

Multicultural failure and the Rise of Islamic Radicalism in *Brick Lane* : Towards an Intercultural Solution

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Abstract

This analysis of Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* is a literary assessment of multiculturalism in Britain with a particular reference to the relationship between Whites and the Muslim minority. Indeed, the battle for cultural hegemony on the British space constrains natives to resort to racist policies that spawn from segregation to exploitation and impoverishment through the demise of Muslims' Britishness. Consequently, this inhospitality leads the Muslim minority to barricade behind radical Islam that provide them with a religious tinged identity. That new identity both compensates for the denial of their belonging to Great Britain and connects them to the worldwide Muslim community. Henceforth, This analysis of the cultural belligerence between Whites and Muslim migrants in Britain brings out the fact that in Britain, multiculturalism is a failed policy that triggers the most extreme forms of rebellion among local ethnic minorities like the Muslim community in *Brick Lane* that ends up relying on Jihad to settle his accounts with Westerners in general and Native Britons in particular. However, the article also shows that there is still hope for a peaceful British society through the endorsement of a concept like interculturalism that can bring the communities together through a frank and courteous cultural collaboration.

Key Words: multiculturalism, interculturalism, Muslim minority, jihad, native Britons

Résumé

Cette analyse du roman, *Brick Lane*, de Monica Ali est une évaluation littéraire du multiculturalisme en Grande Bretagne avec une référence particulière à la relation entre les natifs et la minorité Musulmane issue de la migration. En effet, la bataille pour l'hégémonie culturelle dans l'espace Britannique contraint les autochtones à user de stratégies racistes à l'encontre de la minorité musulmane. Ces actes racistes vont de la ségrégation à l'exploitation et l'appauvrissement en passant par le déni de nationalité. En réponse à cette inhospitalité, la minorité Musulmane se barricade derrière l'extrémisme religieux qui a le don de leur donner une nouvelle identité à caractère Islamique. Cette identité leur permet à la fois de compenser la négation leur appartenance à la grande Bretagne en se rapprochant de la communauté Islamique internationale. De ce fait, cette analyse de la belligérance culturelle entre Blancs et migrants Musulmans révèle que le multiculturalisme en Grande Bretagne est un échec politique qui pousse les minorités ethniques locales, tels que les Musulmans décrits dans *Brick Lane* de Monica Ali, à recourir aux formes les plus extrêmes de rebellions, notamment le Jihad, afin de régler leurs comptes avec les occidentaux de façon générale et les Britanniques en particulier. Cependant, l'article montre aussi qu'il y a encore de l'espoir pour la paix dans la société Britannique à travers l'adoption d'un concept tel que l'interculturalisme qui peut rassembler les populations dans leurs diversités par l'entremise d'une collaboration culturelle franche et courtoise entre majorité et minorité.

Mots clés : multiculturalisme, interculturalisme, minorité Musulmane, Jihad, les britanniques

INTRODUCTION

In *Cultural Diversity in Britain: A Toolkit for Cross-cultural Co-operation*, Phil Wood et al posit that

Societies where there is more than one ethnic group and/or tradition in play, dominant version of history and culture and the forms of identity that they encourage often function to exclude, silence, stereotype or render invisible those who do not fit within hegemonic narratives (2006: 35).

This quotation sheds light on the intricacy of the cultural cooperation between the people who live on the same territory under opposed cultural allegiances. Thus, the desire of each group to see his culture take precedence over the others' ends up turning the location where the cultures are performed into a bone of contention. Actually, in culture confrontations, the control over the space means more visibility and power for the most conspicuous culture. However, even though the problem between cultures sharing the same space exists since times immemorial, the nineteenth century colonial ventures of Western countries has exacerbated culture clashes in contemporary human society.

As a matter of fact, today, native Westerners are caught up by their countries' nineteenth century's "imperial posture" (J. Morris, 1981:25). The current presence of cultures from former colonised countries in Western metropolises is very disturbing for White people. As White people are facing their colonial past through the diversification of the cultures on their soil, they find it hard to put up with the situation. That is the case for British people in Britain. Actually, Britain's quality as the most powerful colonial empire of the nineteenth century has turned the country into one of the most favourite destinations for migrants. As a result, the country has become a multicultural, a "multi-ethnic, multi racially mixed" (C. Weedon, 2004:14) place with cultures that originate from different areas of the globe. Therefore, in Britain, among the visiting cultures that disturb British nationals, Muslims' culture is the most problematic. In this connection, the clash that arises from the confrontational cohabitation between natives' culture and Muslims is the focus of this study.

In this article, we analyse how interculturalism can be the solution to the multicultural dysfunction and its implications in the rise of Islamist extremism in Britain. By multicultural dysfunction, we mean the failure of the policy of 'silent' cohabitation between the different cultures in Britain. As for Islamist extremism, we use it to refer to the various forms of violence the Muslim minority in Britain uses to express its grievances and claim for its rights. Finally, Interculturalism, is a policy that "recognizes that in a society of mixed ethnicities, cultures act in multiple directions. Host or majority cultures are influenced by immigrant or minority

cultures and vice versa” (D. Powell et S. Fiona, 2004 : 1). Consequently, the tumultuous cohabitation between Muslims and white people in the West is skilfully depicted in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*. In the novel, she features a Muslim community, from Bangladesh, which is established in the London district of Tower Hamlets. That Muslim community is rejected by natives who suspect them of trying to colonise British people. As a response, the migrants self-ghettoise and consider taking terrorist actions within and outside Britain in order to both earn the respect of their fellow British and support their fellow Muslims who are reportedly being martyred in the Orient and Middle-East by Westerners. However, in the midst of this chaos, the contact zone created by some Muslim migrants and natives through a cultural dialogue gives hope to both communities for a prospective peaceful cohabitation.

Considering the situation described in the novel, this work purports to show that the failure of multiculturalism in Britain prompts Muslims, as the most harassed minority group, to recourse to religious extremism to create their own space in the metropolis and fight Whites back. However, the intercultural relationship between the two groups can settle the matter. Therefore, the main question that leads to this quest is the following: How does Monica Ali describe multiculturalism in Britain? Can interculturalism restore the cultural trust and social truce in Britain? The answer to these questions will appear through the three movements of the analysis. The first movement consists in showing how Whites’ racism helps them to push Muslim migrants to the background of the British society. Then, the second one consists in showing how Muslims resort to religious extremism, namely Jihad, to fight Westerners’ anti-Islam prejudices in general and the injustice of the British society in particular. Finally the third movement shows how interculturalism as social blueprint can re-establish peace and trust between natives and Muslim migrants in Britain.

The focus of this article on the cultural strife between British and Muslim migrants leads us to carry out our analysis through the postcolonial theory. Hence, all along the analysis, concepts such as “Subaltern”, “Eurocentrism”, “Orientalism”, “religious fundamentalism” and “cultural diversity” will be very useful to show that in *Brick Lane*, Natives adopt a Eurocentric view in order to push Muslim migrants to the background and silence them as well socially as culturally. Beside this, the Postcolonial theory will show that the silencing of Muslim migrants does not suffice to erase them from Britain’s cultural landscape. In their struggle to survive in Britain, the Muslims in *Brick lane* rather undertake to create their own space from where they will be able to utter their grievances and assume an identity that will be proper to their

community. This situation echoes Bill Ashcroft et al in *The Postcolonial Key Concepts* where they contend that for Muslim minorities in the West,

Islamist fundamentalism in particular has emerged in the public domain as a force that asserts a shared identity above and beyond their cultural allegiances, causing direct confrontation to emerge in many societies with earlier markers of identity based on secular formation such as nationality and citizenship (2007: 188).

It means that the postcolonial theory will help us to bring into relief the fact that the trial of strength between British and Muslims bears testimony to both, natives' will to keep the cultural monopoly and Muslims' struggle to compensate for their rejection from Britishness by endorsing a religious-based identity that would bring them close to the worldwide Muslim community. Nevertheless, a convivial and comprehensive cultural cohabitation between Whites and migrant Muslims in Britain can help to create a harmonious British society where the major and the minor cultures coalesce, communicate and emerge with more strength from the ashes of the multicultural pyre of insularity.

1. Native British's Hostility

The analysis of this movement consists in exposing how *Brick Lane* presents the way natives express their hostility towards migrant Muslims.

1-1.Racial Segregation: The Spatial Confinement

In this analysis, we intend to show how in *Brick Lane* the spatial occupation in Britain is used by natives as a means of discrimination.

First of all, in *Brick Lane*, natives' contempt and hypocrisy constrain migrants to choose self-isolation. As a matter of fact, in their retreat from the neighbourhood of Tower Hamlets, some White people like "the tattoo lady" (BL: 18) decide to stay in the district. The choice some natives make to cohabit with Muslim migrants has nothing to do with love. For the natives who still live in Tower Hamlets, the cohabitation is an opportunity to spy on migrants. The situation of distrust between Muslim migrants and British people is expressed by Mrs. Islam when she states that: "At time they are polite. They smile. They say "please" this and "Thank you" that. Make no mistake about it, they shake your hand with the right, and with the left they stab you in the back" (BL: 206). This remark by Mrs Islam says a lot about British's behaviour towards Muslim migrants in *Brick Lane*. British are hypocritical in their relationships with migrants. Everything they do is out of pretence. In this condition, as Muslims remark that their British hosts are deceitful with them, they opt for a self-isolation strategy. In order to hide

their frustration, the Muslim community in Tower Hamlets takes advantage of natives' hostile behaviour to ghettoise themselves. From then on, migrants' living place becomes an exclusive space, a sort of country within a country.

Therefore, *Brick Lane*'s Muslim migrants' gathering in the same district corroborates Melanie Philips's statement that some district in Britain are now "Muslim enclave" (2015:35). In fact, the underhand racism suffered by migrants in *Brick Lane* serves as a motivation for their coming together. From then on, Tower Hamlets becomes the symbol of migrants' will to organise a community where they are likely to avoid Whites' hypocrisy. That is why Chanu sheds light on the fact that Muslim migrants have turned Tower Hamlets into a Muslim preserve with a close-knit religious and cultural group. He states that: "They stick together because they come from the same district. They know each other from the villages, and they come to Tower Hamlets and they think they are back in the village" (BL: 28). Chanu's sentence is the evidence that Muslim migrants fear Whites' arrogance and contempt. Therefore, the self-segregation is the opportunity for them to avoid any contact with White people. In so doing, migrants are able to live according to their own cultural codes and they avoid suffering Whites' racist comments. However, Muslim's gathering in the same place turns them into easy targets for natives. Hence, the houses they inhabit are used as weapons to discriminate against them.

1-2. Muslims exploitation

Muslim migrants' desire to fend for themselves in Britain is the opportunity for natives to make them work to the bones. This method is the continuation of the colonial system which consisted in overexploiting the indigenous populations to the benefit of the colonial power. Thus, this analysis purports to investigate the way *Brick Lane* exposes Muslim migrants' exploitation by Whites.

First of all, in *Brick Lane*, migrants are refused any high standard job. Thus, all the jobs they are given are just meant for their exploitation. Indeed, as Galahad says in *The Lonely Londoners*, "Job is all the security a man have. A job mean place to sleep, food to eat, cigarette to smoke" (2006: 27). This quotation means that in the modern society, a job is a means to maintain people's humanity. Without job, people are bound to live undignified lives. However, in *Brick Lane*, this is natives' purpose. White people, consider that depriving migrants from job opportunities means more power for Whites. In this respect, whenever natives pretend to give Muslim migrants a job opportunity, it is to exploit them in a pitiful way.

In *Brick Lane* labour is turned into a weapon that favours the dislocation of migrants' families and exposes the women to enormous sufferings when their husbands are victims of an occupational hazards. In fact, in *Brick Lane*, the reification of Muslim migrants leads their British employers to treat them like the postcolonial slaves, the valets and the underdogs of the metropolis. In this respect, Chanu states that migrants roam the city of London "working like donkey" (BL: 139). The fact that Chanu qualifies his peers as donkeys means that the hard work they put in is insufficient to help them make ends meet. In this condition, migrants' lives are stuck. They are used as work machines to perform all the tasks which, at first sight, seem debasing and hard to be done by white people. In *Brick Lane*, this ongoing inhuman treatment finally gets the better of Razia's husband. As he used to do a dead-end-job in a slaughterhouse; he ends up killed, crushed by "seventeen falling frozen cow" (BL: 139). The fact for him to die in the harness is the evidence that his job was very dangerous and his employers knew it. This dramatic story shows that migrants are treated as the modern slaves. They have to work in horrible conditions to win their bread. The death of Razia's husband testifies that the normal labour conditions are not gathered to secure migrant workers. Their White employers care less about their lives; in as much as when they die or get injured, there are many other famished migrants to take over.

This cunning exploitation of migrant workers is echoed in *The Lonely Londoner* by Sam Selvon. Selvon's testimonial novel about the early coloured migrants in Britain brings up the wicked trick used against migrant workers since then. In the novel, Moses states that: "They send you for a storekeeper work and they want to put you in the yard to lift heavy iron. They think that is all we good for, and this time keeping all the soft clerical for them white fellars" (2006: 35). Moses's revelation is quite interesting in the understanding of *Brick Lane's* Muslims' predicaments on the labour market. Indeed, not only does the passage help us understand the inhuman treatments inflicted upon the former postcolonial migrants in Britain, but it also helps us understand the exploitation of Muslim migrants by the British employers in Tower Hamlets. It means that migrants in Britain are considered as the milky cows who have to provide for the crown whatever the conditions.

In this condition, migrant Muslims and their families fail to meet the ideal of jobs as guarantors of social security. Hence, migrants' poverty is what leaves them at the mercy of their White hosts. Through poverty, migrants are kept at the bottom of the social ladder while the British hosts keep climbing from bottom to top. In this condition, as they fail to win their bread, Muslim migrants in Britain become freeloaders.

1-3. Migrant Muslims in Britain: the Spongers

Muslim women in Britain have no resources to live on. The harsh segregation policy and the stereotyping that keep them off the labour market makes poverty shower on them. As a consequence to that poverty, migrants have no more recourse than bowing and scraping to natives.

To begin with, in *Brick Lane*, migrant women are turned into beggars across Tower Hamlets. As shown earlier, all the systems put in place to prevent migrants from thriving in Britain result in their impoverishment. Therefore, when migrants like Razia and Jorina are deprived of their means of subsistence, they have nothing left than charity and alms. The harshness of their condition leads them to forget about their pride. Under such circumstances, British are the ones who come to their rescue. Even though it is a hypocritical assistance, Muslim communities consider it as a relief. Thus, the strategy that consists for Whites to create poverty within the Muslim community and then pretend to be compassionate is very evident. In the narrative, Chanu so well understands the mechanism that he complains as follows: “If they see us rise then they are resentful because we have left our proper place” (BL: 38), and then, they “feel threatened” (BL: 257). Chanu’s analysis sticks to the reality of the situation Muslim women and their communities face in Britain. According to the social blueprint of the country, Muslim migrants have to be prevented from acceding the symbol of power that can make them rise to the top of the ladder. Henceforth, the symbol of power in the British capitalist society being money; migrants and their families are weaned from money sources. The technique used to reach this goal is the scarcity of jobs for migrants or the bare bone salaries they get when they have an occupation.

Moreover, Whites take advantage of the poverty in Muslim women’s community to put in place another belittling form of discrimination. This new discrimination policy is described by Ayaan Hirsi as “Racism of low expectations”. Ayaan Hirsi Ali writes that this type of racism comes as a response “to the social failures of Muslim immigrants” (2010: 11). In this regard, Muslim migrants’ failure is the visible result of a whole political and cultural process skilfully framed up to turn them into beggars whose hands are always stretched to receive from the white boss. Thus, Ayaan Hirsi Ali continues to blame Whites’ social policy for Muslim migrants. In her opinion, the fact that migrants are pigeonholed as weak, desperate people who need assistance is racism. That is why she states that: “This western attitude is based on the fact that people of colour must be exempted from “Normal” standards of behaviour” (2010: 11). It means that Muslim migrants too are encouraged to dwell in

unemployment and content themselves with the allowances they are given. In this way, their poverty is justified and they are assisted for being inactive and unproductive. However this condition of assisted people helps Whites to state their superiority over Muslim women and their communities. Yet, the subtlety of the practice leads migrants to fall into a complacent comfort and laziness becomes a privilege for them.

Actually, labour is important for anyone aspiring to a livelihood. But the problem still remains with its difficulty and the suffering it creates in the labourer. In this sense, when people are exempted from labour's torture, they take it as a privilege, a blessing. However, what they ignore is that labour has a humanising value. It helps the individual to be useful to his community, his family and the whole society. In this condition, a person who fails to have a job and feels proud of it has lost a part of his humanity. Hence, he has no value for the society he lives in. In this connection, in *Brick Lane*, Razia is one of the examples of the women's complacency towards the planned impoverishment of Muslim migrants. She displays her ignorance by raving about the system. Thus, Razia states that: "If you don't have job here they give you money. Did you know that? You can have somewhere to live, without any rent. Your children go to school. And on the top of that they give you money" (BL: 73). What Razia fails to know is all these favours are to be taken with caution; in as much as they are mere poisoned chalices that are meant to blur migrants' conscience and keep them in a state of poverty through low salaries in underemployment and unemployment.

To corroborate the tricky nature of social assistance, John Hartwell Moore's *Encyclopaedia of Race and Racism* gives us a good understanding of the policy hidden behind the welfare state. Indeed, it is stated in the encyclopaedia that if "the welfare state is theoretically characterized as a system providing services and protection as a right of citizenship. In practice, however, social services in Britain are neither comprehensive nor generous" (2008: 80). This revelation breaks the myth of the generosity of the welfare state. It allows us to see how pernicious the system is in planning so wicked a strategy. In reality, it is meant to complete the dehumanisation process of migrants who, by dint of enjoying the donations from the State and some clichés-ridden natives, no longer try to make ends meet in their own ways. Thus, the sweat of their brow cools out of idleness.

In this connection, the dehumanising character of public assistance towards migrants is expressed by Leila Aboulela in one of her first articles entitled "Travel is Part of Our Faith". In the article, Leila, as a new-comer in Scotland, is broached by a native who gives her a coin. Then, she expresses her amazement as follows: "so that's how we looked, my baby and I,

deserving of charity. That's how we appeared, poverty stricken foreigners! It was a blow to my pride" (2007: 3). Aboulela's sentence is an explanation of what Razia and the other families suffer in Tower Hamlets. Whites' kindness to them is both a mere confirmation of migrants' pauperisation and natives' superiority. Hence, Leila's reaction is what sounds normal in front of this belittling attitude of natives who reduce Muslim migrants to mere beggars.

However, Unlike Leila Aboulela, Razia in *Brick Lane* is far from being shocked. She fails to see people's charity as a denial of her dignity. She is even pleased to be assisted and dares tell Nazneen that: "My husband has a work colleague, he gives us things. Clothes that his children have grown out of. (...) All sort of things" (BL: 72). Unfortunately, by accepting his White colleague's gifts that are no more than old hand-me-downs, Razia and her husband validate the White man's superiority over them. The white man imagines that he is richer than Razia and her family. Therefore, the fact of giving them what he no longer needs gives him the illusion that he possesses more than them. But Razia is totally blind to the game. She just sees what she is offered and ignores the tricks that lies beneath the pseudo-charitable actions. Natives' behaviour toward the impoverished Muslims echoes Edward Said's opinion when he states that Orientalism is a means for the West to pose the Orient as "its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the other" (1977: 1). It means that for British people, anything that comes from the Orient, like Muslims, has to be despised, reviled and belittled. Thus, when Muslims are considered as beggars who live on charity, they are naturally excluded from any contribution to Britishness.

2. The Battles of the Identities in *BL*

Upon all the bad treatments inflicted upon Muslim communities, they are clearly maintained outside mainstream British society. This situation results in Muslims' unfitness to the criteria of British identity. Thus, in *Brick Lane*, the author shows how natives defend their national identity as regards foreigners like Muslim migrants. That is why, in the subsequent analysis, we show natives' will to protect their identity leads them to question multiculturalism in Britain.

2-1. The White Hearts' Denial of Multiculturalism in *Brick Lane*

Britain is today a cosmopolite country. This is owed to the fact that people from many parts of the globe migrate to the country. However, the cohabitation between migrant minorities and natives raises the question of cultural hegemony. Indeed, the presence of many cultures in the country leads the authorities to advocate the policy of multiculturalism. The situation

worries Whites as regards the prevalence of Britishness over any other culture. Hence, natives decide to constrain the Muslim community to fall in line with the British cultural norms. For the young British who have the initiative with leading this struggle, it is an imperative to impose the supremacy of British culture on Muslims.

To begin with, in *Brick Lane*, natives pigeonhole the cultures that cohabitate in London. In this categorisation, the local culture that is considered as the authentic and civilized one is located at the top. Hence, migrants' culture, which is described as barbaric must stay at the bottom of London's cultural ladder. Indeed, the first aim of natives' exclusionist behaviour is to push migrants' culture to invisibility. In so doing, British are likely to control the cultural debate in the metropolis. That is why, in *Brick Lane*, any occasion to trample on migrants' culture is a blessing for natives. Therefore, in order to show *Brick Lane*'s Muslim community that their culture is disturbing in Tower Hamlets, the narrator states that: "The police had been to the mosque and questioned the Imam for two hours. No one had any idea why (...), and everyone doubted that a church had ever been treated with such a flagrant disrespect" (BL: 206). This is an evidence that Muslim migrants in *Brick Lane* are barred from playing a part in the cultural structure of the metropolis. The behaviour Muslims label as a "disrespect" is in reality a message sent to them. Natives want to make it clear that the territory Muslims inhabit is first and foremost for Whites. Therefore, if a culture is to be given credit, it is the British one. Thus, even the mosque which is a sacred place should be desacralized so that Muslims can know that in Britain, no religion can be sanctified apart from the local creeds and beliefs.

Hence, Whites refuse to see migrants display overtly their home cultural items all over Britain. For natives, this is too risky. That is why, as Peter Whittle considers that multiculturalism is a real danger for British identity, he contends that: "If everybody can be British, then it follows that nobody is British _ or rather it can be viewed as increasingly meaningless label" (2012: 80). This quotation by Peter is the evidence that for Whites, Britishness is a one way life structure. No room can be made for diversity. Indeed, the opening of the doors of Britishness to other forms of culture is the byword for the loss of Whites supremacy. Therefore, any sign of an external cultural reference must be suppressed and discouraged.

In addition, in *Brick Lane*, Muslims' cultural identity is just suppressed and trampled down in order to prevent it from existing within the cross-cultural relationships between the metropolis' minorities and natives. This uselessness of Muslim migrants' culture appears when the narrator reveals that: "Walking in the street, on her way to college Razia's daughter had her

Hijab pulled off.” (BL: 368). This kind of humiliation is the evidence that Muslims’ cultural symbols are disturbing in Britain. That is the reason why they are reviled and belittled like *persona non grata*. As Whites refuse to see any external cultural reference to be part of Britishness in the name of multiculturalism, Muslims’ cultural identity appears as a blot on the local cultural landscape. Muslims’ culture wrongs the British ideal of cultural genuineness. Under these conditions, migrants in *Brick Lane* should be aware of the fact that their cultural singularity is a mere illusion. Whatever they do, they are prevented from displaying the tokens of Islam as freely as they want.

Consequently, in this context of trivialisation of Muslims’ culture in *Brick Lane*, Seda Arikian et al find the reason that justifies natives’ patronising attitude towards Muslim migrants. According to them, “Britain, as an earlier colonizer of some colonies, continued her dominating attitude toward the colonies and the people coming from there” (2010: 5). Hence, when people from the former colonies get to Britain, they have to grovel to natives and content themselves with what they are given as opportunities. No complaints coming from them can be accepted by the native community. The fact of being Black or Brown compels Muslim migrants to make do with what they have at their disposal. They cannot afford the cultural autonomy they want to show by exposing their home culture in London. For Natives, this is a true imbroglio. How dare Muslim women and their community display a culture from Pakistan, Bangladesh or Sudan and then claim that they are British citizens? Certainly not. For natives, this is out of the question

From then on, for Whites, this behaviour comes down to usurpation and disrespect for British identity. In fact, theoretically, migrants may be considered as British citizens. But in practice, they are far from being regarded as such. For British, Muslims’ behaviour is contradictory. When they claim for their British identity, they still dwell in their home culture. Whites regard this contradictory behaviour as an attempt at colonisation. Hence, after the policy of marginalisation implemented through the massive segregation of Muslim women and their community of ‘Tower Hamlets’ in *Brick Lane*, it is now high time for natives to enhance their strategy by advocating the restoration of the authentic British identity from the void in which it is thrown. To reach this purpose, the White Hearts advocate the adoption of Nativism as strategy in *Brick Lane*.

In *Postcolonial Key Concepts* by Bill Ashcroft et al, Nativism is defined as “a desire to return to indigenous practices and cultural forms as they existed in pre-colonial society” (2007:156). In fact, the huge presence of migrants in Britain represents a threat for the stability

of the local mores and values. Therefore, in *Brick Lane*, Whites take a jaundiced view of the tentaculous character of Muslim migrants' culture in their surroundings. Actually, Britain as a country with a strong attachment to Christianity is bound to lose her soul if ever Christianity is to disappear from her cultural symbols. For the young British it is about time they did something about it in order to give the opportunity to their intrinsic identity, which is Britishness, to prosper in its own land without being threatened or stifled by Muslim migrants' sabotage. That is why the 'Lion Hearts' state that: "*The islamification of our neighbourhood has gone too far. (...) how long before the extremists are putting veils on our women and insulting our daughters for wearing short skirts? Don't not tolerate it! Write to the council! This is England!*" (BL: 251) The fact of ending the complaint by "*this is England!*" is far from being a random fact. It is a way for the white campaigners to let the Muslims, in *brick Lane*, know that the space wherein they are is first and foremost for Whites. Therefore, if a culture has to be displayed all over the place it must be Whites' culture. Accordingly, Muslim women's dress code is regarded as a sign of defiance.

Therefore, the White Hearts' obsession with denouncing Islam and Muslims comes under the fact that for them, Britain is a Christian land and it should remain so. A foreign culture should never take precedence over the British one. That is why they ring the alarm by pointing out that: "*Christianity is being gently slaughtered. It is "only one" of the world "great religions". Indeed, in our local school you could be forgiven for thinking that Islam is the official religion*" (BL: 251). For White people, Britain is likely to become an Islamic-ruled country where the principles of Islam are inoculated to White children. Therefore, Christianity which is the window of British culture will be pushed to the background while Muslim minority's culture will lead the cultural debate in the metropolis. The focus the young White campaigners put on White schoolboys is owed to the fact that according to Anthony Smith, it is "through compulsory, standardized, public mass education systems (that) state authorities hope to inoculate national devotion and a distinctive homogenous culture" (1991: 27). It means that education is the canal through which culture and patriotism are passed to future generations. However, the notion of "homogeneous culture" in the White children of Tower Hamlets is in jeopardy. The new generation of White children risks emerging out of school as culturally mongrelised people. This way of envisioning the British society, as a multicultural society, is out of the question for the White Hearts. After their rejection from the British nationhood, Muslims turn to another means of identification namely religion.

2-2. British Muslims' Pan-Islamic Identity

As they are dismissed from any cultural contribution in Britain, Muslim migrants in Britain turn to the worldwide Muslim community in order to strengthen and tighten their cultural affiliation. Therefore, through pan-Islamism, we mean that Muslims in Britain consider themselves as members of the worldwide Muslim family where only Islam prevails as the unique identity symbol.

Pan-Islamism is the fact for all the Muslims around the world to be connected through a single historical and cultural kinship. This situation turns all the Muslims into brothers and sisters who share in the same values, worries, struggles and hopes. In this respect, as they lose any hope to be part of the ideal of Britishness, Muslims in Britain try to cling to something valuable that can help them fill in the gap left by their current hazy identity. In this sense, the new identity Muslims endorse in Britain is not a random one. It comes from the faith, the creed (Islam) they have embraced and inherited from their forefathers' culture. That is why in *Brick Lane*, When Chanu feels that his desire to be considered as a British is doomed to remain a dream, Nazneen reveals that "for the first time since they were married, (she) watched him take the Quran. He sat on the floor and he stayed with the book for the rest of the evening" (BL: 252). This revival of Chanu's relationship with a religion he would endeavour to shun from, just to be called a British citizen, is an evidence that Muslims recourse to religious fundamentalism originates from their frustrations, their failure, to be accepted by the host countries as full citizens who can play their part in the local culture enrichment process.

This behaviour by British Muslims is explained by Ulrike Tancke who states that: "Religion, most obviously in its fundamentalist guise, functions as an antidote to the crisis of identity" (2011: 4). It means that to fulfil their will to belong to an identity typology, Muslim migrants in the West, especially in Britain, make a comeback to their parents' cultural agenda. By doing so, they show that they are now ready to forgo anything that belongs to the country they live in. This last step becomes the renewal step. They slough like snakes, turn over a new leaf to become devote Muslims which and they begin to boast their cultural values

In Britain, Muslim migrants consider that their culture has more moral credential than natives'. Actually, as they look for argument to justify their now hostile behaviour against Whites' culture, Muslims endeavour to show that the culture indulged by natives is a set of immoral and perverse practices that go against the Islamic ethical rigour and purity. Accordingly, in order to denounce the host culture's filthiness, the young Muslims in *Brick Lane* issue a leaflet in which they write:

We refer to a leaflet put recently into circulation by those who claim to uphold the 'native' culture. We have a message for them.

KEEP YOUR BREASTS TO YOURSELF

And we say this. It is not us who like to degrade women by showing their body parts in public spaces. (BL: 258)

This excerpt is the evidence that the British territory has turned into a civilizational battle ground between Muslim migrants and natives. For Muslims, from now on, their separation from mainstream British society is indisputable. Therefore, no culture elements from the infamous Western culture should be given the opportunity to influence their ways. Muslims behaviour in Britain is vindicated by Hanif Kureishi in his book *The Words and the Bomb*. For him, "it is constraining, limiting, degrading to be a victim in your own country. If you feel excluded it might be tempting to exclude the others" (2011: 37-38). In other words, in *Brick Lane*, owing to their frustrations, Karim and his peers no longer indulge in western civilisation. They have turned over a new leaf and the spring of their religious awakening has come. Now they abide by the religious texts they have elected as their identity flagpole, Islam. This new identity is specific to them in London. They will not have to fight over it with other people. On the contrary, this new identity mark excludes all the other groups that are not devoted to Islam. That is why although Karim is in London, Nazneen reveals that "when (he) came last time he read from a magazine about the orphan children in refugee camps in Gaza. He was moved and she (Nazneen) watched as a cycle of emotion started turning. (...) As he explained the situation, his eyes became watery" (BL: 274). It means that Karim, who used to enjoy western culture by wearing unislamic dresses, is now looking down on it. His deep connection with the Quran has even linked him to the other Muslims all over the world.

Therefore, Karim feels for any Muslims who suffers in other parts of the world. This situation suggests that Karim has found his anchor. A space he can now endorse without somebody coming in to remind him he is out of place. *Brick Lane*'s Muslims take western civilisation for a shit; a pit of dishonour that does not bear a single trace of divinity. Muslims dwell on the religion of their parents' homelands and see western culture as an opponent. The insurgence of Muslims against British cultural values is also highlighted in *My Son the Fanatic* by Hanif Kureishi as the protagonist, Ali, opposes his father's involvement in western culture. Ali tells his father that: "You are too involved in western civilisation". Then he asks him: "The western materialists hate us". "Papa, how can you love something which hates you"? (H. Kureishi, 2013: 20-21) This question is the evidence that the young Muslims in *Brick Lane* indulge in Islamic fundamentalism just because they have been rejected by natives. Therefore,

they take the latter for their enemies. Religious fundamentalism as adopted by Muslim migrants in *Brick Lane* later spurs on young Muslims' desire to undertake extremist actions.

2-3. Advocating “Jihad”: The “Bengal Tigers” Crossing Continents

Jihad is commonly defined as a “holy war for the propagation of Islam”. In the Middle-East and Orient, it is generally used by Islamic extremist groups to claim for their rights and defend their political positions as regard the West. In the West, the Muslim diaspora envisions to use this religious violence in order to defend themselves in the West. They also see Jihad as a means of international solidarity that can bring all the downtrodden Muslims together in order to fight the Western oppressor.

The fact for Muslim migrants to assume a transnational identity in *Brick Lane* helps them to secure an identity. Yet, this identity is not sufficient for their security. To ensure their security, they resort to another solution which is atrocious: Jihad. Indeed, the Jihad advocated in *Brick Lane* by the Bengal Tigers is first for the protection of their community within Britain. It is a kind of rebellion within the State in order to claim for their rights. Through their violent actions, *Brick Lane*'s Muslims expect to slide down to the centre of mainstream British society. That is why when Karim notices that: “Out there, there are people who are twisted with hatred for us and for Islam” (BL: 417), another character known as the Questioner states that: “This ain't time for committee. This is time for Jihad” (BL: 281). It means that Muslims have enough of the unfair situation they have been taking in Britain. Time has come to turn the tide and show natives that Muslims have a ground to defend too. This ground is nothing other than their cultural and religious assets.

Muslims consider that for Islam to stand Westerners' arrogance, aggressiveness and rudeness, it must be loaded with an equal level of rudeness and coarseness. This vision by the Muslims in *Brick Lane* is echoed by Hanif Kureishi's Characters, in *The Black Album*, when they state that: “A religion that's lost its hatred is not a religion” (2005:107). From the above sentence, it can be inferred that Islam itself has become for Muslim migrants the lethal arm they draw their hatred and courage from. So, full of this hatred Islam has inoculated them with, Muslims are not ready to put up with any kind of frustration as they used to do. They are not like the “blasted Christians. (They) don't turn the other buttock” (Kureishi, 2005:53). This situation is all the more true that Chanu acknowledges that “We always kept quiet, the young ones don't want to be quiet any more” (BL: 258). Chanu's quote testifies to the fact that the use of Islam as an anchor has perked up Muslims' morale and given them an identity they are ready

to defend come what may. Beyond this protective character of Jihad, Britain's Muslims use it as a rehabilitative tool to impose Islam as a good religion.

Besides, Muslim migrants consider that the recourse to Jihad can also rehabilitate the image of Islam in Britain. In fact, as Muslims consider that they are victims of a bad publicity across Britain, they are convinced that some retaliative violence can help them restore the good image they are denied all over the country. That is why when Karim the leader of the Bengal Tigers calls on a meeting to fight back the White supremacists of Tower Hamlets, he welcomes his audience with the following statement: "It's good to see so many of us united in our stand against those scummy people who dare come round here and slander our religion" (BL: 413). This statement is the evidence that in Tower Hamlets, it is all about Islam now. Muslims consider their religion as the last and trustworthy identity token they are left. Henceforth, they are ready to go to every length to cling to it, even if it means to wage war.

Tower Hamlets' Muslims' behaviour is explained by Amine Maalouf who writes that: "Where people feel their faith is threatened, it is their religious affiliation that seems to reflect their whole identity" (2008: 13). However, the identities inspired by and anchored to religious references are in Maalouf's words "murderous or mortal identities, identities that kill" (2008: 30). It means that for the Muslims who resort to Islam to fill in the void created by their rejection from the British multicultural dialogue; violence against their fellow citizens, who despise and reject them, is the solution to restore and impose a good image of their creed.

Thus, even if Muslims defence of their identity often consists in taking others' lives, they regard it as a legitimate retaliation that aims at delineating their territory and Identity slandered by natives. For this reason, Karim wants the reprisal to begin at home. He suggests to his friends to "think global but act local" (BL: 287), insofar as he wants them to "fight the ones (pagans) on (their) doorsteps first" (BL: 284). These quotations show that the key ground for Muslims' struggle in Britain is the defence of their people, their identity and their faith. Amin Maalouf's explanation of this macabre ideology of Jihadists is very clear. He states that the "butchers often have a clear conscience and are amazed to hear themselves described as criminals. How can they be criminals when all they are doing is protecting their aged mothers, their brothers and sisters and children" (2005: 34)? It means that in *Brick Lane*, Muslims plan to resort to Jihad in order to cleanse the name of their religion and protect their community in Britain.

Muslim migrants become Jihadist to protect their families that have been exposed to all kind of abuses in Britain because of their allegiance to Islam. In this connection, Mirza Asmer Berg contends that “Jihad is defensive” (2008: 58). From this sentence, we understand that through Jihad, Muslims care for their relatives who cannot do so by themselves. In fact, as described in *Brick Lane*, the social atmosphere has never been favourable to Muslim migrants in Britain. They are downtrodden and confined to the most abject living conditions. These bad treatments obviously lead them to wallow in poverty, ignorance and disillusionment. Hence, violence is the only way out they are offered. They have to threaten and kill so that they can exist in the cultural exchange in Britain. Moreover, for their struggle to be efficient and effective, Muslim migrants in Britain have to express their loyalty to the global Muslim community. This step consists in taking the fight out of Britain in order to defeat their Western haters at a global scale. It can also be called international Jihad.

In *Brick Lane*, Jihad is also a matter of international solidarity. In fact, the Muslims in Britain have sympathy and empathy for their counterparts around the world. Thus, they are no longer Jihadists against Britain only. They now member a transnational Islamic army which uses the religious weapon in the struggle against the western oppressor. Actually, for some times past, the powerful Western countries have been trying to lay hand again on Muslim countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan in order to avail themselves of their oil reservoirs. However, some native people in these countries take a jaundiced view of that Western initiative. They make up their minds to tackle this issue head on. In this respect, the Bengal tigers, as Muslim citizens, refuse to be on the periphery of this struggle. Therefore, in *Brick Lane*, the protagonist known as the Questioner tries to motivate his fellow Muslims through the following statement: “The most powerful nation on this planet attacks one of the most ravaged countries in the world. We are fit young men. There are no chains tying us to these walls. With a little planning, a little effort, we can cross walls” (BL: 415). This quotation shows that owing to their new transnational identity, Britain’s Muslims complain about the gloomy neo-colonial situations that hurts their fathers’ homelands and they want to help settle the matter. The Questioner’s idea gives us a clear reading of the Bengal Tigers’ frame of mind. As they are tired of looking at Muslims’ unfair conditions in the world, the battle-ready Muslim diaspora has decided to join the international Islamic army in order to defeat the Western haters. By crossing continents, they will be able to join their brothers in Iran, Pakistan, Iraq or Afghanistan and help them fight against Western neo-imperialists.

Thus, the adoption of Jihad as a way of resisting Western neo-imperialism is praised by *Brick Lane*'s Jihadists as the propitiatory sacrifice that will first create an earthly paradise and then a heavenly paradise for the Jihadists and the whole Muslim community. In other words, the Jihad Muslims carry out is likely to free them from the oppression and dictate of Western stereotypes against Islam and Muslims. Also, if the Jihadist meets his death during his actions, his soul is sure to reach heaven as God already approves of the fight that has led to his death. Hence, during the meetings they hold, they take time to indoctrinate the members of the community who are still reluctant. Eventually, when all the young men in the community are nowhere to be seen, the narrator reveals that Nazneen "had a vision: Karim in his jeans and White shirt, a thin gold chain at his neck and a bale of dresses over his shoulder; Karim in a mountain cave, surrounded by men in turbans wielding machine-guns" (BL: 486). Nazneen's vision is telling. It sheds light on Britain's Muslims' will to join the fight in remote areas in order to save the face of Islam and Muslims. In this respect, Jihad becomes the magic rod the community uses to settle the civilizational problem that opposes the West to the East.

The fact for the Muslim diaspora to join in the international Jihad is explained by Olivier Roy's definition of Jihad. For him, Jihad is "an individual religious obligation on the same level as the five pillars. It is no longer optional, at least as long as part of the ummah is suffering under a foreign yoke" (2017:13). Roy's conception of Jihad ably accounts for British Muslim's will to join in the international Jihad in order to help their fellow Muslims who are reportedly bullied by Westerners. Hence, Jihad is a testimony to the emotional connection between all the Muslims around the world, insofar as the suffering of a group of Muslims in a remote country can be retaliated in Britain by the local Muslim community. However, in this context of culture conflict between Whites and Muslim migrants in Britain; some Muslims, like Nazneen, find the energy to value both Western and Islamic culture.

3. The Reconciliation of the West and the Orient

In *Brick Lane*, the culture belligerence between Muslims and their White hosts is resolved by some members of the Muslim community who indiscriminately join in both Western and Islamic culture. To succeed in doing that, these protagonists give in to the spell of Western culture.

3-1. The Appeal of British Culture

The status of traditional Muslim woman endorsed by Nazneen is gnawed at by the contact she has with British culture. As time goes, the things Nazneen sees around her influence her mind set and she feels like discovering and understanding Western culture.

In *Brick Lane*, despite her Islamic allegiance, Nazneen ends up being attracted by Western culture. Even though Muslim migrant communities impose on their women to resist Western culture, the challenge is hard to take. In this respect, as Nazneen is kept at home, her contact with the outer world is mediated through the television. However, Nazneen's contact with the media brings to her what she is supposed to ignore. Actually, as she watches a television show that features an ice-skating woman, Nazneen discovers that a woman has a place elsewhere than in the kitchen. The effect of the scene on Nazneen leads the narrator to say that: "The screen held her" (BL: 36). Nazneen is focused on the television because the show she watches brings her a new reality. The narrator's commentary shows that what Nazneen sees on television raises her interest and curiosity. She is astonished to see a woman doing something else than cooking or tidying a house. Hence, she asks her husband: "What is this called?" (BL: 36) When her husband answers: "Ice skating", she tries her best to repeat it, but she mispronounces it as "Ice e-skating" (BL: 36).

Therefore, Nazneen's curiosity about the White woman's freedom to use her time as she wishes is the first aperture she has on White women's life in Britain. Through this woman on the ice rink, she can imagine how life is when one is a White woman. From that moment on, the reality is no more the same for Chanu. Even though his wife still tries to be faithful to her home culture, she begins to have new cultural landmarks in her life. Hence, when Chanu prevents her from going out to see what the outer world looks like, television becomes the evading loophole that helps Nazneen escape her usual domestic world.

3-2. Muslim Women in *Brick Lane*: The Apostles of Interculturalism

In *Brick Lane*, Muslim women establish a cultural dialogue with the host culture. By so doing, they avoid stereotyping the local culture and they even enjoy it for a better integration into the mainstream society. This way of behaving comes under an intercultural system that breaks the barriers between the ethnics that inhabits the same place; insofar as according to Phil wood *et* Charle Landry, "an intercultural approach aims to facilitate dialogue, exchange and reciprocal understanding between people of different background" (2006: 9).

In *Brick Lane*, Nazneen fears that the lure of British culture nullifies her pledge to be a good Muslim woman. Therefore, she chooses a mitigated solution that consists in enjoying both cultures at the same time. This way of applying interculturalism has an ambivalent undertone. Actually, in the realm of postcolonial theory, “Ambivalence” is defined by Bill Ashcroft et al as “the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized” (2007:10). It means that while the coloniser wants the colonized to imitate him, he is also afraid of a resemblance that might result in the loss of his power over the colonized. In the light of this definition, the practice of interculturalism leads Nazneen to have an ambivalent identity in *Brick Lane*. Indeed, while Nazneen envies British culture she also wants to keep track of her Islamic culture from Bangladesh. For her, the fact of turning to another identity is a moral betrayal toward the community and Islam.

Nazneen’s way of practicing interculturalism shows that to her mind, identity is a bargain, a negotiation in order to find an equilibrium within a society wherein many identities are at play. That is the reason why, instead of turning her back on her original culture, she rather opts for a mitigated solution. That is to say, she chooses to be a migrant with an ambivalent identity. In this respect, when Nazneen goes to the ice rink for the first time, she keeps her sari. This paradoxical mixture makes her daughter tell her that: “But you cannot skate in a sari” (BL, 492). The scene on the rink summarises Nazneen’s identity in Britain: she likes British culture, but she fears it makes her lose track of her former identity. Therefore, she straddles both cultures. That is why Ashti Anwar Mohammed concludes that: “Nazneen succeeds in finding her own identity. She keeps her Bangladeshi traditions, but assimilates into British society by adopting certain aspects of Western culture” (2016: 552). This solution helps her enjoy a bit of each culture without being entirely part of them.

Similarly, Mrs. Azad joins in the intercultural trend by adopting all the behavioural codes of Western women. Indeed, Mrs Azad’s position as the wife of a rich doctor allows her to enter Whites’ world without trouble. In this condition, it is easy for her to learn and adjust to the local ways. Therefore, she ends up becoming the opposite of the definition the Tower Hamlets’ community gives to womanhood. That is the reason why Nazneen is surprised to see that a woman like her, who is supposed to be a Muslim, “smoke(s) cigarette” (BL: 114) and gives her husband orders. This casual behaviour displayed by Mrs. Azad is the evidence that she has lost contact with the Islamic moral. Her ways are remapped by her new social status.

Furthermore, Mrs Azad’s high life standard bends her to live like white people so that she can be identified with them. Accordingly, she start denouncing Muslim women’s

communitarian behaviour as encouraged by multiculturalism. As a consequence, during the visit at the Azads', when Chanu starts complaining about racism in Britain, Mrs Azad tells him that:

Listen, when I'm in Bangladesh I put on a sari and cover my head and all that. But here I go out to work. I work with White girls and I'm just one of them. If I want to come home and eat curry, that's my business. Some women spend ten, twenty years here and they sit in the kitchen grinding spices all day and learn only two words of English" (BL: 114).

Mrs. Azad's statement is very clear. In Britain, Muslim migrants have to live up to the local cultural codes. For her, it is a mistake to try to set up an atmosphere of cultural rivalry with British values. Therefore, the best way for migrants to survive and prosper in the metropolis is to show amenable, culturally flexible. That is the reason why, as she complains about some Muslim women's refusal to adjust, Mrs. Azad states that many Muslim women "go around covered from head to toe, in their little walking prisons, and when someone calls to them in the street they are upset. The society is racist. The society is all wrong. Everything should change for them. They don't have to change one thing" (BL: 114). Through this quotation, Mrs. Azad confirms that the adaptation to the local culture is the right way for any Muslim migrant who aspires to peace and happiness in the West. Any other attempt to abide by the original culture may lead to a suicidal lifestyle. Mrs Azad's convictions about the social opportunity of interculturalism can also be noticed in Mrs Islam.

In *Brick Lane*, Mrs Islam understands that while living in the west; she cannot afford to live and take the challenges of the British space with the tools of her past life in Bangladesh. Therefore, she decides to borrow from the host country's culture tank; because only cultural tools from the West can help a migrant live easily in the West. Hence, as a very clever woman, Mrs Islam is far from being shocked by any intercultural connection. She rather boasts about it when she states that:

Mixing with all sorts: Turkish, English, Jewish. All sorts. I am not old-fashioned, said Mrs Islam. 'I don't wear burkha. I keep purdha in my mind. Which is the most important thing. Plus I have cardigans and anoraks *and* a scarf for my head. But if you mix with all those people, even if they are good people, you have to give up your culture you accept theirs. That's how it is. (BL: 29)

This quotation shows the secret of Mrs. Islam's success in Britain. Instead of sticking to her community's cultural practices that prove detrimental to the frustrated Muslim men who turn to Jihad, she openly embraces the local cultural traits. This trick is what allows her to build a financial empire within tower Hamlets. Thus, Mrs. Islam's behaviour echoes Tariq Ramadan's

notion of “Western Muslim” stated in *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*. For Ramadan, a Western Muslim is a Muslim who lives in the West and adopt a moderate “Islam that is rooted in the Western cultural universe, just as there is an Islam rooted in the African or Asian tradition” (2004: 85). It means that Mrs. Islam gears her Islamic identity with Western reflexes. In so doing, her actions are freed from any challenging intention against her British hosts. On the contrary, she uses her knowledge of the British culture to deceive the other Muslims in Tower Hamlets.

This behaviour *Brick Lane*’s Muslim women confirms the fact that “Multiculturalism tends to *preserve* a cultural heritage, while interculturalism acknowledges and enables cultures to have currency, to be exchanged, to circulate, to be modified and evolve” (Diana P et F. Sze, 2004: 1). It means that interculturalism has the potential to develop culture and communities that end up finding a meeting ground that enables them to cohabitates through a sound comprehension of each other’s cultures. Yet, multiculturalism is quite the opposite. It fosters separatism and clannishness that are the main reasons of practices like religious extremist behaviour like Jihad.

Conclusion

This article has discussed the multicultural failure in the British society, from a postcolonial lens, with a focus on the heated cohabitation between natives and Muslim migrants that can be ended through the intercultural configuration of the British society. It emerges from this study that the multicultural configuration of the British society is a disfavour for Muslim migrants who turn to communitarianism and religious extremism. However, an intercultural approach between natives and ethnic minorities like Muslims can settle the cultural strife in Britain.

The postcolonial analysis has shown that natives do their best to push Muslim migrants to the background of the British society. In so doing, they reduce Muslims to the status of second zone citizens. Therefore, this status of second zone citizenship lays the ground for their exploitation and social revilement. However, Muslims react by endorsing Islam as their key identity token. By so doing, the Islamic identity creates a thick link between the Muslims in Britain and those in Muslim countries around the world. As a result to the adoption of Islam as their new identity, Britain Muslims are emboldened in such a way that religious extremism, through Jihad, becomes the main weapon they use to restore the image of their religion in the West.

Monica Ali's accurate description of the multicultural clash between Muslim migrants and natives shows how the multicultural failure in Britain has turned the country into a battleground between natives and minorities. Multiculturalism, as a cultural insularity or cultural autonomisation policy, has just exacerbated the division between the ethnic groups in Britain. In this context each ethnic group becomes radical and goes to great length to bring his own culture to the fore, within the same space, detrimentally to the idea of a national culture that can bring all the identities on the spot together in order to create a single homogenous cultural label that truly respect diversity. This situation brings in the concept of interculturalism as a solution that can give to each ethnic group its place within the British society so that conflicts like the one between natives and Muslim migrants in *Brick Lane* can be avoided. In this respect, Phil Wood et al consider again that interculturalism is the panacea to deal with social turmoils. For them, "we should interact more with each other because we live side by side. Only then will we foster empathy by learning more of each other and reduce the distrust between people" (2008:5).

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