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IN-BETWEEN RESILIENCE OF SELF: CHAOS WITHIN/WITHOUT IN ZADIE SMITH'S *ON BEAUTY*

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ABSTRACT

The waves of immigration that surged after World War II, particularly from formerly colonized countries, have significantly transformed cities like London. This transformation has resulted in a multicultural landscape marked by diverse identities. Immigrant communities faced numerous challenges, including discrimination based on race, religion, and color. Adapting to a new cultural setting has also led to complex issues such as integration, identity crises, and the concepts of hybridity and multiculturalism. In Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* (2005), the hybridization of characters arises naturally from their experiences of integration, oppression, and a sense of being "in-between." These experiences highlight the tension between their inherited values and the discriminatory attitudes of the host country. The study explores the factors that influence identity formation within multicultural societies. It will demonstrate how miscommunication across races, genders, classes, and generations complicates life. This disconnection leaves young people without role models, prompting them to seek their identities, roots, and place in society. Ultimately, the chaos in people's lives stems from the gap between their lived experiences and prevailing ideologies. The study focuses on the issues of mimicry experienced by the colonized and the cultural inferiority imposed upon them by their colonizers. The study also examines how the colonizers distort the culture and identity of immigrants, which leads to a corrupt understanding of their roots and sense of self.

Keywords: Integration, Identity, Hybridity, Multiculturalism, In-Betweenness

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ARADA KALMIŞ KENDİLİK VE ÖZ-SAVUNMA: ZADIE SMITH'İN *ON BEAUTY* ADLI ROMANINDA İÇ VE DIŞ KAOS

Nimetullah ALDEMİR¹

ÖZ

İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra özellikle eski sömürge ülkelerinden gelen göç dalgaları, Londra gibi şehirleri önemli ölçüde dönüştürdü. Bu dönüşüm, çeşitli kimliklerle işaretlenmiş çok kültürlü bir manzarayla sonuçlandı. Göçmen topluluklar, ırk, din ve renge dayalı ayrımcılık da dâhil olmak üzere çok sayıda zorlukla karşı karşıya kaldı. Yeni bir kültürel ortama uyum sağlamak, kimlik krizleri ve Melezlik ve çok kültürlülük kavramları gibi karmaşık sorunlara da yol açtı. Zadie Smith'in *Güzelliğe Dair* (2005) adlı eserinde, karakterlerin melezleşmesi; entegrasyon, baskı ve "arada" olma hissinin deneyimlerinden doğal olarak ortaya çıkar. Bu deneyimler, miras aldıkları değerler ile ev sahibi ülkenin ayrımcı tutumları arasındaki gerilimi vurgular. Bu çalışma, çok kültürlü toplumlarda kimlik oluşumunu etkileyen faktörleri araştırmaktadır. Irklar, cinsiyetler, sınıflar ve nesiller arasındaki yanlış iletişimin hayatı nasıl zorlaştırdığını gösterecektir. Bu kopukluk, gençleri rol modelsiz bırakarak, onları, kimliklerini, köklerini ve toplumdaki yerlerini aramaya yönlendirmektedir. Sonuç olarak, insanların hayatlarındaki kaos, yaşanmış deneyimleri ile hakim ideolojiler arasındaki boşluktan kaynaklanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, sömürgeleştirilenlerin deneyimlediği taklit sorunlarına ve sömürgecileri tarafından kendilerine dayatılan kültürel aşağılığa odaklanır. Çalışma ayrıca sömürgecilerin göçmenlerin kültürünü ve kimliğini nasıl çarpıttığını inceler ve bu da onların kökleri ve benlik duygusu hakkında bozuk bir anlayışa yol açar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Entegrasyon, Kimlik, Melezlik, Çokkültürlülük, Arada Kalmışlık

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1. INTRODUCTION

The traits and attributes of postcolonial literature emerge from postcolonial theory, which was initially introduced in the wake of independence and decolonization movements that began with the rise of resistance movements in India, Pakistan, and other colonized nations that emerged in response to colonizers and imperial powers. This trend intensified during and after the Second World War. As the war concluded, decolonization movements gained momentum, and concepts of anti-colonialism began to take precedence. Edward Said was instrumental in defining the framework of postcolonialism through his analysis of Western colonization's effects on cultural, economic, and political landscapes. He critiques the misrepresentation of the Orient as uncivilized and primitive, suggesting that such narratives contributed to the subjugation of these regions by European powers. He argues that despite achieving independence, many of these nations struggled with the legacies of colonization, including the corruption and conditions that persisted in their societies. Said acknowledges that a dominant colonizer enforced its language and cultural practices. However, in their attempts to control and exploit the resources of Oriental societies, colonial powers often overlooked and misrepresented the diverse cultures, histories, values, and languages of these peoples. Similarly, Frantz Fanon (1967) contends that the relationship between colonizers and the colonized is characterized by a sense of otherness, with colonizers perceiving colonized nations as culturally, morally, and racially inferior: despite managing to implant themselves successfully and take ownership, the settler is still considered a foreigner. It is not simply the ownership of factories, land, or wealth that defines the ruling class; instead, it is primarily those who originate from different places distinct from the native population: the "others." (p. 31).

In a social or racial context, 'hybridity' refers to the continuous transformation or blending that occurs throughout the evolution of cultures. This concept highlights cultural authority and its representations. Said describes hybridity as intrinsic to culture, noting that "cultures are hybrid and heterogeneous [...] and interdependent" (1995, p. 347). This phenomenon arises from various factors, including globalization, immigration, and colonialism, and is also evident in the development of any culture. Homi K. Bhabha introduced the concept of cultural hybridity and identity in *The Location of Culture*. He defines hybridity as the intertwined construction of postcolonial identities, which blend and challenge binary oppositions in nuanced and often ambiguous manners (Meyer, 2008, p. 171). One intriguing element of Bhabha's analysis suggests that the 'other' adopts certain behaviors and traits from the dominant culture. While acknowledging the challenges posed by this mimicry, he underscores that even if a minority group perfectly emulates the cultural codes of the dominant group, acceptance is not guaranteed, nor is their imitation necessarily regarded with seriousness (Meyer, 2008, p. 171). Tim Warner states, "Hybridity is a concept settled between multiculturalism and the concept of a melting pot" (2007, p. 5). Multiculturalism refers to a specific social condition where various cultures coexist in one location. Multiculturalism is often described as a 'salad bowl' (Burgess, 2005, p. 31); a multicultural society suggests that the distinct cultures within a community remain separate rather than blending. It is impossible to compel one cultural group to assimilate into another, mainly when one culture is dominant.

The study begins with the theoretical framework surrounding the implications of colonialism. It outlines colonial and postcolonial theory and its key tenets. The second part investigates themes of identity and cultural belonging within *On Beauty*. Analysis highlights the characters' journeys as they seek their identities and sense of belonging. Smith thoroughly examines the tensions and conflicts presented in the narrative, offering insights into individuals' challenges in shaping their identities. The analysis pays close attention to the critical factors that shape identity in multicultural environments. The novel reflects experiences of otherness, hybrid identity, and the quest for one's roots.

2. HYBRIDITY, IDENTITY, AND MULTICULTURALISM

Colonialism refers to one group's dominance over another or specific territories, a trend that began during the Renaissance and persists into modern times. Throughout history, colonialism has taken on various forms, accompanied by various practices, and rooted in distinct ideologies. This often leads to conflict between the indigenous populations of the colonized regions and the colonizers. Ania Loomba describes colonialism as "the most intricate and terrible human historical relationship" (Loomba, 2005, p.23). In essence, colonialism creates a profound and enduring interaction between those who conquer and those who are conquered, impacting the mental states of both parties and profoundly shaping their worldviews. Today, the repercussions of colonialism still influence contemporary relationships, whether in terms of international dynamics or the interactions between majority populations and immigrants or indigenous groups living in Western countries. Robert Young argues that colonialism encompassed many practices and forms that engaged with vastly different cultures over several centuries (Young, 2001, p. 17). He cites examples such as the British colonies in North America and Australia and French Algeria. He asserts that colonialism is a subset of imperialism, which he defines as the domination of one region by a different metropolitan power.

Colonialism is defined by three key characteristics: exploitation, cultural imposition, and dominance. As noted by Ronald J. Horvath, colonialism entails a form of control characterized by subordination and is widely recognized as a form of domination, where individuals or organizations wield power over a specific territory (Horvath, 1972, p. 47). First, it often involves imposing cultural norms upon the conquered populations, effectively reshaping their identities. Second, the historical record shows a disturbing pattern of exploitation of the colonized, which includes practices such as slavery, the appropriation of cultural heritage, and the extraction of natural and material resources. Colonialism has also been linked to severe human rights abuses such as genocides, tortures, sexual servitude, and forced displacement.

Said significantly shaped the postcolonialism field through his 1978 book, *Orientalism*. He showed how Western powers constructed narratives about the Orient and criticized Western scholars for endorsing imperialistic domination. He defined Orientalism as the "Western-style dominance, reorganization, and authority over the Orient" (Said, 2003, p.3). For Said, Orientalism is a time-honored practice of defining communities in the East as the ultimate "other" and inferior to those in the West. According to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (2004) today, postcolonialism encompasses a wide range of interpretations, including the investigation and critique of European territorial expansion, the different institutions associated with European colonialism, how empire operates through language, the complexities of identity formation within colonial narratives, and the responses of those identities. This includes resistance to colonial rule, the varied reactions to these incursions, and their lasting effects in pre- and post-independence nations and communities. (p. 169).

After engaging with Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), and the historical analysis found in *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* (1989), the postcolonial aesthetics movement gained significant momentum. The term "Postcoloniality" has come to embody two distinct meanings. The first meaning relates to the historical context of the decolonization era. The second is shaped by philosophies influenced by poststructuralism and post-deconstruction. Many critics argue that postcolonialism serves as a reaction to colonialism, suggesting a sequence of events that contradicts the intentions of colonialism itself. Ashcroft and colleagues (2002) indicate that the term "postcolonial" is expanding in the following ways: The literary works from African nations, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean nations, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, countries in the South Pacific, and Sri Lanka are all considered Postcolonial literature. The literature of the USA should also fit into this category. While its current dominance and neo-colonial influence may have led to a lack of recognition regarding its postcolonial characteristics, its historical relationship with the metropolitan center over the past two centuries serves as a model for postcolonial literature worldwide (p. 2).

In his seminal texts, *Nation and Narration* and *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha argues that while there can be communication between colonizers and the colonized, it often fails to create a foundation for dialogue or mutual understanding, as the colonizer holds complete control over colonial power and discourse. Since cultures inherently influence one another, a central tenet of postcolonial theory is that they cannot thrive in isolation. Homi K. Bhabha engages with this notion mainly through his concept of the 'third space.' His perspectives on this subject are considered both significant and provocative, as he suggests that this 'third space' is where all civilizations, systems, and assertions are generated:

The intervention of the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and references an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code. Such an intervention appropriately challenges our sins of the historical identity of a culture. It is a homogenizing, unifying force authenticated by the ordinary past that keeps living on the national tradition of the People (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37).

Bhabha argues that the culture exists in a dynamic space where two or more opposing forces intersect and interact. While cultural differences may be fundamentally incompatible, these need to be compared and influenced by one another. Bhabha asserts that cultural hybridity arises from this interaction, suggesting that the idea of an original, pure culture is unrealistic; such a concept is ultimately untenable. Meanwhile, the colonizer often aims to assert dominance over these concepts through their understanding of the other: "To name the world is to understand it, to know it, and to have control over it" (Ashcroft et al., 2003, p. 283). Thus, the emergence of theory can be attributed to the failure of established European theories to embrace the cultural diversity evident in postcolonial contexts. The European representational framework contributed to the cultural dominance of colonizers. This led to a widespread belief in the necessity of expansion, ultimately resulting in cultural subjugation. However, the colonized have opposed the various efforts by European powers to marginalize them. They sought to establish multiplicity, plurality, and a decentralized perspective while simultaneously creating cultural resistance to the authority of European powers. In this struggle, marginality transformed into a remarkable source of creative energy. This perspective is essential for understanding how postcolonial theory addresses "the problems of transmuting time into space with the present struggling out of the past" (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 35). While European theories may challenge postcolonial discourse, they also offer a pathway to reintegrate postcolonial

cultures within a new internationalist framework. Postcolonial theory has emerged as "one of the most diverse and contentious fields in literary and cultural studies" (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 193).

Multiculturalism functions as an umbrella term that redefines many marginalized groups' moral and political claims (Song, 2005, p. 473). Multiculturalism incorporates ideology, racism, and the diversity of cultures and ethnicities within a specific geographical area. It posits that no culture is superior to another and that all cultures deserve equal respect and consideration. It embraces and accepts diverse ethnic beliefs and cultures, ultimately working towards full inclusion and equality. The essence of multiculturalism can be defined as the idea that every citizen is equal, which is fundamental. Cultural diversity plays a key role in fostering unity, and multiculturalism acknowledges and honors that role. It also allows all individuals to preserve their identities, take pride in their heritage, and feel a sense of belonging. At its core, multiculturalism fundamentally involves the acceptance and recognition of 'the other.' The dominant group must navigate these differences in this scenario while fostering inclusivity: "Multiculturalism was not defined as cultural pluralism or minority rights, but in terms of the rights of all citizens in a democratic state" (Castles, 2000, p. 146). Therefore, multiculturalism serves as a more practical approach for nations with a history marked by racial and ethnic inequality, ultimately transforming notions of identity and citizenship.

Multiculturalism is now seen as a distinctive and appealing alternative that emphasizes social interactions among diverse backgrounds and fosters a sense of shared community. Von Meien (2007) states that cultural equality and equitable power dynamics are essential components in the understanding of multiculturalism, which can be considered a form of "public policy," which is highlighted by the emphasis on "mutual respect and tolerance" (p. 3). A multicultural society is often likened to a "salad bowl," suggesting that the various cultures present in a community are recognized and defined individually. Warner (2007) points out that hybridity exists between the ideas of multiculturalism and the melting-pot concept: "Hybridity is a concept settled between multiculturalism and the concept of a melting-pot" (Warner, 2007, p. 5). This approach acknowledges the citizenship rights and cultural identities of ethnic minority groups while emphasizing the importance of cultural diversity.

The concept of "hybridity" is widely recognized as a significant aspect of postcolonial theory, as scholars such as Homi K. Bhabha and Robert Young highlighted. Hybridity involves the interaction of two distinct cultures, resulting in the emergence of a third culture that serves to distinguish itself from the original two. This phenomenon is rooted in the profound interconnections among diverse cultures, particularly in the context of historical hybridization in a postcolonial world. Bhabha argues that hybridization is politically harmful, as colonial discourse consistently creates distinctions among people, shaping identities through a lens of colonial ambivalence. He suggests that hybrids often replicate the dynamics of colonialism from psychoanalytic and poststructuralist perspectives, including the use of language. Although Bhabha believes that a one-dimensional colonial discourse is ineffective, he maintains that hybridity produces a disruptive influence. He asserts that the struggle for racial identity is rooted in the colonial period and views hybridity as a crucial element of identity crises. In *Location of Culture*, Bhabha (1994) asserts that hybridity reflects the dynamic nature of colonial power, highlighting its fluctuating influences and established norms. It signifies a strategic counteraction to domination by undermining the construction of exclusive identities that reinforce the dominant authority's 'pure' and original identity. It challenges the mimetic or self-serving aspirations of colonial power while echoing its structures through methods of resistance that direct the focus of the oppressed back onto the power itself (p. 112). He suggests that ethnicity is no longer a definitive identifier for the population. "People's characteristics are not confined to their ethnic background; instead, they evolve and adapt through their experiences" (Bharati, 2010, p. 44). Robert Young notes that "there is no single or correct concept of hybridity: it changes as it repeats, but it also changes as it repeats" (Young, 1995, p. 25). Bhabha views cultural hybridity as a valuable framework for examining the intricate dynamics of cross-cultural interactions and for shaping a new hybrid culture in the postcolonial context. This perspective offers an alternative approach that contests the notion of a dominant culture, fostering a distinct canon that prompts a reevaluation of power dynamics.

Therefore, hybridity challenges the concepts of racial and cultural purity and the idea of fixed and essential identities. It embraces the blending and amalgamation of diverse cultural elements, leading to the emergence of a new identity space referred to as the "in-between." As noted by Young: "hybridity works in different ways simultaneously, according to the cultural, economic, and political demands of specific situations" (2003, p. 79). The concepts of 'the colonizers' and 'the colonized' have historically interacted to produce cultural hybridity. With globalization, the connection between Western and Eastern cultures has become more accessible, fostering new avenues for cultural exchange. This cultural hybridity permeates all aspects of society due to cross-cultural interactions. Bhabha argues that their identities are shaped through this mutual interaction and interdependence. Bhabha offers an expansive view of 'hybridity' by incorporating aspects of culture and power dynamics. He presents this concept within the realm of cultural identity, highlighting it as a means of strategically correcting domination through processes of marginalization (1994, p. 159). He introduces the notion of the "third space," a

realm where various representations and cultural frameworks are formed. This third space is characterized by cultural ambivalence, which may help to bridge the gaps among the diverse cultures that exist within it:

A willingness to descend into that alien territory...may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity (Bhabha, 1995, p. 38).

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha emphasizes that the social articulation of difference involves a complex and ongoing negotiation. This articulation aims to legitimize the cultural hybridity that emerges during significant historical changes (p. 3). He suggests that "cultures of postcolonial contra-modernity" resist exploitative multicultural systems (p. 9). The idea of an "in-between space" where these cultural systems take shape. He views hybridity as a process rather than a static entity; it does not simply arise from two sources but is instead linked to an ambiguous "third space" of cultural production and reproduction. In the upcoming section, the novel *On Beauty* by Zadie Smith will be examined through postcolonial theory, highlighting the multicultural dynamics and hybrid identities.

3. HYBRIDITY, IDENTITY AND MULTICULTURALISM IN *ON BEAUTY*

Smith's novel *On Beauty* opens with two families whose lives are intricately connected. The Belsey family features Howard, a university professor and an art history scholar. He is a white Englishman and lives with his African American wife, Kiki, and their three children: Jerome, Zora, and Levi. They reside in the fictional university town of Wellington, located just outside Boston. Howard's professional rival is Monty Kipps, a Trinidadian who lives in Britain with his wife, Carlene, and their children, Victoria and Michael. While the Belsey family identifies as secular and atheist, tensions arise when Howard struggles with his son Jerome's newfound Christian faith. During his summer break, Jerome works with the conservative Kipps family and even becomes entangled in a relationship with Victoria Kipps. After this failed affair, he returns home, but the two families are drawn together again when the Kippses relocate to Wellington for Monty's new job at the university. As the Belsey family navigates the challenges of Howard's affair with Claire, a colleague and family friend, an unexpected friendship blooms between Kiki and Carlene, despite the underlying family tensions. They bond over a painting in Carlene's library, *Maitresse Erzulie*, by Haitian artist Hector Hyppolite. Carlene reveals to Kiki that she acquired the painting in Haiti before her marriage to Monty. The two women meet a few more times before Carlene tragically passes away from cancer, a battle she keeps hidden from her family. The Belsey family attends Carlene's funeral in London, during which Howard succumbs to his attraction for his student, Victoria Kipps. In the aftermath, when reviewing Carlene's will, the Kipps family discovers that she intended for the painting to be given to Kiki.

Howard perceives himself and Monty as opposites, yet they share more similarities than he knows. Unlike Howard, Monty engages in an affair while his wife is terminally ill. Both men work in the same professional realm but differ significantly in other aspects of their lives. Monty successfully authored a book on Rembrandt, the subject Howard is attempting to research. Smith notes that "Howard's book on the same topic remained unfinished and strewn across the floor before his printer on pages that seemed to him sometimes to have been spewed from the machine in disgust" (Smith, p.17). This success of Monty's book makes Howard feel threatened, and even though he acknowledges that Monty's writing is commendable, it transforms his disdain for Monty into outright animosity: "Howard had always disliked Monty, as any sensible liberal would dislike a man who had dedicated his life to the perverse politics of right-wing iconoclasm" (Smith, 2006, p. 29).

Smith portrays characters in a modern multicultural society struggling with communication issues between fathers and their children. The fathers struggle to understand their children's needs and often respond inadequately to their challenges. The fathers exemplify an institutional blindness to everyday life. This detachment leads to an identity crisis in their children, as the fathers consciously impose their own beliefs, lacking the empathy necessary to connect. Monty Kipps advocates for neo-conservative views and expresses anti-affirmative ideology. His stance embodies a humanistic perspective that assumes anyone can achieve their desires through sheer human reasoning. However, this viewpoint is fundamentally flawed as it inadvertently exacerbates disparities between the privileged and the disadvantaged. Monty dismisses the negative dimensions of Humanism, insisting that "equality is a myth," "multiculturalism is a fanciful dream," and that "being black is not a matter of identity but pigment" (Smith, 2006, p. 44). Nonetheless, overlooking the complexities posed by Humanism does not resolve identity conflicts. Instead, it leads Monty to grapple with self-hatred regarding his own racial identity. A key conflict revolves around the affirmative action policy at Wellington University. Monty is against this policy, allowing successful disadvantaged students to be admitted. During a visit to Howard's home following the death of his wife, Carlene, Kiki observes a discussion between Monty and Chantelle, one of his students. After Chantelle departs, Monty explains to Kiki the reasons for his opposition to the policy: "The problem is larger than that. These children are being used as political pawns- they are being fed lies" (p. 365).

Monty embraces a humanistic view of life, holding everyone responsible for obtaining their rights and shaping their destiny. As a Black man, he acknowledges the reality that Blacks have historically faced inequality and oppression. He believes Black students should earn their place in college rather than view admission as a mere favor. However, Kiki points out that the systemic limitations on opportunities for Blacks have been significant, emphasizing the urgent need to correct these disparities. On the other hand, contentious Howard reflects this in his interactions and relationships. Despite being secular, he neglects to honor the opinions and beliefs of his children and wife. Instead, he attempts to influence and control various aspects of their lives with his mindset. His wife states: "You are like the thought police. And you do not care about anything, you do not care about us" (Smith, 2006, p.393). Howard exerts psychological influence over his family and approaches life and art with a theoretical mindset. Over time, he becomes blind to the realities of those around him, making it difficult for him to connect with his wife and children on an emotional level. This prevents him from recognizing the pain of his family. Despite being involved with poetry professor Claire Malcolm, Howard remains oblivious to Kiki's emotional turmoil. When Kiki questions him about his infidelity, he shifts the blame onto her, pointing to her changing appearance as a justification for his betrayal.

Carlene and Kiki build their friendship amid the aggression displayed by their husbands, managing to set aside their differences. The Kipps family extends a rare kindness by inviting Jerome, a member of the Belsey family, to stay with them during his visit to London. Following a brief encounter, he awkwardly proposes to Victoria after they become intimate. Meanwhile, Kiki seeks to make amends for past events, to which Carlene responds: "I hope you will not offend me by apologizing for things that were no fault of yours" (p. 91). In this exchange, Kiki discovers a sense of equality with Carlene, who embodies strength as a prominent black woman in their community. As the narrative unfolds, Carlene ultimately succumbs to cancer, leaving Kiki feeling adrift without her dear friend.

Howard's infidelity serves as a central plot point; At the same time, Kiki initially thinks he has been unfaithful to an anonymous woman; it turns out to be a three-week affair with an old colleague known to both. Although Kiki struggles with the idea of forgiveness, she ultimately finds a way to move past it. However, her world crumbles when she learns that her husband has been involved with Claire Malcolm. This revelation provokes an intense emotional reaction from Kiki. The strain on their relationship deepens as Howard fails to understand the complexities Kiki faces as a Black woman in a predominantly white setting, reflecting a significant gap in their understanding of each other: "I do not see any black folk unless they be cleaning under my feet in the fucking café in your college. Or pushing a fucking hospital bed through a corridor" (Smith, 2006, p. 206). Howard seems utterly oblivious to his wife's emotions and shows no interest in empathizing with her, which only fuels Kiki's frustration. She retorts, "You married a big black bitch, and you run off with a fucking leprechaun" (p. 206). Rather than evoking sympathy, her words only provoke more anger from him. Howard has lost sight of his wife's beauty, while Zora believes Kiki's attractiveness has diminished in Howard's eyes because of some extra weight. Interestingly, the two women who are involved with Howard continue to acknowledge Kiki's appeal. At the party, Claire compliments Kiki's stunning appearance and playfully suggests that she could grace a fountain in Rome. Meanwhile, Victoria shares with Howard her admiration for Kiki, calling her unique and queen-like. However, Howard makes comments about Kiki's weight, which irritates her, and his manner of speaking to his wife also grates on her nerves.

Howard's scholarly background starkly contrasts with the dynamics of his home life. So, when a disagreement arises with his wife, he resorts to an intellectual tone in their exchange: "Nothing... the onus is on me, I know that. It is for me to – to – explain my narrative comprehensibly" (p. 204). Kiki tells Howard that they are not in a classroom and that he should interact in a more meaningful way. This comment frustrates Howard, as he recognizes it as a recurring issue in their marriage, as Kiki's way of communicating is "more personal and more emotionally expressive" than his own (Smith, 2006, p. 205). Rather than trying to connect with Kiki and engage with her more pleasantly, Howard opts for isolation, distancing himself not only from her but from his entire family. He also struggles to bond with his mixed-race children, feeling a deep divide due to their differing backgrounds. Susan A. Fischer notes that Howard's son faces hostile stares from white passers-by as he approaches his own home, highlighting Howard's failure to grasp the experiences of his young black son in America (2007, p. 87). Levi conveys that Howard "disliked and feared conversations with his children that concerned race, as he suspected this one would" (Smith, 2006, p. 85). This struggle to connect with his family reflects deeper identity issues for Howard. His eldest son's conversion to Christianity, which contradicts the liberal and atheist beliefs held by Howard and his family, complicates their relationship further. Therefore, Howard struggles to understand Levi's feelings and lacks empathy for Jerome.

Jerome, Zora, and Levi are young Blacks of mixed race living in a predominantly white community, where they struggle with their identities and sense of belonging. Howard struggles to understand their experiences, as he cannot relate to their mixed-race backgrounds within such a white-dominated environment. Similarly, the trio feels disconnected from Howard. The longing for escape contributes to Levi's fascination with the street lifestyle. He

often wishes he had been raised in the gritty streets of Roxbury, Boston, rather than in Wellington's picturesque, white neighborhood. This desire is reflected in his friendship with Carl, a young Black man from a less privileged background who identifies as a "street poet." Levi admires Carl's lifestyle and tries to mimic it, adopting his mannerisms and using street slang like "di'unt," "important," and expressions like, "Aw, shut up, man. Mom, a'hma be back by eleven." When people hear Levi speak, they would not easily guess that he comes from an academic family. He embraces the identity of the streets, asserting that he belongs to Roxbury's urban landscape. This inclination does not stem from a desire to diminish his whiteness but rather a wish to embody a more authentic Black identity, consciously rebelling against his family's lifestyle. For instance, he immerses himself in hip-hop culture, makes street friends, and takes on a job in the music department of a megastore. He aims to earn enough money "to escape Wellington on a Saturday night" (p. 193).

While Zora may not be as vocal as Levi, her demeanor reveals her discontent with her environment. She is preoccupied with more significant social concerns, causing her to overlook the minor grievances associated with her family's behavior. For example, she responds dismissively to her mother's actions: "They were speaking to each other with tinkling officiousness, like two administrators filling out a form together" (p. 199). Zora stands out as the one who most closely follows her father's academic path, showing a genuine thirst for knowledge. However, she subtly acts of rebellion by developing feelings for Carl, Levi's friend from the streets. Carl, who lacks formal education and does not fit into her social class, is quickly rejected from the Belsey household upon his first visit. Although not as extensively explored in the story as Levi and Zora, Jerome struggles with his identity. Coming from a liberal, atheist family, he decides to convert to Christianity and travel to England to intern for the Kippses as a way of asserting his independence.

The narrative portrays the second generation rebelling against traditional parental values as they navigate multicultural settings and unique circumstances. Bhabha points out that "multiculturalism celebrates post-Second World War migration and distinguishes this new establishment from more recent (and less acceptable) migrations" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 104). Consistent with this observation, Howard struggles with his self-respect mainly because he cannot recreate the emotional connection he once had with his family. Also, his lack of success at work contributes to his low self-esteem. He often distances himself from his wife and children instead of addressing his feelings, exacerbating his situation. In contrast, Kiki is unafraid to express her emotions to Howard. She openly shares her discomfort living in a predominantly white neighbourhood, describing her feelings of isolation in "this sea of white" (p. 206). In her search for connection, she seeks friendships with those who share her background, finding solace in Carlene Kipps. Kiki's quest for belonging reflects the multicultural dynamics that Bhabha states: "Multiculturalism has been careful to address the fears of divisiveness and social fracturing by insisting that institutions will be held in common" (1990, p. 111). Kiki openly shares her discomfort with living in a predominantly white neighbourhood, expressing that she feels isolated in "this sea of white" (Smith, 2006, p. 206). To fight against this, she seeks friendships with individuals who share her skin color and finds a connection with Carlene Kipps. Kiki is searching for the sense of belonging that comes with multicultural environments, as Bhabha notes: "Multiculturalism has been careful to address the fears of divisiveness and social fracturing by insisting that institutions will be held in common" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 111). The anxiety of losing one's identity and the tendency to seek out others of the same race within multicultural communities highlights Bhabha's comments. Such dynamics may lead to the rise of distinct, antagonistic national identities within migrant societies, resulting in exclusivity and division. The younger generation often feels the urge to rebel against their parents. For instance, Jerome escapes his family upon arriving in England, where he lives with the traditional Kipps family. As he begins training at Monty's office, he converts to Christianity. Kiki observes that Jerome is seeking attention in his actions: "He is wanting his daddy's attention" (p.10).

Unlike his mother, Jerome's father takes his son's correspondence seriously. He learns that Jerome intends to marry Victoria after just a week of knowing her. Since Howard does not have a cell phone, Kiki is unable to inform him about Jerome's change of heart. In a subsequent email, Jerome mentions that his previous declaration was a mistake and requests that Howard keep it to himself. Unbeknownst to Jerome, Howard is en route to England, determined to prevent the marriage. Howard is adamant that he does not want a Kipps in the family and disapproves of having any connection to Monty Kipps. He also overlooks an important lesson that Kiki understands. When a child expresses an outlandish idea, a parent should either dismiss it or feign support while helping the child move past it, not take it too seriously. Both parents fail to grasp that Jerome has fallen for a family dynamic that is drastically different from his own: charming in its chaos and warmth, which he finds irresistible. As Jerome notes, "Long before Victoria arrived in the house, he was already in love; it was only that his overarching affection for the family found its true focus in Victoria"(p.53).

Zora embodies her father's aspirations, choosing to follow in his academic footsteps by enrolling in the same college where he teaches. She is a diligent, intelligent, cooperative young woman determined to shape her future through hard work. Often preoccupied with her studies, Zora effectively uses her free time by organizing various initiatives to boost her educational journey. One of her primary goals is to meet with influential individuals,

including Professor Claire Malcolm, to secure a spot in her poetry class. Despite maintaining an impressive academic record and being "in the top three percentile of this college," she is convinced she deserves it. Undeterred, Zora even persuades the Dean to reach out to Claire on her behalf. However, Claire remains confident that Zora lacks the necessary poetic talent despite her academic achievements. While this anticipation can have positive aspects, it also reflects a desire to escape from her current life, which includes rebelling against her parents. She is infatuated with Carl, a street poet she first met at a Mozart concert. Initially, Carl's charm does not take Zora in, but her feelings deepen as she gets to know him. Her father disapproves of Carl, making Zora's crush feel like an act of defiance against her parents.

Levi Belsey's desire to embrace a culture he has not previously experienced reveals his passion for connecting with others. Bhabha describes multiculturalism as a process where various cultures are often returned in a homogenized form, akin to a folkloric display (Bhabha, 1990, p. 112). Following his dismissal from work, Levi finds comfort among a group of Haitian immigrants. He begins to skip school to participate in the street vending activities that the Haitians engage in. Levi holds these individuals in high esteem, especially Felix: "he had this idea that Felix was like the essence of blackness in some way" (Smith, 2006, p. 242). Levi finds himself at odds with his parents, feeling that they do not embody enough of their black heritage. He is particularly troubled by his mother's behavior, which he perceives as an imitation of white culture. He expresses his frustration, saying, "We are sucking their blood – we are like vampires" (Smith, 2006, p. 428). Despite this conflict, Levi feels a stronger connection to Felix and his other friends on the streets, longing for a life in Haiti. He experiences shame about coming from the affluent neighborhood of Wellington. In many ways, Levi's existence appears to him as a facade; he constantly needs to pretend to be someone he is not. This construct is merely a fantasy for him, while his friend embraces a more authentic life: "Who would choose their own lonely, dank rooms over this Technicolor video, this outdoor community that Levi insisted they were all a part of?" (p. 245).

Levi actively engages with street vendors to support political campaigns aimed at fighting against the exploitation of Haitians. He aids his friends by distributing flyers and taking on various tasks. In a controversial move, Levi steals a painting that belongs to the Kipps family, a piece that Carlene Kipps had wished for Kiki after her passing. Levi's motive for this act stems from his belief that Monty Kipps is antagonistic toward the Haitian community. He perceives Monty as deceitful and dishonest: "got all these paintings by lying to poor people and buying them for a few dollars, and now they are worth all his money ain't his money." (p. 428). Levi's actions can be seen as an act of vengeance for the Haitians, as he aims to reclaim what he believes is rightfully theirs in the eyes of the Kipps family.

In contrast, the Kipps children have experienced less attention than the Belsey children, yet Victoria rebels against her parents' aspirations. Her brother Michael is mainly absent; there is not much to discover about him. He is a "risk analyst for an equities firm" (p. 33). Michael maintains a stable relationship and is on the verge of marriage. Although he and Victoria were raised in a traditional and conservative environment, it becomes evident as the story unfolds that Victoria is far from the archetype of a pure Virgin Mary. She shares a bed with Jerome Belsey, his father Howard, and, later, Carl, who is a friend of Levi's. Her parents are unaware of her sexual escapades because she rebels secretly against her reality. Her action means that she wants to provoke her father and his principles. That is why Victoria has a negative self-image; it appears that she is trying to gain acceptance and appreciation from men by sleeping with them is a plausible explanation. The following night, she joins Howard at a formal dinner hosted by the university, where her father is also an instructor. Howard notices this stunning young lady is an heiress: "Giving her attention to a 57-year-old married man might have other motives besides pure animal passion. Was he – as Levi would put it – being played?" (p. 343).

Carl Thomas resides with his mother in a disadvantaged neighbourhood in Boston. Despite being a talented and ambitious young man, he does not have the same opportunities as the Belsey children. When Carl enrolls in a poetry class at the university, he quickly finds himself without hope for learning. He struggles with the challenges posed by his background. During a social gathering, Howard asks his son Levi to stop inviting Carl to their "private parties," highlighting Carl's isolation stemming from his upbringing. This underscores the cultural differences as Bhabha (1990) argues, this area focuses more on the idea of temporality rather than historical aspects; it represents a way of living that goes beyond the notion of 'community,' is richer in symbolism than 'society,' has more profound implications than 'country,' is less about patriotism than a sense of belonging, is more about rhetoric than state reasoning, more rooted in mythology than strict ideology, and is less uniform than hegemony. It is also less about singular citizenship and more about collective identities, embracing a psychological dimension over mere civility while being more diverse in expressing cultural differences and identities than can be captured by any hierarchical or binary categorization of social conflict (p. 292).

Zora suspects Carl that he takes her belongings, especially when she suddenly cannot find her goggles, and questions him about their whereabouts. Despite this mistrust, she teasingly suggests that he join her at the pool to enjoy the thrill of sneaking other people's things, a usual occurrence during the performance where Carl first encounters the Belseys. However, his answer to Zora's question is far from reassuring: "Oh, shit - He laughed

loudly, but it sounded insincere to Zora. She quickly shoved her wallet deep into her tote bag and clasped it shut." (p. 135). The tension between Zora and Carl stems from their different backgrounds and cultural perspectives. Bhabha points out, "It is the mark of the nation's ambivalence as a narrative strategy and an apparatus of power that it produces a continual slippage into analogous, even metonymic, categories, like the people, minorities, or cultural difference." (1990, p. 292). Therefore, Zora's mistrust of Carl arises from his lower socioeconomic status, while Carl struggles to understand her and the context in which she exists.

Besides, the concepts of university and studying seem distant to Carl. As Zora approached the main campus building, he appeared to delay the moment before she stepped through the gate and left his world behind. Unlike Zora and her father, he lacks competence and struggles with communication and discussions. However, he channels his sorrows into writing, eventually transforming them into rap. Despite this, Carl is undeniably a genius in his realm. When people witness his performances at the Bus Stop café, where artists and painters display their work, they see an intriguing blend in his art, likening him to "Keats with a knapsack." His unique talent captivates audiences in a way few can, so poetry professor Claire invites him to her class, even though he is not a Wellington student. In her class, Carl experiences a sense of joy he has not felt in a long time; Claire possesses that exceptional quality of a teacher that he had missed since childhood: "an encouraging presence that motivates him to succeed, unlike the fearful environment he faced in the past, she wanted him to do well"(p. 260). At first, he composes a sonnet in a single sitting, which impresses his colleagues struggling to craft their own.

In contrast, Carl, bewildered by the turmoil, experiences a feeling he has never felt in a classroom before. Despite his pride, his commitment to challenging personal biases in the classroom leads his colleagues to dismiss him. To support Carl, Claire sends Zora to a faculty meeting to urge the faculty to permit him to teach the poetry classes. However, Claire belittles Carl in her remarks: "What I would really like to do is send Carl himself, but you know..." she sighed. "Depressing as it is, the truth is these people will not respond to an appeal to their consciences in any language other than Wellington language" (p. 263).

Professor Claire believes that he does not require Zora's support because he possesses a strong voice that enables him to advocate for himself effectively, wherever he is, which should help him maintain his position at the university and secure a job as the "Chief Librarian of the African American Music Library" (p. 372). Carl is acknowledged for his efforts in creating product records for the archive and organizing the covers of older albums. Despite coming in five days a week, exceeding his expected three-day work schedule, Carl is a dedicated employee who consistently brings forth innovative ideas to enhance the archive. However, his supervisor often overlooks him and shows little interest in his suggestions. When his colleague Elisha remarks that his line of work requires one to carve out their path, she serves as a grounding reminder for Carl: "But people like you and me, continued Elisha severely, we are not a part of his community, are we? I mean, no one is gonna help us feel that way" (Smith, 2006, p. 372). This is the first time he has stumbled upon something that genuinely piques his interest, and he is eager to engage in the task. When Zora tries to persuade Carl to continue attending Claire Malcolm's poetry class, he becomes frustrated with her and loses interest in staying. Eventually, he decides it does not matter whether he remains or not. Unbeknownst to him, Zora has feelings for him. When she finds out about Carl's involvement with Victoria, the two come to an understanding that reveals Zora had anticipated some form of retribution for the struggles she has caused him. Later, a significant confrontation erupts between Zora and Jerome on one side and Carl and Victoria on the other. During this clash, the Belsey children uncover their father's affair with Victoria, while Carl makes a derogatory comment about their heritage, suggesting they are too good for their community. The following day, Monty Kipps learns that a portrait of him, previously stolen from the university's wall, has vanished again. Carl emerges as the primary suspect due to his troubled background. Unbeknownst to the university team, it was Levi who orchestrated the theft. Thus, Monty and Howard embody the complexities of friendship as they struggle to get along despite their similarities. Both work in the same academic field and are entangled in affairs while their wives, who have grown close, move from England to the United States. However, they find it challenging to navigate everyday life. Even though they share a similar cultural background, professional expertise, and lifestyle, their opposing beliefs about art, particularly their views on Rembrandt, position them as fierce rivals.

The novel explores how different families address their challenges in unique ways, highlighting the theme of multiculturalism. Howard's life reflects a midlife crisis, marked by infidelity towards his wife and children, while Monty struggles with similar personal turmoil and aims for tremendous academic success. Monty also conceals his wife's illness and engages in affairs with a student. The younger generation in both families actively rejects their parents' values and traditions. For instance, Levi aspires to be different, while Jerome turns to Christianity to escape his family. Zora chases an imagined future, and Victoria discards the principles taught by her parents. The theme of multiculturalism significantly influences the struggles of the children as they come of age. Carl faces prejudices that the Belsey family, who are of mixed race, do not experience to the same extent. Carl is determined to prove his intelligence and reliability, but he views the Belseys as disconnected from their cultural roots and considers themselves superior to their community. This creates a distinction in how Carl perceives mixed-race

individuals compared to those who identify as black. The characters are on a quest to discover their identities and origins.

The experience of navigating between different cultures contributes to an identity crisis, compelling individuals to seek a sense of belonging in the world. Bhabha discusses the idea of being 'in-between' as "the spaces of double frames: its historical originality marked by cognitive obscurity; its decentred subject signified in the nervous temporality of the transitional, or the emergent provisionality of the present" (1994, p. 216). In this context, the identity crisis the Caribbean nation faces emerges during migration as individuals navigate the influences of both Caribbean and British cultures. Therefore, the interaction between different nations is crucial for successful adaptation. Despite this, individuals in post-war Britain experience feelings of insecurity and hostility as they navigate a transformed environment. This setting has become a space where migrants must express their identities through their cultural distinctions. It is important to highlight that many national identities have evolved into hybrid forms in the post-war period.

The movement of immigrants has significantly contributed to the rich tapestry of cultural diversity and transformed human experiences. For instance, when Caribbean immigrants bring their cultural values and identities to Britain, they help forge a hybrid society. Zadie Smith examines how the colonial era has profoundly influenced contemporary attitudes and the significance of multiculturalism. This perspective highlights the long history of interaction between Caribbean migrants and the native population of Britain. Hence, Caribbean migration is intricately connected to the ideas of multiculturalism. However, establishing a consistent relationship between black immigrants and white British citizens is a complex endeavor. Smith candidly addresses the challenges of navigating a multicultural society, particularly highlighting the differences between first and second-generation immigrants. Despite growing up in modern society, her characters maintain strong connections to their cultural roots and heritage. This often leads to experiences of intolerance and prejudice related to their religious beliefs and practices. Even after many years in the UK, some characters still struggle with feelings of being outsiders, while others may turn to groups to gain recognition and shape their identities. Ultimately, they strive for a sense of integration, with their British identity emerging as a central aspect of who they are.

Monty and Howard struggle to appreciate art, people, and life's beauty. Smith illustrates how their academic focus and theoretical approaches lead to blindness, hindering their ability to form meaningful human relationships. This lack of vision makes them narrow-minded and intolerant of differing viewpoints, negatively impacting their children's journeys toward self-discovery and belonging. In her exploration of the ideological reliability of academics and the identity struggles faced by young characters, Smith highlights the dynamic between two marginalized women in the novel: Kiki and Carlene. Unlike the academic society around them, these women experience alienation and isolation. However, Smith portrays them as possessing a deeper sense of human connection than many other characters. Kiki and Carlene engage with each other without bias and maintain their emotional sensitivity. They can appreciate the beauty in life and art, approaching it profoundly personally, allowing them to reflect on their identities. Their responses to art foster a compassionate understanding of their lives and relationships.

In contrast, their intellectual husbands struggle to connect with art on an emotional level. For these professors, engaging emotions in their artistic appreciation feels like a forbidden territory; as a result, they miss the opportunity to discover a personal resonance in art. The novel explores the complex dynamics of racial representation. Kiki, a black woman, is a multifaceted character who faces challenges in her unhappy marriage, mainly stemming from her husband's betrayal and lack of empathy. In her quest for self-discovery, Kiki struggles with her identity. These characters illustrate the advantages and challenges of British and African cultures. The novel highlights their struggles with the tensions between various cultural groups. A notable example is the friendship between Kiki Belsey and Carlene, which thrives despite their cultural differences, placing them in a unique "in-between" state. The narrative highlights the richness of culture through the appreciation of diverse backgrounds. True art and harmony can flourish when we connect and recognize the value in one another, transcending boundaries of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, or political views. Immigrants often confront uncertainty, confusion, and powerlessness in their new environments.

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