

AFFECTIVE METAMORPHOSES:
FORMATIONS OF COMMUNITY IN THE
BLACK BRITISH FEMALE BILDUNGSROMAN

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Chapter 1: Tracing the Roots/Routes: A View of the Black British Female Diasporic Experience Through the Bildungsroman Form

“You do not believe that there is a country called England?”

“She blinked and answered quickly, ‘I don’t say I don’t believe, I say I don’t know, I know what I see with my eyes and I never see it. Besides I ask myself is this place like they tell us? Some say one thing, some different, I hear it cold to freeze your bones and they thief you money, clever like the devil...Why you want to go see this place at all, I never see it, that is one thing sure.’” (67)

-Conversation between Antoinette and Christophine, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys

“To England, then, I conveyed her [Bertha]; a fearful voyage I had with such a monster in the vessel. Glad was I when I at last got her to Thornfield, and saw her safely lodged in that third-story room, of whose secret inner cabinet she has now for ten years made a wild beast’s den—a goblin’s cell” (356)

Mr. Rochester to Jane Eyre, *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë

This study is an exploration of three Black British bildungsromane: Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* (2003), Joan Riley’s *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987), and Buchi Emecheta’s *Second-Class Citizen* (1975). My selection of these three works contains one text from each “homeland” that is defined as Black British: South Asia, Afro-Caribbean, and African, respectively. In utilizing this variety of homelands, I aim to recognize the distinctions between these geographic areas—yet, my foremost goal is to find commonalities in the conditions of diaspora and the lived experience of “blackness” for women from the Global South as they migrate to Britain in the late twentieth century. In addition to this diversity in geographical regions, I selected these texts because they show aspects of the existential states of isolation, loneliness and solitude and the formation of collectivity and friendships: key critical terms for my work. Ali’s *Brick Lane* is my most recent text (2003) and has received a lot of critical attention for its portrayal of a woman’s movement from Bangladesh to Britain, as well as her personal transitions from

an isolated, fearful woman to an empowered mother and business owner within diasporic conditions, a common theme within these fictions. This text follows a traditional, transformative bildungsroman form. Riley's *Waiting in the Twilight*, however, represents a darker side of diaspora that does not end so hopefully. While Riley is widely-considered to be the first female Black British novelist of Afro-Caribbean descent, her works remain relatively out of the literary limelight. This text, though, provides a compelling exemplar of the (potential) trap of gendered labor and the shortcomings of some diasporic communities. Finally, Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen* is a relatively well-known womanist novel that provides the most concentrated focus on the protagonist's experiences, tracing Adah's force of will that enables her to overcome overwhelming experiences of sexism and racism to find success as a writer in Britain. Her narrative seems teleological, as she is if she is destined for success despite tremendous obstacles. The range of decades (about 40 years), distinct locations of origin, and varying outcomes between these three novels provide compelling exemplars of the ways that work, labor, and friendships can be experienced within diasporic conditions. I will explore the ways that these Black female protagonists experience loneliness and isolation as immigrants in Britain and ways in which work and friendship can serve as means toward freedom from these debilitating states.

While the core of my study considers a specific (Black British, diasporic, female) sliver of the bildungsroman, I will begin by considering two parallel canonical texts (a "classic" text followed by another that "writes back") as a way of further outlining my eventual focus on the novel form I discuss at length in this thesis: the bildungsroman. *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* portray two protagonists who have very different outcomes due to their different relationships to work, friendship, and conditions of

migration, yet the important issue of race (at least, as “blackness”) remains unconsidered or marginalized in both of these texts.

Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* is commonly read as a canonical bildungsroman, a coming of age novel of its female (English) protagonist. It follows many tropes of this type of text, tracing the life of Jane from birth as an abused orphan, to her role as a governess at the mysterious Thornfield Hall, and her eventual marriage of “perfect equality” to Mr. Rochester. By the conclusion of the novel, Jane has (purportedly) found the balance between freedom and passion in her relationship with her husband. Over a hundred years later, Jean Rhys, a Dominican-born author, wrote a post-colonial response to Brontë’s canonical work—*Wide Sargasso Sea*—giving a voice to Mr. Rochester’s West Indian first wife. Providing this alternative perspective has opened up a plethora of postcolonial and feminist readings of both of these novels. In Rhys’ version, Antoinette Cosway is born in Jamaica, the daughter of Creole¹ slave-owners. Antoinette later marries the (unnamed) Mr. Rochester, and the novel concludes with Antoinette’s (now named Bertha at Rochester’s inexplicable insistence) migration to England with her husband, where she is kept imprisoned and eventually dies in a fire of her own creation.

Both of these novels can be categorized as “coming of age” novels, or bildungsromane. Within this form, most protagonists do achieve *bildung*, or successful self-formation (like Jane), yet some do not (Antoinette). Despite their different outcomes, though, Jane and Antoinette do share some similar experiences: in their childhoods, both are orphaned, abused, and ostracized. Yet, in comparing these two novels, some illuminating differences between these two protagonists’ experiences help us isolate why one woman finds a purported balance between marriage and equality while the other ends her own life in madness and violence.

¹ This term refers to West Indian-born white individuals.

First, Jane is provided with an education that leads to her ability to teach. This allows her to make her own way in the world, choosing another placement if the one she has is not satisfactory, culminating in her refusal of St. John's offer to take her to India to be a missionary. Also, while she is oftentimes alone, she does develop friendships based on relative equality both at school and with Mrs. Fairfax at Thornfield. Furthermore, she forms a marriage between purported "equals," finding a mate who respects her and treats her well, which also provides an "appropriate" (or culturally sanctioned) outlet for her passion while still encouraging her free will.

Antoinette, on the other hand, is not as successful as Rochester's second wife proves to be. As opposed to Jane, Antoinette does not develop any skills that provide her a means whereby which she may earn her own living. Likewise, she does not form any lasting friendships of equality, as her (black) friend Tia betrays her by throwing a rock at her face and Christophine, her maid, is never able to really understand her due to their vastly different cultural, racial, and economic experiences. Finally, her marriage results in abuse and imprisonment, with her husband viewing her as a "doll" (103) and a "ghost" (102), no longer even respecting her as a living human being.

There are two other marked differences between these women's lives as well. The first is their experiences of race. Jane is white and seems to face no obstacles resulting from her race, and this is not even an issue in this text. Antoinette, however, is Creole—which, while still considered nominally "white," is, in Homi Bhabha's words, "not white, not quite" (131). The black "natives" of Jamaica typically resented or taunted her, and she is commonly referred to as a "white nigger" (14). However, Europeans typically viewed Creoles as below them too, as is clear from Rochester's remarks on Antoinette: "Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not

English or European either” (39). This racist attitude leads many to see her (and other Creoles, including her mother) as crazy as well.

The second experience unique to Antoinette is her experience of migration. Antoinette moves from Coulibri to several other locations in the West Indies throughout her youth, but ultimately travels to England with her husband (almost certainly against her will). While at one time early in her marriage she sees England as a place of hope (“I wish to see England...I will be a different person when I live in England and different things will happen to me. England, rosy pink in the geography book map...” (66)), this place ultimately becomes the location of her imprisonment. In fact, she does not even believe that she is there, thinking that “...we changed course and lost our way to England. This cardboard house where I walk at night is not England” (107). She experiences her migration to England as literal place-less-ness in that she cannot even define her location beyond the walls that cage her in. Antoinette’s so-called madness seems irrevocably connected to perceptions of her Creole race and the trauma of forced displacement.

While these canonical texts offer a useful launching point in that they engage many of the ideas that I will flesh out throughout this study, my work will take a slightly different, more specific direction. First, while Antoinette is defined as a “Creole” in this text, her skin color and family line are considered European. The texts that I will examine engage female protagonists who would be defined as “Black” by English standards, an ultimately slippery term (defining race by perception of skin color) that I will discuss in detail later in this chapter. Similarly, I will examine texts by Black British female authors—and while Rhys herself grew up in the West Indies, she too would be defined as “white” by most standards. Nevertheless, her novel explores many of the questions I will be engaging throughout this study that both engage with and write back against

common tropes of the bildungsroman genre. Within this study, I am particularly interested in how the female protagonists in my primary texts experience their perceived alienation and how (or if) they overcome it. Upon my examination of a variety of Black British female bildungsromane (as well as the Rhys and Brontë texts discussed above), several common themes emerged that provoked some compelling questions. These include—how does a (specifically) female protagonist from a formerly colonized location find an identity or define herself in conditions of migration to England? What role does race and racialism play in her ability to develop a sense of “home”? How can we best understand her existential state(s) that arise from a lack of community and connection in her new location? How can she find freedom from these states, specifically in relation to work and labor? And what role does friendship/community play in her escape or liberation from these isolationist states of being? Clearly, Antoinette Cosway-turned-Bertha Mason does not find community or a way to build a world for herself except through utter destruction—burning her home (which is also her prison) and herself with it. Nevertheless, many female protagonists in more contemporary novels (and specifically those in the Black British novels I will examine) do find friendship and a sense of home in England. I will trace this in the three texts that I study in my next chapter: Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* (2003), Joan Riley’s *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987), and Buchi Emecheta’s *Second-Class Citizen* (1975).

In this first chapter, though, I define concepts and connections to establish the basis for my textual studies. My initial launching point, as I established with my brief and cursory examination of *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, is a discussion of some defining tropes of the novel form known as the bildungsroman. After exploring the nuances of this term, I will focus my investigation on critical explorations of the deployment of this form by female/feminist authors. Next, I will look at the connotations

of “Black British” as defining certain texts, as well as various ways of discussing and describing the lived experience of racialism, racist discourse, and diaspora, for Black individuals. Following this, I will outline several additional terms that I will later explore in relation to the protagonists of my primary texts. These include Hannah Arendt’s conceptions of isolation, loneliness, and solitude, followed by her definitions of work and labor as a means to overcome these existential states. Furthermore, I will expound upon conceptions of community formation, including diasporic intimacy and the notion of *philoxenia*. Overall, my study aims to create a fresh examination of the bildungsroman form by specifically looking at Black British female texts. The originality of my study lies in the fact that I choose two specific and relatively unexplored avenues whereby the women represented in the novels are able to overcome these states of existential nihilism: the Arendtian conceptions of the liberating dimensions of work and labor, as well as the formation of friendships based on sameness (diasporic intimacy) or difference (*philoxenia*). This study aims to add to the efforts of a plethora of postcolonial, feminist, and critical race scholars who have contributed tremendously in framing a critical language for understanding existential situations that survive in the interstices of the hegemonic discourses of race, gender, sexuality and nationality. I will begin this exploration by outlining the salient features of the novel form known as the bildungsroman

The German Bildungsroman to the Black British Novel of Transformation

Critics usually agree that the earliest identifiable bildungsroman emerged in the late eighteenth-century with the publication of Goethe’s German novel *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*. This novel is characterized by its coming-of-age story whereby a young man finds his place in a new community, career, and love through his own hard work and some help from strangers along the way (Stein 6). This novel form remained popular

in Germany and spread throughout Europe, diminishing to some extent at the beginning of the twentieth century with the rise of modernism. However, the bildungsroman experienced a revival later in the 1900s, with a variety of offshoots emerging, including socialist and feminist variants.

Critics are divided about the criteria through which a novel may be deemed a bildungsroman. While the German word can be pulled apart with “bildung” roughly translating “formation” and “roman” meaning “novel,” the tradition of this novel form typically engages some specific tropes that exceed the idea of the formation of the individual. According to Franco Moretti, the classic bildungsroman featured a focus on (outward) mobility and (inward) interiority. He connects this to the rethinking of modernity:

Virtually without notice, in the dreams and nightmares of the so called ‘double revolution,’ Europe plunges into modernity, but without possessing a *culture* of modernity. If youth, therefore, achieves its symbolic centrality, and the ‘great narrative’ of the *Bildungsroman* comes into being, this is because Europe has to attach a meaning, not so much to youth, as to *modernity*. (5)

This increased migration from rural to urban areas in the shift from feudalism to capitalism produced a crisis of the individual, impacting communities as well. However, in novels, the young male (in most cases) represented these changing viewpoints, as well as the ability of a community and a society to “grow into” these new systems. Notably, the protagonist is typically “normal”—or even “anti-heroic and prosaic” (Moretti 11)—in that he is not especially powerful or gifted, but instead seems unmarked by any special qualities. This too serves to make these early bildungsroman characters represent the “universalized” individual more than the exceptional elite.

Moretti goes on to identify two models of the bildungsroman: one as teleological and the other as transformative. The former typically involves a stable narrative in which the individual is moving toward an already-defined end—oftentimes, a particular career and a fulfilling marriage (7). This type also “posits ‘happiness’ as the highest value, but only to the detriment and eventual annulment of ‘freedom’” (8), seen in the constricted contentment found in marriage and a trade. For the transformative bildungsroman, on the other hand, the narrative is much more open-ended, with no “solution” proposed for the problems facing the individual (7). These tend more toward disruptions of families through adultery and tout freedom as the ideal over happiness (8). Feminist variants oftentimes follow this transformative model, as do the Black British female novels I will later examine. For instance, in Ali’s *Brick Lane* Nazneen has an affair, separates from her husband, and frees herself from economic dependence by the novel’s end.

While Moretti identifies the useful distinction between two types of bildungsroman, Ellen McWilliams posits a more general definition that is a worthy starting point from which to classify such novels: “Ultimately, for the purpose of literary critics, the most useful, inclusive definition of *Bildung* can be taken as a physical, intellectual, or indeed spiritual process of cultivation and transformation” (8). However, she recognizes that while the term “bildungsroman” can, in fact, include a wide range of novels with this loose definition, this classification has been problematized by some critics because of its deep roots in a white, male, bourgeois ideology. While some (like Jeffrey Sammons) call for the expulsion of this term from literary vocabulary, many others propose new terms by which to refer to these novels that are less historically loaded and can be applied more specifically. These include such propositions as the “Novel of the Individual, or *Individualroman*,” “the “Novel of Identity, or *Identitätsroman*,” and even the “*Antibildungsroman*” (9). Nevertheless, McWilliams argues that a “difficulty

with these arguments is that they risk losing the distinction of a highly fecund literary and critical term; the Bildungsroman has developed a palimpsest of meanings, one that cannot be easily erased” (10). She believes that this complexity should be mined when looking at novels that work within this genre while also writing back against some of its long-held tropes. The rest of McWilliams’ text utilizes this methodology in the examination of the female bildungsroman, the exemplar being the works of Margaret Atwood. I find her defense of the bildungsroman useful in examining the texts I study, as these works seem to borrow from many of the “classic” tropes of this novel form, but also write back against some as well in an ongoing tradition of post-colonial “writing back.” I am particularly interested in how these texts portray the achievement of *bildung* for their protagonists and if they follow a teleological model or (more likely) a transformative one.

However, the question (or occlusion) of gender in the “traditional” bildungsroman could be pushed even further. Twenty years before McWilliams published her study, Esther Kleinbord Labovitz outlined an extensive list of common tropes of the female bildungsroman. She notes the inherent male-ness and masculinity in the notion of “Bildung” (2), whereby eighteenth and nineteenth-century depictions of females in German novels touted the “image of woman as the ‘eternal feminine’ and the ‘beautiful soul,’ while simultaneously depriving her of her selfhood” (4). Even those nineteenth-century novels that do depict female characters striving toward self-fulfillment typically end in a marriage and extensive reliance on men and masculine values (e.g., Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, etc.) (5). Labovitz argues that new conceptions of the female bildungsroman emerged in the twentieth century “only when *Bildung* became a reality for women” (7). As political and social freedoms became more widely available to women, novels became less focused on the ultimate end of marriage and instead allowed for similar spiritual, social, and intellectual awakenings for female characters that

paralleled that of males in earlier bildungsromane. The continued (and problematized) use of the bildungsroman form for Black British female authors is no surprise, then, as the (white, capitalistic) notion of *bildung* becomes available to these protagonists upon their migration to the Global North.

Labovitz examines several novels in her study, concluding with some insightful distinctions between the traditional, masculinized bildungsroman and the newer feminine one. First, she notes that “*Bildung* would function from her life experience rather than from *a priori* lessons to be learned” (246). This allows for individualized growth and a plethora of potential paths that emerge from one’s own story as opposed to an already-existing, prescriptive idea of what it means to be a woman. Second, while males in bildungsromane usually experience their full transformations in young adulthood, this process is generally delayed in their female counterparts, with significant development oftentimes occurring in mid-adulthood to old age (247). This seems to be due to the compounded levels of oppression of women in sexist societies, experienced both within family structures and the public sphere (e.g., the workplace, government, etc.). Another distinction from the traditional bildungsroman is where the transformation occurs: “Often the question for an authentic self is carried out in loneliness, alone, or with other women, safe from the eyes of the male world...” (248). This insulation is required to allow these protagonists to fully explore and create themselves away from the male institutions that resist their achievement of *bildung*. This is true for Adella in *Waiting in the Twilight*, who finds her most productive attempts to transform her life within her friend Lisa’s home, where they tell stories and share their struggles.

Many of Labovitz’s observations concerning female bildungsromane fit well with my study of Black British texts, and I see these distinctions resonating throughout the novels in my study. I would like to put Labovitz’s conclusions in conversation with Mark

Stein's well-known work on the Black British bildungsroman to extend my exploration further. My work seeks to combine (and therefore extend) these studies, as Labovitz provides little regard to issues of race, while Stein only nominally discusses gender. My texts portray Black British females who are impacted greatly by both gender and race, so continued scholarship that pays heed to both of these within bildungsroman studies is greatly needed.

Stein's work begins by identifying ways in which Black British bildungsromane hold to or divert from older, "classic" bildungsromane. While Stein does examine some novels written by and about female authors, his work does not center on the issue of gender, and I will expand upon his work along these lines with a specific consideration of female texts later. However, first, I would like to consider his findings concerning the Black British "Novel of Transformation"—which provide an interesting illumination of Moretti's second category of the bildungsroman. His notion of transformation corresponds well with Moretti's ideas of an open-ended narrative with no clear solution, yet the Black British novel form has even more specific tropes that echo throughout many texts. Nevertheless, while within his title Stein uses the phrase "novel of transformation," he sees this term as interchangeable with "novel of formation" and "bildungsroman," noting that the latter is appropriate despite his examination of literature that is not specifically German because "contemporary literatures are characterized by cross-fertilization rather than by confinement to national borders" (26).

However, this subdivision of texts also requires a negotiation of the term Black British, a category that is somewhat disputed. He notes that, in the British context, "according to the concept of *political* color, 'black' refers to 'people of color,' people with an African, African Caribbean, or South Asian background" (8). While he acknowledges the potential problems of this grouping, he recognizes that these categories inevitably

leak but must be engaged in order to establish the parameters for any study. I begin with this premise as well and will utilize one text from each of these three areas of the world in my study of Black British female novels. While I do recognize the distinctions between these different cultural ensembles, productive similarities can be drawn between these novels under the umbrella term of “Black British.”

Stein goes on to acknowledge that “Black British” does not in fact identify a homogeneous culture, or even a common nation or “home.” Instead, Stein points out what they do share, according to Stuart Hall: “the members of this group...share the experiences of marginalization, experiences which induce a process of ‘diasporization’” (11). So-called “Blacks” in Britain undergo similar (or, at least, comparable) experiences of racism and dislocation, attempting to find a sense of place within a dominant culture that seems to view their presence in Britain with ambivalence and sometimes outright hostility. Therefore, while “black” is a term that is defined by the negative experience of racism, it is nonetheless useful in identifying an experience that is, in fact, shared by many who come from a variety of places. Furthermore, Stein employs Hall’s influential periodization of the term Black British as well—while the first phase involved a more overarching view of a singular Black identity or “the” (supposedly definitive) Black experience, the second phase is marked by a far more pluralist view that attends to the question of the heterogeneity of “black” experiences in Britain. This second way is “[w]hat Hall refers to as the ‘politics of ethnicity predic[a]ted on difference and diversity’” and “is a move toward *strengthening* the political concept of black British identities in the plural, precisely by *weakening* its boundaries, by making it a more pluralist concept” (13). This conception employs difference in the sense that those marked as Black British are not only different from the dominant (white) culture, but also from each other. However, this very basis of difference can serve to frame contingent frameworks of

interests that these diverse groups share in terms of common experience of marginalization and diasporic alienation, which is why I choose to root my study using novels under the omnibus category of Black British.

The Black British bildungsroman, similar to the female bildungsroman, adheres to many generic tropes, yet deviates in significant ways. First, instead of the protagonist struggling primarily with generational conflicts, he/she oftentimes encounters these as cultural conflicts (66). Commonly, the protagonist has moved from the homeland and experiences this tension as a result of cultural clashes between his/her adaptations to the new “home,” accepting or adopting (at least some) British cultural norms with the disapproval of parents and/or extended family in the homeland. From this, the notion of the return (“real” or imagined) becomes important in Black British bildungromane. To Stein, “[r]eturning is related to seeking an earlier state or position, to giving in to nostalgia and a yearning for home. It is encumbered by the weight of tradition; yet the absence of a tradition...[it] is an act of participating in the collective memory, in the *making* and remaking of tradition, rather than merely a comfort-seeking activity” (57). However, “true” return is impossible, as Doreen Massey indicates, because return implies not only a return to a space, but also to a certain time that once was (124). Adella experiences this in *Waiting in the Twilight*, as she longs to return to Jamaica. Later, though, she visits her homeland to discover that it is changed and much more impoverished than she remembered—her longing was to return to the past as well as the place, an impossible desire. Still, though, the homeland for the migrant can be a place where one can “make tradition”—that is, actively participate in the making and reproduction of culture as opposed to feeling continuously marginalized in the foreign space. Typically, Black British protagonists in bildungromane struggle initially with strong longings for return, followed by a rise of ambivalent feelings toward this possibility.

Likewise, Stein says, the transformations that occur for the protagonist are not limited to a private realization of self but are instead marked by its (oftentimes forced) intrusion into the public arena: "...the black British novel of transformation does not predominantly feature the privatist *formation* of an individual: instead, the text constitutes a symbolic act of carving out space, of creating a public sphere" (30). This formation of a public self is oftentimes communitarian and comes through a process of world-making.² Finally, the Black British bildungsroman itself transforms culture. The "black" individuals within these novels are not just passively affected by their (foreign) surroundings, but grow to exert themselves on their environs. The protagonists typically (purposefully or not) are able to create a change in a public space and a place for themselves, even if this is simply having hope for their children's opportunities in Britain. Not only does each novel tell the life story of a Black British individual carving out some sense of place in Britain, it also serves a "performative function...concern[ing] the redefinition of Britishness and the modification of the image of Britain by way of the novel" (42). By relating realistic narratives of Black diasporic subjects in Britain, "[t]he former objects of the anthropological view become themselves acting and narrating subjects..." (43). By granting this subjecthood, these bildungsromane depict Black British *subjects*, serving to slowly redefine paradigms of what it means to be British and non-white in a postcolonial setting.

My work, then, serves as an extension of many of Stein's findings through my particular examination of *female* Black British bildungsromane. Using these insights (as well as those of Labovitz and McWilliams) as my premise, I will explore the complex and specific ways in which Black women achieve (or fail to achieve) *bildung* in Britain. This

² I will address how communities are formed, as well as the operations of world-making, in much greater detail later in this chapter in relation to Hannah Arendt's conception of "work."

involves an exploration of the way each woman experiences her diasporic conditions through her empirical existential state, as well as the means by which she begins to experience connection to her surroundings and other individuals—how she is able to establish this new place as “home.”

Diaspora, Diasporic Subjects and Encounters with Racism

In order to frame a critical language to understand the experiences of the protagonists and others in the Black British bildungsroman, I will first consider ways of understanding lived experience within diasporic conditions. According to Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur, the term “diaspora” derives from the Greek “*dia-*,” meaning “across” and “*-sperien*,” “to sow or scatter seeds.” Theorists generally use this term to refer to “displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile” (1). They go on to note that diaspora initially referred to Jews who were living in exile from Palestine (1), but that this term has taken on new significance in its application to a variety of mass migrations worldwide, both forced and unforced, including those resulting from the slave trade, genocide, and famine (2). There are diverse factors that affect the conditions of diaspora for any person or people group, and it would certainly be problematic to attempt to homogenize these experiences in a singular way. Instead, Braziel and Mannur posit that

[d]iasporic traversals question the rigidities of identity itself—religious, ethnic, gendered, national; yet this diasporic movement marks not a postmodern turn from history, but a nomadic turn in which the very parameters of specific historical moments are embodied and—as diaspora itself suggests—are scattered and regrouped into *new points of becoming*. (3, italics mine)

Diasporic experiences can be fruitfully examined as singular, yet occurring within the context of a plethora of mass migrations, both ancient and modern, thereby problematizing fixed, homogenized notions of home, nation, and culture. Likewise, the conditions of diaspora (and of immigration) provide, as Brazier and Mannur suggest, “new points of becoming,” whereby diasporic subjects change/are changed, as are communities, and, ultimately, overarching cultures and nations by the addition of these migrant individuals/groups. Likewise, the idea of “becoming” clearly parallels the transformative dimensions immanent within the bildungsroman, whereby an individual’s movement and growth can be a metaphor for the changes within a (diasporic) community.³

Diverging slightly from Brazier and Mannur, John Durham Peters locates diaspora between exile and nomadism in terms of mobility, three terms between which I will distinguish to locate my own particular study. To Peters, “*exile* suggests pining for home; *diaspora* suggests networks among compatriots. Exile may be solitary, but diaspora is always collective” (20). He later notes that the strong desire to return is not always present in diaspora, whereas exile is defined by strong (often political) barriers to returning to the homeland, creating a pathos that aches for return. On the other end of the spectrum of mobility, nomadism implies that there is no home or homeland, and the community moves together as a unit with no longing for a permanent home (20). While it is clear that there can be some leaking between these terms, diaspora appears to be the

³ This notion of change/being changed by a nation seems to enter into the distinction between (the homophonic) roots vs. routes as well. “Roots” connotes a long-term stability that is typically desired by the nation-state—one who has roots is seen as “native” to the nation and is assumed to have been born there, a consistent entity. On the other hand, “routes” seems dangerous to this stability, as this implies flux and movement. One who has “routes” in (or to) a nation is typically not “native” or “natal” (thus embodying a status of a migrant or diasporic subject), so is seen as an alien and a potential danger or threat.

most slippery, as Peters too sees it as potentially forced or not. However, the necessity of community and continued networks which are not always present in conditions of exile is the necessary distinction to keep in mind here.

These notions of “becoming” and “community” are further problematized for women within these conditions though, as is evident in Riley’s *Waiting in the Twilight*. While Adella is willing to follow her husband Stanton to Britain, she does not initially want to go, as she enjoys her life in Kingston. Living within unchosen diasporic conditions is common in female Black British fictions, as Nazneen in *Brick Lane* too goes to London to meet her husband as a result of a marriage arranged by her family, leaving her beloved sister behind. These women do not initially experience the hope of this “becoming” that their husbands do, as they (at least at first) serve as helpmates to their spouses within this new space, finding little opportunity to transform their own lives or find connection in this foreign place.

Nevertheless, many Black British individuals would be considered diasporic subjects based on the conditions of their immigration from their homeland to Great Britain. Paul Gilroy discusses the difficulties associated with being both European and Black, observing that one must take on a “double consciousness” in these conditions (50). This means stretching between these two identities that are deemed mutually exclusive by a racist dominant culture—although Gilroy chooses to problematize this notion of the “nation as an ethnically homogeneous object” (51). Instead, he posits that one possible paradigm within which to see the collective experiences of Black diasporic subjects is through the mobile image “of a ship—a living, microcultural, micropolitical system in motion” as this metaphor not only provokes the memory of the Middle Passage, but also gives emphasis to movement as opposed to stasis.

Gilroy goes on to note the continued impact of racism on Black British subjects as well, outlining the history of racism within colonialism and slavery that continues in state discourse to the present day. He in fact cautions that “this inside/outside relationship should be recognized as more powerful, more complex, and more contested element in the historical, social, and cultural memory of our glorious nation than has previously been supposed” (58-9). In other words, the pervasiveness of the belief that whites are “insiders” and blacks “outsiders” can hardly be overstated even today in Britain. Nonetheless, Gilroy points out that “Britain’s black settler communities have forged a compound culture from disparate sources” (62), bringing elements from their homeland as well as adopting some more “English” ways. Nevertheless, this fusion of cultures is never seamless, and “[t]he themes of nationality, exile, and cultural affiliation accentuate the inescapable fragmentation and differentiation of the black subject” (71). While these fragments could serve as potential sites for Braziel and Mannur’s “new points of becoming,” Gilroy emphasizes the underwritten histories of trauma and pain present inherent in these conditions of diaspora and/or exile, especially in light of racialism. What he fails to note is the pain of forced gendered migration, as wives (or wives-to-be) are thrust into diasporic conditions against their will. Still, despite his celebration of the idea of ships in motion, Gilroy realistically acknowledges the difficulties facing Black diasporic subjects in England. This notion of the pains and joys of becoming are pertinent to the examination of the bildungsroman in the general sense, but especially in regard to race for Black British texts.

While Gilroy argues for the ultimate benefits of a fragmented, always changing culture, Salman Rushdie pragmatically outlines the difficulties for Black Britishers in light of racist state discourse. Rushdie focuses especially on the years when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister (1979-90), highlighting the inside/outside language to

which Gilroy also refers. Thatcher famously gave a speech provoking fear that Britain would be “swamped’ by immigrants” (Rushdie 131), but even her references to the British as “we,” reminiscing about the glory days of the Empire serves to exclude immigrants and especially Black immigrants (131). Rushdie goes on to point out the racist implications of the term “immigrant” as it is used in Britain:

And still the word ‘immigrant’ means ‘black immigrant’; the myth of ‘swamping’ lingers on; and even British-born blacks and Asians are thought of as people whose real ‘home’ is elsewhere. Immigration is only a problem if you are worried about blacks; that is, if your whole approach to the question is one of racial prejudice. (132)

Rushdie concludes by problematizing terms that put forth the goals for smoothing over the “Problem” (138) of blacks in Britain, including “integration,” “assimilation,” “racial harmony,” and “multiculturalism” (137). In fact, he argues, these are oftentimes used to persuade Blacks to be quiet and docile when faced with racism, as their primary goal should be to fit in and be “British”—that is, white. My particular study focuses on ways that the protagonists resist this type of “integration”—particularly how they incorporate ways from their homeland with British norms. For example, Nazneen in *Brick Lane* forms Fusion Fashions with several female friends. This business mirrors capitalist practices in London as well as female labor networks common in the Global South, an act of hybridity that proudly asserts cultural difference as opposed to quietly falling in line with British modes of dress.

While Rushdie focuses on the overarching political implications of racist discourse in Britain on Blacks, the phenomenologist Sara Ahmed considers the way(s) that racism is felt and experienced as a lived reality by those who fall outside of whiteness in Western societies. Her ideas relate well to how individuals are hindered

from their quest for *bildung* in Black British novels of transformation due to their “lack” of whiteness. She utilizes theories from Fanon, determining ultimately that “the body at home is one that can inhabit whiteness” (111). This means that, within Western states, to feel as though one belongs, at “home,” one must not necessarily *be* white, but must have whiteness. Ahmed later defines “whiteness” more explicitly:

When I refer to whiteness, I am talking precisely about the production of whiteness as a straight line rather than whiteness as a characteristic of bodies. Indeed, we can talk about how whiteness is “attributed” to bodies *as if* it were a property of bodies; one way of describing this process is to describe whiteness as a straightening device. (121)

Ahmed here constructs a useful schema of whiteness as a line around which individuals—and a society—cohere. Those who “inherit” this whiteness (the implication of family—and racial—inheritance is purposeful) also inherit the “reachability of...objects” (126), whereby whiteness becomes the orientation around which the extent of one’s reach is determined. Those who lack this whiteness, *lack* the ability to do so, and are unable to penetrate and gain what is accessible to those on the “inside” around these lines of whiteness. Adah in *Second-Class Citizen* experiences this minimal reach as she seeks housing in London and is continuously refused by landlords in any white neighborhoods—adequate housing in safe neighborhoods for her (Black) self and family is quite literally out of her reach.

This schema is also useful in its linking of whiteness to concepts of “home,” or belonging, in the Global North and its effects on those who do not inhabit this whiteness. Ahmed posits that “[s]paces acquire the ‘skin’ of the bodies that inhabit them” (132), meaning that a mass of white bodies together can create a “white” space. She further extends this to institutions: “When we describe an institution as ‘being’ white, we are

pointing to how institutional spaces are shaped by the proximity of some bodies and not others: white bodies gather and cohere to form the edges of such spaces” (132). This inclusion of white bodies results in an exclusion of non-white bodies, creating a device that “stops” black bodies from “moving up,” insofar as what is “up” is closer to whiteness and possesses a greater reach to access desirable objects. Within Black British bildungsromane, this can be seen in black individuals (bodies) being passed over for promotions; lacking access to adequate housing, health care, or childcare; or even simply feeling out of place (not at-home) within a white space. While Ahmed notes that bodies that inhabit the “sea of whiteness” do not even perceive its pervasiveness, those who are not inside experience it continuously, feeling cut off and restricted in their ability to move or grow (133).⁴

After establishing the presence and effects of racism and racist discourse in my study of these novels, I will examine the ways in which these effects of racialization can be felt on an experiential level by individuals in diasporic conditions. To do this, however, I must establish a few other key terms of this study: namely the existential states of loneliness, isolation, and solitude. I am particularly interested in utilizing these three states as they seem well-suited to describe the cross-cutting conditions of Black British female subjects, but have yet to be widely used in diasporic theory. While here I will explore these existential states as it has been represented in theoretical discourse, I

⁴ Ahmed’s discourse here seems pertinent to one’s “reach” based on gender differences as well. In *Brick Lane* and *Second-Class Citizen*, the diasporic men tend to *expect* to have profitable careers, respect from the community, and obedience from their wives (although they do not necessarily get these). However, Nazneen expects none of these upon her initial migration due to her gender, while Adah does, but finds them to be out of her reach because of her status. Much of Adah’s treatment in her community could certainly be attributed to racialism, yet within her family structure, Francis demands total submission while continuously treating Adah as beneath him due to her gender.

will particularize and concretize the specifics of each state as I apply them to three bildungsromane in my next chapter.

Existential States and Diaspora: Loneliness, Isolation, and Solitude

Hannah Arendt discusses these existential states in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. While she examines loneliness, isolation, and solitude in relation to the rise of totalitarianism in the twentieth century, I argue that these states are applicable to a study of immigrant experiences in Britain as well. Arendt defines isolation as a political circumstance in which one is impotent “insofar as power always comes from men acting together...” (474). This is characterized by the “fundamental inability to act at all” (474) in the political sphere, and she strongly stresses the potential of persons working together as opposed to the lack of power of the isolated individual. This is a common experience of the diasporic subject: one has left a community in the homeland in which one was connected to others and able to act with them, and now, even if one has some family or acquaintances in the Global North, one feels the state of isolation profoundly, especially in contrast to the connection one had access to “back home.”

In addition to the state of isolation one may experience in diasporic conditions, one may also encounter loneliness in one’s new home, making the lack of connection unbearable. While isolation is the political (or public) state of separation from others, loneliness is its social counterpart. For Arendt, “loneliness...is closely connected with uprootedness and superfluousness” (475), conditions that have appeared to be on the rise since the Industrial Revolution. “To be uprooted means to have no place in the world, recognized and guaranteed by others; to be superfluous means not to belong to the world at all” (475). Here lies the intersection between isolation and loneliness: when one is isolated and unable to act, this can lead to a sense of uprootedness and superfluousness, in which one experiences loneliness, leading to a compounded sense

of separation from others that ends in despair. Arendt further notes that “loneliness concerns human life as a whole” as it is “the experience of not belonging to the world at all, which is among the most radical and desperate experiences of man” (475).

Loneliness, therefore, is a profound, totalizing experience that consumes the self with a range of emotions from panic at one’s own redundancy in the world to hopelessness at ever being productive or recognized by others within one’s world.

This loneliness seems especially pertinent to the women (as opposed to the men) in the novels I examine. Adella in *Waiting in the Twilight* has friends in Britain, but is often trapped in her home taking care of the children or forced to work extensive hours to provide for her family, while Stanton carouses with women or goes to bars to socialize. *Second-Class Citizen’s* Adah too bears most of the load of childcare, despite the fact that she provides financially for the family as well. Most of her time is spent in her tiny apartment or at work. Nazneen in *Brick Lane* even further experiences this loneliness as she does not speak English like her husband does, so she spends most of her days upon her initial migration within her apartment, longing for connection and a sense of community that she fears she will never have in this foreign place.

Furthermore, it seems that in the postcolonial diasporic experience, isolation and loneliness no longer follow the chain of cause and effect that Arendt describes (loneliness as a product of isolation), but instead occur simultaneously as a result of finding oneself in a new place in which (a) one has no/a severely limited political voice, and (b) one is separated from familiar people, places, and systems, leading to a sense of uprootedness. This especially holds true when we consider diasporic experiences from the Global South to the Global North. Not only are people uprooted from their places of origin, or “home,” but the discourse of the “host” state increasingly pathologizes immigrants of color, resulting in a condition of “double alienation” and a

sense of absolute un-welcome-ness, as noted by Gilroy and Rushdie above.⁵ This isolation becomes all-encompassing through the experience of loneliness, founded in a sense of rootlessness and seeing oneself as surplus, inessential humanity.

Nevertheless, a third existential state allows for one to be alone without the negative experiences of isolation and loneliness, and this is solitude. While Arendt cautions that this condition cannot be maintained indefinitely, she states that “the solitary man...is alone and therefore ‘can be together with himself’ since men have the capacity of ‘talking with themselves.’ In solitude, in other words, I am ‘by myself,’ together with my self, and therefore two-in-one, whereas in loneliness I am actually one, deserted by all others” (476). Within solitude, one does not “feel” alone, as one is in the company of oneself. This state can be productive to women in diasporic conditions, especially upon their initial arrival in Britain. This sense of communion with the self allows a woman to insulate herself from the loneliness and isolation that awaits her “outside,” due to any number of barriers including racism, sexism, and differences in language and culture. Likewise, she is able to maintain the ways of the homeland within her new home, resisting influences that may feel critical or destructive of meaningful ways of life that she has brought to Britain. In other words, this notion of solitude can become a spur towards a developing capacity to narrativize and historicize experience, as is evident in Adah’s action of writing a book towards the close of Emecheta’s *Second-Class Citizen*.

However, while this experience of solitude is certainly initially useful in “settling in” and keeping a sense of identity, both individually and culturally, Arendt stresses that this state can only be maintained temporarily:

⁵ Furthermore, this can result in an internalization of this racist thought, seeing oneself as an object within this state discourse of racism and resulting in a sense of self-loathing.

The problem of solitude is that this two-in-one needs the others in order to become one again: one unchangeable individual whose identity can never be mistaken for that of any other. For the confirmation of my identity I depend entirely upon other people; and it is the great saving grace of companionship for solitary men that it makes them “whole” again, saves them from the dialogue of thought in which one remains always equivocal, restores the identity which makes them speak with the single voice of one unexchangeable person. (476)

What Arendt eloquently expresses here is the possibility of the slide from solitude to loneliness and isolation if solitude is relied upon or continues for too long. This sense of singularity and originality, of being the only “me” there is, is no longer felt in loneliness, and the danger of prolonged solitude is losing this notion of individual identity. For in solitude, paradoxically, one is “whole” while being two—me and the “by myself.” The sense of hope from this experience of wholeness shatters, though, when one no longer feels like an individual, but is instead like one among the masses—or even “some” among others, not even maintaining the integrity of a “one,” with nothing new or personal to offer the world. Hopelessness quickly follows these feelings of superfluousness. This is the danger in failing to acknowledge the necessary temporality of solitude.

Now that I have established the parameters of each of these existential states, I will explore some ways in which individuals—and particularly Black British female subjects—may find freedom from these conditions. I will borrow further from Arendt in the next section of my study, as I describe and expound upon her ideas of work and labor. I utilize her definitions of these terms as opposed to exploring Karl Marx’s valorization of the category of labor because her contribution to the work/labor distinction seems especially pertinent in regard to the gendering of labor (or work), as well as to productive versus reproductive work. Within my primary texts, (gendered) labor and

conceptions of work serve as means by which the protagonists can experience freedom, like Nazneen's care for her daughters and establishment of her own business—or can serve as another form of oppression, as in Adella's endless labor at menial jobs and overwhelming task of childcare. How these characters experience their work and/or labor seems key in their ability to overcome loneliness and isolation.

Finding a Way Out: Work and Labor

First, I must lay out what I mean by the terms “work” and “labor” and establish their relationship to these existential states. One way to achieve freedom from loneliness and/or isolation is work. Work, Arendt says, itself “adds new objects to the human artifice” (*Human* 88), creating permanent material things. To Arendt, work is a physical action that creates a product, and it “always requires some material upon which it will be performed and which through fabrication, the activity of the *homo faber*, will be transformed into a worldly object” (91). The *homo faber* is the worker, the one who creates these permanent goods. By definition, work seems to have the capacity to free one from isolation, as it is a physical action, requiring motion and enacting change. Likewise, it is also a process of world-making, changing one's surroundings by putting one's own creation(s) into it. Arendt calls the *homo faber* the “builder of the world” (135). She goes on to recognize that “without being at home in the midst of things whose durability makes them fit for use and for erecting a world whose very permanence stands in direct contrast to life, this life would never be human” (135). In other words, life itself is impermanent, so the *homo faber* strives to create objects that will outlast her, carving out a place in the world that will remain even at the end of her life.

Work creates those objects that make one feel at home, and these are largely “use-ful” objects, like buildings, furniture, or even tools. Nonetheless, Arendt maintains that works of art are the result of “work” as well. While these pieces certainly originate as

thoughts (the thought of the thing), they are actualized and reified, finally, as “things,” physical objects in the world. To Arendt, the act of writing, sculpting, painting, or composing is “the same workmanship which, through the primordial instrument of human hands, builds the other durable things of the human artifice” (169). She extends this argument by acknowledging that works of art are not “useful” in the same way as other products of work, but they are typically even more permanent, as they are not “used” in the same way so are rarely “used up.” Arendt explains: “It is as though worldly stability had become transparent in the permanence of art, so that a premonition of immortality, not the immortality of the soul or of life but of something immortal achieved by mortal hands, has become tangibly present...” (168). In its stability, its ability to last for millenia, art is what makes us most “human.” At the same time, it is what makes one able to come closest to immortality, by leaving part of one’s self in the world long after one’s mortal body is gone.

While Arendt’s conceptions of work (and “art work”) are not rooted in concepts of migrancy or diaspora, they seem especially applicable to immigrant conditions. As I have explored above, Black British subjects often face cross-cutting experiences of marginalization through racism, sexism, and economic hardships. “Home” is a slippery term at best, with “here” (Britain) feeling foreign and unwelcoming, and “there” (the homeland) feeling far away and complicated by ambivalent feelings toward the possibility of return. Even the *possibility* of work, of creating something permanent in this (new) world “here,” increases one’s sense of belonging in an initially foreign place. Significantly, this is not through a move toward assimilation or adaptation (as Rushdie has problematized). In work, one is not entering an already-established institution and adopting its norms, rejecting one’s own prior subjective formation or any acknowledgement of one’s diasporic experiences. Instead, work allows one to physically

create for oneself, making something that reflects the self, and then one puts this out into the world, increasing one's sphere through creating space for one's work (an extension of oneself) in the world.

Arendt's conception of work is defined in contrast to her theorization of labor.⁶ Labor is physical as well, but creates consumable, destructible goods as opposed to permanent ones. Arendt states, "Labor's productivity is measured and gauged against the requirements of the life process for its own reproduction; it resides in the potential surplus inherent in human labor power, not in the quality or character of the thing it produces" (93). All products of labor are temporary, produced for consumption with the sole purpose of perpetuating life—for instance, preparing meals and cleaning clothing (I will make an important qualification about these supposed forms of "labor" later). While Arendt does maintain that labor can create its own sense of pleasure in the immediacy of producing followed by consuming, it lacks the permanence of the useful goods created by work. Where labor is unending, work is defined by a specific beginning and ending from conception to a final creation.

While one who works is *homo faber*, one who labors is *animal laborans*. This latter figure operates similarly to a machine, using repetitive motions day after day to produce what is then immediately consumed (146). The *animal laborans* does not make his/her own world, but is in fact excluded from it: "The *animal laborans* does not flee the world but is ejected from it in so far as he is imprisoned in the privacy of his own body,

⁶ In belaboring this divide between work and labor, Arendt develops and reorients an Aristotelean distinction, re-routed via Martin Heidegger, upon which Marx puts little emphasis. She too fundamentally alters his definition of labor, as Marx creates a split between productive and unproductive labor, while to Arendt, that which produces any lasting goods is marked as work, and labor cannot be productive in the world-making sense. In fact, she notes that "Karl Marx...had an almost irresistible tendency to look upon all labor as work and to speak of the *animal laborans* in terms much more fitting for *homo faber*" (87). These distinctions between Marxian and Arendtian labor become especially important as I incorporate particularly Marxist theorists later in this chapter.

caught in the fulfilment of needs in which nobody can share and which nobody can fully communicate” (119). The laborer, therefore, also must operate in isolation, as the body itself is a prison that keeps oneself in and others out and whose needs are strictly individual. The labor required to keep these needs met can produce a sense of connection—others too, in their own homes, are laboring to survive as well—yet this process is ultimately unending and produces little sense of fulfillment beyond the fleeting satisfaction of meeting one’s physical needs.

The distinctions between the worker and laborer extend into the social realm as well: “[T]he *animal laborans*, whose social life is worldless and herdlike and who therefore is incapable of building or inhabiting a public, worldly realm [as opposed to] *homo faber* [who] is fully capable of having a public realm of his own” (160). These different abilities can be attributed to the former’s inability to create his/her own world or to carve out space, while the latter can and does. In diasporic conditions, this becomes increasingly important as well, because the “public realm” is oftentimes hostile to Black British subjects, so the ability to build a place in the world for oneself is paramount. Moreover, the laborer remains “animal-like,” figuratively without a world in which to inhabit.⁷ Yet, in the literal sense, one still takes up space, so he/she labors in someone else’s world, in a world that does not want him or her, a world for which he/she has created nothing permanent. The immigrant oftentimes already sees him/herself through the lens of the perceived dominant culture: as an intruder, an alien, even an animal. This raises the significance immensely, then, of this distinction between worker and laborer—

⁷By using discourse that portrays the laborer as “animal-like,” Arendt reveals her debt to the European metaphysical tradition that uses “animal” as the base from which humans are viewed as different. For instance, Aristotle sees the human as the combination of *logos* (speech) and *phone* (voice). The former is what makes one specifically human, while the latter is what is shared in common with the base animal. For a deconstruction of this binary, see Derrida’s *The Animal That Therefore I Am*.

the worker can create a sense of home for herself, even in diasporic conditions, while the laborer operates as a machine or an animal, repetitively, within a world that is not his/her own.

Arendt's positions can, however, be a little problematic. She notes that work can only be done in isolation, suggesting that "isolation, though destructive of power and the capacity for action, not only leaves intact but is required for all so-called productive activities of men. Man insofar as he is *homo faber* tends to isolate himself with his work, that is to leave temporarily the realm of politics" (474-5). This seems to create a false distinction between the so-called "political realm" or what is "political action" and the "personal" or "individual" work that goes into world-making. I maintain that even individualized work can be of a profoundly political nature, especially when done by a "foreigner" or "alien" who is carving out space for him/herself in a seemingly hostile nation. Moreover, I think that her concept of work can be usefully combined with the productive aspects of the Marxist ideas of the reproduction of labor power and immaterial labor, especially as it has been reformulated in the contemporary works of Italian autonomists and post-Marxists such as Michael Hardt.

The reproduction of labor power in a Marxist sense oftentimes operates outside of the means of production with little or no recognition of those who produce these consumable goods. These practices can be further categorized when considering the gendering of labor. In *Caliban and the Witch*, the Italian autonomist Silvia Federici traces the parallel rise of capitalism with the commodification of women's bodies. While much of her study focuses on the medieval world, her observations are still useful in relation to the more contemporary growth of capitalism in the Global South, as well as how so-called "women's labor" is still viewed in the Global North. She maintains that women suffer a "particular form of exploitation [in] the history of capitalist relations" (13). This is

due to the relegation of women to “the reproduction of labor-power carried out in the home” (75) as men began to leave the home to work in factories upon the advent of industrialization and urbanization. While men were (are) paid for this labor, women were not paid for their “housework,” and women’s “function in the accumulation of capital became invisible, being mystified as a natural vocation and labeled ‘women’s labor’” (75).⁸ This fixing of women’s work as unpaid created a (further) imbalance of power within the emerging nuclear family as the male head of the household was not compelled to financially compensate his wife for her contributions to the family. Furthermore, Federici notes the rise of male control over women’s bodies, especially in regard to childbirth. She maintains that, by men controlling conception, maternity itself became a type of “forced labor” in which women were trapped, and also for which they were not paid (92).

While the twentieth century in the Global North and South has seen a rise of women’s liberation movements, including great strides in educational, financial, and social equality, many women still find themselves trapped in this uncompensated reproduction of labor within the home, including childcare. This seems especially true for Black women in diasporic conditions—a woman and her family are oftentimes unable to afford the childcare or education that will allow her to enter the means of production, so she operates as the unpaid caretaker of the home and children. However, sometimes she is still forced to take on work to help out the family financially. Federici notes that this was the case in medieval times as well, but that some still maintained that “any work that women did at home was ‘non-work’ and was worthless even when done for the

⁸ In Arendtian terms, most men at this time would be performing “work” outside the home, while the women’s “housework” would be defined as labor as it only produces that which is immediately consumed to sustain life. However, many Marxist scholars use these terms relatively interchangeably.

market...Thus, if a woman sewed some clothes it was 'domestic work' or 'housekeeping,' even if the clothes were not for the family, whereas when a man did the same task it was considered 'productive'" (92). This idea persists today, as I will show in my next chapter through an exploration of gendered labor in diasporic fictions. In Arendtian terms, this marginalization of women's sewing or other jobs devalues her work, that which she creates and puts into the world, as labor, reducing it to the status of a menial household task. Therefore, despite a woman's actual action of world-making, she is not allowed to see it as such, instead perceiving it as a repetitive labor of consumption, as are all her other tasks.

To further understand the work/labor distinction, and to problematize it in some ways, I consider Michael Hardt's extension to this theory of "women's labor" in his exploration of affective labor within a capitalist economy. To Hardt, affective labor is a "type of immaterial labor [that] involves the production and manipulation of affects and requires (virtual or actual) human contact and proximity" (97-98).⁹ Therefore, this can involve numerous careers in the service or health care industries, but also includes caring for children or the elderly. However, instead of seeing this as a marginalizing type of labor, Hardt examines affective labor in relation to power, specifically through an exploration of Foucault's theories of biopower, or "the power of the emerging forces of governmentality to create, manage, and control populations—the power to manage life" (98). While Foucault examines this notion from "above," as a massing of governmental apparatuses, Hardt extends this to a view of biopower bubbling up from below through gendered, affective labor. This type of biopower is largely in the hands of women through their roles as caregivers, in which they manage the creation and shaping of life

⁹ Like Federici, Hardt too conflates work and labor, although much of what he discusses as "gendered labor" (childcare, household chores, etc) is labor in the Arendtian sense as well.

through their roles in the home. While Hardt cautions against seeing this type of labor—e.g., childcare—as naturally gendered, he maintains that affective labor that is largely relegated to women “has become firmly embedded as a necessary foundation for capitalist accumulation and patriarchal order...however, the production of affects, subjectivities, and forms of life present an enormous potential for autonomous circuits of valorization, and perhaps for liberation” (100).

Therefore, while Federici maintains that the gendered division of labor is essentially a prison for women, Hardt sees some potential for empowerment within this role as a way in which women can claim some autonomy and potentially demand the compensation they deserve. I draw from both of these as I acknowledge the prison-like sense of gendered labor whereby women are trapped in loneliness and isolation within their duties of housework and childcare. Nevertheless, I see the potential for empowerment within this reproductive labor, not just through compensation for childcare, as Hardt suggests, but also in a woman’s ability to shape her children to be more successful than she was within diasporic conditions. While Adella in *Waiting in the Twilight* remains mired in loneliness and isolation even on her deathbed, she sees hope for two of her daughters who have found profitable careers and equitable relationships in Britain. Despite her tragic life, this gives Adella some sense of accomplishment and pride that is found in the reproductive/affective labor of raising her children.

In fact, within diasporic conditions in Britain, Black women can find themselves empowered by their role(s) as caregivers to older family members or children. In the fictional texts I will later explore, the female protagonists are oftentimes made to feel by their husbands (and British society at large) that their affective labor is just “women’s work,” and thereby almost useless. However, I maintain that affective labor or laboring in a community can lend these women purpose and fulfillment, effectively creating

connections that allow them to shed their isolation and/or loneliness. In fact, many of these women grow to feel a strong sense of hope and connection in rearing their children, laboring to ensure that their offspring will have better opportunities in Britain than they did. Oftentimes, too, these women find more connection and purpose in childcare after they leave their husbands, as they are no longer consistently hearing that voice that negates the value of their affective labor. Likewise, childcare often seems to feel less like a rigorous burden when paired with work. When these women are able to engage in work, embracing the practice of world-making, they are able to further extend themselves into their own space in the world, opening up more room through which to connect to and see hope for their children. Also, this work oftentimes occurs within a community, providing a social response to their loneliness, while also bridging their isolation as they create their world(s). Hazel Carby notes that this connection through shared labor is much more common in the Global South than in the North and that diasporic women oftentimes reimagine and recreate these networks in their new homes.

Forming Friendships Through Diasporic Intimacy and *Philoxenia*

In this section, I identify two frameworks within which Black British women may formulate temporary or lasting friendships whereby they are further able to find release from isolation, loneliness, or solitude. These are Svetlana Boym's notion of diasporic intimacy and Leela Gandhi's exploration of *philoxenia*. I choose these concepts specifically as they show the heterogeneous, non-formulaic ways in which connection can be established in diasporic conditions. Specifically, I engage with Boym's and Gandhi's ideas of sameness versus difference between individuals who choose to be friends, as well as ways that these can be related to work and labor as sources of freedom from oppressive existential states.

Finding a way in which to work, to become the *homo faber*, is far from simple for Black diasporic women, but this can become less of a struggle when one embarks upon work within a group. Arendt maintains that work can only happen alone, as “[t]here can be hardly anything more alien or even more destructive to workmanship than teamwork” as one must be “alone with the ‘idea,’ the mental image of the thing to be” (161). The *homo faber* only interacts with others on the actual exchange market, selling one’s wares (162). However, within diasporic conditions, Arendt’s ideas need to be extended. One oftentimes does not have the ability (or desire) to create work in isolation, and in fact, work can be a way in which diasporic subjects can create connections and form friendships. In this way, work can be a means in which a woman can free herself from the paralyzing conditions of loneliness and isolation.

To Arendt, the so-called *animal laborans* seems to be a depressingly solitary figure as well—however, this paradigm changes when applied to female cultural norms in the Global South. According to Hazel Carby, labor and work in the Global South oftentimes serve to bring women together. In examining one West African women’s network, Carby quotes ethnographers who state, “Women often work together in their own fields, or as family members preparing meals together, village women meeting at the stream to do the wash...They share childcare [and] news...they have a tremendous sense of solidarity when it comes to working in their collective interest” (82). In this sense, labor is not isolating, but the acts of cleaning, washing clothing, cooking, collecting food, and caring for children can serve the purpose of bonding these women together as well. This type of (affective) laboring together, then, becomes an important social time and place in these women’s lives as well, one that shifts for women in diasporic conditions.

Carby notes that “such female support networks...provide a startling contrast to the isolated position of women in the Euro-American nuclear family structure” (82). Despite the fact that these types of networks are not typical between families in the Global North, diasporic women sometimes reconstruct similar connections with other migrant women in Britain. These are certainly not exact replicas of the formed communities in the homeland. In fact, this re-creation of networks provides women with the opportunity to renegotiate the circumstances and types of connections they desire. Carby writes, “...the transformations that occur are not merely adaptive; neither is the black family destroyed in the process of change. Female networks mean that black women are key figures in the development of survival strategies...facing a racist and authoritarian state” (83). Within a racist state and further compounded by experiences of sexism within their own families, these women can find female networks to be the key to their recovery from isolation and loneliness, as well as what allows them to feel connection and purpose in labor and/or work.

It is important to recognize that labor and work are not the only ways in which diasporic women overcome the state of isolation, loneliness, and solitude. In fact, one runs the risk of creating a narrow, Hegelian view in which work and/or labor are the only ways in which one can be free. Instead, scholars must also recognize the immaterial “intangibles,” such as relationships with others, intimacy, and friendship that enable the subject to experience freedom from these existential states as well. With this in mind, I will explore Svetlana Boym’s idea of “diasporic intimacy” and Leela Gandhi’s particular use of the term “friendship” through *philoxenia* as forging a critical language that describes such “intangibles.”

In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Boym begins her discussion of “diasporic intimacy” by exploring the language associated with notions of home and being “at home.” She

maintains that “home” is not necessarily a place but instead “a sense of intimacy with the world” (251). Intimacy itself has numerous connotations, including “‘innermost,’ ‘pertaining to a deep nature,’ ‘very personal,’ [and] ‘sexual’” (251). However, when one “intimates” something, there is implied communication; it is indirect or secretive, with the “something” only being hinted at. Boym applies these multiple connotations of this term to the circumstances of the diasporic subject: she recognizes that “[o]rdinary exiles often become artists of their lives, remaking themselves and their second homes with great ingenuity. Inability to return home is both a personal tragedy and an enabling force” (252). However, communication remains problematic within these circumstances, not only due to probable language barriers, but also the inability (and impossibility) of “plainly speaking” about one’s experiences that are not fully definable and translatable.

What Boym proposes, then, is a model of friendship that acknowledges, and in fact embraces, the indirection and secretiveness of “intimacy,” as well as the unique (yet comparable and relatable) experiences of the individual diasporic subject. She coins “diasporic intimacy” as a connection that is constituted through “uprootedness and defamiliarization.” She goes on:

Diasporic intimacy can be approached only through indirection and intimation, through stories and secrets. It is spoken of in a foreign language that reveals the inadequacies of translation. Diasporic intimacy does not promise an unmediated emotional fusion, but only a precarious affection—no less deep, yet aware of its transience...diasporic intimacy is dystopic by definition; it is rooted in the suspicion of a single home, in shared longing without belonging...[it] is haunted by the images of the home and homeland, yet it also discloses some of the furtive pleasures of exile. (252-3)

Boym here identifies many key components of this type of bond: indirection, secretiveness, precariousness, suspiciousness, and acknowledgement of temporality. Due to the conditions of diaspora, one recognizes that friendships based on place do not always last, as one has experienced firsthand the severing of many of these relationships upon one's departure from the homeland, so one approaches these new bonds with an acknowledgement of their potential precariousness. Likewise, the conditions of racism and financial insecurity in Britain can lead to feelings of suspicion toward others and a view of the world as dystopic. At the same time, one can feel compelled to be secretive and self-protective about one's own experiences in one's new "home" too—encounters with racism and sexism are oftentimes mortifying and embarrassing to the recipient, and one may choose to keep these as secrets from others—or to share them as secrets with select others. Within diasporic intimacy, this acknowledgement and respect for shared or unshared secrets to preserve (each) one's dignity is paramount.

While many of the conditions of diasporic intimacy seem negative (dystopic, even), this description of this type of friendship concludes positively—as a disclosure of the "furtive pleasures of exile." Clearly, living in diasporic conditions can be painful, as one copes with the separation from one's homeland and loved ones back home, as well as racism and limited opportunities in one's new place. However, there is pleasure to be found in diasporic conditions from a freedom from "the old" and an ability to invent and create oneself anew. One is surrounded by "the foreign," yet can choose to adopt some of these ways, or simply to observe them. While one (probably) had a sense of place and identity in the homeland, much of this former sense can dissipate in diasporic conditions, and this can be frightening, yet liberating. This sense of pleasure can be best expressed and understood through the conditions of diasporic intimacy—communicating

this indirectly, to someone else who has shared similar experiences who understands the untranslatability of one's emotions and sense of self. So, while there is pleasure to be experienced in exile, it seems that this pleasure is enhanced by finding someone with whom to (tentatively) share it.

While Boym's notion of diasporic intimacy is firmly rooted in shared experiences of exile, Leela Gandhi traces parallel notions of friendship, ultimately examining the politics of friendship in regard to connections based on difference. In *Affective Communities*, Gandhi begins by tracing ideas of friendship through various thinkers, including Derrida, Kant, and Hegel, identifying threads of difference and sameness between individuals that forge these bonds. Gandhi then relates these to notions of *philia* and *philoxenia*. *Philia* describes friendships formed from (perceived) similarities between one and another. This then relates to "Aristotle's conception of friendship as a *homophilic* bond owing principally, if not exclusively, to fellow citizens" (28). The notion of *philia* is then connected to the idea of the polis—one's allegiance, loyalty, and friendships are based around the place in which one lives and the fellow citizens who inhabit it too. Gandhi notes that the discourse produced by this type of relationship focuses on "filiation," namely the view that "a friend is another self" (28). Ideas about this type of friendship proliferated upon the growth of the Greek city-state in which equality and democracy were ostensibly lauded, holding up the ideal of friendship as that between two (or more) similar, equal (male) citizens.

While Aristotle's conceptions of *philia* focus on sameness (even replication as "another self"), Epicurean models of friendship celebrate difference within friendships. *Philoxenia*, then, is a "love for guests, strangers, and foreigners. In sharp contrast to Aristotle, this ethic of fidelity to strange friends is predicated upon a principled distaste for the racial exclusivity of the polis" (29). To the foreigner, the polis can be a hostile

place. Gandhi references Giorgio Agamben's postulation that "the polis ratifies 'exclusion' as the principle that 'founds the city of men,' locating at the core of politics a principle of *exceptio* according to which the promise of the good life for some requires consigning others to...the various inhospitable borders of modern civility" (29). The "some" who live "the good life" are generally bonded through *philia*, especially through a common race. Sameness, then, is viewed as connected to "communitarianism, the polis, [and] regimes of security" (30). In fact, the foreigner is an intruder, a threat not just to the perceived "purity" of the state, but to its very safety. These racist notions of the polis immediately reject even the possibility of friendship with the "foreigner," and in fact demand his/her ejection from the state.

However, *philoxenia* provides an alternative model for formations of friendships, one that opens up a place for diasporic subjects. These friendships are based on difference, or "hospitality, exile, [and] risk" (30). Gandhi writes:

The ethical agency of the host-friend relies precisely on her capacity to leave herself open...to the risk of radical insufficiency. Poised in a relation where an irreducible and asymmetrical other always calls her being into question, she is ever willing to risk becoming strange or guestlike in her own domain, whether this be home, nation, community, race, gender, sex, skin, or species. (31)

Here, Gandhi emphasizes the risk involved in this type of friendship—one's place and even self can be unsettled by forming these bonds, as one is no longer seeing oneself reflected back by the other that one befriends, but instead is faced with radical difference. Likewise, *philoxenic* friendships require openness from both parties, as there will inevitably be misunderstandings and miscommunications that can be experienced as "insufficiencies," circularly raising questions of oneself and the other.

Also, Gandhi speaks specifically of the “host-friend,” who would be the citizen of the polis (for instance, the white British citizen) and the risks and responsibilities this individual faces in opening oneself to this type of friendship. She sees him/her as a type of gatekeeper of a place who chooses to throw open the gate—however, there is not always a clear “host” in diasporic conditions. A diasporic subject may form bonds through *philoxenia* with others who have their own issues—or, for some, immigrant statuses—that keep them from serving as the true “host” either. Instead, it seems that each party may serve as the “host” in the sense of choosing whether or not to let those different from them into their lives to potentially change them. This is especially poignant for diasporic subjects because they oftentimes have significant yet tenuous connections to their homeland, and the risk inherent in “becoming strange” is losing the ties to those practices that connect them to these roots “back home.” For example, in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*, set in London, the Bangladeshi immigrant Nazneen imagines connecting to the “tattoo lady,” a white woman who lives across the courtyard. In this circumstance, though, the risk is too great for Nazneen, and she fears being misunderstood or rejected. Likewise, she worries that “strangers” will answer if she approaches the wrong apartment, and, even if she finds the correct door, the woman “might be angry at an unwanted interruption” (7). To her, the cultural differences between her and her neighbor are just too great, there is too much to lose by attempting to forge this connection, and she is unable to open herself to the possibility of *philoxenia*.

Gandhi further expounds upon the notion of *philoxenia*, noting that “...the open house of hospitality or the open heart of friendship can never know guests-friends in advance, as one might a fellow citizen, sister, or comrade” (31). However, the diasporic subject experiences the citizen of the polis as a guest as well, not only in one’s home (private space), but he/she too has friendships based on *philia* back home, so

experiences a similar discomfort to the citizen in this more unsettling type of friendship. Therefore, there is risk on both sides in forming *philoxenic* relationships, and there is rarely a clear host figure on the most fundamental, individual level. Nonetheless, those who open themselves to the risks of *philoxenic* friendships often find themselves rewarded for taking this risk by the bonds that they form—a point that I will explore further in my reading of the literary texts.

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Plan of the Work:

The rest of my thesis is comprised of a chapter on three novels by and about Black British women, as well as an appendix on the parallel issue of the crisis of masculinity in these texts. I will trace the concepts I have discussed above using Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, Joan Riley's *Waiting in the Twilight*, and Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen*. Within each of these novels, I will examine how each female protagonist experiences the existential states of loneliness, isolation, and/or solitude and how (or if) she breaks free from this condition. Furthermore, I will explore how these women utilize work and labor as ways in which to find freedom from these existential conditions, as well as how they form communities through diasporic intimacy and/or *philoxenia* as defined above.

Chapter 2: Can I Find Connection and “Home”?

Within this chapter, I will expand the concepts discussed in my previous chapter through a reading of three Black British female bildungsromane. After providing a brief summary of each text, I will analyze the ways that each protagonist experiences diasporic conditions in relation to loneliness, isolation, and/or solitude. Following this, I examine the ways that she does or does not use work or labor to find some freedom from these existential conditions, as well as her engagement in relationships that reflect diasporic intimacy or *philoxenia*. I conclude with a brief appendix discussing the crisis of masculinity found within each of these novels.

Additionally, within these texts I look at the relative success of each protagonist in her achievement of *bildung*. Why does Adella fail to find hope and happiness in England while Nazneen and Adah do? I argue that Nazneen’s positive outcome is rooted in her development of friendships based on diasporic intimacy. Furthermore, her participation in affective labor and (art) work fulfills her and allows her to engage in world-making. Likewise, Adah escapes loneliness and isolation through her (sometimes) productive state of solitude, as well as in relationships that she develops based on *philoxenia* and her work both in the library and as a writer. However, Adella does not profit from friendships in the same way as these other women due to her fixation upon her abusive (and, later on, absent) husband. Moreover, her deteriorating health and continued rejection from labor jobs creates economic hardships as well as the real sense that she cannot create her own world. Despite some relationships based on diasporic

intimacy, Adella fails to achieve the contented conclusion that Nazneen and Adah reach due to her idealization of her husband Stanton and menial labor positions.

Nazneen in *Brick Lane*: Isolation and Loneliness to Diasporic Intimacy

The first novel I will examine is Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*. This debut work was long anticipated by the literary world, and it received both praise and condemnation from critics upon its arrival. This novel traces the story of its protagonist Nazneen, a Bangladeshi woman, from her birth in (then) East Pakistan to her arranged marriage to Chanu, a Bangladeshi pursuing a university degree in London. Nazneen moves to England to be with her husband, and they have two daughters. However, she struggles with the foreignness of the language and customs in her new "home," as well as her lack of acquaintances on Brick Lane, a section of Banglatown in London. Also, she mourns her separation from her beloved sister Hasina, who is still in the homeland. Nonetheless, Nazneen builds a life for herself in this new place through her friendship with Razia, another Bangladeshi immigrant, and through an affair with the politically-active second-generation immigrant Karim. In spite of this connection, Nazneen ends her relationship with Karim at the end of novel, refusing to return to Bangladesh with her husband. Instead, she chooses to remain in London with her daughters, where she establishes a clothing business with Razia and other Bangladeshi women.

Despite the novel's apparent message of female empowerment in immigrant conditions, the critical reception following *Brick Lane*'s 2003 release was mixed, with many reviewers seeing it as reinforcing stereotypes of Bangladeshi immigrants. According to Jane Hiddleston, some readers were "offended by what they considered to be a gross misrepresentation of Bengali culture in London...as backward and uneducated" (57). While Hiddleston enters this debate by examining the nature of fiction as a mixture of representation and myth that is not intended to provide a "true" view of a

culture or community, Sarah Brouillette discusses the response to the book from a different angle. After thoroughly tracing reactions to this novel from actual Brick Lane residents, Bangladeshi immigrant groups, and literary critics, she concludes that some of Ali's detractors are correct—her use of Brick Lane could be seen as an act of gentrification “in the way she attaches her name to a work called *Brick Lane* and accrues cultural and economic capital on the basis of that title despite the several ways in which she is actually distant from the area that name references” (443).

While this debate concerning representation of immigrant populations is certainly significant, especially in the repetition of stereotypes in such a widely-circulated novel, I plan instead to approach this text as a contemporary Black British female bildungsroman. This focus roots Ali's contemporary narrative within the tropes of this centuries-old genre to then explore specifically how this Black British female protagonist shapes her identity in diasporic conditions. Utilizing the common tropes of this genre outlined earlier, I will examine Nazneen's personal growth through her felt experiences and encounters with racism, sexism, and economic oppression. While she begins in a state of loneliness and isolation in London, she overcomes these conditions through formations of community based on diasporic intimacy, as well as by engaging with work and through embracing affective labor. Despite other critics' arguments concerning the novel's negative representations of Banglatown residents, I argue instead that Nazneen, through her engagement with work and diasporic intimacy, becomes a successful and empowered Black British woman by the conclusion of the novel.

As a result of their diasporic conditions, as well as compounded oppressions from sexism and racism, the women in Ali's novel (at least upon their initial immigration) feel isolated and lonely. This sense of isolation and loneliness results not only from the disturbing experience of being uprooted from one's place of origin, but also the

increasing “pathologization” of immigrants of color, resulting in a condition of “double alienation.” From this exclusionary rhetoric, one may feel superfluous. Nazneen’s husband Chanu inadvertently speaks to this in a statement concerning Bangladeshi immigrants in London: *“Three point five people to one room. That’s a council statistic.... All crammed together. They can’t stop having children, or they bring over all their relatives and pack them in like little fish in a tin. It’s a Tower Hamlets official statistic: three point five Bangladeshis to one room (30).* While Chanu poses this as an objective number based on “official” research, his editorial comments on these numbers show his own disdain for Bangladeshi immigrants, and the rapid multiplication of these South Asian populations that many British officials see as a real danger to “the” English way of life.¹⁰ To Bangladeshis, then, including Chanu, this discourse can produce a sense of loneliness that comes from feeling superfluous; that is, “there are already so many of us here, and I am just part of the excess.” This seems increasingly true as Chanu continually fails to receive promotions at work, leading (among other reasons) to his decision at the end of the novel to return to the homeland.

Not only does Chanu experience this sense of isolation and loneliness, but Nazneen also feels these acutely upon her arrival in London. The novel begins with Nazneen’s birth in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), but within the first five pages of the text, she is in London. Here, she consistently gazes across the apartment complex where she resides, and these initial scenes in London illustrate the nature of Nazneen’s compounded loneliness and isolation. She has been working inside on chores all day

¹⁰ Enoch Powell’s (in)famous “Rivers of Blood” (1968) speech is a prime exemplar of this rhetoric. Here, this conservative politician argues that the influx of Black immigrants into England is a serious threat to the nation, stating famously that “in 15 or 20 years’ time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man.” This rhetoric of racialized fear remained pervasive throughout the Thatcher era and continues through the political positions on immigration of the British National Party (BNP).

and is about to begin preparing a meal for her husband and his friend—but she looks across the courtyard and sees the (white) “tattoo lady” drinking and smoking in the windowsill of her apartment. Nazneen dreams of approaching her, forging a connection:

She [Nazneen] would take something, an offering of samosas or bhajis, and the tattoo lady would smile and Nazneen would smile and perhaps they would sit together by the window and let the time pass more easily. She thought of it but she would not go. Strangers would answer if she knocked on the wrong door. The tattoo lady might be angry at an unwanted interruption...what would be the point? Nazneen could say two things in English: sorry and thank you. She could spend another day alone. It was only another day. (7)

Significantly, Nazneen experiences her loneliness temporally, imagining time moving “more easily” with a friend, but then resigning herself to “another day alone.” The prospect of Chanu’s guest (Dr. Azad) for dinner provides some break in the monotonous repetition of days for Nazneen, trapped in her apartment performing household chores. Yet the fact remains that he is Chanu’s friend, not her own. Her dream of connection to the tattoo lady hinges on her own action (an act that would break her isolation, as well as her loneliness), and on someone of her own gender, albeit not a South Asian immigrant like her. Nonetheless, Nazneen does not attempt to speak to this woman due to the language barrier and her husband’s desire for her to stay in the apartment.

This state of loneliness is symptomatic of what Dr. Azad calls “Going Home Syndrome” (16). While he and Chanu discuss it in a classist way, as a disease afflicting peasants who miss the land, Azad’s description of this seems relevant to Nazneen’s experiences: “They don’t ever really leave home. Their bodies are here but their hearts are back there. And anyway, look how they live: just re-creating the villages here” (17). Since Nazneen’s isolation prevents her from re-creating her Bangladeshi community in

London, her corporeal self seems to reside in London while her heart remains in Bangladesh with her sister Hasina. She strains to be with her sister as she learns of Hasina's crumbling marriage and flight from her first husband, work in a garment factory, fall into prostitution, and second failed marriage. Even after almost twenty years in London, Nazneen still yearns for home: "If they went to Dhaka she could be with Hasina. Every nerve ending strained towards it as if the sheer physical desire could transport her. But the children would be unhappy" (129-30). Nazneen's compounded isolation and loneliness in London perpetuates her case of so-called Going Home Syndrome, and, for most of the narrative, her strongest human connection remains with her sister Hasina who is unbearably far away.

In fact, Nazneen desires so strongly to feel close to her sister that she attempts to imaginatively mirror her actions. When she learns that Hasina has fled to a city in Bangladesh and is lost and alone, Nazneen too flees her home in London, running up Brick Lane, insistent upon being lost too. Yet this repetition fails because of the differences in their respective environments, as Nazneen does not speak the language in her location or know the norms of how to navigate public spaces. In this experience, Nazneen feels her strongest sense of alienation, noting the foreignness of the city and unfamiliar behavior of the people—she does not even have the knowledge necessary to safely cross the street. Likewise, she feels separated from the other passersby:

Every person who brushed past her on the pavement, every back she saw, was on a private, urgent mission to execute a precise and demanding plan: to get a promotion today, to be exactly on time for an appointment, to buy a newspaper with the right coins so that the exchange was swift and seamless, to walk without wasting a second and to reach the roadside just as the lights turned red.

Nazneen, hobbling and halting, began to be aware of herself. *Without* a coat,

without a suit, *without* a white face, *without* a destination. A leafshake of fear—or was it excitement?—passed through her legs. (35)

Sara Ahmed maintains that the corporeal schema of a “body at home” is racially structured, rendering the feeling of at-home-ness inaccessible to Nazneen. From her perspective, she lacks the “white face” necessary to have a purpose in this society—or to even be a part of it. In fact, she is not defined by what she *has* but by what she does not have (or is *without*)—which is a sense of place in this city or any type of public connection. In this situation, Nazneen is completely disoriented and is literally lost in this urban space. Unable to orient herself, and, from Ahmed’s perspective, as an out-of-place body in a white space, she cannot orient herself around the invisible yet omnipresent lines of whiteness that surround her.

Nevertheless, this action of stepping out into the urban space from her private domestic sphere results in her first experience of recognition in public in London. Initially, she senses that others on the street “were not aware of her.... They could not see her any more than she could see God” (35). Instead of continued feelings of alienation upon this realization, though, Nazneen feels free to observe others. Nazneen’s gaze serves to empower her, as she is able to look upon others with impunity, yet also reflects her own status, as she is not “worth” regarding due to her status as a brown woman. This tentative sense of control continues until she sees someone notice her gaze. With a building sense of disorientation, she begins to panic, feeling an unhappy affinity with Hasina and crying at her own foolishness in getting lost. However, this journey ends with her running into “a brown-faced man in a dark coat and tie” (38). She says “sorry” and he nods, departing. Following this incident, “she began to feel a little pleased. She had spoken, in English, to a stranger, and she had been understood and acknowledged. It was very little. But it was something” (38-39). Significantly, her first experience of

recognition, a form of becoming visible, however momentary, occurs with a person of color, not a white individual for whom she remains invisible. This seems to foreshadow Nazneen's eventual escape from isolation and loneliness through connections to other immigrants of color through diasporic intimacy.

Furthermore, Nazneen's experience of walking mirrors—or is an extension of—her own uprootedness. According to Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*,

To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates, makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place—an experience that is...compensated for by the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric.... (103)

While Nazneen feels this lack of place no matter where she is in London, as nowhere feels like “home,” this sense is magnified intensely when she is lost and walking through the city. Significantly, though, when she is outside walking, she is having a “social experience,” one in which she is not alone in feeling placeless. Instead, she is surrounded by countless others who too are trapped within the “indefinite process” of locating a place. While much of this experience is terrifying for Nazneen, she is nonetheless ingratiating herself into the “urban fabric” of London, creating relationships, no matter how momentary, with the people and places that she passes by. For her, this ultimate success in having one positive interaction with another pedestrian, or “walker,” on a city street sparks the eventual realization that she too is a part of this city, one who “creates” her own small part of the heterogeneous “urban fabric.”

Even prior to this experience of disorientation and recognition, she does form a few relationships with other Bangladeshi Londoners, albeit hesitantly. Initially, she befriends Razia, a funny, kind-hearted woman who loves harmless gossip. However,

Chanu does not approve of this burgeoning friendship and wants Nazneen to befriend Mrs. Islam, a woman who knows everything about every Bangladeshi immigrant in their neighborhood. Mrs. Islam, though, is later revealed to be a usurious money-lender who is able to control many of her so-called friends—including Chanu—with her high interest rates. Nonetheless, Mrs. Islam gives Nazneen advice early on that resonates later in the novel: “If you think you are powerless, then you are. Everything is within you, where God put it. If your husband does not do what is required, think what you yourself have left undone” (42). While she is specifically advising Nazneen to withhold sex from her husband to get what she wants, Mrs. Islam also addresses Nazneen’s physical isolation that is, to some degree, self-imposed. While Chanu does not want her to go out, he is gone all day at work. Why can’t she leave the apartment if she chooses to?

While initially Nazneen does not venture far, despite having successfully (albeit fearfully) navigated the city once before, she does begin to visit Razia, who now lives across the street, opening up to her about her sister Hasina’s love marriage and subsequent divorce. While Mrs. Islam’s presence is too imposing and vaguely threatening to invite (rather than coerce) intimacy, Razia becomes an ideal companion for Nazneen, although she continues to hold herself back from a deep connection with this woman due to Chanu’s reservations.

One way to understand the connection between these women is through Svetlana Boym’s definition of “diasporic intimacy.” As mentioned in my first chapter, diasporic intimacy describes relationships forged “through indirection and intimation, through stories and secrets” (252). It recognizes the untranslatability and transience of friendship, as well as the ambivalence experienced by the exiled individual(s) in relation to the new “home” and the homeland. Nevertheless, it “also discloses some of the furtive pleasures of exile” (253). Nazneen and Razia have forged a bond based on these very

pre-conditions of the temporality of friendship and a lack of true place. They share stories with one another that show their unique blend of past and present: Nazneen confides to Razia that her sister Hasina made a love marriage—a social taboo in Bangladesh, but the standard in their current location. Likewise, they share secrets, supporting one another through a mutual understanding of the blending cultures and moral codes of their pasts and presents. Most notably, Nazneen tells Razia about her relationship with her extramarital lover, and Razia shares her struggles with her son's drug addiction. Even the ways in which they communicate reflect the "indirection" of diasporic intimacy as they navigate their community together, with Razia indirectly intimating to Nazneen that Mrs. Islam cannot be trusted. They paradoxically experience the furtive pleasures of exile together—from their homeland and hegemonic English culture, and even their husbands and children on occasion. Despite their experiences of isolation and loneliness within England, they feel pleasure at their sense of connection, as well as through the ability to reinvent themselves as diasporic, Black British women. However, despite their growing connection, both are aware of the possibility of Nazneen's return to the homeland or of Chanu's interference ending their relationship, remaining cognizant of the precariousness and potential temporality of their bond.

Still, Razia and Nazneen react to the conditions in London in remarkably different ways. While Nazneen maintains a quiet demeanor, allowing her husband to make the decisions and only quietly defying him by going to see Razia while he is at work, Razia seems to adopt English ways: she swears, consumes Western goods, and defies her husband in ways that seem English, contrary to Bangladeshi customs. When Razia tells Nazneen that she threatened her husband that she would get a job if he didn't bring money home, Nazneen asks her what the Banglatown community will say. Razia responds, "Will the community feed me? Will it buy footballs for my son? Let the

community say what it will. I say *this* to the community.' And she flicked her fingers" (66). This tension between Razia and other Bangladeshis in their neighborhood shows the difficult negotiations in (re)establishing community in diasporic conditions. Razia's desire to adopt some facets of English culture through her speech and actions is met with resistance from her husband and others, including Mrs. Islam. Razia's Union Jack sweatshirt, which she wears numerous times throughout the novel, metonymically represents her acceptance, and even celebration of, her new home in London. Oliva M. Espín describes the significance of clothing in relation to identity for diasporic women, noting "the importance women assign to their clothing and appearance as a statement of their relation to acculturation" (127). This is clearly seen in *Brick Lane* through Razia's adoption of Western dress while Nazneen continues to wear saris. Nazneen's clothing seems not only to reflect Chanu's desire for his wife to remain tied to Bangladeshi femininity, but also shows her own backward gaze toward her life (and sister) back "home."

Likewise, the friendship between these women shifts its focus from stories of those in the homeland (like Hasina) to confessions of current struggles. Razia shares her worries with Nazneen when she leaves her husband and helps her son break his drug addiction, and Nazneen tells Razia of her affair with Karim. This shift from a focus on the past and their friends and relatives back home toward their present reality becomes increasingly difficult for Nazneen as the date approaches for her family's return to Bangladesh. While she does not whole-heartedly embrace London as a place of possibility like Razia does, she has forged a sense of connection through her friendship with Razia (and, to a lesser extent, some other Bangladeshi women) that breaks her free from her loneliness.

While much of the transformation of Nazneen's loneliness to social connection comes from her relationships with women, her relationship with Karim significantly influences her as well. To make extra money to facilitate her family's return to Bangladesh (and to send funds to Hasina), Nazneen begins taking work as a seamstress at home while her children are in school. The middleman who brings the work to her is Karim, who is several years her junior and a second-generation Bengali in England. He is fiercely politically active, serving as a leader for the Bengal Tigers, an activist group of South Asian Londoners who protest racialist views of white interpretations of Bengali culture and Islam. Through him, Nazneen becomes involved with this political group, and significantly casts the deciding vote to make Karim the leader of this organization. Attending these meetings and casting this vote can be seen as some of her first steps out of isolation into political power, as she joins with a group to agitate for change. She and Karim begin having an affair, and he becomes a strong influence on her political (and personal) views—so while her participation in the Bengal Tigers is a first step out of isolation, it is not necessarily a freely-made political choice. Clearly, she is strongly influenced by the highly-opinionated Karim and seems to formulate opinions based solely on his arguments. Yet, he serves as another catalyst (in addition to Razia) for her to resist Chanu's overpowering, but ultimately benign, influence.¹¹

¹¹ A clear intertext for this love triangle is Rabindranath Tagore's allegorical novel *The Home and the World* (1916). This colonial-era Bengali novel traces Bimala (e.g., Nazneen), her relatively apolitical husband Nikhil (Chanu), and her actively anticolonial nationalist lover Sandip (Karim). The novel concludes with Bimala choosing to stay with her husband as she realizes that this is a truer love, but a city-wide riot ensues, forcing Sandip to flee and in which Nikhil is mortally wounded. However, in some ways Chanu is an anti-Nikhil as well, in that Nikhil seems (truly) well-educated and well-informed and encourages his wife's education as well. In the end, he allows his wife to choose between him and her lover, and she chooses him—this is a confidence and awareness that Chanu seems to lack.

Nonetheless, her hero worship of Karim begins to shift as she sees the cracks in Karim's facade of a proud Bengali militant. She notices that he stutters whenever he speaks Bengali, a condition that worsens when he reveals to Nazneen that he has never been to Bangladesh. When she finds this out, "[s]omehow, she felt sorry, as if she had asked casually after a relative, not knowing that he had died" (254). As their affair continues, she still supports and admires Karim's political goals, but ultimately decides to end her relationship with him, even though she has already decided to stay in London despite Chanu's departure. Her final realization about Karim comes from this difference of place:

He was who he was. Question and answer. The same as her. Maybe not even that. Karim had never even been to Bangladesh. Nazneen felt a stab of pity.

Karim was born a foreigner. When he spoke Bengali, he stammered. Why had it not puzzled her? She saw only what she wanted to see. Karim did not have a place in the world. That was why he defended it. (335)

Her previous admiration of the Karim who "always knew" and "[fed] her slices of the world" (335) transforms into an understanding that he in fact has no homeland, which is why he so strongly defends the ideal of this. Even the use of short, choppy sentences make these realizations seem like decisive facts as they occur to Nazneen—most potently that "Karim did not have a place in the world." He feels a connection to the supposedly "timeless" homeland but has never experienced this place, and (to Nazneen) is misguidedly attempting to create an imagined Bangladeshi space in England, thereby rooting himself in no-place. His undying defense of Bangladeshi culture in London and his veneration of Nazneen come from his unproblematized nostalgic notion of this home elsewhere, one that he can maintain because he has not experienced the less-than-perfect reality of Bangladeshi culture as Nazneen has.

This feeling of pity also comes from the realization that she will never share a diasporic intimacy with Karim in the same way that she does with Razia. While he struggles against similar issues of racism in London as he is a fellow Bangladeshi, he fails to recognize that direct speech is never exactly “direct,” that it is ultimately imperfectly translatable. As Boym notes, “Diasporic intimacy can be approached only through indirection and intimation, through stories and secrets” (252), and Karim fails to recognize the mysteriousness and transience of connection. Karim expects quick results to his distribution of pamphlets and organization of protests with the Bengali Tigers, yet he does not understand the ambivalence toward establishing roots and feeling of foreignness in England of the first generation diasporic subjects with whom he interacts, like Nazneen and Chanu. They are not as invested in English politics as he is, as they are tending to look backward toward a physical home they once inhabited and another language spoken there. Likewise, Karim and Nazneen’s relationship provides political discussions and the sexual union of their bodies but does not include their unification through shared stories, as the former has not yet reconciled his problematic position with a homeland which he has never visited. Nazneen, on the other hand, having left Bangladesh, has a stronger understanding of the temporal structure of relationships in diasporic conditions and realizes that her bond with Karim is not intimate to a degree that will stave off her loneliness. While ending their relationship, Nazneen ponders, “How did Karim see her? The real thing, he’d said. She was his real thing. A Bengali wife. A Bengali mother. An idea of home. An idea of himself that he found in her” (339). Not only does this closely parallel Chanu’s initial perceptions of her (when she arrives in London, he says, “I am satisfied...a girl from the village: totally unspoilt” (10)), but she recognizes her own capacity to make herself fit into the role in

which her male companion(s) perceives her—therefore, she realizes that she must act to separate herself from these perceptions in order to truly forge her own identity.

To do this, she performs three actions that free her from restrictive relationships, and these movements serve to effectively end her isolation. These are standing up to Mrs. Islam, ending her relationship with Karim, and telling Chanu that she and their children will remain in London. A prominent factor in keeping Chanu in London is his debt to Mrs. Islam, but Nazneen realizes that her husband has paid off the principle many times over. She decides to fight against this injustice, despite Mrs. Islam's power in the neighborhood and the threat of physical violence from her sons. She finally defeats Mrs. Islam by asking her to swear on the Qur'an that she is not collecting interest, an act forbidden by the holy text. Nazneen uses this law from the homeland against her oppressor, freeing herself and her family from this usurer by blending the past with the present. Not only does Nazneen free herself from Mrs. Islam, but she also significantly ends her relationship with Karim, which I have discussed earlier. Her final action is to inform Chanu that she intends to remain in London despite his departure, a decision that causes her husband to crumble, begging her to return with him. Despite his pleas, she realizes that she has effectively formed a life in London, one that will be enriched by her husband's departure. The night that Chanu leaves, Nazneen and her two daughters eat together, and she responds to her daughters' questions of where they will permanently live with "...we'll decide what to do. Staying or going, it's up to us three" (360). With these words, Nazneen forms a (female) community with her daughters that gives them each equal decision-making power, a new type of interaction for this family. Nazneen acknowledges her own silent suffering in her relationship with Chanu, and, to a lesser degree, with Karim. So she decides to forge a new norm when

she assumes the position of authority. This also ends her ongoing struggle with “Going Home Syndrome,” seemingly terminating her consistent backward gaze to Bangladesh.

However, Jogomaya Bayer notes the problem of Nazneen’s sister Hasina’s disappearance from the narrative: Hasina works in a sweatshop, and while the novel “brings the exotic Other [Hasina] very close, [it] does not force one to reflect on his/her problems. The unemployed sister of the garment factory vanishes, making room for the more successful one of the metropolitan fashion world...” (45). In fact, there are many parallels between Hasina and Nazneen: both leave their husbands, take lovers, and long to create. In this way, they can be read as parallel characters, where the old self back home in Hasina must be released for Nazneen to become whole in England. By releasing this connection to her sister, Nazneen lets go of a major source of her nostalgia for the homeland, allowing her to further embrace the diasporic intimacy she experiences with Razia and her other business partners. Likewise, by effectively erasing Hasina from the narrative, Nazneen does not seem to contend with the fact that she will still be separated from her sister if she remains in England, making her decision to stay much easier to reach.¹² However, both her husband and her former lover return to the homeland—Chanu as a going home, and Karim for the first time.

After disentangling herself from these relationships, Nazneen and her friends create a tight-knit community of shared economics, work, and intimacy through their

¹² The longer Nazneen is in London, the more Hasina seems to be an idea rather than an individual to Nazneen. In fact, to her sister, “Hasina” becomes a narcissistic projection of what it means to be “back home,” or a representation of a “homeland” version of Nazneen. This conflicts with the narrative motion of *Brick Lane*, which portrays Nazneen’s teleological growth toward a successful blending of “old” and “new” in the Global North. Hasina’s story, as well as the way that the “Hasina” projection is a part of Nazneen herself, requires that the “backward” sister must be removed from the story to create the final “happy” ending. As a result of this excision, Hasina becomes Gayatri Spivak’s subaltern who cannot speak, cut off from any voice or representation by the end of the novel. While any extension of these ideas is outside the scope of my argument, this removal of the “Other” sister must be noted.

establishment of their own business Fusion Fashions. Gayatri Gopinath emphasizes the significance of this creative act: “This new collective home space thereby also breaks with the patriarchal gender arrangements that characterize diasporic nationalism and that situate women as embodiments of communal tradition and the longed-for homeland” (56). Establishing this business allows her to further free herself from Karim’s conceptions of her as “real” (e.g., an “authentic” Bangladeshi woman) and Chanu’s of her as a simple village woman, instead asserting herself as an independent businesswoman, mother, and friend.

As well as freeing herself from isolation, Nazneen’s new job gives her the pleasures of work as well, another Arendtian concept. Previously, within her home, Nazneen was trapped in the never-ending cycle of labor of cleaning the house, doing laundry, cooking—acting only as the *animal laborans*. While Arendt does maintain that labor can create its own sense of pleasure in the immediacy of producing followed by consuming, it lacks the permanence of the useful goods created by work. Work makes those things that are permanent in our world, and Nazneen herself transforms into the *homo faber* by her role in Fusion Fashions. Nazneen designs the clothing that the women sell, creating (art) work that serves to insert herself into the world with her products serving as an extension of her. Similar to Ahmed’s ideas of orienting oneself in a place, Arendt argues that those things that one creates and puts into the world orient one, creating a more permanent sense of oneself, a necessity to make life fully human. By forming and creating through Fusion Fashions, Nazneen engages in work, a creative process of establishing permanence, building her world.

At the same time, Nazneen and the other women’s creation of this business forms a female community under diasporic conditions. Hazel Carby discusses the importance of female networks in many formerly colonized areas including South Asia, a

significant bond in Bangladesh that Mrs. Islam acknowledges in a story to Nazneen: “So then the women of the village came together to discuss. First they shared their complaints. Then they sympathized, one with another...Once these important things were done, they moved on to decide what to do” (41). Ironically, although Mrs. Islam oppresses many of the Bangladeshi families on Brick Lane, she outlines here a viable process by which Nazneen and her friends can facilitate positive changes in their lives. Here, Nazneen takes the advice of a known bully (and usurer) and repurposes it to assist in her own actions toward work and community.

The connections to which Mrs. Islam refers are forged through the shared experience of walking to the well to fetch water, and Carby recognizes shared labor as a common source of bonds between women in the Global South. In an analogous fashion, Nazneen and Razia, along with their friends Hanufa and Jorina, “fuse” together to form Fusion Fashions, employing their various skills as seamstresses, businesswomen, and designers to form a successful business based on shared funds and equal votes in decision-making. This situation echoes Nazneen’s new community, where no one person bears the burden (or privilege) of absolute decision-making. Nadia Valman concludes that, at the end of the novel, “Ali casts the East End [of London], to which the heroine declares her allegiance...as a place of multicultural harmony especially receptive to female enterprise” (6). While Ali does acknowledge London as place that opens itself to these women’s business, she also credits these specific women with the savvy and creativity to run a successful company if given the opportunity. While this may seem to resonate with liberal English ideals of democracy and free market economics, it simultaneously echoes standards for women’s networks in Bangladesh, forging a hybrid of old and new that facilitates the diasporic intimacy formed between these women, who work and share stories, overcoming conditions of loneliness and isolation as immigrants

in London through this shared bond constructed by the *homo faber*. Likewise, Nazneen's narrative follows the transformative bildungsroman, as she transitions from a meek housewife, trapped within her home as the *animal laborans*, to an independent (and purportedly single) clothing designer, finding/creating her place in the world through her blending of friendships, affective labor, and work.

Adella in *Waiting in the Twilight*: Loneliness and Isolation Despite Diasporic

Intimacy

While Ali's Nazneen ultimately finds a relatively untroubled home in London, the protagonist Adella in Joan Riley's *Waiting in the Twilight* is not so successful in creating her own space and happiness. This novel spans Adella's life from childhood to death, and the narrative is constructed using a series of her flashbacks. As the plot progresses, the linear story of Adella's life can be reconstructed. We learn that she was born in the countryside in Jamaica, but then moved in with her cousins in Kingston at age 11 because a pedophilic pastor in her small town desires her. As a young adult, she meets Beresford, a police officer who impregnates her and sets her up in her own house with the child. He coerces her into remaining in a sexual relationship with him, later revealing that he is already married. Adella manages to escape his financial hold over her, and shortly thereafter forms a relationship with Stanton, an idealistic man who seems to not care that she has two children from her previous relationship. Stanton goes to England, Adella follows him there, and they marry, having four more daughters. However, financial struggles and pervasive racism create turmoil within their relationship. Adella suffers a stroke, and an increasingly abusive Stanton leaves her and the children, running away with her cousin Gladys. Adella's situation continues to crumble as she loses job after job, two of her daughters become pregnant at young ages, she loses her

home to the bank, and she suffers another stroke. The novel ends with Adella's death, and in her final moments she hallucinates that Stanton has returned to her.

While there is not a vast amount of scholarship on Joan Riley's novels, some critics have taken notice of her work, especially as she is considered to be the first published Black West Indian woman writer in Britain (Ellis 69). Much of this scholarship (including work by Perry, Ellis, and Neumaier) focuses on representations of sexism and domestic abuse in her novels, as Adella is physically abused by Beresford and Stanton in *Waiting in the Twilight*, Hyacinth is a victim of incest from her father in *The Unbelonging*, and Verona is raped by her sister's boyfriend in *Romance*. Other critics (Fischer, Gamallo) have examined her novel's unhappy endings, noting the utter lack of romance or fruitful nostalgia in her protagonist's lives by the close of the text. Despite this novel's apparent hopelessness, I maintain that it does provide a compelling narrative of Adella's unrealized quest for *bildung*, and I aim to trace these characteristics to identify *why* Adella is unsuccessful in escaping loneliness and isolation as opposed to the protagonists of the other novels I examine. Nevertheless, in my exploration of *Waiting in the Twilight*, I will begin with Suarez's proposition that there is some hopefulness in the ending of this novel, as two of Adella's daughters are successful in England, as is her best friend Lisa. I will examine what makes these women's experiences in England different from Adella's as they escape patriarchal limitations as well as racist structures to embrace diasporic intimacy and educational opportunities, like Ali's Nazneen. On the other side, I will trace the patriarchal and racist discourses that prevent Adella from experiencing these connections in a way that successfully root her in her diasporic conditions, as she remains mired in loneliness and isolation. Likewise, she is unable to engage in work, remaining trapped in unfulfilling labor until the end of her life.

Similar to *Brick Lane*, *Waiting in the Twilight* traces the movements of an immigrant woman from her homeland to England and engages with notions of identity and connection in diasporic conditions. However, Adella's plight is not told chronologically. Instead it is narrated in flashbacks as she is dying, and it is immediately apparent that she is unhappy, old, and disabled at the end of her life. Nevertheless, upon reconstructing the story of her life from her childhood in Jamaica, it is clear that this has not always been the case. She has happy memories of her time in the motherland before she immigrated, especially in the countryside with her grandmother, and these reflections seem to form the only joy she feels at the end of her life. However, even these reveries are consistently interrupted by the encroachment of noise from the city-space. For instance, as she reflects upon how much she "loved the outhouse kitchen" in Jamaica, "far away in the distance, a door slammed, and Adella shook herself...", back to her present in England, in the midst of her old age and squalid living conditions (43).

In her life, Adella has been subjected to two separate situations of exile, the first of which occurs when she is forced to leave Beaumont, a seemingly paradisiacal place in the Jamaican countryside, due to the unwanted attentions of a pedophilic pastor. While she experiences this as a betrayal of sorts—being sent away for reasons that are not her fault—she is reassured by her Aunt May: "You, Adella chile, could mek a way in town. Yu have boldness and yu restless in de country, an fram yu have a skill yu will get work no prablem" (35-6). Adella's skill is sewing, which is a form of work that she continues to deploy in Kingston when she moves in with her cousin's family. Even more

importantly, though, her aunt identifies Adella's personality as one that will lead to success in her new urban circumstances.¹³

Nevertheless, it takes Adella some time to adapt to her new conditions, and she identifies the contrast of the "dust-filled heat" and "strange smell" of her surroundings to those in the countryside. While initially she sees it as "like Beaumont and yet not so," she adapts to Kingston (42). Her initial sensations of foreignness and discomfort later yield to a love of the city, and "slowly it became a part of all the things she liked about the city, rotting waste, dust and packed humanity" (42).

Nevertheless, her quest for *bildung* derails with her relationship with Beresford, a police officer, which results in her subsequent loss of independence and work. These blows lead to her descent into loneliness and isolation. Beresford persuades her into a sexual relationship with him and then scolds her when he learns that she is pregnant. When Adella is kicked out of her cousin's house for being pregnant, Beresford offers to support her by paying her rent in her own house, but then demands sex from her in return. While Adella initially sees this as her only option, she realizes that this situation is not ideal and begins trying to find other avenues—however, this is hampered by her losing her freelance sewing work when the women who brought her jobs learn that she is pregnant out of wedlock. This financial blow is further compounded by her loss of any female support: "How many of them [her customers] had said she was the best dressmaker in town, that they would always stand by her if she ever needed help. But that was before...After that had come the excuses. The 'we can't have you coming here in case it's a bad influence, you know'" (114). The shame of her pregnancy severs her ties with her work and with other women in the community, and Beresford becomes one

¹³ This movement from the country to the city also follows the traditional *bildungsroman* structure of a transformation through the relocation from comfortable yet stifling rural surroundings to a bustling, urban center.

of her only contacts to the outside world as she is now fully dependent on him. She suffers from loneliness and isolation, as she is cut off from all family and former friends and any means of financial independence. However, upon learning that Beresford is already married, Adella ends her relationship with him, despite the fact that this leaves her destitute with their two children.

She escapes this initial experience of isolation and loneliness, though, when Stanton enters her life, seemingly fortuitously. Nevertheless, this relationship results in her reluctant migration to England, and to her lifelong tie to unproductive labor and isolation. Initially, though, Stanton treats her with respect and love, even though he is somewhat younger than her and she is pregnant when they meet. He is overjoyed when she is pregnant with his child several months into their relationship. However, he begins to turn cold when she gives birth to a girl (“A doan want no girl chile. A want a son fe carry me name” (151)), and the only dream that sustains him then is of going to England and getting rich. While Adella supports him, feeling that she owes him this because he rescued her financially, she is hesitant to leave the life that she has built in Kingston that provides fulfilling relationships with others: “She was respectable, could go to church again. Now she could invite people up from the country, feeling happy as they marvelled about the coolness and the space in her brick house” (153). This is short-lived, though, as Stanton and Adella solidify plans to immigrate, with Stanton departing for England first and later sending for her. Adella’s family supports her in this decision, and her grandmother and sister agree to take in her three oldest children (Danny, Mikey, and Delores), with the expectation that they will return wealthy in two years to be reunited as a family. However, Adella never does live in Jamaica again.

Upon Adella’s arrival in England, her life with Stanton begins to crumble due to racist attitudes and economic hardships. She manages to find a job embroidering in a

factory (utilizing her sewing skills), but Stanton does not work regularly or contribute the money he does earn to the household. At the same time, the tiny rooms they rent are not big enough as they continue to have children, and Adella insists that they buy a larger house. Upon contacting a realtor, though, they experience the financial and personal impact of racism from this man and the wider community. While Adella is aghast at this, Stanton accepts it, becoming angry with her when she tries to fight back. The realtor will only show them houses in specific slum-like neighborhoods, and the prices are clearly too high for the quality of the homes:

The row of houses soared high on either side of the street, testifying to a long-past glory. There was something dark and dismal about them...Adella had never seen anything so big, so gloomy...She had never been on Eldridge Road before, but it was like any other road in that decaying part of Brixton...How could this one cost so much? (14)

While Stanton stands by, embarrassed, Adella insists that the realtor show them nicer houses in better neighborhoods until he finally admits, “I am afraid some people are funny about just who they sell their houses to” (16). Despite forcing him to admit that these neighborhoods are divided racially, Adella’s satisfaction is short-lived as she realizes that she must either buy this house or continue to rent their tiny rooms. Although the house is big, much of it is in decay, the steps are rotten (in fact, Stanton falls through them), and there is mold and fungus everywhere. As she walks through this putrid structure, “she thought about her father’s house [in Jamaica]. It was so light, so nice and cool inside. The lacy patterned brick that enclosed the red-polished veranda was always white. Freshly coated with lime it was bright against the lush green vegetation and the red dirt road” (20). This sense of nostalgia echoes throughout the novel, contrasting the

dark, impoverished conditions in England with the lush, prosperous life she had back home.

At the same time that Adella expresses frustration with the realtor, she also fights against Stanton, who reacts much more passively to the racialism he encounters. From the beginning, Stanton is resistant to them buying their own home and is insistent that they just purchase this house at the asking price from the realtor. As Adah attempts to negotiate, “Stanton’s fingers pinched into her arm. ‘Leave de man noh,’ he hissed bad-temperedly, ‘ihm ongly doing ihm jab. why yu waan trouble ihm?’” (17). Instead of teaming up with her to fight such racist attitudes that force them to live in squalid conditions for expensive prices, Stanton has internalized these views, seeing himself, and especially Adella, as unworthy of a nice home in a nice neighborhood. He is embarrassed, agreeing to take this subpar house: “‘We’ll tek it,’ he said, looking apologetically at the man, before glaring at [Adella]” (21). Because he believes that he is inferior to this white man, he accepts this swindling, taking it out on Adella through angry words and physical abuse, like pinching her arm. Adella recognizes this from their first months in England:

She had wished even then that they had stayed in Jamaica. She saw what it was doing to Stanton, the way the white people treated him and sometimes she wished there was something she could do. She knew better than to mention it.

One thing Stanton had was pride. He would never forgive her for noticing that he was afraid of the white man outside the door. (12-3)

Initially, though, Adella does not internalize the racism or Stanton’s treatment of her, instead recognizing these as external conditions that affect her but do not define her. She continues to try to improve life for her and her children despite rampant racism and the lack of Stanton’s support.

One key factor in Adella's initial ability to overcome these seemingly debilitating circumstances is her friendship with Lisa, whom she met on the boat from Jamaica to England. Their bond is based on diasporic intimacy, similar to that of Nazneen and Razia in *Brick Lane*. While Adella is on her way to meet her husband, Lisa has left her husband and children behind to go to school to be a nurse in England. Lisa remains an important touchstone for Adella throughout her life, especially in the midst of tumultuous times with Stanton. While Adella argues with the realtor, she thinks, "Wait till she told Lisa and Bess about this" (19). Likewise, Lisa watches the children while they are shopping for homes, and this is a source of relief for Adella: "She was glad that she had to collect the children from Lisa. That he [Stanton] never came round to her friend's room. At least it would give him time to calm down; give her time to think of a way to soothe him" (22). Lisa's apartment serves as a place in which Adella can privately vent her frustrations and secrets to her friend—both concerning the racism she encounters (she "can't wait" to tell her), as well as her trials with Stanton.

Their friendship reflects diasporic intimacy as well in its recognition of the temporality of their connection. Although it later becomes clear that Lisa has no intention of returning to Jamaica to her family, this remains a possibility for many years. Likewise, after buying their home, Stanton begins to discuss his desire to return to Jamaica once they save up the money. While this seems like a distant dream to Adella, she has already followed Stanton once, and, at his insistence, would probably do so again, interrupting her friendship with Lisa. Likewise, Boym notes that these types of bonds are "rooted in the suspicion of a single home," and in this novel, this means both the dichotomy between Jamaica and England, as well as the various homes each woman has in England. Lisa remains relatively rooted compared to Adella, though, renting until she eventually saves the money to buy a house. She establishes a stable physical home

in England, largely due to the fact that she does not have a husband and children to care for in her diasporic conditions. On the other hand, Adella's home is literally splitting apart at the seams, infested with fungus and mold and topped with a caving-in roof. Adella must take in boarders to afford her home, creating a feel of transience within her own house as lodgers move in and out. Despite (or perhaps because of) the instability of their homes, the bond between these women remains strong, as they visit one another at their various lodgings, sharing secrets and intimacy in whatever space they can afford. This resilience enables them to continue on even when their trials seem unbearable, and this is largely due to their connection and support of one another.

Nevertheless, they do not share everything, and this allowance for secrets is also key: "The thing that made them such good friends was mutual respect for privacy. It was all right to gossip about everyone else, to talk about the way they ran their lives, and the things they did wrong; but that was not the way of friends. What Lisa wanted her to know she told her, and everything else was not her business" (24). This unspoken rule allows diasporic women to maintain their dignity to one another in the oftentimes undignified circumstances in which they find themselves as a result of racism, sexism, and poverty. They support one another in the secrets they do tell, but also respect each other's personal decisions to maintain their privacy, another important facet of diasporic intimacy.

Another notable factor in Adella's continued effort and hope is her work, which is disrupted by health problems and the disintegration of her marriage. Despite the menial nature of her embroidering work in the factory upon her arrival in England, she takes pride in her job, especially since she serves as the primary provider within her family. She is always punctual, organizing care for her children when Stanton is unavailable and then doing the labor of cooking and cleaning for her family when she returns in the

evenings. However, this changes when she has a stroke at age 34. She is hospitalized for many months, with Lisa caring for the children, as Stanton becomes increasingly detached. He only comes to visit her twice in the hospital, and her partially-paralyzed body seems to repulse him. His reaction to her causes her to experience total paralysis in his presence: “Fear of his reaction stopped her speaking...The silence stretched on. Stanton looked at his watch almost constantly and Adella felt tears burn the back of her eyes when she saw his open relief at the bell that signalled the end of visiting time” (53).

This stroke causes Adella to lose three important components in her life: her health, her job, and her husband. Despite some improvement in muscle function through physical therapy, Adella is permanently disabled by her stroke, which induces pain and feelings of shame, as well as affects her ability to perform some jobs. Furthermore, she loses her long-held job in the factory because of her prolonged absence, severing her connection to another important facet of her life from which she finds self-worth. From here, she must take on a series of low-paying jobs, culminating in her labor as a cleaning woman. She holds this job for many years despite her paralyzed side, and, when everything else is crumbling, “only the thought of work sustained her. She told herself she had a job, was not as useless as [Stanton] said she was” (93). Even though this cleaning job, in Arendtian terms, is labor and not work, it still serves to make Adella feel worthwhile and gives her a purpose that keeps her moving, overcoming the increasingly difficult conditions of her stroke. However, after many years, she is let go from this position for being late once—a clear indication that her employers do not value her work or sympathize with her condition. Susan Alice Fischer notes that this termination indicates her dispensability (110), a trigger to loneliness.¹⁴ Not only does this

¹⁴ This parallels the loneliness experienced by Ali's Chanu in his workplace, where he is continually passed over for promotions and is made to feel superfluous.

cause Adella to lose her house to the bank, but she also feels worthless when she is unemployed, and her health deteriorates even further as a result.

In addition to the stroke and job loss, Adella's happiness and hope is further destroyed by Stanton's betrayal and abandonment. After Adella's stroke, her cousin Gladys moves in with them to care for the children, and she and Stanton begin having an affair. At the same time, Stanton refuses to have any sexual contact with Adella because he is repulsed by her body following her stroke. Lisa finally forces Adella to recognize the truth about Stanton's infidelity, and she kicks her cousin out of her house. Stanton reacts with hatred and violence, attempting to suffocate Adella with a pillow: "The blood pounded in her head, threatening to burst out. She could hear him swearing and muttering above her...'Yu doan hear a sey die,' he said angrily, slapping her across the face again. 'Jesas, yu caan even do dat properly. All yu do is bada me'" (64). That night, Stanton leaves, never returning to Adella except occasionally to see the children. At this point, Adella begins to internalize Stanton's view of her as a disappointment, especially since her stroke. She chooses to blame Gladys for Stanton's unfaithfulness, calling her a Jezebel. Instead of holding Stanton responsible, recognizing that in England he has never been the financial or personal support that she needed, she holds out hope for several decades until the end of her life that he will return to her. Adella chooses to stake her happiness in her relationship with the absent and unfaithful Stanton as opposed to in her friendships with Lisa and other Afro-Caribbean immigrant friends, and this is a deciding factor in her ultimate unhappiness.

Likewise, while Adella continues to reflect on home, at times longing to be there, she feels that she cannot return, despite the encouragement to do so by her children and Lisa. In fact, she feels that she must lie to her family in Jamaica about her lack of success in England. While initially, she had planned to invite her family to come for a

visit when she bought the house with Stanton, she is too embarrassed to invite them when she realizes how dilapidated her home is, so she makes excuses to keep them from coming. Instead, she emphasizes that her home is big enough to take in lodgers, and her family in Jamaica is proud of this. Likewise, she is ashamed to tell her parents that she must take on a cleaning job. In fact, Lisa encourages her to lie about this, stating, “Yu doan haffe tell yu people dem back ome...Yu tink a tell me mada dat a work in a factory...?” (59). Lisa emphasizes the common experience of immigrants who tell their families back home that they are prospering in their new locations despite a plethora of unexpected hardships.

However, Lisa later encourages Adella to return to Jamaica once her children have grown and she has lost her job. Adella, though, has returned once to visit, and the experience was not encouraging: “It had been so different, so strange and she could not see herself returning there to live” (125). This homeland that she had always reflected upon fondly proves to not be as welcoming as she had hoped, as many in her family still judge her for affair with Beresford, and her family fortune has dwindled so she could not live comfortably. She is too ashamed to tell her daughters or Lisa this, so instead she (seemingly) stubbornly insists that she will live out the rest of her life in England, despite her obvious physical, financial, and romantic struggles.

Adella does hold out some hope for the next generation—a positive outcome to her affective labor—although her feelings are divided concerning her children. Two of her daughters, Delores and Eena, become pregnant as young teenagers, following in Adella’s footsteps, and are sources of disappointment to their mother. Likewise, Mikey seems weak and incompetent, chasing white women, and Danny remains in Jamaica, starting a family in impoverished conditions. However, Adella is proud of two of her daughters, Audrey and Carol, who have successful careers, remain chaste in their

teenage years, and care for Adella as her health deteriorates. Despite the racist conditions that this family faces in England, these two young women are able to fight against it, standing up for themselves and their mother. Audrey goes to Adella's doctor's appointment with her, forcing the white doctor to treat her mother's pain when he seems hesitant to do so. This is a source of happiness to Adella: "It had been good to see the doctor climb down, to know her daughter had made him do so. She couldn't wait to get home and get on the phone and tell Lisa and the others all about it...she knew inside that they would envy her, would wish they were just as lucky with their children..." (72).

Adella is eager to share her pride in her daughter with her friends, and she feels similarly about Carol, who calls the police for Adella after she is mugged in the park by some white boys. When the police question Adella, hesitant to believe that the muggers were white, Carol insists, stating "As mum said, there is nothing wrong with her eyes, if she said the muggers were white they were white" (79). Adella is hesitant to call the police at all in this incident, as she distrusts them because she has heard stories of their racism, but Carol insists on making sure her mother's voice is heard by them regardless of her color. Jana Gohrisch notes the significance of these two daughters' rejection of sexism as well (285), despite their mother's continued demands that they remain "respectful" when they talk about their father. This insistence on recognition and fair treatment by Audrey and Carol shows hope that at least some of Adella's children will have an easier, more equitable life in England than Adella and Stanton did.

Another source of hope in the novel is Lisa, who seems parallel to *Brick Lane's* Razia as she remains strong throughout the novel, adapting to and changing her own diasporic conditions. Unlike Adella, Lisa is unhampered by children and a spouse, leaving them behind in Jamaica while she pursues her career in England. When Adella asks Lisa if she misses her husband, Lisa retorts, "Ihm...Listen, girl, if a wait fa ihm, a

would breed every year, and me an de pickney dem would starve” (24). Lisa is practical about the difficulties of having children and a spouse in these hard financial conditions and remains free from this never-ending gendered labor, and Adella envies this. However, Lisa continues to care for Adella and her children when necessary, engaging in childcare by choice to help out her friend. She remains a source of strength for Adella, encouraging her to practice talking so she can regain her speech after the stroke: “‘Since yu in hospital, not one word come fram yu, and yu talk so much, Adella, yu caan get shy now” (55). Lisa reminds Adella of who she was because she knows her, as they have shared so much through their conditions of diasporic intimacy. This friendship remains important as Adella suffers a second stroke, and Lisa continues to care for her friend until Adella dies.

Despite her experiences of diasporic intimacy and closeness with some of her children, Adella’s attachment to Stanton consumes her, and her life ends with a fantasy of his return. Even on her deathbed, Adella does not receive proper care in the hospital, and she dies on a gurney in a hallway while waiting for a bed. Carol and Audrey are with her, fighting with the doctors and nurses to give their mother a room and some medicine while Adella slowly fades. However, right before she passes, she imagines that she sees Stanton return:

He stayed there, smiling, just smiling, and her mouth moved in a painful smile. It was hard to focus: but that was okay. Stanton was here now and nothing mattered. She knew she was dying, that was why he was at her bedside...She shifted her head slightly, seeing shapes behind him, behind the picture of the coconut tree and the calm brown sea. (164)

As Isabel Carrera Suárez notes, it is clear that Adella has conflated Stanton’s return and return to the homeland (299)—two nostalgic prospects that she has idealized at various

points in her life but are less perfect than she imagines. She goes on to hallucinate images of her family in Jamaica and all of her children, despite the reality that only two are there. The final line of the novel reads, “‘All dat respeck,’ she murmured to herself, and this time her eyes smiled as they closed” (165). The respect and honor that she so strongly desires in life remains elusive at her death, as she lays in a hospital hallway, ignored by doctors and nurses and with only two members of her family present, but she imagines an idyllic scene so she can die peacefully.

Adella’s reflections upon Jamaica, both on her deathbed and throughout her life in England, idealize the homeland. Svetlana Boym defines this type of backward-looking as “restorative nostalgia.” She writes:

The past for the restorative nostalgic is a value for the present; the past is not a duration but a perfect snapshot. Moreover, the past is not supposed to reveal any signs of decay; it has to be freshly painted in its ‘original image’ and remain eternally young...restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time.... (49)

Adella sees Jamaica through this lens: she imagines a still image of a coconut tree and the sea, a snapshot of an idyllic past. This representation (or restoration) of the homeland is fresh and clean, with no acknowledgment of the poverty and overcrowding that she witnessed on her one visit to Jamaica since her emigration. In fact, Boym sees restorative nostalgia as attempting to capture a “prelapsarian moment” (49), and this image Adella evokes of untouched nature conjures a sense of innocent timelessness. Adella seemingly continuously suffers throughout her time in England, so she clings not only to the idea of Stanton’s return, but also to restorative nostalgia for the Jamaican countryside. She fails to acknowledge, especially at the end of her life, the struggles that

she faced during her time in Jamaica, and instead constructs an idealized image of the homeland.

While Nazneen in *Brick Lane* is able to overcome her isolation and loneliness through diasporic intimacy with Razia and her work with Fusion Fashions, Adella does not reach this level of contentment. This is due to Adella's commitment to her husband instead of to female friendships based on diasporic intimacy, her loss of work, and her inability to release nostalgic views of the homeland. Nevertheless, she does show strength in leaving Beresford in Kingston, adapting to conditions in England, and negotiating the purchase of her own home. Likewise, she stands up to Stanton when she learns he is having an affair, but then loses her resolve to force him to be faithful. Despite her connections to Lisa (based on diasporic intimacy) and her two "successful" daughters, she remains mired in restorative nostalgia and her need for Stanton, instead of letting this (and him) go as Nazneen does Chanu. Likewise, she holds on to idyllic representations of Jamaica, failing to acknowledge the shortcomings of the homeland like Nazneen ultimately does. However, Adella has many more children and financial constraints than Nazneen and is unable to maintain her work—her world-making—because of her sudden health problems. This serves not only to make her financial situation unbearable as she loses her home, but it also destroys her hopefulness for the future as she has always taken pride and purpose from her work, especially under diasporic conditions. Also, Nazneen is able to choose to not return home, a source of empowerment, as opposed to Adella, who is trapped between an impoverished Jamaican homeland where she must admit defeat and a racist English environment where she is unemployed and isolated. However, there is some hope for overcoming the trials of diasporic conditions in Lisa's ultimate contentment, as well as Audrey and Carol's confidence and success in England.

Adah in *Second-Class Citizen*: Isolation, Loneliness, and Solitude to Friendship

Like Ali and Riley's novels, Buchi Emecheta's semi-autobiographical novel *Second-Class Citizen* traces the experiences of an immigrant woman to London. Emecheta has long been seen as an important womanist author, and her novels reflect this empowering view of Black women (Charles 280). This narrative begins with protagonist Adah's life in her Nigerian homeland, where she is orphaned but, through her own tenacity, manages to secure a Westernized education. She (reluctantly) marries Francis, and she and her husband (and their ever-growing brood of children) move to London, which she sees as a place of infinite opportunity. However, she is bound by the effects of racialization in the public spaces of London and patriarchy in the private realm at home with her husband. These experiences stifle her hopeful nature, and she begins to distrust those around her. However, through kind interactions with an eclectic group of coworkers at the library, Adah finds social connections through *philoxenic* connections that facilitate her work of authoring a novel. When her husband burns her creation, Adah decides to divorce him, moving out with her children and looking hopefully to the future.

This novel has long been examined as a modern African bildungsroman (Porter, Collins) in which Adah grows to self-realization and independence. I plan to expand upon this idea through a juxtaposition of Adah's development to that of Nazneen in *Brick Lane* and Adella in *Waiting in the Twilight* once again through a consideration of loneliness, isolation, and (for Adah) solitude, and the subsequent formation of friendships and community that facilitates creative action. However, Adah's connections in the narrative are not born from diasporic intimacy, but instead more closely resemble the politics of friendship based on difference described by Leela Gandhi. Nevertheless, Nazneen and Adah both find identity through reworking (or severing) relationships with their husbands and/or lovers, and through exploring creative actions in diasporic

conditions, while Adella suffers from loneliness and isolation until death, with the hope for connection in *Waiting in the Twilight* coming from peripheral female characters.

Second-Class Citizen contains many parallels to *Waiting in the Twilight*, including its representations of domestic abuse, the wife/mother as primary income provider, and hopefulness upon initial immigration to England. This novel also resembles *Brick Lane* in several significant ways: it too portrays an immigrant woman in London in an oppressive marriage who ultimately overcomes her circumstances through her connections to others, her separation from her husband, and her own creative actions. Emecheta's narrative provides an extensive account of the protagonist's experiences in the homeland. However, Adah strongly desires to immigrate to London from an early age. Her experience of loneliness begins in Nigeria, and she sees the promise of England as an opportunity to achieve professional success and connections. However, her father dies when she is young. Therefore, she must live with her extended family, and she sees schooling as the way in which she can rise above her circumstances. In the pursuit of an education, she is forced to steal some money from her uncle, who then canes her, resulting in her realization that she must marry in order to establish a home from which she can enter the university and eventually go to England.

Prior to her move to London, almost everyone in Adah's life seems to work to thwart her goals, or at least fails to help her. Clearly, she seems set up to experience (social) loneliness and isolation, in that she has no community acting with her to assist her in her goals.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Adah seems relentlessly optimistic throughout this novel, and this fortitude seems to stem from two conditions. One is that the narrator is speaking retrospectively, after Adah has already succeeded in London, so it is relatively

¹⁵ Arendt maintains that isolation is always experienced when there is an absence of a group or community working together.

easy to construct a view of an always-positive Adah when one knows the triumphant (and teleological) outcome of her story. More than this, though, Adah seems to thrive in the existential state of solitude. While Arendt cautions that this condition cannot be maintained indefinitely, she notes that this state can be profitable in the short-term as one is “by oneself” so experiencing the “two-in-one” (465). In this way, Adah seems to serve as her own source of encouragement, thriving (or at least managing) in solitude, up until her marriage. She also oftentimes personifies this other as the “Presence.” While there are certainly religious implications of these experiences that are outside the scope of my study, this force that she experiences seems to come from within her and her sheer will to succeed so can be seen as the “other” that she experiences in solitude. Furthermore, this independent attitude seems quite distinct from other protagonists in ethnic bildungsroman, in that Adah’s success is largely attributable to her solitary efforts as opposed to the work of a group of migrants—and her later connections to others are in fact formed through *philoxenia* as opposed to a Black, diasporic community.

Because of her success in solitude and fear of patriarchal control, Adah is unhappy about her need to marry, but she initially sees hope for her union to Francis, who seems as though he will be a kind and respectful husband. Nonetheless, this community feels like a trap to Adah, as she feels bound by her inability to make decisions for herself in Nigeria, despite being highly capable. She marries Francis so he may help facilitate her education, but then “most of the decisions about their own lives had to be referred first to Big Pa, Francis’s father, then to his mother, then discussed amongst the brothers of the family before Adah was referred to” (26-27). She feels trapped when they decide that she will go to medical school—yet, “nobody talked of who was going to support her, nobody talked of where she was going to live. So she found herself alone once more, forced into a situation dictated by society in which, as an

individual, she had little choice" (27). Due to the patriarchally-induced restrictions she experiences in Nigeria, coupled with the need to obey her in-laws' wishes, she pushes Francis to ask his parents if they may move to England, where she believes she will better be able to determine her own fate. Upon her marriage, she does become part of a family system, yet she experiences this particular community as oppressive and lacking the support and respect that she desires. Therefore, she is devastated when Francis returns to say that he will be departing for England while she remains at home.

Nevertheless, with persistence and cunning, Adah convinces her in-laws that she should follow Francis to London shortly after his departure, but she is unable to find diasporic intimacy in her new home. Furthermore, England is far from the paradise that Adah anticipates, as she finds herself immediately bound by racism in her new surroundings. As Christine W. Sizemore notes, Emecheta's novels often examine the "liminal situation" of the immigrant "because from the perspective of England she sees problems for women within patriarchal Nigerian culture but from the perspective of her homeland she sees the problems for blacks within racist British culture" (368). Adah remains caught in both patriarchy and racism, as Francis proves to be an abusive and selfish husband who demands his "rights" as a Nigerian husband. He struggles with his studies and finds himself unable to succeed personally or professionally in London and punishes Adah for his perceived inadequacy by beating her, belittling her, refusing to work, having sex with other women, and even disallowing her from using birth control. Adah finds no intimacy or fellowship with her husband while in London as he becomes increasingly lazy and monstrous.

Throughout this time, Adah also struggles to find any companionship outside of her marriage, and her hold on solitude crumbles as she debilitates into loneliness and isolation. Her belief in the almost mystical qualities of freedom that she hopes to acquire

in England reveal her naïveté—according to Walter P. Collins, III, she wants to move there “in hopes of discovering a developed and individuated self,” as “Adah has associated life in the United Kingdom with a wonderful, even luxurious, dream life” (48). While this might be a bit overstated, it is clear that Adah is grossly unprepared for the realities of racism in diasporic conditions, and, more practically, the base living conditions for poor immigrants in London upon her arrival. Her isolation from the English “natives” that she encounters, although cold (“They looked...determined to keep their distance” (36)), is not altogether unexpected, but she is shocked by the behavior of Francis and the other people she encounters. On her first day in London, Francis informs her that “the day you land in England, you are a second-class citizen” (39). Likewise, the other immigrant Nigerians in her apartment building are jealous of Adah, both because she manages to land a well-paying job in the library (a “first-class job” (45)) and because she is able to keep her children instead of fostering them to white families, which many immigrants were forced to do. To her Nigerian neighbors, “she was having her cake and eating it” (69). There is no sense of community between Francis and Adah and their neighbors, but instead a state of competition. This culminates as the neighbors eventually succeed in evicting Adah’s family from the building.

Because of Adah’s insistence that she is not “second class”, her lack of community becomes increasingly pronounced. While she is able to keep her children, a condition many immigrants were not able to facilitate, she struggles to find childcare. She laments the conditions that she left behind:

At home in Nigeria, all a mother had to do for a baby was wash and feed him and, if he was fidgety, strap him onto her back and carry on with her work while the baby slept. But in England...looking after babies was in itself a full-time job.

This was difficult for a Nigerian wife to cope with, especially when she realised that she could no longer count on the help the extended family usually gave in such situations. (46)

While Nazneen in *Brick Lane* ultimately (re)constructs women's networks in London at the end of the novel and Adella in *Waiting in the Twilight* receives assistance from Lisa in childcare, Adah is unable to forge these connections and receive this type of help from friends. Instead, she must take her children to Trudy, a white woman who neglects them in her filthy house and entertains male clients while Adah's children are in her home. Due to the jealousy of the other immigrants she encounters, she also does not have friends who are bonded together by like conditions of migrancy. Furthermore, even if she did find friends with whom to share her experiences, she has no time to socialize, as she must work, care for the children, and complete all the housework. This lack of diasporic intimacy compounds her sense of isolation as she has no power to act with others within a community as Nazneen eventually does.

Adah further experiences her lack of connection when her son Vicky becomes violently ill and must be taken to the hospital. A white nurse asks her if Vicky is her only child and she responds negatively, but notes that the other is "only a girl" (62). The nurse reprimands her for what she deems to be Adah's complicity with sexism, when, in fact, it is a cultural system that is more complex than this nurse understands. In fact,

in her society she could only be sure of the love of her husband...by having and keeping alive as many children as possible, and...to her people a boy was like four children put together[.] And if the family could give the boy a good university education, his mother would be given the status of a man in the tribe. (62-3)

Adah feels completely misunderstood, as she herself works toward equality with men, an ideal in which she believes—yet that does not change the fact that her life will be worse

if her son dies rather than her daughter. Adah experiences deep loneliness throughout her initial time in London as she is socially isolated through experiences like this one. Hazel Carby discusses the pathologization of these family structures by white feminists, and the state at large. Asian and African women, she argues, are oftentimes viewed as victims with no power who must be rescued from their backward culture, and these assumptions are usually made with little understanding of the nuances of the culture being criticized (65-66). Adah finds herself being judged in this way by this nurse, and this experience furthers her sense of isolation.

However, Adah notes that it is not just her, or even only immigrants who experience this loneliness, but it is in fact built into English culture. As opposed to Nigeria, where people sit outside and visit, “in England people locked themselves inside; they made a paradise of their living rooms” (104). T.N. Madan notes that domestic and non-domestic spaces (e.g., private and public) in non-Western places are oftentimes more fluid than in the West (92). Adah experiences the culture shock of this difference by feeling trapped in her home and in the subsequent lack of community that results from the severe separation of the domestic and non-domestic spheres in London. Likewise, she finds herself without the support systems that she had back home due to the comparative rigidity of the separation of the public and private spheres. As mentioned in my previous chapter, Carby addresses the ways in which women in the Global South labor together, performing household chores in public spaces in one another’s company. In England, though, as in much of the Global North, these tasks are relegated to private spaces where women complete them alone. For women from the Global South, this can serve to intensify the loneliness that is already felt in diasporic conditions. Adah, although adamantly committed to leaving Nigeria, fondly remembers a number of cultural practices that greatly facilitated lives of women, like fewer childcare

responsibilities and more open friendships through shared time and space spent outside. These are absent in England, hindering her ability to connect with others in London, including those from her homeland. These compounded feelings of isolation and loneliness lead to her beginning to “doubt her own senses...You come to behave and act like a mad person if you are surrounded by mad people. Was that what people call adaptation? she wondered” (73). Along with her senses, Adah’s hope that she will ever truly be happy and find connections in London begins to crumble.

Despite her utter lack of friendship with other “second-class citizens,” Adah does find one respite of peace and eventual friendship through her job at the library. Although she defines this position as “more of a ‘Thank you, thank you’ job than anything else” (44), meaning she is forever performing menial customer service tasks, it is still “first class,” and she finds immediately that her coworkers like her. Nevertheless, she does not open up to her peers at the library for quite some time. While it is never explicitly explained why she fails to forge these friendships early on, there are many possible reasons, including her ingrained belief now that she is “second class” compared to her (mostly) white colleagues, and her fear of getting too close to anyone at work who may discover the horrors of her home life (squalid living conditions, abusive husband) and view her negatively because of this.

The catalyst for Adah’s decision to begin to trust people again and attempt to form connections comes from her time spent in the hospital when she gives birth to her third child Bubu. Here, she is separated from her children and husband except for the times the nurses give her the new baby or when Francis comes for short visits. Instead, she is in a large room with other bedridden women whom she can only observe for the first four days, as Adah has a tube in her mouth and cannot talk. She sees a man come and visit his wife, observing the obvious love between them, and she notices that the

nurses treat her own baby kindly. When they remove the tube, Adah is able to speak to those around her, and she begins to wonder why she is not loved as these other women are: "Why was it she could never be loved as an individual, the way the sleek woman was being loved...The whole world seemed so unequal, so unfair" (115). However, instead of attempting to form lasting friendships with these women, Adah internalizes these feelings of unworthiness as she sees her own neglectful husband's reluctance to even get her the nightgown she requires. Here, Adah does seem to reduce herself to an unworthy object in the Fanonian sense¹⁶—her confidence in her own worth falters, especially as she continues to lack support even from her husband. Despite everyone's kindness at the hospital, she hears voices in her head of what she supposes they think of her: "*Look at that nigger woman with no flowers, no cards, no visitors, except her husband who usually comes five minutes before the closing time, looking as if he hates it all. Look at her, she doesn't have a nightdress of her own*" (119). With this sense of total isolation and loneliness, she realizes that Francis is in fact her enemy and she must rid herself of him. Nonetheless, she also decides that she must stay away from everyone else as well and not open up. She becomes cold and indifferent to the kindness of others, wanting simply to get away from these women who she is sure are laughing at her. Her loneliness has become such an internalized condition that she has begun to believe Francis' pronouncement that she is "second class," and she longs to leave the hospital so that people will no longer feel obligated to be kind to her. She is so self-conscious that she will not go with her baby as it is passed around the ward for a final time to say "goodbye" and "thank you" before she leaves.

¹⁶ See the appendix for an extended discussion of Fanon's ideas of racialism reducing its victims to objects.

Reflecting upon this incident, though, she feels regret at her behavior at the end of her stay, and she realizes that this is a missed opportunity to form potentially lasting connections that could free her from her loneliness. She laments that she cannot remedy this, as even if she were to go back, some of the women would be gone and it wouldn't be the same. She resolves that "she must learn to thank people, even for their smiles, and kindly nods" (126). More than this, though, it seems that she realizes that sometimes people are kind to her because they want to be and that she deserves to be treated well. Overall, she realizes that she enjoyed the time she spent in the hospital with these women, and this opens up the first possibility for true connection for her in England and the hope of forming friendships, an opportunity that she had missed up until this time. Significantly, though, these women were not fellow Nigerians, but were mostly white, a possibility for connection she does not seem to have considered before this necessary hospitalization in which she had the opportunity to bond with them.

After this, Adah refuses to support Francis anymore—a decision that triggers the return of the Presence (a signifier of the return of solitude) that she felt in her childhood. She links this to a hope that "[s]ome day, help would come from somewhere...Some day her fingers would touch something solid that would help her pull herself out" (150). By opening herself to the possibility of connections and distancing herself from Francis, she begins to form strong relationships with her coworkers. Here, for the first time, her colleagues are described in detail: Peggy, a young Irish woman enthralled with her boyfriend; Mr. Barking, her grouchy boss who takes his wife for granted, Fay, a woman of mixed race who is ashamed of her skin color, and Bill, a Canadian who becomes Adah's "first real friend she had had outside her family" (152). Bill introduces her to James Baldwin and other black writers who teach her that "black is beautiful" (152). While Bill has the biggest influence on her, it seems that the narrator's inclusion of these

personal details of many of her coworkers shows Adah's own shifting focus—she is interested in getting to know them even though she still will not reveal her own troubles. This hesitancy persists despite the fact that everyone at work thinks she has an ideal private life.

The appearance of Mr. Okpara, an Ibo man Adah encounters, juxtaposes this cacophony of different voices at work. This man sees Adah crying in the park and follows her home to try to help her resolve her fight with Francis as is fitting in Ibo culture. Here, the domestic and non-domestic spheres converge in the fluidity of the homeland, as Mr. Okpara feels comfortable “meddling” in their marriage as would be appropriate in Nigeria. According to Omar Sougou, “[Mr. Okpara] is all that Adah's husband should have been. He is shown as someone who has attained the cultural symbiosis that might have saved Francis from failure” (514). Nevertheless, while Mr. Okpara encourages Francis to work so his sons will respect him, he also continues to reinforce the patriarchy of the homeland, as he ignores the female children and Adah as they are “only” women. However, Adah remains silent “because she still maintained to herself that failure to make her marriage work was her own affair” (157). She says this “to herself,” in the solitude of her own mind, rejecting this offer of diasporic intimacy from someone who knows the homeland too, because she realizes that he will not respect her choice or her unique situation and that he does not view her as an equal due to her gender. Despite his apparently paradigmatic status as a “successful” immigrant who has achieved a useful blend of cultures, he can be of no help to Adah.

Instead, she begins to turn away from dreams of a unified Ibo community (her wistful remembrances of church, child care, and community in the homeland) and begins to form bonds with non-immigrants she encounters. These friendships closely resemble Leela Gandhi's idea of the politics of friendship based on *philoxenia*. These consist of

friendships based on difference, where a host-friend opens up him/herself to a guest, a daring but ultimately worthwhile risk. However, there is no clear “host” in diasporic situations. Despite the fact that many of her coworkers are white, and therefore (probably) enjoy more privileges in England than Adah, they each have their own issues (and some are immigrants as well) such that they all are putting something at risk by engaging in this type of friendship. Instead, it seems that each must make the choice of whether or not to let those different from them into their lives to potentially change them. This is especially poignant for Adah because, as an immigrant, she has tenuous connections to her homeland, and the risk inherent in “becoming strange” is losing her ties to those practices that connect her to these roots in Nigeria.

Adah is unwilling to take the “risk of radical insufficiency” (Gandhi 31) when she is in the hospital with Bubu—she does not try to connect with others for fear of being seen as a joke or a pitiable subhuman. Her choices when in the hospital with the birth of her final child Dada are completely different as she has learned from her prior reservations and missed opportunities: this time, she tips the nurses and writes a letter thanking them. Following this “she could hear them in her mind’s ear saying what a nice happy African woman she was. She had not troubles in the world. Because of this attitude her problems became insignificant” (161). With her decision to take the risk of friendship even with those radically different from her, her attitude shifts such that she is freed from her prior loneliness as she forges (even short-term) social connections, and this allows her to step outside of her isolation, and inaction, as well.

This break in her isolation fosters her ability to produce, writing a novel that she titles *The Bride Price*. This comes from an inner incentive: “She was feeling this urge: *Write; go on and do it, you can write*” (164). These positive voices emerge from the return of her productive solitude that is fostered by her new sense of connection at work.

Her coworkers, especially Bill, encourage this creativity, and her openness to sharing her work with him is rewarded by his kind words of encouragement, praising her writing and telling her he will assist in getting it published. She gains positive responses when she shares this in a community based on difference, and she begins engaging in the work (in the Arendtian sense) of writing this novel, creating something permanent to orient herself in the world. However, her husband rejects her creative actions, ultimately burning her work. Adah sees this creative work as her “brainchild,” and realizes that “Francis could kill her child” (170) when he destroys her novel. As Hannah Arendt notes, “Human life, in so far as it is world-building, is engaged in a constant process of reification, and the degree of worldliness of produced things, which all together form the human artifice, depends upon their greater or lesser permanence in the world itself” (96). This is the work of the *homo faber*, and Francis’ destruction of her work is an attempt to keep her at the status of the *animal laborans*. By destroying her work *The Bride Price*, Francis kills that which she works to birth into the world, the very creation of her own world. This is the final straw for Adah, and she chooses to dissolve their marriage.

Adah’s decision to leave Francis parallels Nazneen’s decision not to return to the homeland with Chanu. Both of these women find the possibility for financial independence through their creative actions—yet Adah’s writing is a more solitary action as opposed to Nazneen’s participation in founding a collective of women who combine their creative efforts. Nevertheless, Adah (more than Nazneen) shows an inner strength in solitude, where her friendships based on difference (like Gandhi describes based on *philoxenia*) seem to be enough to sustain her. Adah, like Adella, escapes physical and emotional abuse by leaving Francis, but Adah’s separation from her husband is by choice, allowing the returned respite of solitude and work, while Adella attaches herself to the idea of Stanton’s return for the rest of her life, paralyzing her emotionally.

Despite her divorce, Adah's story does not end with her completely alone. She has her children, a potential literary career, and the hope for connection.¹⁷ Also, the novel interestingly ends with the possibility of a bond based on diasporic intimacy: Adah hears the gentle voice of an Ibo man calling her childhood nickname, and she realizes he is an old friend from Nigeria. He asks if she married Francis, and when she replies affirmatively, "it was like Fate intervening. It was like a story one might read in a true story magazine. This old friend of Adah's paid for the taxi that took her home from Camden Town because he thought she was still with her husband" (175). The novel concludes with this strange scene that seems to open up possibilities for Adah: while this in some ways seems to echo Mr. Okpara's desire to fix her marriage (his action is provoked by his belief that she is married to Francis), Adah experiences this as a positive sign of "Fate intervening." While the narrative concludes here, it seems that Adah sees the possibility for a relationship with someone from her homeland, connections to supplement her friendships with her coworkers. Regardless, it is clear by the end of the novel that Adah is hopeful and open to possibilities of friendships with Ibos and English people alike.

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All of these novels provide compelling examples of Black British female bildungsromane. While Mark Stein provides useful and thorough scholarship concerning

¹⁷ The conclusion of this novel parallels the final scene of Samuel Selvon's classic Black bildungsroman *The Lonely Londoners* (1956). This text follows its protagonist Moses, a Trinidadian immigrant, throughout his development of friendships and connections to other immigrants in London—however, he continues to feel lonely despite having spent years in England and still longs to return home. At the close of the novel, Moses stands on the banks of the Thames and has a "profound realisation" (141) that he wants to be a writer. Despite a pervasive hopeless tone throughout this novel, the glimmer of hope at the close is Moses' possibility of world-making through the work of writing. While Emecheta's text certainly has a brighter tone than Selvon's, Adah finds her ultimate sense of self through writing as well.

many facets of the Black British novel of transformation, I build on his analysis by incorporating notions of gender into this discussion that already acknowledges the effects of race and diaspora. This more nuanced view provides further insights into the individualized ways that these conditions are experienced within changing relationships based on gender in the Global North. As such, I recognize that each of the bildungsromane I have examined maintains many of the tropes of the female novel form as outlined by Esther Labowitz, including portraying the protagonist's growth as a result of life experience, as occurring later in life than its masculine counterparts, and as connected to her development in private or within a female community. Likewise, these protagonists face similar struggles as they experience the trials of living in diasporic conditions due to migration from the Global South to Britain, facing the double alienation of racism and sexism. As a result of racist discourse within Britain, being "black" means that one does not have the reach, or the opportunity, of those who are white, creating a sense of being trapped, or superfluous, or "second-class." This can lead to a descent into the Arendtian existential states of loneliness, isolation, or solitude. These conditions of diaspora, though, can also open possibilities for these women to create new types of relationships through diasporic intimacy or *philoxenia* in their new homes, whereby they may form innovative communities and networks that still parallel or fulfill the needs of those they experienced in the homeland. Likewise, these women's relationship to labor and work can change as well, and becoming the *homo faber* and working to make one's world is the way in which these women find themselves to be most successful and satisfied in diasporic conditions.

Within these three novels I have examined, the protagonists find different yet parallel routes whereby they seek to escape their states of loneliness and isolation in Britain. As previously noted, Adah's experiences of creativity that lead to her ultimate

escape from her marriage to Francis are much more solitary than Nazneen's situation at Fusion Fashions or even than Adella's ultimate loneliness, despite her relationships with Lisa and her children. While Nazneen finds diasporic intimacy with fellow immigrant women on Brick Lane, Adah is separated from her country(wo)men by patriarchy and/or class, as she has a higher paying job than many of her fellow immigrants. Adella too experiences this patriarchy, and her experience of diasporic intimacy with women is not enough to overcome this isolation and loneliness.

Not everyone in *Brick Lane* or *Waiting in the Twilight* experiences strong connections through diasporic intimacy, though. Chanu believes so strongly in social mobility that he is unable to contend with his career failure in England. Likewise, he retains tenuous connections to the historical idea of the homeland, wanting his children to embrace Bangladeshi culture, but he is unable to form a workable hybridity of his relationship to his country of origin and his (ultimately, failed) opportunities in England, resulting in his return to Bangladesh at the end of the novel. Likewise, Karim idealizes the homeland, a place he has never been until his ultimate departure at the end of the novel. As an extension of this, he puts Nazneen on a pedestal as a "real" Bangladeshi woman, a status (or paradigm) that Nazneen ultimately rejects, instead identifying herself with a community of women of her own choosing with whom she finds connection. Hasina, on the other hand, is a "real" Bangladeshi woman who has remained in the homeland, and her tumultuous life and ultimate silencing at the end of the novel represents a condition to which Nazneen has no desire to return. In *Waiting in the Twilight*, Stanton parallels Chanu in his inability to cope with the disappointment of the realities of England, including failed work opportunities, pervasive racism, and financial constraints. However, as opposed to Chanu but like Francis, Stanton resorts to

domestic abuse, beating and berating his wife to vent the rage that he feels he cannot turn upon his white oppressors.¹⁸

While all three women experience separation from their husbands, they form women's networks differently as well. Nazneen and Adella's friendships are based on similar experiences of diaspora, while Adah forms friendships based on difference, which carry with them inherent risk according to Gandhi. Her distrust of the women at the hospital based on their differences in race and class causes her to miss an opportunity to form friendships, and she resolves to be willing to take this risk in the future, opening herself up to the possibility of friendships with her coworkers. These friends give her the support to write a novel and to leave her husband—yet these actions seem to open up a new possibility for a connection with an Ibo man, although this relationship remains ambiguous at the end of the novel. Likewise, her focus shifts from a wistful gaze to the past to a firmly hopeful focus on the present and future.

Significantly, though, the female immigrant protagonists in each of these novels work to overcome their experiences of isolation and loneliness through making major decisions: Nazneen through her initial friendship with Razia and political action with Karim, to her ultimate decision to stay in England without her husband to form a business with her friends. Adella too shows self-motivation in choosing to leave Beresford, follow Stanton to England, and purchase a home. Even with the empowerment that comes from these decisions, though, she remains under (the absent) Stanton's influence, unable to ultimately overcome her isolation and loneliness as she clings to the idea of her ex-husband's return. On the other hand, Adah is able to overcome her loneliness and isolation through a re-embracing of her solitude through

¹⁸ I address this crisis of masculinity in more detail in my appendix.

her connection to the Presence but most of all through her friendships with her coworkers.

By examining the protagonists in *Brick Lane*, *Waiting in Twilight*, and *Second Class Citizen* through Arendt's ideas of loneliness, solitude, and isolation, it becomes clear that these female characters' emergences from these existential states are anchored in community formation, be they derived from similar experiences (diasporic intimacy) or friendships founded on the risk of difference. Also, the creation of these relationships is essential to the birth of creativity and possibility through work that each woman strives to experience, ending in success for Nazneen and Adah and utter heartbreak for Adella. Hopefulness and the possibility of new beginnings abounds though, as Nazneen and Adah would probably agree with Razia's statement at the close of *Brick Lane*: "This is England...You can do whatever you like" (369).

Appendix: Frantz Fanon and the Crisis of Masculinity

Within these three novels, I have explored how the female protagonists experience loneliness, isolation, and solitude, and how they are oftentimes able to overcome these existential states through renewed opportunities regarding work and labor and through formations of community. Nonetheless, these women's male counterparts (and oftentimes partners) in these novels seem unable to achieve the same type of success or happiness as the female characters. While the focus of my study is on the protagonist women, I will now briefly turn to the apparent crisis of masculinity in these diasporic fictions.

Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* addresses the way(s) that racism affects black men. Despite being over fifty years old, his work still provides useful insights into race relations and their psychological effects primarily on constructions of masculinity. Fanon outlines general ways in which white and black men interact, noting that "[a] white man addressing a Negro behaves exactly like an adult with a child and starts smirking, whispering, patronizing, cozening" (31). This type of interaction is clear between Stanton and the (white) realtor in *Waiting in the Twilight*, a conversation which I discussed at length in my second chapter. Stanton's reaction to this situation is quiet submission, though, and he refuses to resist this treatment. Instead, Stanton fulfills the role that is expected of him as a black man because he does not believe that he has any other options. Francis and Chanu too seem to experience this treatment within society and see themselves as having few options for recourse as well.

One way for a black man to overcome this, though, is through work. Fanon states

that “with the exception of such privileged sectors as *his intellectual life or his profession*, he [a black man] cherishes a deep-seated feeling of worthlessness” (78). This is the outlet that both Francis and Chanu seek, yet neither are successful in establishing the careers that help them to overcome this sense of worthlessness. Francis is a student with high hopes of getting a degree that will result in a career that brings him a sizable paycheck, but most of all respect.¹⁹ However, he cannot pass his exams, and instead watches his wife get a “first-class” job while he consistently fails. Francis becomes increasingly controlling and violent toward Adah in response to these failures. Likewise, Chanu too is consistently held back at work. He anticipates a promotion at work for years, continuing to think that he will be rewarded for his contributions to his company, but instead remains stuck, presumably due to his race. Also, he sees himself as a scholar, believing that being well-read and verbose about his “educated” opinions should earn him respect—however, not only does he not get promotions at work, but his oldest daughter consistently rejects and mocks his long-winded postulations. Eventually, to earn the funds to return to Bangladesh, Chanu takes on a night job driving a taxi, despite his high level of education. By the end of the novel, it is clear that Chanu feels that London has defeated him, as his only desire becomes to return to Bangladesh with his family. He is denied even this, as Nazneen and the children remain in London and Chanu goes back to the homeland, unsuccessful and exhausted.

¹⁹ Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners* portrays Black British men who seem ultimately to crave respect as well. Henry Oliver (nicknamed Sir Galahad), upon his arrival in London, is hopeful of his own success in this new place, but soon learns that getting a respectable job and being viewed positively by (especially white) women is harder than he expected. Likewise, Cap, another West Indian immigrant, realizes quickly that he cannot earn the respect of English men so focuses solely on chasing women, hoping to gain confidence from their approval instead. Harris, the most successful of the immigrant men in the novel, throws parties for his more “respectable” (white) friends and is embarrassed of his West Indian acquaintances, who undermine his (perceived) dignity and ruin his gatherings.

Once the hope of work runs out, this experience of racism culminates in actually seeing oneself through the eyes of the racist society, as an object to be rejected. Fanon relates his own experience facing the gaze of racist white people and describes his thoughts and feelings in reaction to this:

I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics...On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. (112)

Individuals in diasporic conditions doubly experience this dislocation, as it is both physical (movement from the Global South to the Global North) and psychological (a separation of the self from one's ethnicity or "blackness"). This sense of dislocation, of feeling removed from oneself, then leads to an inability to fruitfully connect to others—as one objectifies oneself and experiences this disconnection internally, this translates into an outward revulsion toward one's perception of blackness, or those who have this blackness as well. Therefore, one experiences "whites" as being repulsed by one, and one is repulsed by "blacks," creating an inability to connect horizontally (to others like oneself) or vertically (to those perceived as "above" one).

Like Fanon, Francis and Stanton internalize this societal disgust at their blackness. Francis, after many months in London begins to see himself as an object that is "second class," believing this label that he receives upon his arrival. This distance from himself causes the sense that he is viewing himself objectively, thus literally as an object. Therefore, his sense of subjectivity, or self as subject, destroys his ability to empathize with himself, or to feel anger at the ways in which he is treated. Because of this type of treatment in a racist society, Fanon posits that "[a]ffect is exacerbated in the

Negro, he is full of rage because he feels small, he suffers from an inadequacy in all human communication, and all these factors chain him with an unbearable insularity” (50). This is clear in the behavior of Francis who, by accepting his own “second-class” status feels self-disgust. This leads to his insistence on pushing Adah down as well—if he is second-class, then surely she is too and must be made to stay in her place. The rage he feels and expresses is not directed at his white oppressors or racist institutions, but instead is taken out upon his wife through domestic abuse, as he cannot (or does not) appropriately channel or manage his rage.²⁰

Stanton, too, objectifies himself through his experiences of racism. As I referenced earlier, he is embarrassed by Adella’s insistence on fair treatment from the realtor, instead believing that they don’t deserve to take up this white man’s time and should simply buy the house that is available to them. He too lashes out at his wife and is the most physically abusive of the husbands in these novels, actually trying to kill Adella. Stanton most clearly uses Adella as a scapegoat, projecting the disgust and shame he feels at his own skin color upon his wife’s disabled body. When he is unable to find fulfilling work in Britain, he blames Adella for their financial trouble instead of acknowledging the racist system that prevents he and his family from having equal opportunities. While Adella (although ultimately unsuccessfully) continues to struggle against this racism by pursuing work and forming friendships, Stanton quickly refuses to

²⁰ Fanon addresses this oppressed-on-oppressed violence in the colonial context in *The Wretched of the Earth*. He notes that the colonized see rage at and confrontation with the colonizer as hopeless—so “[t]hey tend to use each other as a screen. Each prevents his neighbor from seeing the national enemy” (230-1). Likewise, these dire circumstances, including being “evicted from [one’s] room for unpaid rent” and “the closure of worksites and the jobless who hang around the foreman like crows” lead “the colonized subject...to see his fellow man as a relentless enemy” (231). These experiences and emotions relate to the Black diasporic experience as well, and gendered examples of this type of violence and rage proliferate the texts I have examined.

try to earn money or establish friendships in London, and instead pursues sexual relationships outside his marriage and goes out to drink alcohol most nights. He is unable to handle his own lack of success so is ultimately self-destructive, running away to America with Adella's cousin and abandoning his wife and children, and he eventually leaves Gladys as well. Chanu, too, in *Brick Lane* experiences this self-disgust (albeit to a lesser degree) and also portrays this in his views of other Bengalis and his insistence upon his own status as a professional that distinguishes himself from other immigrants. However, by the end of his residence in London, he feels that he cannot stay in Britain anymore as he has experienced too much rejection.

As opposed to these three husbands, Karim in *Brick Lane* does struggle against racist attitudes through his work with the Bengal Tigers in reaction to the white supremacist Lion Hearts. This latter group states their credos on a series of leaflets: "The Islamification of our neighborhood has gone too far...Do not tolerate it! Write to the council! This is England!" (186). The Bengal Tigers work to fight against these attitudes. In the first meeting that Nazneen attends, Karim leads the gathering, stating "What are we for? We are for Muslim rights and culture. We're into protecting our local ummah and supporting the global ummah" (174). Throughout the novel, Karim struggles to root this global ideal and idea of a unified culture with a specific place, feeling unsettled and unable to take on any specific identity. While he was born in London and has never been to Bangladesh, he stills feels a strong desire to find roots in this homeland. He explains his ambivalent connection to being Bangladeshi to Nazneen: "When I was a little kid...If you wanted to be cool you had to be something else—a bit white, a bit black, a bit something...you couldn't just be yourself. Bangladeshi. Know what I'm saying?" (190-1). While Karim seems to feel less shame than the other (older) male characters in these novels about his own experience of "blackness," his struggle comes from his perceived

roots in a homeland he has never visited and the anger he feels at the racist attitudes he faces in London, especially from the Lion Hearts. Nonetheless, he does not seem to internalize these negative views of "blackness" like the other men in these novels do.

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