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# Representations of Family Relationships and Generational Conflicts in the Works of British Writers in Diaspora

Faten Adi & Mahmoud Al-Shetawi, *Arab Soecity of English Language Studies*



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**Representations of Family Relationships and Generational Conflicts in the Works of British Writers in Diaspora****Faten Adi**Department of English  
School of Foreign Languages, The University of Jordan  
Amman, Jordan**Mahmoud Al-Shetawi**Department of English,  
School of Foreign Languages, The University of Jordan  
Amman, Jordan**Abstract:**

This paper aims to discuss representations of family relationships and generational conflicts in the works of British writers in diaspora in the context of British multiculturalism. This study argues that in the context of multiculturalism, generational conflicts ensue between first-generation immigrants and their British-born children for various reasons. While the parents attempt to retain their roots and to belong to their homelands, second-generation children struggle to maintain a balance between submergence into mainstream culture and negotiating flexible identities. The paper also points out that paternal conflicts are the result of the clash of ideologies, emotional alienation, and lack of communication. These concerns will be examined in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000).

**Keywords:** Family, first-generation immigrants, generational conflicts, Hanif Kureishi, multiculturalism, second-generation children, Zadie Smith.

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## 1. Introduction

Cultural and ethnic diversity became a defining characteristic of post-war Britain. The catchphrases of Louise Bennett's "Colonization in Reverse" and Salman Rushdie's "The New Empire Within" describe how Britain transformed from an imperial metropolis to a melting pot after the arrival of influxes of immigrants from its former colonies. Hall (2000) maintains that multiculturalism describes heterogeneous societies in terms of the coexistence of diverse cultures, religions, and races where people are not separated by any barriers or divisions. This phenomenon had subverted notions of national, unified, pure, and homogeneous societies and it permitted the emergence of the idea of cultural diversity and heterogeneity (pp. 3-4). Hall (2000) further suggests that multiculturalism is about the "multicultural question" which underlines twofold assumptions "the double demand for greater equality and social justice and for the recognition of difference and cultural diversity" (p. 10). Cultural identities, therefore, are not essential and complete, but rather they are dialogically negotiated in the presence of the other. In order to cohabit and to survive in a foreign society, people who are racially, culturally, and linguistically different have to adapt and "to negotiate new space, either by struggle or by resistance or by creating work to produce new creative positions" (Hall, 2009, pp. 44-45) and this is the case with the diasporic subjects. As a multicultural country, therefore, Britain after post-war decolonization and Black immigration faced a substantial challenge in achieving equality, justice, and recognition for minorities within a plural society.

Post-war immigration generated political debates and public discourses about the supposed problems caused by Black immigration and its impact on the "racial character of the British people" (Brah, 1996, p. 225; Solomos, 1993, p. 59). Black immigration was regarded "a threat to the rule of law in the inner cities and endangered the "English way of life" (Solomos, 1993, p. 60). For both Labor and Conservative governments, immigration controls became a necessary action to reduce the entry of large numbers of immigrants into the country. Despite the various legislative acts that have been implemented to control immigration, anti-discrimination legislation and liberal policies have also been introduced to improve race relations and to promote greater equality of opportunities for Black British citizens. The British government encouraged assimilation and integration as key measures that would help the social adjustment of immigrants in the mainstream institutions of society. Education, for example, is the major sector in which multiculturalism turned into a state policy (Brah, 1996, p. 227). In practice, as these social and multicultural policies achieved little results, immigrants have experienced institutionalized racism and social inequalities.

Being a major phenomenon of the century, multiculturalism also led to the emergence of a new type of literature concerned with migrant life and its hardships in the metropolis. Stein (2004) asserts that, "Black British Literature . . . not only deals with the situation of those who came from former colonies and their descendants, but also with the society which they discovered and continue to shape-and with those societies left behind" (p. xii). Black British Literature then is not just concerned with the immigrants' relationship with their homeland, but also describes their social circumstances, their cultural identities, and their experiences of disillusionment in the host country. The settlement of immigrants in the mother country is not an easy-going process. Their

expectations of finding jobs and establishing a secured life were fell into feelings of frustration, alienation, social exclusion, and racial discrimination. Dawson (2007) argue that “the passage to Britain was not simply another arduous trek in search of a decent wage, with all the pain of ruptured family relations and cultural alienation that such a history implies” (p. 4). Immigrants face problems not just on socio-economic, political, and cultural levels, but also on the level of family relationships where frictions and generational conflicts are most common. Relatedly, the selected novels echo these concerns as they narrate experiences of different families over generations.

This study investigates representations of family relationships and generational conflicts in two novels of British diaspora: Hanif Kureishi’s *The Buddha of Suburbia* and Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* from the prism of multiculturalism through comparing and contrasting the experiences and the beliefs of first-generation immigrants and their children. Both novels capture the spirit of multiculturalism, youth culture, and family relationships in the postcolonial community. Simultaneously, they show how immigrants struggle with stereotypes and racial prejudices in the British society; how they try to resist these attitudes; and how the issue of belonging to two cultures and identities generates clashes and disjointed ties between first-generation immigrants and their British-born children. Through a close reading of both texts, this study will show different images of paternal relationships and how both authors write about the experiences of diasporic families in order to address broader issues such as home, identity, and the clash between East and West.

## 2. Literary Context: Migrant Life and Novels of Diaspora

Perfect’s *Contemporary Fictions of Multiculturalism: Diversity and the Millennial London Novel* is a notable book about multiculturalism in London. The book covers a number of contemporary novels which portray London’s ethnic and cultural diversity by post-war migration. His choice of these novels is not because they are written by ethnic writers, but he focuses on the texts themselves as “literary representations of ethnic and cultural diversity” (Perfect, 2014, p.9) where the city becomes a backdrop against which cultural histories interact and multicultural identities are negotiated. There is a large body of fiction which illustrates the immigrants’ experiences and their struggles of relocation in post-war multicultural London such as: George Lamming’s *The Emigrants* (1954), Sam Selvon *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), Caryl Phillips’s *The Final Passage* (1985), Joan Riley’s *The Unbelonging* (1985), and Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* (2003). In addition to issues of displacement and relocation, immigrants face problems within the family concerning the upbringing of their children and which culture they should belong to and identify with. More important, generational conflicts pose a major problem to both parents and their children as they are caught between the demands of home and the mainstream of the host culture. Whereas fathers want to preserve their cultural identities and roots, the younger generation, very often born and bred in Britain, tends to integrate into the dominant culture. Emmambokus (2011) uses the term “Overlapping Space” to describe how second-generation children negotiate cultural identities whereby “[t]he individual is able to negotiate and renegotiate the cultural elements they want to use to create their cultural identity” (p. 84) and this is the case with the characters discussed in this paper.

Multicultural Britain and youth culture produced a generation of young children who are estranged from both society and their families. Characters like Karim, Jamila, Charlie, Millat, Magid, Irie Jones, and Joshua Chalfen show the confusion, the restlessness, the isolation, and the ambition of the young generation in contemporary Britain. These characters are also torn between the desire to free themselves from fixed positions and the desire to experience multiple possibilities in life. But born in a foreign environment not the one their parents left behind led to cultural, generational, and communication gaps between the parents and their descendants. Through the depiction of generational conflicts in different immigrant families, Kureishi and Smith show that life in post-war London impacts the socialization of first-generation immigrants in terms of adaptation and maintaining strong ties with their children. Characters like Haroon Amir, Anwar, and Samad Iqbal feel culturally displaced and disillusioned with British culture and lifestyle. Some parents seek reconciliation with their native homes through instilling in their children feelings of attachment to roots and familial history.

### **3. *The Buddha of Suburbia*: Disillusioned Parents vs. Rebellious and Self-Defined Children**

The British-born Pakistani author Hanif Kureishi (1954- ) writes about diverse experiences of British Asians living in Britain whose lives are informed by the junction of race, sexual orientation, class, and gender. Kureishi questions the inseparable relationship between British and Asian cultures; thus he contests the idea of racially pure and fixed identities. His works also examine a plethora of social, political, and cultural issues which revise and deconstruct “dominant representations of black subjectivity in the 1980s and 1990s . . . [and in] the late 1990s, [he] displayed a preoccupation with youth subcultures” (Procter & Sharma, 2002, p. 239). Kureishi here debunks essentialist stereotypes about the immigrants and his interest in youth culture reveals its importance as a form of protest against authorial institutions. Consequently, it contributes shaping the character and the behavior of the young youth.

In her reading of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Fischer (2014) suggests that:

*The Buddha of Suburbia* focuses on the 1970s during a heady time of experimentation with drugs, sexuality, Eastern philosophy, progressive struggles and counter-cultural youth movements, and when moving from the suburbs into London seemed to give access to all that one could possibly desire. (p. 281)

Set against this multifaceted socio-cultural background, the novel contains several references to 1970s Britain in which the multicultural background impacts both the behavior of the youth and family ties which become less close and stable. The narrator says, “[a]ll over the Western world there were liberation movements and alternative life-styles . . . We lived in rebellious and unconventional times” (Kureishi, 1990, pp. 71-82). Youth culture, therefore, produces rebellious, angry, and confused generation which challenges centers of power and transgresses conventions and social codes.

King (2005) sees Karim:

not a product of cultural conflict like his father . . . Karim, at seventeen, is a product of the cultural revolution of the 1960 of pop music, instant fame, sexual freedom, drugs, multiracialism, multiculturalism. *The Buddha of Suburbia* is not primarily about identity, but about desire and liberation and their costs, especially the wounding effect of change on family and those with whom one has emotional ties. (p. 89)

Though Karim is worried about finding a place in the British society, it cannot be ignored that his restlessness and anxiety are nurtured partly by his unsettled position at home and his troubled relationship with his father. In his journey of creating and situating oneself in Britain, Karim receives monitoring not from his father, but from other characters. Stein (2004) foregrounds that Kureishi's novel falls under the umbrella of Black British novels of transformation. This type of novels traces the character's development under the impact of overlapping factors so as to highlight the transformation of both the individual and the society around him (p. 22).

At the opening pages of the novel, Karim introduces himself and where he belongs. He says:

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 . . . having emerged from two old histories. But I don't care-Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London suburbs. (Kureishi, 1990, p. 3)

Karim is not definite about his identity; he is ambivalent and resists an exact definition. This state of in-betweenness or "the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 3) makes Karim feel frustrated and bored. He further explains that his restlessness and agitation are the outcomes of the frivolous and the dull life in the suburbs. Head (2002) identifies the suburbs with the "urban margins . . . narrow attitudes . . . suburban life is deadening, unimaginative, representative of a low or restricted common denominator" (pp. 213-218). Head's definition matches with Karim's descriptions which associate the suburbs with paralysis, deadly routine, and materialistic mentality while he looks for more dynamic and adventurous life. In an interview with MacCabe (2003), Kureishi compares between life in London and the suburbs in terms of stasis and change. For Kureishi, London represents "a kind of inferno of pleasure and madness . . . It's continuously being renewed . . . there's a sense of possibility in London" (pp. 40-49). In contrast, the suburbs stand for sameness and immobility.

Kureishi juxtaposes the suburbs and the city to highlight the different impacts these geographical spaces have on the formation of the protagonist's identity. Karim's movement from the suburbs to the city and his various bisexual relationships show the flexibility of his identity because "the space of the in-between [is] one of immense creativity and possibility" (Schaff, 2009, p. 282). From the beginning, Karim intends to "go somewhere" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 3) in order to "live always this intensely: mysticism, alcohol, sexual promise, clever people and drugs" (Kureishi, 1990, p.15). Whereas some scholars interpret Karim's story as an escape from suburbia "the margin" to the city "the centre" (Bentley, 2008; Head, 2002; Upstone, 2010), Karim loathes the suburbs not only because of their deplorable socio-economic conditions and their monotonous

atmosphere, but also wants to flee from family problems and to set himself apart from his father. Moore-Gilbert (2001) attests that the family in Kureishi's fiction is "represented as a highly dysfunctional institution. . . British-Asian (or mixed-race) family is not represented in any better light than its British equivalent" (p. 22). Karim lives with his parents in a family atmosphere marked by disputes and lack of communication between his father and his mother. Thus, when Karim fails in his exams and his father berates him, he puts all the blame on his father and on family problems.

The differences between first and second-generation are illustrated in the oppositions to one another, confrontations, and even rejection. Haroon Amir "the future guru of Chislehurst" (Kureishi, 1990, p.25) came to Britain in the 1950s and works as a civil servant. His life in India and Britain are totally opposed. Whereas in India he belongs to well-to-do family and life is easy going, in South London life is complicated. Racial prejudice and social exclusion make Haroon feel discriminated, a second-class citizen, and above all fails to maintain a good relationship with his wife and his children. Similarly, Anwar's idealized image of Britain is shattered after moving there and becomes doubly marginalized by class and race. Anwar marries Princess Jeeta and they run a grocery shop. For Haroon, unable to become an Englishman himself, he turns to his Indian origins studying Oriental philosophy, mysticism, and practicing yoga. With the help of Eva, they organize gatherings for suburbanites to teach them mysticism and spirituality. From a postcolonial perspective, Bentley (2008) maintains that Haroon's role as Buddha represents him as a colonizer. He reverses colonial roles and carries out his revenge on colonialism using his exoticism and the image of the guru in order to exploit the suburbanites (p.165). Still, Haroon performs the Buddha personality not just to make money, but also to rediscover his Indian identity, to replace the materialism of the West with spirituality, and to become popular and respected.

Karim explains his father's transformation into "a renegade Muslim masquerading as a Buddhist" (Kureishi, 1990, p.16) and his uncle Anwar "behaving like a Muslim" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 64) in terms of becoming less attracted to Britain. He states:

Perhaps it was the immigrant condition living itself out through them. For years they were both happy to live like Englishmen . . . Now, as they aged and seemed settled here, Anwar and Dad appeared to be returning internally to India, or at least to be resisting the English here. (Kureishi, 1990, p. 64)

Although Haroon and Anwar do not consider a physical return to their native homelands, they construct mental and imaginary homes. In other words, diasporic subjects who are physically alienated from their native homes can build "a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination" (Brah, 1996, p.188) or "create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands" (Rushdie, 1992, p. 10). Unlike their fathers who fail to be English and to place themselves in the society because of racial stereotypes and limited social opportunities, Karim and Jamila have developed a liberal lifestyle and tried to adjust to the dominant culture (feelings of outsider/insider were fairly common) in ways contrary to their fathers' lives.

Jamila and Karim epitomize second-generation children whose identities and life-choices are in opposition to their parents. Jamila is described as an independent and an empowered woman wherein Karim is strongly fascinated by her character. She “was so powerful . . . so in control and certain about what to do about everything” (Kureishi, 1990, p.55). Unlike Karim who is confused and lost, Jamila maintains a rebellious personality, unshaken identity, and she knows who she. As a second-generation, she adapts to mainstream culture; at the same time she does not repudiate her ethnic roots and fights for the rights of blacks and ethnic minorities. Influenced by figures like Angela Davis and Simone de Beauvoir, Jamila becomes a feminist and a political activist. But, a critical moment in Jamila’s life happens when Anwar decides that his daughter should get married. In reconsidering his Indian roots, Anwar uses Gandhi’s hunger-strike strategy as a means to make his daughter accept his decision and obey him. In doing so, he enacts his patriarchal authority as the head of a conservative Indian family. Although Jamila gets married to the man chosen by her father, she continues behaving in rebellious manners that clash with the beliefs and the traditions of her Indian Muslim family. The arranged marriage does not impede her from pursuing her ambitions, but her character develops to the extremes. Likewise, Karim follows a hedonistic lifestyle and never regards his father as a model to emulate.

The change in Haroon’s personality neither makes Karim a strong admirer of him as a Buddha nor as a paternal mentor. Although characters like Helen, Charlie, and other suburbanites admire his meditations and even acclaim him to be “wise” (Kureishi, 1990, p. 14), “magician” (Kureishi, 1990, p.31), and “spiritual” (Kureishi, 1990, p. 35), this is not the case with his wife and his sons. Karim criticizes his Indian physical appearance, his Buddhist-like manners, and the efficacy of his profession. He sees him “exotic” (Kureishi, 1990, p. 31), “another suburban eccentric” (Kureishi, 1990, p. 22), and even sarcastically calls him “God” (Kureishi, 1990, p. 21) for assuming the role of a spiritual leader. When accompanying him in one of his meditation sessions, Karim describes how naïve is his father for not knowing street directions although two decades had passed since he arrived in Britain. He describes his father’s attitude and how he gets ashamed of him as follows:

Dad had been in Britain since 1950-over twenty years-and for fifteen of those years he’d lived in the South of London suburbs. Yet still he stumbled around the place like an Indian just off the boat. . . I sweated with embarrassment when he halted strangers in the street to ask directions to places. . . so lost and boyish did he look at times.(Kureishi, 1990 p. 7)

For Karim, his father is a first-generation immigrant, but his manners show as if he is a newly comer and unable to adapt to the British society. When Eva introduces him to his yoga guests “he will show us the way. The Path” (Kureishi, 1990, p.13), Karim also makes fun of him and wonders how come his father will lead people to the right way while he does not know how to get home himself. Ironically, the title the Buddha of suburbia ascribed to Haroon is his social persona that other people are fascinated with while at home he lacks this prestige and is seen lazy and irresponsible.

Haroon’s preoccupation with the study of Eastern philosophy and his alienation from his family are illustrated in a number of situations. For instance, Karim confesses that he loves his Uncle Ted



and not his father “because he knew about the things other boys’ fathers knew about, and Dad, to my frustration, didn’t: fishing and air rifles, airplanes, and how to eat winkles” (Kureishi, 1990, p. 33). For Karim, his father lacks some of the qualities of fatherhood and fails to be up to his responsibilities such as taking care of his family and keeping it united. Second, when Changez asks Karim whether his father watches his behavior and his manners because he looks ““very daring and non-conformist”” (Kureishi, 1990, p.97), he tells him bitterly “My father’s too busy with the woman he ran off with . . . to think about me too much” (Kureishi, 1990, p.97). The appearance of Eva in the life of Haroon is the catalyst which fuels Karim’s hostility toward his father and makes him disclose why he sees him in a bad image. But Karim seems in need of parental care and guidance.

Although Karim blames Eva for causing the falling apart of his family, she plays a crucial role in introducing him to theatre producers. She “was unfolding the world for me. It was through her that I became interested in life” (Kureishi, 1990, p. 87), Karim confesses. His dream of going to the city “where life was bottomless in its temptations” (Kureishi, 1990, p. 8) comes true when Eva and Haroon move to London in order to meet influential people and to improve their social position. Karim lives with his father and Eva, but their relationship remains complicated and his feelings swing between love and hatred. Karim discloses his feelings of anger and bitterness towards his father to the manager director Matthew Pyke “I resented Dad for what he’d done to Mum, and how Mum had suffered, how painful the whole thing had been” (Kureishi, 1990, p. 163). Disappointed at his father, Karim fills in the emotional void through indulgence in numerous bisexual relationships with (Charlie, Helen, Jamila, Marlene, and Eleanor) and searching for alternative mentors and resorts. He finds refuge in Anwar’s house although this family has its own problems as well. He states that “Jamila and her parents were like an alternative family. It comforted me that there was always somehow less intense, and warmer, where I could go when my own family had me thinking of running away” (Kureishi, 1990, p. 52). It is Jamila with whom Karim vents his anger and complains to her the damage caused by his father’s decision to be with Eva. The collapse of his family adds to Karim’s sense of dislocation and restlessness whereby he becomes neither secure at home nor in the suburbs. Wilson (2005) believes that the image of the nuclear family is shattered in both Western societies and in the fiction of diasporic writers. In Kureishi’s novel, the families portrayed are dysfunctional and out of blood family ties, it emerges alternative familial affiliations and multi-sexual relationships (pp.109-116). Thus, Karim’s friendship with Jamila and Changez can be regarded as other forms of filiation which help in alleviating the pressure of family problems.

London marks a turning point in Karim’s life and changes him at different levels. While “[t]he suburbs were . . . a leaving place” (Kureishi, 1990, p. 117), London stands as a welcoming city and contains possibilities of changing oneself. Ball (1996) points out that, “[Karim’s] leaving is a one-way journey, a permanent relocation in a new and stimulating urban space. The city is a space of discovery, experience, indulgence, and consumption” (p. 21). Karim’s acquaintance with theatre producers like Jeremy Shadwell and Matthew Pyke helps him to become a theatre actor, to establish new affiliations, and to perform different roles. In addition, life in the city and work at the theatre make Karim reconcile with his origins and reconsider some attitudes and beliefs. Despite

his attempts to disregard his Indian roots which are an essential constituent in his identity, it is during Anwar's funeral that he acknowledges being an Indian. He states:

looking at these strange creatures now -the Indians- that in some way these were my people, and that I'd spent my life denying or avoiding that fact. I felt ashamed and incomplete at the same time, as if half of me were missing . . . Partly I blamed Dad for this. (Kureishi, 1990, p. 212)

After Anwar's funeral, Karim recognizes not only his Indian origins but also discovers himself and reconciles with it. At this stage, Karim starts to see change in himself and in the people around him. With regard to Jamila, she never gives in free-thinking and rebellious lifestyle. She moves to live in a community of friends and makes relationships out of marriage. Eva maintains to be an energetic and a self-empowered woman; Allie becomes a cloth designer; his mother finds an English boyfriend, and his father marries Eva and dedicates his time to teaching meditation. Karim celebrates his new job at the soap opera and the novel closes with Karim pondering over the ordeals he goes through, what he has achieved in the present, and he anticipates living the future more deeply than his past and his present.

#### **4. *White Teeth*: Is Multiculturalism a Bless or a Curse?**

Smith is hailed as "the icon of a new generation of racially mixed young authors . . . and was considered as the privileged successor to writers like Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi" (Wood, 2010, n.p). Her writings explore myriad issues such as multiculturalism, cultural conflict, hybridity, cultural identity, history, fundamentalism, postcolonialism, and family relationships. *White Teeth* received wide attention and was analyzed not just as a celebration of multiculturalism and diverse cultural identity. The novel also highlights the themes of war, history, science, love, gender relationships, fanaticism, and generational conflicts. Walters (2008) points out "*White Teeth* made Smith an international phenomenon. Critics applauded Smith's ability to address multiplicity of themes . . . in a single novel, complemented by a touch of humor" (p. 2). The importance of this novel, therefore, lies in its ability to interconnect family stories so as to uncover important thematic concerns.

The novel takes place in North West London during the 1970s until 1990s with flashbacks to WWII, India's Mutiny 1857, and Jamaica's earthquake of 1907. The plotline centers on the lives of three multiethnic families living in contemporary London. These families coming from heterogeneous backgrounds (the Iqbals, the Jones, and the Chalfens) reflect the cultural and the ethnic mosaic of the British society. The novel also exhibits the struggles of the three families with their children whose identities are shaped by the circumstances of being British-born and bred subjects. They are caught between maintaining the traditions of the country of origin and following stream culture and values. Smith builds her narrative plot on these families to unfold various concerns about the cultural and the social setting of post-war Britain in general and to examine the situation of diasporic families in particular.

Paproth (2008) classifies Smith's fiction as both postmodernist in the sense that it resists fixed perspectives and modernist in its construction. Smith's characters live in a fragmented post-modern world searching for meanings, but find themselves struggling with conflicting values (pp. 9-10). By discussing the significance of the interplay between the past and the present, "Smith wants her characters to see that things are messier and less definitive than they would like them to be" (Paproth, 2008, p.18). This suggests that nothing in the characters' lives is settled and controlled, and this applies to the relationship between parents and their children. The two generations have contradictory perspectives about cultural roots, identity, the self, and home. While the parents adhere to fixed views and to the past, the second-generation, Schaff (2009) suggests "try to escape from the obsession of their parents' generation with the past, searching for, as Irie exclaims 'neutral spaces'" (p.286). Thus, life in London not only affects first-generation immigrants' sense of belonging, but also shakes their status as father figures and estranges them from their children.

For a family to function rightly and in a balanced way, communication is of paramount importance. In the Bangladeshi Iqbal family, there is an absence of warmth and stable connections between Alsana and Samad, and between the parents and their sons (Magid and Millat). Communication between Alsana and Samad is marked by disputes and cold indifference, thus when the bridge of communication between the parents is cracked, the children develop shaken relationships either. Neena, Alsana's niece, says:

Untie . . . [y]ou don't talk to him, he talks at you. You scream and shout at each other, but there's no communication. It's 1975, Alsi. You can't conduct relationships like that any more. . . There is got to be communication between men and women in the West. (Smith, 2000, p.76)

The absence of means of communication in the relationship of Samad and Alsana led them to be critical of each other and to have frequent quarrels including physical fighting. Whereas Alsana thinks that Samad is irresponsible, tyrannical, and objects his decision to send the children back home, Samad believes life there is better than living in "a morally bankrupt country with a mother who is going mad" (Smith, 2000, p. 198). Alsana further ridicules his religious practices; critiques his old stories about his great-grandfather "Mangal Pande," and his participation in WWII. She believes that the war costs him a handicapped hand and there is no heroism and glory in war.

Samad is nostalgic to the past and proud of having heroism in his blood because the figure of his grandfather stands for home and roots. By keeping the memory of his grandfather alive, he thinks he can connect his children to their origins too. In turn, Schaff (2009) explains Samad's adherence to the past and roots as an escape from failure and an affirmation of his subjectivity. She says that "Samad takes refuge in his family's history and constructs a glorious past in order to overcome the shortcomings of his existence as a waiter . . . He is obsessed with his roots which he regards his authentic self"(p. 285). Like Haroon and Anwar in Kureishi's novel, Samad finds life in Britain, not like the one he has dreamt off. He expects to secure a good life for his family, but he encounters a hostile and a corrupting environment and ends as a waiter in his cousin's

restaurant. Still, Samad is seen as a contradictory character when it comes to his behavior and his manners. He is a conservative religious Muslim, but finds himself “at a moral crossroads” (Smith, 2000, p. 145). Samad tells his friend Shiva:

I have been corrupted by England, I see that now-my children, my wife they too have been corrupted . . . I don't wish to be a modern man! I wish to live as I was always meant to! I wish to return to the East . . . what kind of a model am I for my children?' (Smith, 2000, pp. 144-145)

His affair with his sons' teacher, Poppy Burt-Jones puts him in a dilemma between keeping pure and God-fearing or following his awakened desires. At this stage, while the father is having secret meetings with his sons' teacher, the children and without their parents' supervision undertake their own adventures.

The seeds of rebellion in the second-generation start in their early teens and as they grow up the gulf between parents and their children becomes larger. For instance, when Samad proposes the elimination of some non-Muslim festivals from the school calendar, the children become angered at him by keeping “a mutual, anger silence” (Smith, 2000, p. 150). Silence is a kind of protest against the father's decision of preventing them from participating in the Harvest Festival. Samad opposes his sons' participation in the festival because it is a Christian rite and this contradicts their Muslim culture. Magid condemns his father's unfair decision and even disapproves his involvement in not permitting his friend Irie Jones from joining them. In another occasion, on Magid's ninth birthday, Magid causes great distress and discontent to his parents. Alsana is astonished when hearing her son's friends call him “Mark Smith” and he, in turn, calls her “Mum” instead of “Amma” (Smith, 2000, p. 151). Magid changes his name to an English one because he dislikes the kind of life with his parents and wants to be like his white British friends. The narrator says “Magid really wanted to be *in some other family* . . . [and even] wanted his father to be a doctor, not a one-handed-waiter” (Smith, 2000, p. 151). Samad attempts to raise his children according to Muslim principles, but they cannot comply with his way of upbringing and his ideologies. By giving his son an Indian name, “A GLORIOUS NAME LIKE MAGID MAHFOOZ MURSHED MUBTASIM IQBAL” (Smith, 2000, p. 151), Samad believes he can manipulate and envision his son's life and destiny. Subsequent events show that the sons' rebellion against their father becomes uncontrolled and the gap between them is unbridgeable.

Nicholas (2001) explains that the statement “the sins of the Eastern fathers shall be visited upon the Western children” is the crux of *White Teeth*. The novel illustrates twofold conflicts between “Fathers and sons and mothers and daughters and east and west” (p.62). “The Eastern fathers” are first-generation immigrants who expect their children to fulfill their expectations and to comply with the decisions made for them. The children, however, are raised in a Western environment; they adapt to its ways of life and submerge into its culture and this stands out against the fathers' expectations. Scheingold (2010) states that “[t]he younger generation has taken their parents' rather mild objections to mainstream English life to extremes that vex the elders” (p.188). Samad considers his sons' detachment from their native culture a sin which befalls on them. Meanwhile,

the children's discovery of his relationship with Poppy-Jones is a greater calamity which haunts him; consequently he fails to be an example for his son. Moreover, Samad sees education and life in Britain corrupting and instigating seeds of rebellion among his children and others. He tells Archie bitterly how life in Britain affects the psychological and the social behavior of the children as follows:

there is rebellion in them. I can see it-it is small now but it is growing . . . I don't know what is happening to our children in this country. . . take Alsana's sisters-all their children are nothing but trouble . . . No respect for tradition. People call it assimilation when it is nothing but corruption. (Smith, 2000, p. 190)

Samad's idea of the bad influence of Western civilization and British lifestyle on the children of immigrants is similar to the ideas discussed in *Some Kind of Black* (1996) and *East is East* (1996) by Diran Adebayo and Ayub Khan-Din, respectively. In an attempt to save his sons from going astray and renouncing their native identity, Samad sends one of them to Bangladesh to be raised properly according to Muslim traditions. For Samad "tradition was culture, and culture led to roots . . . Roots were what saved" (Smith, 2000, p.193), thus he shields them from the influences of Western civilization.

While Haroon returns to his roots through becoming a Buddha and Anwar becomes a patriarchal conservative Muslim, return to Samad is realized after sending Magid to Bangladesh. But the results do not come as he anticipates. Despite Magid's stay in Bangladesh, he returns back a metamorphosed person; intellectually and culturally British. What happens to Magid affects Samad deeply, considering him a source of shame and bitterness. In addition, the mentor-protégé relationship between him and Marcus Chalfen, becoming his lawyer and his supporter of his genetic project, puts him at odds with his brother. They become enemies like Cain and Abel because as Magid argues "I am a non-believer. . . I have converted to life" (Smith, 2000, p. 434). Meanwhile, Millat who needs to be watched and morally guided becomes the epitome of the bad boy and troublemaker. He is "the DON . . . a street boy, a leader of tribes" (Smith, 2000, p. 218) and he becomes implicated in delinquent activities such as smoking, drinking, and having various relationships with white girls. But deep down, Millat feels lost, confused, and belongs to nowhere. Delinquency and rebellious behavior do not only concern Millat, but these attitudes become common among other second-generation children. The domestic atmosphere and the socio-cultural background are among the main factors which cause this situation. The narrator states that:

[T]here was much discussion-at home, at school . . . about *The Trouble with Millat*, mutinous Millat . . . and not just Millat but *all* the children . . . *what was wrong with all the children*, what had gone wrong with these first descendants of the great ocean-crossing experiment? Didn't they have everything they could want? . . . Hadn't the elders done their best? Hadn't they all come to this island for a reason? To be safe. Weren't they *safe*?" (Smith, 2000, pp. 218-219)

First-generation immigrant parents' dreams of having a stable life in a foreign country are met with frustrations and new challenges. While parents attempt securing a socio-economic welfare for their families and preserving their roots, their offspring are more concerned by "adaptation at a deeper level of compromise." Effectively, these opposing interests set off a generation gap between the two because the parents regard their children's integration into the British society a kind of threat to their native culture (Acquarone, 2013, p. 137).

Alsana criticizes Samad's method of conducting his sons' lives and imposing his beliefs on them. As second-generation, they think differently and they want to confront their battles on their own. She says:

You say we have no control, yet you always try to control everything! Let go, Samad Miah. Let the boy go. He is second generation-he was born here- naturally he will do things differently. . . *You have to let them make their own mistakes.* (Smith, 2000, p. 289)

She also blames the Chalfens for taking Millat away from his family, faith, and culture, and consequently westernizing him. She even condemns them for fueling the rupture between Millat and his brother. On the contrary, Neena warns Alsana of the extremist group KEVIN (Keepers of Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation) whom Millat befriends and spends time with. She further explains to her that Millat flees to the Chalfens because he looks for a harbor far from the tense and the unstable family atmosphere at the Iqbals. The family, instead of providing security and shelter, becomes a chaotic and a stifling social unit (Smith, 2000, pp. 346-347). In fact, both Alsana and Samad fail to communicate with their sons whereby the relationship between the youngsters and their father reaches a dead end and any possibility of compromise becomes difficult. Millat's aversion to his father climaxes when he tells the Chalfens that his father is "a bloody hypocrite" (Smith, 2000, p. 334) and "[a]ll his life he wanted a Godfather, and all he got was Samad. A faulty, broken, stupid, one-handed waiter of a man who had spent eighteen years in a strange land and made no more mark" (Smith, 2000, p. 506). Millat underestimates his father in which the father figure appears to lose much of his esteem both as an authority and as a mentor.

Brah (1996) maintains that "'home' can simultaneously be a place of safety and of terror" (p. 177). Home here can stand for physical spaces and by extension includes the family household. The family becomes a hostile environment and it adds further to the problems of the young generation. By the time Millat, Magid, Joshua, and Irie reach adulthood, none of them continue living with their parents and keep maintaining good ties with them. Each one finds an alternative through which to express his/her rebellion and dissatisfaction. Millat finds a substitute family in KEVIN because he "loved clans . . . and he loved clans at war" (Smith, 2000, p. 442). Samad becomes doubly disappointed at Magid turning British and at Millat's involvement with KEVIN because they are just extremists and "thugs in a gang" (Smith, 2000, p. 442) using religion for political and personal reasons. The issue of religious fundamentalism is also discussed in Kureishi's *The Black Album* and "My Son the Fanatic." Violence, social exclusion, racism, oppression, against the black community in Britain led to the conversion of many people into

religious fundamentalism. Other characters like Joshua Chalfen and Irie Jones undergo adolescent crises and experience feelings of antagonism towards their parents.

Irie, the daughter of British-Jamaican parents, is at odds with both her family and the society. She lacks a sense of belonging and feels alienated “without reflection. A stranger in a stranger land” (Smith, 2000, p. 266). Irie’s shaken sense of self intensifies due to self-hatred and lack of self-confidence. She is embarrassed at her physical appearance, skin-color, and desperately longs “for her transformation from Jamaican hourglass . . . to *English Rose*” (Smith, 2000, pp. 266-267). This transformation would help her to be both accepted in society and admired by Millat. Neena tries to restore Irie’s self-esteem and self-acceptance through encouraging her to appreciate herself and after seeing her reflection in the mirror, Irie recognizes that she cannot change one’s appearance, genes, and the fact that she is a hybrid. Furthermore, Irie is in conflict with her parents because they hide secrets about their family history and she does not find in them the qualities of paternal mentors. She finds in the Chalfens’s way of life various characteristics that her parents lack. The Chalfens are introduced when their son Joshua is caught smoking marijuana with Millat and Irie at school. They are middle-class intellectuals whose life is dominated by science, intellect, perfection, and rationalistic principles. In a meeting of parents, the headmaster decides to send Millat and Irie to the Chalfens for extra tutoring so as to improve their weaknesses in “a stable environment” and “keeping [them] both off the streets” (Smith, 2000, p. 303). He seems in them great capacities and the possibility of getting improved. Scheingold (2010) describes the Chalfens as “devoted missionaries of the modern project” (p.182). His statement suggests that the Chalfens are the representatives of modern times “civilized mission” who come to save the children of immigrants. The coming of Irie and Millat to the Chalfens’s household marks a critical moment for the three families and their children. A mentor-disciple relationship has been developed between the Chalfens and the Iqbal twins, and between the Chalfens and Irie Jones.

Irie’s stay with the Chalfens improves her on different levels. The way Joyce and Marcus deal with each other and with their children make Irie “fascinated, enamoured after five minutes. No one in the Jones household made jokes . . . or let speech flow freely from adult to child, child to adult, as if the channel of communication between these two tribes was untrammelled, unblocked by history, *free*” (Smith, 2000, p. 319). Captivated by the Chalfens’s intellectualism, Englishness, and way life, Irie wishes to fuse with them and to break up “from the chaotic, random flesh of her own family” (Smith, 2000, p. 342). She progresses in her studies and comes to settle her struggle for-self definition. But, Irie’s conflict with her parents culminates after her discovery of the Chalfens’s family tree and her mother’s false teeth. For Irie, while her family history was much “rumour, folk-tale and myth . . . or an oral tradition” (Smith, 2000, pp. 338-339), the Chalfens know who they are. The false-teeth incident adds to her disenchantment with her parents who hide various truths. After meeting her grandmother, Irie starts filling in all the gaps about her ancestry and coming to terms with her roots, her past, and her homeland, Jamaica. While Irie reasserts her sense of belonging to somewhere, Samad at this stage and deeply embittered renounces the idea of return and belonging. He feels that his homeland has betrayed him, rather than saving his son and ingraining in him the seeds of true Muslim, Magid returns a converted son “[m]ore English than the English” (Smith, 2000, p. 406).

## 5. Conclusion

After analyzing generational conflicts in Kureishi's and Smith's novels in multicultural London, it can be concluded that conflicts between first-generation immigrants and their British-born children are produced by the interplay of social, cultural, and familial forces. Influenced by youth culture and British lifestyle, a young rebellious generation emerges. What distinguishes this generation is its conflict with both the society and the family and its struggle between retaining roots and negotiating routes. While the parents insist on keeping hold of their native identities and interfering in their children's lives, the young youth struggle to fashion independent and flexible identities and to locate themselves in a multicultural society. In both novels, dysfunctional families and biological fathers have been substituted by other affiliations such as having refuge in alternative families; joining Gang Street and religious extremist groups and developing mentor-disciple relationships and friendships. Numerous works have been written about the family and paternal conflicts but this study only suggests a small representation of the fiction which examines family relationships in British novels of Diaspora. Even though this study has attempted to analyze generational conflicts in the light of multiculturalism, this subject may require more investigation in 21<sup>st</sup> literature taking into account the relationship between the phenomenon of globalization and the rise of the digital age and their impact on family life.

### About the Authors:

**Adi Faten** has just obtained her PhD in English Literature from The University of Jordan. She has got her Master degree in Language, Literature, and Civilization: British and American Studies from The University of Constantine 1 (Brothers Mentouri) in 2012. Her research interests are in Modern British and American Literature, Third World and Postcolonial Literature, and Feminism. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000/0002-8764-1577>

**Al-Shetawi Mahmoud** is a professor of English literature in the Department of English at The University of Jordan. He got his MA and PhD degrees in English literature from The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (USA). Al-Shetawi published many essays and scholarly research papers on Shakespeare, the English novel, and comparative drama. His main interest lies in Shakespeare and the Arab World, the contemporary novel, Arab-American drama and theater and representations of Arabs and Islam in Anglo-American drama and theater. Al-Shetawi is currently working on a book entitled **Shakespeare's Journey into the Arab World: Studies in Cross-Cultural Encounters**. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8783-6032>

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