot find her own reflection, has conflicts with her family and herself in searching for her identity (Smith, 2001: 266). In that regard, Irie, who belongs and does not belong to each side simultaneously, demonstrates the emergence of new individuals in Britain and the difficulties they experienced in this process.

Therefore, her interaction with the Chalfen family is significant to understanding her conflicts during her journey in the novel. Irie, who was in her

adolescence at the time of her encounter with the Chalfen family, had disputes with her family and was confused about her family's past. Hence, her problem of belonging is foreground in this period. Since Irie admires the Chalfen family for their known family history and ability to communicate with each other, she considers them an ideal family and wants to be a part of it. As the narrator states, she wants "their Englishness" and wants to "merge with them" (Smith, 2001: 328). Hence, the Chalfen family reflects Irie's desire to assimilate into the major society and leave her differences behind. Her relationship with them reinforces her will to be an ordinary English person in Britain without conflicts stemming from the imperial past. Nevertheless, when she goes to her grandmother's house and learns about her ancestors' past in Jamaica, she eventually realises that she does not have to try to be an English because there is another place, Jamaica, where she can discover herself without "fiction, myths, and tangled webs" (Smith, 2001: 402). Hence, it is a moment of illumination for Irie, and it helps her reconcile with herself.

Irie's pregnancy toward the end of the novel proposes the future can be borderless in case the burden of the past is not transmitted through the father's roots to their children. It is not known that whether the father is Millat or Magid, and Irie raises her daughter with Joshua Chalfen, the son of the Chalfens. The narrator states that the uncertainty of the roots of this child makes her feel free from the burden of the past. Hence, the presence of her hybrid daughter helps Irie imagine a less borderless future: "In a vision, Irie has seen a time, a time not far from now, when roots won't matter anymore because they can't because they mustn't because they're too long and they're too tortuous and they're just buried too damn deep. She looks forward to it" (Smith, 2001: 527). In other words, the presence of Irie and her daughter proposes that concepts such as race and ethnicity can be less important in terms of determining people's social position and sense of belonging.

As can be seen, the painful growth processes of these three characters are important in conveying the difficulties experienced by the second-generation immigrants in England despite their influential presence. The families' expectations and the burdens of the past cause difficulties for them in establishing their identities. Alongside them, Joshua Chalfen, who comes from a white family and represents the

white youth, has difficulty establishing an identity separate from his family's mindset. Nevertheless, the hopeful relationship between Irie and Joshua contributes to reimagining a less complex future. In the end, with the baby of uncertain origin, it is implied that the future will be convivial despite all the conflicts and tensions.

3.2.3. Everyday Racism and Melancholia in *White Teeth*

As seen, the cross-cultural visits between the private spaces and the interactions in public spaces are associated with border crossings on a daily level in British society. However, everyday racism still can be seen in the discourse and mindset of English people. In **Everyday Multiculturalism**, Amanda Wise and Selvaraj Velayutham state that everyday racism is a concept that is influenced “by a phenomenological approach with an emphasis on understanding the intersections between macro-discourses and structures and everyday practices” (2009: 7-8). In this respect, everyday racism is an intersection of macro-discourses that produce racism and everyday multicultural practices. According to Wise, everyday racism is not always about “extreme incidents” but about “everyday practices” (Wise and Velayutham, 2009: 8). In other words, racism does not always manifest itself through riots and attacks. On the contrary, it is usually seen in people’s everyday discourses and behaviours. **White Teeth** prefers to portray racism through daily incidents instead of depicting violent racist actions. For example, Archibald's colleagues' thoughts on his marriage to Clara expose everyday racism. Workplaces are one of the social areas that have become prominent in daily multicultural studies. In general, workplaces where different cultures coexist are defined as productive spaces for cross-cultural dialogue and interaction. Apart from the Indian Restaurant where Samad works and other multicultural workplaces⁶² in **White Teeth**, the only workplace depicted is *MorganHero*, the paper company where Archibald works. The company is a white homogeneous space, and it does not have employees of different ethnicities. Furthermore, Archibald is considered a strange man

⁶² In the novel, South Asian characters usually work in places that are a part of daily life, such as Indian restaurants or butchers. Therefore, as people from different cultures encounter, these places provide an interactive rather than discriminatory environment. Compared to these places, *MorganHero* is a more institutional place, so there is no intercultural interactive environment.

in the company because of his relations with people of different races; therefore, his marriage to Clara is not well received by his colleagues:

"Oh, Archie, you are funny," said Maureen sadly, for she had always fancied Archie a bit but never more than a bit because of this strange way he had about him, always talking to Pakistanis and Caribbeans like he didn't even notice and now he'd gone and married one and hadn't even though it worth mentioning what colour she was until the office dinner when she turned up black as anything and Maureen almost choked on her prawn cocktail. (Smith, 2001: 69)

Maureen's thoughts about Archibald convey the everyday racism in his workplace. When Archibald learns that he will be a father, he buys Indian sweet to celebrate. He offers the sweet to his colleagues, but none of them would like to taste the "Pakistani food" (Smith, 2001: 67). Their unpleasant reaction to the Indian sweet and uneasiness about Archibald's hybrid baby reveals cultural prejudices. Following this conversation, Archibald's boss Kelvin Hero⁶³ calls him to his office in order to explain that he is not going to be invited to the company dinner because of Clara. The conversation between them also indicates the impacts of political discourses on everyday encounters. While Hero tries to explain the situation, he emphasises that he is not a racist and not a supporter of Enoch Powell. However, he does not deny that he agrees with Powell's thoughts that the increasing immigration is a problem for the English nation:

"as I say, it's not that I'm a racistist,"

"A racistist..."

"I'd spit on that Enoch Powell... but then again he does have a point, doesn't he? There comes a point, a saturation point, and people begin to feel a bit uncomfortable... You see, all he was saying"

"Who?"

"Powell, Archie, Powell try and keep up- all he was saying is enough is enough after a certain point, isn't it? I mean, it's like Delhi in Euston every Monday morning. And there's some people around here, Arch and I don't include myself here who just feel your attitude is a little strange."

⁶³ The fact that Archibald's boss's surname is Hero reinforces their juxtaposition. As explored in the previous section, the concept of heroism is closely related to the mentality that creates postimperial melancholia. The content of the speech also supports this argument.

“Strange?” (Smith, 2001: 72)

Hero's support of Powell's ideas is a reflection of the melancholy that continues in everyday life. Archibald's unawareness of the subject matter during the speech makes the scene comical and also provides space for the reader to notice the ongoing racism in daily life. Archibald does not comment on the subject; the reader is asked to question existing conceptual boundaries in society. During this conversation, Hero gives Archibald food coupons as a so-called goodwill gesture, and Archibald, who is unable to capture the context of the conversation, dreams of using these coupons with Samad at an Irish restaurant run by an Arab family called the O'Connell. Thus, Archibald shows a convivial existence as an alternative to melancholy, which points to the different experiences of multiculturalism that exist in social dynamics.

While Archibald's workplace represents everyday racism and postimperial melancholia, Archibald and Clara's wedding day also reflects the invisible boundaries between different racial groups in Britain. On the one hand, their marriage highlights that hybridity has become a mundane aspect and contributes to the convivial future of Britain where according to Sara Ahmed, “the acceptance of interracial heterosexual love is a conventional narrative of reconciliation, as if love can overcome past antagonism and create ... hybrid familiarity” (2010: 145). On the other hand, marriage is a border crossing act because it enables exposure of cultural boundaries in society. As the narrator states, only Alsana and Samad Iqbal attend their wedding: “All other relatives and friends had declined the wedding invitation; some tersely, some horrified; others, thinking silence the best option, had spent the past week studiously stepping over the mail and avoiding the phone” (Smith, 2001: 51). The English relatives and friends' response or silence to the marriage of English Archibald and Jamaican Clara is a resonance of ongoing everyday racism. As seen, the novel does not represent the melancholic state of Britain vividly but points out that everyday incidents reveal the inherited boundaries in English society. Clara's mother, Hortense, also disowns Clara when she finds out about her marriage to an English man. Although Hortense later admits that Archibald is a “peacekeeper”, she still thinks that the union of black and white never has good results (Smith, 2001: 384). Although Alsana attends the wedding, she also considers hybrid marriage inappropriate. As seen, the wedding scene

provides a double perspective in order to underscore the inherited boundaries behind the contemporary cross-cultural conflicts. Nevertheless, despite all objections, they get married and have a hybrid daughter Irie, whose name means “hope and peace” in the native Jamaican language (Smith, 2001: 75). In this respect, their marriage is an everyday border crossing that contributes to shaping Britain's multicultural structure bottom-up.

3.2.4. The Second World War and Melancholia: The Encounter with Mr. Hamilton

The encounter in which racism is most palpable in the novel is undoubtedly Millat, Magid and Irie's encounter with Mr. Hamilton. This encounter was briefly touched upon in the chapter on the rewriting of the Second World War. This section will examine this encounter as the intersection of postimperial melancholia and everyday life. This encounter is similar to Karim's encounter with Hairy Back in **The Buddha of Suburbia**. Karim's encounter with Hairy Back shows that anti-immigrant speeches negatively affect cross-cultural relations in Britain. The children's encounter with Mr. Hamilton shows that the imperial discourse and the memories of the Second World War trigger melancholy in the English subjects. Since the children visit Mr. Hamilton for the Harvest Festival's charity work, the first encounter on the threshold reminds of Derrida's argument on hospitality⁶⁴ that puts emphasis on the borders, limits, and thresholds (Derrida and Dufourmentalle, 2000: 49). The threshold functions as a marker that determines the social positions of both sides as host/guest, native/foreigner, self/other in hospitality. As Judith Still states in her study analysing hospitality in Derrida and Levinas, “hospitality is always about crossing thresholds [into home, region, or nation] – perhaps between the private and public” (2010: 7). Although the relationship between host and guest is a complex process, hospitality is defined as a border crossing act because hospitality signs that the host accepts the guest

⁶⁴ In **Of Hospitality**, Derrida states that the concept of hospitality in Latin means both guest and enemy. Therefore, hostility and hospitality are two related terms, like two sides of the same coin. The encounter between Mr. Hamilton and the children includes the complexities and contradictions of hospitality.

into his house or territory, either conditionally or unconditionally. In addition to the border crossing aspect, one of the codes of hospitality is reciprocity:

Hospitality between individuals (governed by the code) is often theorised (and experienced), on the one hand, as a structure of reciprocity and, on the other, as an exchange between peers, although non-reciprocity and inequality are at least as important. (I should note that the pairings are not inevitable.) The linguist Emile Benveniste, in his great work on the vocabulary of Indo- European institutions, claims that reciprocity is inscribed at the very origin of hospitality. (Still, 2010: 15)

According to the gift code, the guest should be grateful to the host and at least reciprocate the host for his hospitality. In other words, hospitality is associated with the power exerted by the master of the house. Therefore, the gift becomes an act of reciprocity that can be a sign of gratitude to justify the presence of the guest at home. Hence, Sarah Ilott points out that to maintain social and power hierarchies between giver and receiver, charity is privileged over the social exchange of gifts. In the context of postimperial Britain, “treating immigrants as guests is a means of reassessing an imperial hierarchy between former colonised and colonisers, between white and non-white” (Ilott, 2018: 222). The children's visit to Mr. Hamilton to give him charity reverses the hierarchical dynamics in the giver and receiver relationship: “they might 'surprise' Mr. J. P. Hamilton with the extent of their charity when he answered the door. Mr. J. P. Hamilton, confronted on his doorstep by three dark-skinned children clutching a myriad of projectiles, was duly surprised” (Smith, 2001: 168). The emphasis on the extent of their charity refers to the reversal of the codes of hospitality. The quote also highlights Mr. Hamilton's perception of children. When he sees them, the first thing he pays attention to is the children's dark skin; therefore, he immediately thinks that they come here to sell or steal something from him. Mr. Hamilton's thoughts reveal his racist thoughts and indicate that he is also a person who considers the Other as an intruder rather than a visitor. The children's perception of Mr. Hamilton is also simultaneously revealed:

As old as they had imagined but far taller and cleaner, he opened the door only slightly, keeping his hand, with its mountain range of blue veins, upon the knob, while his head curled around the frame. To Irie, he was reminiscent of some genteel elderly eagle: tufts of feather-like hair protruded from ear drums, shirt cuffs and the neck, with one white spray falling over his forehead, his fingers lay in a permanent tight spasm like talons, and he was well dressed, as one might

expect of an elderly English bird in Wonderland a suede waistcoat and a tweed jacket, and a watch on a gold chain. (Smith, 2001: 168)

The first aspect the children perceive of Mr. Hamilton is that he is an old man whose voice sounds like belonging to “a different class, a different era”, and Irie likens him to an “elderly eagle” because of his white and feather-like hair. In **The Buddha of Suburbia**, Karim describes Hairy Back through his hairy body that resonances with a beast-like figure. However, Irie's simile of the eagle is not associated with negative thoughts about Mr. Hamilton. In addition to his eagle-like appearance, the “four argent medals over his heart and the silver rim of a Senior Service packet over the breast pocket” draw the children’s attention (Smith, 2001: 168). The medals and silver rim indicate that he served as a soldier in the Second World War. Therefore, when Mr. Hamilton's prejudices about the dark-skinned children and his war background are taken into consideration, his postimperial melancholia becomes more evident to the reader.

The depiction of Mr. Hamilton’s house is also significant to understanding he stands for the imperial past in present Britain:

They followed Mr. Hamilton into the town house gloom of his hall. Filled to the brim with battered and chipped Victoriana punctuated by signs of more recent life children's broken bikes, a discarded Speak-and-Spell, four pairs of muddy wellies in a family's variant sizes. (Smith, 2001: 170)

Unlike Hairy Back, Mr. Hamilton invites the children to his house. The house contains various memorabilia belonging to the Victorian Era and the contemporary period as well. While the old and new objects in the house show that the past and the present are intertwined, the house's gloominess creates an uncanny atmosphere. Although the children have crossed the border and been invited into the home, the furnishings and gloom at the entrance imply that the children are seen as uninvited guests here. Moreover, broken bikes belonging to other children show that Mr. Hamilton is not very friendly with children. Thus, it is foreshadowed that the children will be confronted with a hostile rather than hospitable attitude from the moment they enter the house. Contrary to the gloomy and claustrophobic atmosphere of the hall, the living room is depicted as a spacious area with large windows. However, the emphasis on the antiquity of the items in the room points to Mr. Hamilton's mindset. Mr. Hamilton

and his house are full of contrasts because of their ties to the past. For example, Mr. Hamilton “cheerfully” offers the children tea⁶⁵, talks about the importance of teeth cleaning, and then suddenly begins to mention the black youth from Congo who was killed during the Second World War:

But like all things, the business has two sides. Clean white teeth are not always wise, now are they? Par exemplum: when I was in the Congo, the only way I could identify the nigger was by the whiteness of his teeth, if you see what I mean. Horrid business. Dark as buggery, it was. And they died because of it, you see? Poor bastards. Or rather I survived, to look at it in another way, do you see?"

The children sat silently. And then Irie began to cry, ever so quietly.

Mr. Hamilton continued, Those are the split decisions you make in war. See a flash of white and bang! as it were... Dark as buggery. Terrible times. All these beautiful boys lying dead there, right in front of me, right at my feet. Stomachs open, you know, with their guts on my shoes. Like the end of the bloody world. Beautiful men, enlisted by the Krauts⁶⁶, black as the ace of spades; poor fools didn't even know why they were there, what people they were fighting for, who they were shooting at. The decision of the gun. So quick, children. So brutal. Biscuit?" (Smith, 2001: 172)

As seen, Mr. Hamilton and his house are described through contradictions that point out connections between past and present. In other words, Mr. Hamilton has become an echo of the imperial past in present Britain. As mentioned previously, Mr. Hamilton describes the war violently, which raises a feeling of horror in the children. While his vocabulary shows his mindset inherited from the imperial period, it is also a sign that he takes no notice of the “dark-skinned” children's background or feelings. He also mentions that black soldiers were brought into the war by the Germans and that he felt sorry for the black soldiers because they did not know why they were fighting in the war. However, Mr. Hamilton denies the presence of the colonial soldiers when Millat says that his father also participated in the war on the side of the British Empire. In this respect, the pride in England's victory over the Germans in the Second World War and the denial of colonial realities occurs simultaneously in Mr. Hamilton's conversation with the children. Gilroy points out that Britain's amnesia about the

⁶⁵ According to Sara Ahmed, tea is “a signifier of Englishness tied closely to political economies of empire” (2010: 147). Therefore, tea is another indicator of Mr. Hamilton's ties with the imperial mindset.

⁶⁶ Kraut is a derogatory word for a German, especially for a German soldier during the First World War and the Second World War (Collins Dictionary).

colonial past is reinforced through their victory against the Nazis in the Second World War (2004: 97). According to him, Britain has attached to the victory in order not to confront the colonial past, and it prevents them from overcoming its melancholic state. Therefore, Mr. Hamilton embodies postimperial melancholia in the novel.

As seen, similar to Karim and Hairy Back's encounter in **The Buddha of Suburbia**, this encounter reinforces conceptual barriers and the obstacles in the way of establishing a cross-cultural dialogue in everyday life. However, in Karim and Hairy Back's encounter, Hairy Back is represented as a middle-aged and strong man, while Mr. Hamilton's old age and frailty become prominent in his physical description. Therefore, Hairy Back indicates that racism and cultural prejudices in society are still powerful. On the other hand, Smith portrays racism and prejudices through an old man and emphasises that his voice comes from a different era. Therefore, Mr. Hamilton functions more like an echo of the imperial past rather than a loud voice in contemporary Britain. Thus, despite the gloomy nature of the encounter, it also foreshadows that the borders of the past can transform into the present.

3.3. White Teeth: Postimperial Melancholia or Conviviality

The last part of the novel is important in terms of conveying the burden and conflicts of the past and future in the present. The repetitive phrase “past tense future perfect” (Smith, 2001: 98) in the novel is one of the patterns that best reflects the novel's underlying message. While the past is tense and the pages of history full of wars and discrimination almost invade today's relations, the possibility of the future being perfect depends on how society confronts the problems inherited from the past and whether it can overcome the past in the present. The final part of the novel is important to convey ongoing disputes and interactions. In this part, everyone meets in an exhibition hall called the “neutral place” for Marcus Chalfen's press release about FutureMouse he was working on genetic coding:

And all these people are heading for the same room. The final space. A big room, one of many in the Perret Institute; a room separate from the exhibition yet called an Exhibition Room; a corporate place, a clean slate; white/chrome/pure/plain (this was the design brief) used for the meetings of people who want to meet somewhere neutral at the end of the twentieth century; a virtual place where their business (be that rebranding lingerie or rebranding lingerie) can be done in an

emptiness, an uncontaminated cavity; the logical endpoint of a thousand years of spaces too crowded and bloody. This one is pared down, sterilised, made new every day by a Nigerian cleaning lady with an industrial Hoover and guarded through the night by Mr. De Winter, a Polish night watchman ... (Smith, 2001: 517)

Significantly, the novel ends in a neutral space far from history and current problems, located in the centre of London and guarded by a Polish man, and cleaned daily by a Nigerian woman. Since this place does not belong to any culture or community, everyone can come together without thinking about borders. However, it is also ironic that each group gathers in such a place because everyone who comes brings their thoughts, beliefs, prejudices and histories. Smith wants to draw attention to the fact that it is not possible to leave the past behind and that if there is no dialogue between cultures, history will repeat itself. In the middle of the meeting, Millat, as a member of a radical religious group, fires the gun to shoot the Doctor, Marcus Chalfen's master, and Archibald saves the Doctor's life for the second time. As mentioned earlier, the Doctor is the Dr. Sick in the war that Samad wanted Archibald to kill. However, Archibald can't kill him, partly because of his indecision and partly because he is not a person who can kill a man: "So Archie is there, there in the trajectory of the bullet, about to do something unusual, even for TV: save the same man twice and with no more reason or rhyme than the first time" (Smith, 2001: 540). The pattern of repetition shows the connections between Millat's shooting at the Doctor, Samad's desire to kill the Doctor in the war, and Pande's firing of the first bullet that started the rebellion in colonised India. In other words, it helps reveal that the boundaries of the past that remain in the present still shape social relations. Throughout the novel, what Archibald does by his own decision is to save the Doctor's life, which can be considered a heroic act. However, the Doctor, an extension of the Nazi mindset, represents human cruelty. By experimenting on mice, he aims to change the genetics of humans to achieve a human-without-disease vision. Therefore, his actions also show that the past still impacts the present and that the thought of the superior man persists in different forms. On the one hand, this scene is important in terms of emphasising the repetition of history. On the other hand, Archibald saves the Doctor's life and causes the FutureMouse, which is at the centre of the conflicts among the people in the place, to escape. Archibald provides a symbolic alternative to the issues by acting in a non-

violent way and standing against violence as the most neutral person in intercultural conflicts. Since the “transgenic” hybrid mouse, which has different genes from other species as well as its own, becomes a metaphor for multiculturalism that is seen as a social experiment⁶⁷, Archibald's involvement in its rescue reinforces Archibald's role as a mediator. Furthermore, its escape due to the turmoil is a sign that the multicultural future of Britain in such a complex environment is uncertain. As Paul Gilroy asserts, the future of multicultural Britain depends on how it has been treated in the complex environment in the late-twentieth-century. In this context, the glass box the mouse is in can be interpreted as a symbol of the invisible borders in which the multicultural future is trapped due to societal conflicts. Therefore, it is significant that the box is accidentally broken by a character who represents neutrality, like Archibald. Archibald supports freeing the mouse by encouraging him to escape rather than trying to re-imprison him. Hence, the fact that the mouse is free and escaped from the small cell that confined it within the boundaries is a border crossing aspect because it implies that multicultural life is possible beyond these borders, concepts, and thought structures inherited from history.

At the end of the novel, Irie's baby is another border-crossing aspect, as is Jamila's baby in **The Buddha of Suburbia**. Since roots are boundaries that determine a person's past, identity, belonging, and future, the uncertain roots of Irie's daughter provide her with an unrestrained space to assess her future; therefore, her presence holds promise for a convivial multicultural Britain. Furthermore, since she is related to each community represented in the novel, her presence suggests that the future will be less borderless if everyone participates in maintaining Britain's multiculturalism through everyday interactions.

⁶⁷ In her essay, Zadie Smith states that multiculturalism is considered an experiment and she is seen as the advocator of the multicultural experiment. Therefore, it is significant she chose to delineate multiculturalism through a genetically modified experimental mouse.

CONCLUSION

As explored throughout this study, the multicultural transformation has not only changed social life but has also profoundly impacted contemporary English literature. The new voices from different cultural and racial backgrounds have started a new phase in English literature to give voice to varying experiences in terms of colonialism and multiculturalism. Therefore, when contemporary English literature produced since the second half of the twentieth century is considered, it is seen that many prominent British writers come from immigrant-origins families. Especially when it comes to the late twentieth century, writers from culturally and racially hybrid families who grew up in contemporary Britain represent both borders and border crossing processes in multicultural Britain from different experiences and perspectives. According to Shameem Black, global borders have rapidly changed due to migration, globalisation, and technological development in the late twentieth century, and boundaries have become contact zones rather than divisions. Inevitably, the multicultural novels written in the late twentieth century reflect borders and border-crossings simultaneously. This study, therefore, has explored two late twentieth-century English multicultural novels, **The Buddha of Suburbia** and **White Teeth**. These novels, written by authors from mixed families and able to observe multicultural Britain from both an inside and outside perspective, are similar in that they convey the multicultural British society. Each novel presents the incidents causing conflicts or dialogue in society from the points of view of characters from different racial and cultural backgrounds. Thus, they can provide each side with a multidimensional angle to see the other side of the borders in society. In addition, a humorous narrative method is used in both novels to be able to approach society with a critical distance and proximity. Moreover, **The Buddha of Suburbia** and **White Teeth** rewrite the turning points in British history, such as the colonial and imperial period and the Second World War, in different ways to demonstrate history is changeable according to which angle you consider it. In **The Buddha of Suburbia**, Karim's encounters or the experiences he conveyed provide a space to reopen the colonial encounters to evaluate their impact in present Britain. For example, while he conveys the colonial experiences through his father Haroon and uncle Anwar's memories, he demonstrates the destructiveness of

the Second World War by referencing his mother's experiences who witnessed the war on the home front. All these characters foreground that neither colonialism nor imperialism is a heroic experience as represented by Western grand narratives. Using a non-linear narrative technique, **White Teeth** rewrites colonial history through Jamaican Hortense's encounter with English Captain Durham and Sir Glenard to present the colonial Other's unhappy experiences about the colonial mission, which is represented as a philanthropic movement by Western philosophers and historians. It also goes back to the Second World War as a non-white homogenous site and shows colonial soldiers' efforts on the British Empire's side. Since this war tends to be depicted through English soldiers' heroic stories, it is delineated as an unheroic story in **White Teeth**. It is also examined that the various narrative techniques such as the hybrid narrator, humorous narrative technique and the non-linear narrator function as border-crossing narrative aspects. Since colonialism, imperialism and the heroic narratives of the Second World War are deeply connected to postimperial melancholia that produces invisible borders, these novels aim to make the readers confront their past that causes social boundaries between communities. Hence, these novels addressing both the English and diaspora readers have become a third space in which people have moved beyond their conceptual borders produced by politics and history and are able to empathise with the other.

In addition to using border-crossing narrative techniques, this study focuses on the representation of borders and border crossings in British society in light of postimperial melancholia and conviviality. The representation of diversity and plurality in society in these novels set in London indicates that Britain has entered a new social and cultural phase. Unlike many previous novels that focus on the boundaries immigrants face in the host society, these novels present multiculturalism as an ordinary and everyday feature of Britain despite the ongoing conflicts. The hybrid identity of Karim Amir, the protagonist of **The Buddha of Suburbia**, shows that daily intercultural relations cross borders inherited from the past and that new subjects have emerged in society. Hybrid identities indicate that ethnic and cultural boundaries are not fixed and that society is open to change. In **White Teeth**, it is important to understand the cultural hybridity of Magid and Millat, from a South Asian

family, as well as Irie, who comes from a British-Jamaican family. While Magid's cultural identity, who grew up in Bangladesh, was shaped by British customs, education and culture, Millat grew up in Britain yet remained under the influence of South Asian and Islamic culture. Thus, since the colonial period, the cultural and social structures of both the coloniser and the colonised societies have changed. In this way, **White Teeth** proclaims that colonialism causes a bilateral change because colonialism always results in immigration.

As many late-twentieth-century multicultural novels written under the influence of "millennial optimism" and imagining a borderless world, **The Buddha of Suburbia** and **White Teeth** reflect the hopeful expectations about Britain's multicultural future. Therefore, many critics tend to define these novels as a celebratory representation of multiculturalism. Nevertheless, Kureishi and Smith are aware of the importance of acknowledging and confronting the conflicts, anxiety, and tension that cause postimperial melancholia in British society to establish a convivial Britain. Therefore, although these novels are written in the last decade of the twentieth century, both adopt a retrospective approach.

The Buddha of Suburbia recounts the complex and tough process of multicultural transformation in the 1970s through Karim's relations with British and diaspora characters. Postimperial melancholia holds immigrants responsible for economic and social problems in the country. The novel highlights the link between the impacts of anti-immigrant politicians in the 1970s and the hostile attitudes of the working and lower class towards immigrants. Karim's encounter with the working-class Hairy Back is important in understanding the representation of postimperial melancholia in the novel. Karim portrays Hairy Back as a working-class white, physically strong, angry, and racist character. His hostility towards Karim is heightened when he finds out that Karim and his daughter are friends. Hairy Back's opposition to his daughter's relationship with Karim is closely related to the desire to preserve racial and cultural homogeneity in the English nation since the imperial period. In his eyes, Karim is a threat that seeks to disrupt England's racial and social structure and exploits Britain's economic opportunities. The fact that Hairy Back is a

supporter of Enoch Powell, an anti-immigrant politician, also shows his political stance. Therefore, the encounter between Hairy Back and Karim ends without crossing conceptual and invisible borders and without turning into a dialogue. Karim's encounter with Shadwell, a director in London, a diverse location, also shows that imperial epistemology still produces conceptual boundaries. Although Shadwell is an upper-class intellectual, he is still tied to the ethnic and cultural boundaries of the imperial era. Therefore, Shadwell also indicates the continuity of postimperial melancholia.

White Teeth not only offers a greater variety of characters but also presents events in a broader time span. On the one hand, it shows the historical connections and reasons between postcolonial immigrants and Britain through the stories from the Second World War and the colonial period. On the other hand, it conveys multiculturalism between 1975 and 2000 through the experiences of different generations. The character that most clearly represents postimperial melancholia is Mr. Hamilton. Mr. Hamilton is portrayed as an old white man. When he first sees Irie, Millat and Magid, the "dark-skinned" children, on his doorstep, he thinks they are thieves who have come to rob him. Thus, Mr. Hamilton's racial and cultural prejudices are displayed from his first encounter with children. Moreover, Mr. Hamilton describes the Second World War as a white-homogeneous site and denies colonial soldiers' presence in the war. For this reason, his presence shows the continuity of the imperial mentality and the ongoing importance of the Second World War in recent British history. The children's encounters with the Chalfens are similar to Karim's encounters with Shadwell. The Chalfen family represents the traditional English family and considers themselves superior to everyone else. Their approaches to Magid, Irie, and Millat also show traces of the colonial period. Alongside the Chalfens, Archibald's relations and conversations with his colleagues draw attention to the relationship between everyday racism and political discourse that continue to produce invisible borders.

Although postimperial melancholia is felt in the backgrounds of both novels, many aspects show that everyday multicultural relationships can cross borders.

Despite negative encounters, Karim's friendships in the suburbs and London show that social boundaries can be crossed. Popular music, popular movies, and everyday activities such as smoking, frequently seen in the British youth culture of this period, form the common lifestyles of young people from all backgrounds, regardless of whether they are English or diaspora. The role of the youth culture makes racial differences less important compared to the earlier generations. In **The Buddha of Suburbia**, Karim's mundane interactions and experiences with white Charlie or Indian Jamila bear similar traces of youth culture. Likewise, Millat in **White Teeth** is not otherised due to his Bangladeshi background but is the most popular person among the white, South Asian, and Jamaican youth in the novel. In this respect, the British youth is able to cross the boundaries of the past, culture and race and contributes to imagining convivial multiculturalism for Britain.

In conclusion, **The Buddha of Suburbia** and **White Teeth** present borders and border crossings in multicultural Britain from different perspectives. On the one hand, they provide a broad perspective for postimperial melancholia that produce boundaries with the impact of an imperial mindset. On the other hand, they suggest that these borders can be crossed through everyday interactions, cross-cultural dialogue and popular culture, providing third spaces for encounters. Both novels highlight the possibility of a happy, convivial and borderless multicultural Britain if the source of social boundaries is grasped and transcended through everyday intercultural dialogue and interaction.

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