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DOUBLE ALIENATION IN MONICA ALI'S NOVEL BRICK LANE

ABSTRACT

This study explicates the fact of double alienation reflected in Monica Ali's novel Brick Lane which depicts the lives of Bangladeshi immigrant families in England having a multi-cultural structure. The fact of alienation which has social, psychological and philosophical dimensions is revealed bilaterally in typical immigrant-woman case by the character of Nazneen, the protagonist. Nazneen, as both a Bangladeshi immigrant and a woman coming from a patriarchal society, inevitably experiences social and psychological alienation in certain periods of her life. In the study, Nazneen's experience will be analyzed by referring to the text with its reasons and results in the context of alienation as an immigrant and as a woman.

Keywords: Monica Ali, Brick Lane, Double Alienation, Immigrant, Woman

MONICA ALI'NIN BRICK LANE ROMANINDA ÇİFTE YABANCILAŞMA

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, çok kültürlü bir yapıya sahip olan İngiltere'deki Bangladeşli göçmen aileleri anlatan Monica Ali'nin Brick Lane adlı romanında yansıtılan çifte yabancılaşma olgusunu açıklamaktadır. Sosyal, psikolojik ve felsefi boyutları olan yabancılaşma olgusu tipik göçmen-kadın çerçevesi içerisinde romanda başkahraman Nazneen karakteriyle çift yönlü olarak verilmektedir. Nazneen hem Bangladeşli bir göçmen hem de patriarkal bir toplumdan gelen bir kadın olarak sosyal ve psikolojik yabancılaşmayı hayatının belirli evrelerinde kaçınılmaz olarak yaşar. Çalışmada Nazneen'in bu deneyimi, sebepleri ve sonuçlarıyla göçmen olarak yaşadığı yabancılaşma ve kadın olarak yaşadığı yabancılaşma bağlamında metine göndermeler yapılarak incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Monica Ali, Brick Lane, Çifte Yabancılaşma, Göçmen, Kadın

1. INTRODUCTION (GİRİŞ)

By the twentieth century, related to the distinct changing dynamics in the world, human being stepped into a new panorama. While the nineteenth century was the age of imperialism of Britain and France, in the last quarter of the century the colonizer countries began to lose their power and especially after the two world wars, the end of colonialism came on the stage. Many countries had fought for their national independence and regained their independence from the earlier empires. As a consequence of those changes, new social movements, one of which is mass immigration, appeared and many countries began to have a more multi-cultural structure in the 20th century. The multi-ethnic and multi-cultural structure formed by those immigration movements made great impact not only on the habitants of the countries to which people immigrated, but also on the people who immigrated because of some causes of which economic expectation was the foremost. It cannot be denied that although diversity of races and cultures has contributed to the cultural richness, it has, at the same time, created significant conflicts in the society consisting of people whose ways of life are different in so many aspects. It is mainly accepted that "migration... always creates problems and even the best integrated groups suffer under such circumstance" (Glazer, 1973:52). However, the most badly affected group in a multi-cultural world is undeniably the immigrants. As Oliva Espin (1999) mentions immigrant identities experience many problems:

The immigrants struggle with the strain and fatigue derived from the new society, which affect self-esteem and may lead to alienation; confusion in terms of role expectations, values and identity; shock resulting from the differences between the two cultures; and a sense of uprootedness and impotence resulting from an inability to function competently in the new culture. (Espin, 1999: 19)

To voice these problems, many writers especially who have had diverse ethnic/cultural and/or immigrant backgrounds have produced many works. In this respect, Monica Ali (1967), as the child of multi-racial and immigrant parents -an English mother and a Bangladeshi father- is one of the most important names who pictures the migrant way of life in multicultural Britain. As a British-born, second generation individual, she explores the immigrant issues in such an effective way that she is named in Granta's 20 Best British novelists 2003 and accepted as an exciting group of young writers giving voice to the new multi-ethnic Britain. With her first and sensational novel Brick Lane (2003) she both presents the modern and hybrid London with the strong themes such as migration, miscegenation, identity crisis and religion and draws the picture of different voices or competing viewpoints. "In exploring the experience of migration and the issues of identity, Ali is responding to a situation where location and culture combine to present conditions that would have been beyond conception in the nineteenth century colonial world order" (Choudhury, 2005:294). In the novel, the area Brick Lane "becomes representative of a holding area, a temporary zone for immigrants who have not yet fully settled in England" (Hussain, 2005:102). Ali, for her novel, which exhibits the immigrant problems in a multi-dimensional way, chooses a woman character as the protagonist. As Nick Bentley comments "Ali is attempting to represent the experiences, through her main character Nazneen, of a group of Bangladeshi women that have rarely before been represented in British fiction" (Bentley, 2008:84). So, she deals with the immigrant issue in a bilateral dimension by depicting the migration incident from a gendered perspective. Not only does she handle the difficulty of being an immigrant, but she also reveals the problem of being an immigrant "woman". "Ali uses her characters to explore the positioning of Bangladeshi women within Britain, as the novel focuses on their social relations inside and outside the home" (Hussain, 2005:91). Thus, in Brick Lane, Monica Ali presents the prominent problem of immigrant woman as experiencing double alienation in the society

both as an immigrant and as a woman. However, Ali does not give a totally pessimistic picture. "The story depicts Nazneen's journey from a dominated, subdued teenager to a gradual metamorphosis into a hesitant, independent mother with a poetic sensitivity beyond her stifling, bleak and cluttered flat on Brick Lane" (Kanal, 2008:51). Meanwhile Nazneen who experiences double alienation is able to destroy the constraints at the end of the novel. So, her novel shows "how, after migration, the position of woman in families and in the wider community undergoes considerable transformation" (Hussain, 2005:91). In this respect, the issue of "double alienation" in Monica Ali's Brick Lane will be examined in terms of its reasons and results.

2. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE (ÇALIŞMANIN ÖNEMİ)

Monica Ali's well-known novel Brick Lane gives a general panorama of immigrant woman identity in multicultural Britain. The protagonist Nazneen is, in many ways, a stereotype of this kind. The purpose of this study is, in general, to depict a significant problem of a common immigrant woman that is alienation within two dimensions, as an immigrant and a woman, and in particular, to make a character analysis, by the character of Nazneen who is a representative figure of those women experiencing double alienation. So, this study interests especially the people studying on women and post-colonial literatures and the findings will be useful in the area of literary and cultural studies.

3. ALIENATION AND ITS TWO DIMENSIONS IN THE NOVEL (YABANCILAŞMA VE ROMANDAKİ İKİ BOYUTU)

Alienation, "in the most general terms, describes the estrangement of individuals from one another, or from a specific situation or process" (Marshall, 1999:798). It has sociological, psychological and philosophical dimensions. Although "the philosophical discussion falls largely outside of the domain of sociology, the philosophical and teleological conception of alienation permeates Marx's writings" (Marshall, 1999:798), whose arguments about the term has been crucial in the literature. In the sociological dimension, the term is used by Marx as a result of the social structures which oppress the people's human sides existing in their essence (Marshall, 1999:798). Marx relates the term to the alienation of the worker from his labor and product, his co-workers and even his own essence. He examines the issue of alienation as an outcome of the conditions of the capitalist disaster. "For Marx, the notion of alienation is used mainly to describe the dehumanization resulting from the development of capitalism" (Boudon, 2003:31). However, in the modern world, alienation is handled in a multi-dimensional point of view. In a broader sense, it is the situation of people's losing interest in the society, in cultural values, seeing those cultural values and norms vain and feeling alone and weak. In fact, alienation, as the name of all kinds of social or psychological malignity which describes the separation, the breaking, the fragmentation of the things staying in their proper places in harmony with each other, is the key concept of twentieth century's society corporations and criticisms. (Ulaş, 2002:1563)

Although it seems like sociological dimension of alienation has been the starting point, it cannot be separated from the psychological aspect as human being is both a social and a psychic organism. In the modern times, psychological dimension of alienation is widely in question. Psychologically, in the most general sense, "it is the feeling of foreignness or separation from the others, deprivation of sociable relationships, and the situation of anomy, animosity of roles, loneliness, and despair" (Budak, 2003:813).

While in general, alienation is a common phenomenon of the twentieth century, in particular, it is also a widespread incident of the immigrant

identity experiencing many social and individual conflicts. Besides the economic, technologic or politic effects, the most important element in the alienation process of an immigrant identity is inevitably social factors. In this context, the immigrant experiencing many problems in a society of which s/he does not feel a part inevitably feels socially and psychologically alienated, parallel to it, weak, isolated, and lonely. Furthermore, if the immigrant is a woman living in a patriarchal family structure, this alienation fact doubles.

Monica Ali depicts this kind of double alienation in her novel by the character of Nazneen. "In this respect, the novel becomes a social text in that it provides an insight into the lives of women who have migrated are learning to adapt to an alien environment" (Hussain, 2005:100). Nazneen is a Bangladeshi woman who moves to Tower Hamlets in London at the age of 18. By an arranged marriage, Nazneen leaves rural Bangladesh as the wife of a 40-year-old man, Chanu, who is depicted by Harriet Lane in *The Observer* as:

...one of the novel's foremost miracles: twice her age, with a face like a frog, a tendency to quote Hume and the boundless doomed optimism of the self-improvement junkie, he is both exasperating and, to the reader at least, enormously loveable. (Lane, 2003)

Nazneen is only one of many ordinary immigrant women coming from an Eastern culture in the guidance of their husbands. As a result of her traditional family background, Nazneen has always accepted the idea that it is meaningless to "kick against fate". "She appears to conform to the teachings of her mother, who instructs Nazneen that it is a woman's role to accept her suffering with indifference" (Hussain, 2005:97). So, she adopts all the roles which are imposed to her by the others. While being an immigrant in Britain is already difficult, Nazneen's situation as an oppressed woman makes the situation worse and unavoidably makes her feel double alienated. In this respect, it is important to define the alienation of Nazneen firstly as an immigrant and secondly as a woman in a multicultural society.

3.1. Alienation as an Immigrant (Göçmen Olarak Yabancılaşma)

As mentioned, Britain has been a post-imperial multi-racial society in the new century. In this multi-racial society, the immigrant identities have experienced difficult processes when they try to adapt into their new lives. Since they arrived into the country, the immigrants have been looked upon with suspicion. In *Social Problems of Modern Britain*, the immigrant is defined as below:

The term 'immigrant' seems to denote a person who is alien, probably unable to speak English, with different and possibly inferior ways of life and perhaps implicitly, a threat to the existence or the continuance of the 'British way of life'. (Butterworth, 1972:312)

As we see, the word "immigrant" is closely related to pejorative connotations and an immigrant is seen as an enemy-threat to the dominant British culture. The cultural differences of the immigrant are also considered as inferior. In *Brick Lane*, Chanu, Nazneen's husband, sees the life of the immigrant as difficult and defines it as a tragedy: "This is the tragedy of our lives. To be an immigrant is to live out a tragedy" (Ali, 2003:112)*. Hanif Kureshi points out that tragedy saying:

In the mid-1960s, Pakistanis were a risible subject in England, derided on television and exploited by politicians. They had the worst jobs, they were uncomfortable in England, some of them had difficulties with the language. They were despised and out of place. (Kureshi, 1996:73)

As it is apparent, since their arrival, the immigrants have been considered as low and inferior. They have been humiliated by the English society. So, they have many adaptation problems and they inevitably feel

* Referrals to the novel will be given by page numbers in parenthesis in the text.

alienated in the society. There are many causes making an immigrant feel alienated or isolated in a society in which s/he is seen as a stranger.

To begin with, the reality of **being seen as "the other"** in the foreign society is really significant to cause alienation. The immigrants who settle in England have been seen as the other for a long time. Salman Rushdie says in an interview: "When I first went to England to study, I became 'the other'. I think I am able to understand what it means to be on the other side of the wall" (Çongar, 2007). Then, what can be the reason or reasons for "being seen as the other" in Britain and in which dimension does it affect the alienation of the immigrant identity?

One of the main reasons of accepting a person as an outsider or stranger in Britain could be related to the historical process of Britain. The main population of immigrants is from post-colonial countries such as Jamaica or India. Immigrants from the colonized countries not only accepted Britain as a new beginning to continue their lives, but also adopted it as a mother country to which they belonged by roots. However, that imperial history did not mean the same thing for the British. Although they have gained their independence, those nations and also the people of them are still considered as the ones under the dominance of England. They are still "patronized by the British, who view them as colonials rather than as genuine Europeans" (Cudjoe, 1990:90). Britain, as an earlier colonizer of some colonies, continued her dominating attitude towards the colonies and the people coming from there. Her point of view as a master stayed the same and a real equality between the earlier colonizer and the colonized was difficult to achieve on the social base.

The negative point of view against the immigrant having a colonized background is apparent in Brick Lane as Nazneen and Chanu have Bangladeshi origin. In the novel "the debilitating feeling of being an outsider, not quite being a part of the culture that one is surrounded by, is also embodied by the character of Nazneen's husband, Chanu" (Tan, 2007: 229). Chanu frequently mentions that the colonial process of England still continues in a different way and the West always despises them and considers the immigrant as lower. He says:

"All these people here who look down at us as peasants know nothing of history...in the sixteenth century, Bengal was called the Paradise of Nations. These are our roots. Do they teach these things in the school here? Does Shahana know about the Paradise of Nations? All she knows about is flood and famine. Whole bloody country is just a bloody basket case to her." (Ali, 185)

The discourses about the earlier colonized continue in such ways that even the immigrant begins to internalize the situation of being inferior. Chanu's daughter Shahana, as one of the second generation immigrant identities, despises her own origin as a result of Western point of view. Furthermore, although he criticizes, Chanu himself "looks down upon the majority of Bangladeshis who are from Sylhet and who are working class... he distances himself from other fellow Bangladeshis" (Hussain, 2005:103). The conflict with the character of Chanu is mentioned by Kathy-Ann Tan as follows:

The irony of Chanu's character is that, although he bitterly resists assimilating into British culture, hanging on to his cultural and historical roots and sense of national identity, he himself is an exaggerated parody of the archetypal product of post-colonialism, a scholar from the Commonwealth who pursues his university studies in the U.K., acquainting himself with, and steeping himself in, British culture and literature, spouting random quotes from Shakespeare to compliment the occasion. (Tan, 2007:229)

It is apparent that Chanu is a representative immigrant experiencing the dilemma of being caught between two cultures. Catriona Mackenzie states that dilemma by these words:

Nazneen's husband, Chanu, is similarly caught. The more his desire for recognition is frustrated the more he feels alienated both from the English culture from which he once hoped to gain respect and from the East London Bangladeshi community, which is riven with internal dissension, intergenerational conflict and hostility towards the dominant culture. (Mackenzie, 2007: 103)

Inevitably, Nazneen, who has come to England as a traditional Bangladeshi immigrant, has not faced the pain of being a member of Britain's earlier colony as much as his husband. As Nazneen almost always stays at home, she does not face the racial issues very much. This alienation will be discussed as another dimension of the issue, which is alienation as a woman, in the second part.

Of course, the only reason of being seen as the other is not related to coming from a colonized national origin. The other main reason of "being seen as the other" comes on the stage as the "appearance" or to say more clearly not being "white". Apart from the colonized history of black or Hindu people in Britain, their non-white origin or appearance has made them to be seen as different and so feel alienated in the British society. Since "for centuries white society had imposed notions of black inferiority-ideas that most blacks had internalized, to shake of that burden was immensely hard" (Gitlin, 1995:128). When Nazneen goes out in her traditional costume with his husband, the difference between her and English women becomes more explicit. A scene that defines such a situation is given thus:

A pair went by who were differently dressed, in short dark skirts with matching jackets. Their shoulders were padded up and out. They saw her looking and whispered together. They walked and laughed, and looked at her over their puffy shoulders. (43)

Nazneen, both apparently and in herself, does not belong to English society. When Nazneen goes out one day to Bishopsgate, which is a close location to Brick Lane but culturally very different, she again experiences the alienation effect of the society. "The behavior of the people in these locations is described in terms that separate them from Nazneen, in terms of clothing, racial characteristics, the way they communicate with each other and gender" (Bentley, 2008:88). In this location Nazneen feels alienated. This experience is narrated in the novel as below: "Nazneen, hobbling and halting, began to be aware of herself. Without a coat, without a suit, without a white face, without a destination" (56). Although as Bentley says that "this passage emphasizes Nazneen's feelings of alienation and powerlessness" (Bentley, 2008:88), Ali does not draw a completely catastrophic picture. Nazneen realizes that she is not seen as a totally foreign being. When she feels that she is an ordinary part of the society, she relaxes:

...they were not aware of her. They could not see her any more than she could see God. They knew that she existed but unless she did something, waved a gun, halted the traffic, they would not see her. She enjoyed this thought. (56)

For Nazneen, to be invisible is better than to be seen as foreign or exotic. In this context, she is not as pessimistic as her husband. Chanu almost always talks about the tragedy of being an immigrant. As mentioned before, this attitude is a result of his participating actively in the society and experiencing some discrimination. He talks "about the feelings of alienation engendered by a society where racism is prevalent" (113). As Yasmin Hussain mentions "The book presents an image of England as racist" (Hussain, 2005:101); however, "racism as a theme is not focused on as a plot but becomes interspersed as part of everyday reality" (Hussain, 2005:95).

In fact, although Nazneen does not face a direct discrimination, her disintegrated situation shows that she is still an alien in the society. The only society she can integrate consists of Bengali women. When she

participates in another public, named Bengal Tigers -a group defending the rights of Muslim immigrants-, we see that she is still alienated from English society. That alienated situation of the immigrant is explained by Yasmin Hussain as being a result of a "bridari system (wider family)" among the immigrants:

Within the Bengladeshi community the novel illustrates the creation of an 'artificial bridari' ... the individual within the novel operate within this 'bridari system' through their social contacts and relationships within the community, through visits to each other, and by offering services of assistance. (Hussain, 2005:102)

The immigrants who have been considered as "the other" because of either their colonial background or their race have been viewed with prejudice and also oppressed in some ways. The social prejudices which would create alienation for the immigrant are felt in a great deal. Chanu tells Nazneen about those prejudices by these words: "... to a white person, we are all the same: dirty little monkeys all in the same monkey clan" (28). In the novel, "prejudice and discrimination are illustrated through the leafleting by the far right groups in Tower Hamlets" (Hussain, 2005:102). Surely, those prejudices towards the immigrants form a gap between 'the self and the other' and make the immigrant identity be isolated from the society. Although this isolation may not be physical, psychological isolation becomes certain. The prejudice and oppression towards the ethnic minorities are not only related to their race. The socio-economic background of those people make them feel and to be seen as lower, too. "Poverty, socio-economic deprivation, dominates the social fabric of Ali's Bangladeshi society in Tower Hamlets" (Hussain, 2005:101). Although England is a welfare society, it does not mean the same thing for the immigrants. As reflected in the novel, the status of the immigrants and minorities in the society is usually low. The immigrant women generally work as charwomen or they sew at home like Nazneen or do the "business with a machine work which ruins the hands, the back, the eyes" (189) like Razia, who does it for her children.

This socio-economic situation also holds back the integration process of the immigrant. For instance, "The famous sights of Central London remain invisible to many Londoners either because they never go near them, or because they pass them every day, but hardly ever notice their presence" (Miquel, 2008:84) and "for Ali's Nazneen also, the experience of London remains for a long time one of limited horizons, loneliness, boredom, and claustrophobia" (Miquel, 2008:87). The immigrant families, who work hard, earn less and so spend less, do not even know the city they live in. Chanu, "thirty or so years after he arrived in London, decided that it was time to see the sights"; he says "all I saw was the Houses of Parliament. And that was in 1979" (289). The immigrant, whose main aim is to save money, scarcely leaves the place s/he lives in. Chanu says "I've spent more than half my life here, but I hardly left these few streets" (291). When Chanu takes his family to see some places in London, we learn that their sightseeing is the first holiday for twenty or thirty years. Although the reason of this situation may be socio-economic or other, the disintegration and so alienation of the immigrant is an explicit reality.

The immigrants, who feel alienated because of being seen as the other as a result of having colonial background, not being white or Christian, being exposed to prejudices and racial discrimination, and having socio-economic problems cannot adapt into the life as they do not feel belonging to the society they live in. In this context, "belonging" to a society appears as a crucial aspect:

To 'belong' to any society is to know it from the inside, to be inward with its forms of social organization and its modes of personal expression, to inhabit its universe of meanings and values, habitually and instinctively, even to share its prejudices. The moment people move to a

new cultural situation, they inevitably become 'strangers'. (Butterworth, 1972:326)

It is apparent that for an immigrant moving to a society whose cultural structure is different from her/his original culture, belonging is not as easy as it seems. So, when a person does not feel belonging to the society where s/he lives, the alienation problem becomes inevitable. Monica Ali defines "un/ belonging" in her essay "Where I'm Coming From" by these words: "Growing up with an English mother and Bengali father means never being an insider. Standing neither behind a closed door, nor in the tick of things, but rather in the shadow of the doorway" (Ali, 2003). As Ali herself, "the lives of Nazneen and Chanu are located in between tensions", too (Mishra, 2007:188).

The difficulty of belonging to the society and experiencing alienation as an immigrant is the one facet of the lock; the other determiner of Nazneen's alienation is her gender, being a woman. This fact makes the situation more painful for Nazneen as a Bangladeshi immigrant woman.

3.2. Alienation as a Woman (Kadin Olarak Yabancılaşma)

The place of the immigrant woman in the society and her problems in terms of gender issues are voiced by many writers. Gayatri Spivak, who discusses the place of "the other" in her influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak" (1988) is one of them. As Nick Bentley emphasizes in Contemporary British Fiction (2008), Spivak uses the term "subaltern" for

"any member of a group that because of their class, gender, race or cultural background (or a combination of these) has little access to the mechanisms of representation and power within any given society... Spivak also identifies several categories of marginalization such as class and gender leading her to the conclusion that women from marginalized cultures are doubly subjugated: 'If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as a female is even more deeply in shadow'." (Bentley, 2008:84).

Monica Ali, in Brick Lane, depicts the position of Nazneen as "the subaltern as a female". Being an immigrant is already difficult; Nazneen who lives this difficulty as a Bangladeshi woman naturally faces double alienation. As Hussain mentions, we see that in the novel,

"There is an absence of the indigenous population, except for passing references, and contact between Nazneen and White Londoners is limited... This reflects the ways in which Bangladeshi man interacted with White People in the 1980s, but their wives did not". (Hussain, 2005:100)

So, Nazneen has had a more complicated role that is to be "a woman immigrant". Because "women's struggles to adapt to the new environment may be further complicated by gender-based cultural prescriptions" (Espin, 1999:20). Nazneen is married to Chanu at the age of eighteen; an uneducated girl having no experience about life is separated from her original land and brought to London. As a young woman knowing almost nothing about the life in London, Nazneen has to continue her life alone at their flat.

In the novel, the issues of "the overwhelming sense of isolation faced by the female characters and their reliance on their male counterparts" (Hussain, 2005:92) are reflected by the character of Nazneen. For Nazneen, the beginning of her alienation process comes with **the oppression** of her husband like many other immigrant women. On the surface, her husband is an "educated" man who keeps on his intellectual life in England. Although he has spent many years in London and has been still working as an academician, he oppresses Nazneen in many ways.

This attitude towards the immigrant women that is to keep them at home being isolated from the outer world, is very common to form oppressed woman identities. Because "for immigrant women isolation stems not only from one's relationship with one's husband but also from the lack of

friends and familial support in a foreign country" (Abraham, 2000:80). At the beginning of her life in London, Nazneen scarcely leaves her flat and she has no circumstance. It is mostly resulted from her feeling of alienation in a society where she speaks no English, except "sorry" and "thank you". That's why; she does not even want to go out in case she has to speak to some strangers and so, she spends her days alone. Her husband, Chanu, finds unnecessary for her to learn English as an immigrant woman worker who sews zippers and buttons in her own flat. When Nazneen says that she would like to learn some English, Chanu's reaction is thus: "Chanu puffed his cheeks and spat the air out in a fuff. 'It will come. Don't worry about it. Where's the need anyway?' " (37). Although some time passes, Nazneen cannot speak in English and again when she wants to learn the language by going to the college with her friend Razia, Chanu's attitude is the same:

'What for?'

'For the English lessons.'

'You are going to be a mother... Will that not keep you busy enough? And you can't take a baby to the college. Babies have to be fed; they have to have their bottoms cleaned. It's not so simple as that. Just to go to college, like that.' (77)

The role which is attributed to Nazneen by Chanu is only 'to be a mother' because "she was supposed to be the one who could not think about the world, who had a head so filled with herself, her week, her day, her hour, that the big things would not fit" (418).

The communication problem of Nazneen is common for many immigrant women. K. J. Wilson mentions this problem as follows:

Women who cannot speak English cannot communicate with her neighbors, the police, lawyers, doctors, or advocates. They may even become alienated from their children or working husbands who gain fluency in English, or may become more dependent on family members to interpret the culture for them. (Wilson, 2006:134)

This alienation and dependence is also apparent for Nazneen. Chanu does not see or care about the reality of her alienation as a result of lack of communication in the society. He even interferes her having friendship with Razia whom he describes as not a respectable type. The reality is that Nazneen is lonely:

What she missed most was people. In all her eighteen years, she could scarcely remember a moment that she had spent alone. Until she married. And came to London to sit day after day in this large box with the furniture to dust, and the muffled sound of private lives sealed away above, below and around her. (24)

Nazneen was a village girl; she was used to live within the nature and crowd of people. However, when she is in London, she is trapped in her flat. While she is spending her time at the window opening to the outer world, her feelings are mentioned as below:

You can spread your soul over a paddy field, you can whisper to a mango tree, you can feel the earth beneath your toes and know that this is the place, the place where it begins and ends. But what can you tell to a pile of bricks? The bricks will not be moved. (87)

Meanwhile, she feels really isolated, depressed and lonely. "The restrictiveness of England is stressed through the feelings of claustrophobia" (Hussain, 2005:100). Her loneliness is very depressing that she lives with the visions of her imaginary friends:

When she had come she had learned first about loneliness, then about privacy, and finally she learned a new kind of community. The wife upstairs who used the lavatory in the night. The milkman's alarm clock that told Nazneen the grueling hours her neighbor must keep. The woman on the other side whose bed thumped the wall when her boyfriends called. These were her unknown intimates. (182)

Zhang indicates that "Immigrant women, with feeling of alienation and isolation, try to establish a self-reflexive dialogue with themselves, when their attempt to communicate with others is frustrated" (Zhang, 1996:133). Nazneen's situation about her imaginary friends is an example of that. Besides, as a result of that prison like way of life and lack of communication with people, she feels trapped: "She looked and she saw that she was trapped inside this body, inside this room, inside this flat, inside this concrete slab of entombed humanity" (76). So, in the novel "her accounts evoke a sense of ruthlessness, isolation, loneliness and detachment from the wider community" (Hussain, 2005:95).

Like many immigrant women, she submits her fate and her life passes at home in England without almost any social activity for many years because her husband, Chanu, does not see any necessity her to adapt to the society. Nazneen always stays at home and she does not even learn English for a long time -like many other immigrant women being illiterate when they leave their homelands - until her daughters get as old as to speak in English to her:

Over the last decade and a half she had gleaned vocabulary here and there. The television, the brief exchanges at the few non-Bengali shops she entered, the dentist, the doctor, teachers at the girls' schools. But it was the girls who taught her. Their method was simple: they demanded to be understood. (194)

Nazneen's learning English comes as a necessity, a necessity not for Nazneen's needs but for her family's. In fact, that oppression is met as natural by Chanu, who sees her as "an unspoilt girl from the village". He defines Nazneen:

Not beautiful, but not so ugly either...Not tall. Not short...Hips are a bit narrow but wide enough to carry children. All things considered, I am satisfied... What's more she is a good worker. Cleaning and cooking and all that. (23)

Chanu does not see her as a life partner but as a hired girl. There is no love, emotional relation or satisfactory communication between them. Their communication is summarized as:

He talked and she listened. Often she had the feeling he was not talking to her, or rather that she was only part of a larger audience for whom the speech was meant. He smiled at her but his eyes were always searching, as if she were a face in the crowd singled out for only a moment (42)

The relation between them and their marriage is ordinary and traditional. His point of view towards marriage is "any wife is better than no wife" (23). This kind of marriage which is really common for many Asian immigrants inevitably creates alienation and isolation for immigrant women:

The issue of isolation becomes more acute in cases of mail-order brides, a practice created by men in industrialized countries to marry docile and domesticated women from lands where more orthodox gender relations are still the norm. Men expect these women to accept a submissive and subordinate role in marriage. In addition, the bride is often on her own for the first time, in a foreign land where her support base is nonexistent, which increases her vulnerability and isolation. (Menjivar, 2002:906)

Although Nazneen is aware of her isolation and position, she accepts it as it is. That oppression continues for a long time. Although Chanu claims being an educated and academic person and also a gentle husband, he does not see any good reason for her to go out or integrate into the society; and he keeps her at home and explains its reason as below:

If you go out, ten people will say, 'I saw her walking on the street'. And I will look like a fool. Personally, I don't mind if you go out but these people are so ignorant... Besides I get everything for you that you need from the shops. Anything you want, you only have to ask... I don't

stop you from doing anything. I am westernized now. It is lucky for you that you married an educated man... And anyway, if you were in Bangladesh you would not go out. Coming here you are not missing anything, only broadening your horizons. (45)

He sees the isolated life of Nazneen, which is created by him, very natural. Besides, he despises Nazneen, intentionally or unintentionally, because of her cultural deficiencies. However, his point of view about that issue is very conflicted. While he claims being a "westernized" man, he behaves in an "un-westernized way". "Ali traces, through Nazneen's husband Chanu, the archetype of the Bengali displaced man, who should be even though, living in England cannot rid himself of the consciousness of his native culture and traditions" (Kanal, 2008:53). His patriarchal cultural background designates his oppressive attitude. However, we cannot say that his oppressive behavior as a free man also having taken education is reasonable. Furthermore, by attributing the responsibility of his oppressive attitude to the society, he does not behave in an honest way. His dishonesty is also observed while he buys a sewing machine for Nazneen and says that it is "a birthday present" -although it is not her birthday. Although he would not give Nazneen permission to work out, he takes advantage of her at home. In a way, he both alienates her from the outer world and makes her work to earn money. So, Nazneen experiences at the same time an economic alienation which is described as follows: "Economic alienation occurs when a woman feels a sense of exclusion from basic economic decisions and control over her wages" (Abraham, 2000:80).

It is undeniable that the established roles that are expected from Nazneen as an immigrant woman are decided not only by her husband but also by the Bangladeshi society and traditions. The main base of these norms is to keep the woman from integrating into the society and to leave her alienated. Surely, Nazneen is not the only immigrant woman who feels trapped because of social pressure. Many immigrant women face that kind of attitude. When a Bangladeshi woman Jorina begins to work to earn money to support her family, the gossip spreads. Nazneen tells her friend Razia:

Mrs Islam says Jorina has been shamed. Her husband goes with other women. She started work, and everyone said, "He cannot feed her." Even though he was working himself, he was shamed. And because of this he became reckless and started going with other women. So Jorina has brought shame on them all. (97)

As "within immigrant communities, traditional gender-role behaviors are often demanded from women migrants" (Espin, 1999:6), here the scapegoat for that family's situation is named as the wife, Jorina, by the society. Their community does not approve of the working of a Bangladeshi woman and they assume that if a woman (from their community) works out, it means her husband cannot feed her. Some immigrant women such as Razia could stand against that point of view. Razia can ask "What about the community? Will the community feed me?" (97); she wears jeans or smoke but only after the death of her husband. She says "I can get that job now. No slaughter man to slaughter me now" (139). However, she cannot escape to be gossiped by the community, either: "I hear what they are saying. Razia is a little touched. Crazy, crazy. Razia is so English. She is getting the Queen herself" (229).

In the novel, "Ali focuses on the way women are disadvantaged in terms of limited career opportunities, greater domestic responsibilities and less freedom to pursue leisure activities" (Hussain, 2005:91). Mrs Azad, the wife of Chanu's friend Mr Azad, depicts this situation of an average immigrant woman by these words:

Some women spend ten, twenty years here and they sit in the kitchen grinding spices all day and learn only two words of English... They go around covered from head to toe, in their walking prisons... (114)

These kinds of patriarchal norms make the immigrant woman feel really isolated and alone; alienated from the society she lives in. Not only the body but also the soul of the immigrant woman is also trapped. Although Ali depicts the constraints for immigrant women, through some characters such as Razia and Mrs Azad, "the author shows that migration has brought major new economic opportunities for women and new ways of constructing their futures" (Hussain, 2005:95). This attitude is proved at the end of the novel by Nazneen's gaining financial freedom.

In the novel, the reason for the accepted oppression of Nazneen such as many other Bangladeshi immigrant women is presented with the concept of "faith". From the beginning of the novel, Nazneen is expected to obey her faith. "Her mother's quiet courage and tearful stoicism is drummed into her existence, instilling in her a passive acceptance of everything that life brings" (Kanal, 2008:52). Her mother says "We must not stand in the way of Fate. Whatever happens, I accept it. And my child must not waste any energy fighting against Fate" (14). That expectation means not to resist against her faith whatever happens; such as her marriage at the age of eighteen to 'an old man, at least forty years old with a face like a frog', who would take her from Bangladesh to England. The motto which has been internalized by Nazneen since her childhood is "What could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne" (16). So, she presents a condition of inertia against her invisible status in the world. However, the turning point in the novel comes when Nazneen attempts to stand against her faith and the norms. But this attitude also brings about self-alienation for Nazneen. It is only "towards the end of the novel that Nazneen shifts from complacency to questioning her positioning and role" (Hussain, 2005: 95).

In Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology another dimension of alienation is given as:

Feeling separated from society is not the only way a person experiences alienation: sometimes the individual feels alienation as disharmony with his or her true self. This condition develops when a person accepts societal expectations that are counter to the person's true goals, feelings, or desires. He may appear to be successful in the role others expect him to assume, but his true wish is hidden, leaving him feeling deeply conflicted and alone.

In this respect, besides the oppressive attitude of his husband and the patriarchal structure, Nazneen's alienation comes with the dilemma of feeling torn between the societal expectations and her desire. This time, the concept of alienation is not social but mainly psychological. "Melvin Seeman ("On the Meaning of Alienation", American Sociological Review, 1959) says that the psychological state of alienation is formed by the dimensions of powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, normlessness, and self-estrangement" (Marshall, 1999:799). Nazneen also experiences the condition of weakness and self-alienation. Because of her conflicted situation, she becomes alienated to herself. To explain, after a period of being a foreigner in a foreign land, her life changes with her love for Karim, another Bangladeshi who brings the clothes she works on at home. As a result of that relation, Nazneen has had a dilemma between her traditional self/religious belief and her freewill; on the one hand she wants to hold on her traditional and religious values, but on the other she cannot escape from her own desire and she enters into a difficult process in which gradually she will learn to fight against her faith.

Although Nazneen is Muslim, she cannot avoid that un-Islamic deed with Karim, who is a young Muslim working in an Islamic group and defending the Islamic elements. It is also ironic that although he presents himself as a soldier of Islam, he commits one of the biggest crimes, adultery, according to the Islamic doctrines. In this process, Nazneen feels the conflict of being a married Muslim woman with two daughters, but at the

same time having a lover. As Oliva Espin (1999) states "those who are uprooted from one society, no matter how successfully they adapt to life in another, do not fully let go of the internalized injunctions and for women this is particularly true for those injunctions that affect sexuality and gender-role expectations" (Espin, 1999:5). This situation is also the same for Nazneen as her deed is totally banned according to her religion, tradition and cultural values she has internalized. That's why, she feels the dilemma of following her desire or her belief:

He was the first man to see her naked. It made her sick with shame. It made her sick with desire. They committed a crime. It was a crime and the sentence was death... beyond death was the eternal fire of hell... (299)

Nazneen feels the pain of committing a crime according to her religious belief; however, she cannot put an end to that situation and she follows her own desire. By this attitude she experiences a "psychological alienation which also means being without norm and against the established role" (Budak, 2003:813). This dilemma causes a traumatic situation for Nazneen. One night, while thinking about the crime she commits, she sees the illusion of her mother who says to Nazneen: "God sees everything... God tests us. Many men have failed such a test. And they will be Judged... he tests with illness or poverty, or with jinn who come in the shape of men..." (322). This illusion makes Nazneen have a nervous exhaustion. Chanu finds her "on the kitchen floor, vomit dried on the corners of her mouth, eyes open and unseeing" (324). For several days she keeps her eyes closed, awake or asleep staying in bed. This self-alienation continues for awhile. When she tries to discard her dilemma, she tends to her religion, but it does not bring a solution, either:

She got up and took the Qur'an. She looked for familiar passages, the words that she knew that would give comfort. In her panic, she could find none and the words on the page kept her out, hid their meaning and pushed her away. (332)

From now on, Nazneen accepts her sinful act and continues to be with Karim for a while: "Whatever I have done is done... Now I have earned myself a place in hell for all eternity" (341). However, she is still anxious: "Feeling returned to her slowly, like blood beginning to articulate. Anxiety, which had been unable to bite through the blanket of her depression, began to maul and chew." (365)

Her discomfort situation, resulting from the dilemma of feeling torn between her religious and traditional norms and her own desire, is not solved by choosing one of those options. Nazneen puts an end to her conflicted situation and alienation by neither following her desire and being with Karim nor holding on to her religion and continuing with her established role. Her self-actualization comes with her ability to take the decisions by herself, without any restriction. When she decides that she will not go back to Bangladesh as Chanu wants or will not be with Karim, either -although he wants to marry her-, Nazneen is not a dependent woman anymore. For Nazneen, "freedom is to be gained through working friendships with other Bengali women not in a new relationship with a man" (Eade, 2007: 32). By defying everything and everyone, she decides to stay in London with her daughters. By this decision "Ali gives such an inchoative promise of slow independent integration" (Shukla, 2006: 102). When Nazneen, Razia and Jorina build up a dressing trade together, we do not see the earlier alienated women anymore. They are changed, independent from their husbands, and the religious or traditional norms. They become a part of the society in which they can identify themselves. At the end of the novel, the scene of ice-skating becomes a symbol of their freedom. Razia and Nazneen's daughters prepare a surprise for Nazneen and take her to ice-skating that Nazneen has watched on TV with enthusiasm since she came to England. While they are skating in their traditional custom, a sari, Razia articulates the last utterance of the novel: "This is England... You can do whatever you

like" (492). So, "Razia's assertion represents the affirmation of a cultural freedom for Nazneen marking her sense of liberation" (Bentley, 2008:90) and "the figure of ice skater becomes a symbol of freedom in the novel" (Bentley, 2008:89).

4. CONCLUSION (SONUÇ)

In Brick Lane, Monica Ali shows the most significant problem of the immigrant woman that is alienation. As we see, the alienation of the immigrant woman caused not only by the othering point of the host society but also by the oppressive attitude of the society's patriarchal and traditional background results with the feelings of isolation, loneliness, weakness or despair. In this way, as both immigrant and as woman those women exemplified by Nazneen here, experience double alienation in the society. However, in Brick Lane, this alienation, having both sociological and psychological dimensions, is resolved with the freedom and integration of Nazneen. Although many experiences of Nazneen prove Nazneen's feelings of alienation and powerlessness, as Bentley emphasizes, "the novel as a whole, follows her gradual empowerment as she begins to come to terms with the alien environment in which she is placed at the beginning of the novel" (Bentley, 2008:88). Accordingly, what emerges is Nazneen's struggle to find her identity through her growing confidence and self-determination" (Kanal, 2008:56). At the end of the novel, Nazneen's will to take her own decisions such as not going back to Bangladesh with her husband, finishing her love relationship with Karim and beginning a new life with her daughters standing on her own feet, makes it possible to take over alienation and to integrate into the society as an independent immigrant woman. "Monica Ali's story is shaped by contemporary single issue... where personal freedom is gained... by sharing work and personal experience with other local, non-conforming Bangladeshi women" (Eade, 2007: 34). Thus, Nazneen finds her place in the world which she has watched from the outside for years. "What Monica Ali tries to probe and highlight is the concept that although displacement leads to alienation and self-searching, it is important to reconcile oneself with the concept of acculturation" (Kanal, 2008:54). So, at the end of the novel, we see that this acculturation process results in Nazneen acquiring a changed identity that is governed by her own individual logic and homespun wisdom not by a male dominance (Kanal, 2008:55).

The novel which is placed in bildungsroman tradition by some critics (Cormack, 2006) suggests that even an ordinary immigrant woman can succeed in actualizing herself using her potential and holding on virtues such as common sense, self-confidence and courage. In consequence, we observe that "Nazneen's metamorphosis is a triumph of the cross cultural intersection reflecting the melting pot of Modern British society" (Kanal, 2008:57). Here, by the character of Nazneen, who orients herself into a new life, Ali is hopeful about the future of the conscious immigrant women.

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