THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY IN HANIF KUREISHI'S *THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA* and *THE BLACK ALBUM*

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ABSTRACT

THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY
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Against the background of *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*, this study explores the ways Hanif Kureishi problematizes the notion of identity. The present study aims to lay bare how Kureishi moves the previously fixed categories into a slippery ground in his fiction and, in the process, how he challenges the fundamental givens of identity politics against the background of Homi Bhabha's key concepts: hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, agency, liminality and the third space. It will also make references to the category of nation as narration in relation to Thatcherite politics and identity as a performative act/process. Bhabha's theories will also help highlight how Kureishi's characters create their liminal spaces and how they perform their identity within these spaces. Looking at both novels, it is concluded that the nature of identity is fluid since it is configured according to many variables such as religious practice, political activism, arts and sexual discourse which are not stable, either. Kureishi's novels fictionalize that identity can never be reified by the essentialist pre-givens of the traditional ideologies. In a

multicultural world, rather than assimilation, it is important to grasp the unstable nature of identity in order to respect cultural differences. Thus, in a world where the dominant voices do not/cannot suppress the marginal ones, identity, national or individual, will keep on transforming itself.

Key words: hybridity, liminality, agency, performativity, identity.

ÖZ

HANIF KUREISHI'NİN *VAROŞLARIN BUDASI* VE *KARA PLAK* ROMANLARINDA KİMLİK SORUNU

Sezer, Şermin

Yüksek Lisans, İNGİLİZ EDEBİYATI PROGRAMI

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Bu çalışma Hanif Kureishi'nin *Varoşların Budası* ve *Kara Plak* romanlarında, yazarın kimlik kavramını nasıl sorunsallaştırdığını gösterir. Var olan çalışma bu romanlarda daha önce kalıplaşmış kategorilerin nasıl kaygan bir zemine taşındığını ve bu süreçte Homi Bhabha'nın melezlik, öykünme(mimikri), muğlaklık, eylemlilik, liminalite ve üçüncü alan hakkındaki ana düşüncelerine gönderme yaparak Kureishi'nin, kimlik politikalarının temel verilerini nasıl sorguladığını göstermeyi amaçlar. Bu tez Thatcher'ın politikalarıyla ilişkilendirilmiş şekilde kurgu olarak ulus kavramına ve edimsel/süreç olarak kimlik kavramına göndermeler yapar. Bhabha'nın teorileri, Kureishi'nin karakterlerinin nasıl liminal (eşik) alanlar yaratıp kimliklerini bu alanlarda gerçekleştirdiklerini vurgulamaya yardımcı olacaktır. Her iki romana bakarak şu sonuca varılmıştır: kimlik dini ritüeller, politik eylemler, sanat ya da cinsel söylem gibi kendisi sabit olmayan pek çok parametre üzerinden kurulduğu için, doğası gereği değişkendir. Kureishi'nin romanları geleneksel ideolojilerin özcü temelleriyle kimliği somutlaştırmanın

imkasızlığını yazınsal kurguya taşır. Çok kültürlü bir dünyada, asimile etme eğilimi yerine, kimliğin değişken yapısını kabul edip kültürel farklılıklara saygı göstermek gerekir. Sonuç olarak, baskın seslerin arka plana itilmiş sesleri bastırmadığı/bastıramadığı bir dünyada, kimlik, ulusal ya da kişisel olması fark etmeksizin, kendini dönüştürmeye devam eder.

Anahtar kelimeler: melezlik, liminalite, eylemlilik, edimsellik, kimlik.

To my family, Şenay, Murat and Duygu

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Hanif Kureishi's novels can be taken as the fictionalized version of a political reaction (to the dominant British ideology) which decentres any fixed category such as race, ethnicity, identity, family and gender. From a postcolonial perspective, Kureishi demonstrates that the individual experience can never be frozen within these categories which revolve around binaries that consolidate the mainstream rather than the marginalized. He reconsiders and attempts to redefine the above mentioned categories with emphasis on their modes of existence without bringing them to a closure. Moreover, subverting the traditional poles of these binaries, he points out a third alternative which, creating freeplay in Derridean terms, works through ambivalence that destabilizes the previously fixed but illusory polarities. This thesis, with references to *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album,* aims to lay bare how Kureishi moves the previously fixed categories into a slippery ground in his fiction and, in the process, how he challenges the fundamental givens of identity politics against the background of Homi Bhabha's key concepts: hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, agency, liminality and the third space. It will also make references to the category of nation as narration in relation to Thatcherite politics and identity as a performative act/process. Bhabha's theories will also help highlight how Kureishi's characters create their liminal spaces and how they perform their identity within these spaces.

Hanif Kureishi's fiction cannot be considered independent of the social and historical context he was born into as he selects much of his material from his immediate social surroundings. Interestingly enough, he himself experienced many of the predicaments that his characters live through in these two novels as he was born into what might be regarded as a liminal space due to his roots. Therefore giving some

biographical information prepares the ground for a more comprehensive analysis of his fiction: His mother is a white British suburbanite and his father is a Pakistani immigrant who came to England in 1947 to be educated by the old colonial power. He married in England and never went back to India. After the partition, the rest of Kureishi's large family moved from Bombay to Karachi. However, he had never lived there and he did not have much communication with his Asian family (*Dreaming and Scheming* 25). Being born in the suburbs of London with a non-British origin in 1954, he was bred as an Englishman, and he did not remember his non-British origin unless he was reminded by racial hostility. However, this did not change the fact that he was exposed to extreme racial discrimination which was strengthened by the harsh politics of Margaret Thatcher in the 1990s. In such a context, Thatcher's racial politics becomes another point of reference as the social context shaped by Thatcher's politics becomes one of the fundamental correlatives of Kureishi's attempts to assert any form of identity: For Thatcher and her supporters, to be British was defined by narrow boundaries of geographical origin and kinship (Green 138). She believed that being born in England does not make the West Indian or Asian Englishmen but they could only become United Kingdom citizens. She never accepted that the immigrants would be integrated into the society and become a member of it. Moreover, she blamed the settlers for the decay in the society and during the election campaigns she promised to stop immigration. Thus, even the children of the immigrants would never become British enough for her. Stuart Hall's definition of Thatcherism might help to give more insight into the narrow-minded and conservative politics of Thatcherism and its dynamics:

> Ideologically, Thatcherism is seen as forging new discursive articulations between the liberal discourses of the 'free market' and economic man and the organic conservative themes of tradition, family and nation, respectability, patriarchalism and order. Its reworking of these different repertoires of 'Englishness' constantly repositions both individual subjects and 'the people' as a whole- their needs, experiences, aspirations, pleasures, and desires – contesting space in terms of shifting social, sexual and ethnic identities, against the background of a crisis of national identity and culture precipitated by the unresolved psychic trauma of the 'end of empire'. Culturally, the project of Thatcherism is defined as a form of 'regressive modernization' – the attempt to 'educate' and discipline the society

> into a particularly regressive version of modernity by paradoxically, dragging it backwards through an equally regressive version of the past. (1998, 2)

Hall was right to call Thatcherism "regressive modernization" since her politics resulted in severe cultural discrimination. Gilborn, too, supports Hall's ideas stating that Thatcherism has been confirmed as a vastly efficient political and cultural project. The core of this project was formed by focusing on racialised ideas about the nation and this was accompanied with the celebration and promotion of a narrow-minded and arrogant understanding of questions of identity and belonging (345).

The way Thatcherite politics defends 'Englishness' is a key to Thatcherism's astonishing popularity; and cultural racism has become one of the most influential, continuing, effective bases of strength. Bill Schwarz is another critic who points out Thatcher's popularity gained through racist acts in his *The Thatcher Years*. He talks about the effects of Thatcher's first speech of national importance in 1968: She stated that her aim was not only to win votes for her party but also to gain people's enthusiasm. Six months later, Enoch Powell, a Conservative Party MP with very strong views on immigration and national identity, made a shocking call for the elimination of the black ghettos. As Schwarz puts it, Thatcher and Powell did not intend to use similar political strategies, however, each of them contributed to the making of new Conservatism which paved the way for creating enthusiasm to preserve the purity of Britishness. They achieved their aim by increasing the conservatives' popularity. With the 1988 Act, as Troyna puts it, "Ethnic diversity was effectively removed from the national policy agenda (in Gilborn 349). This does not mean that racism had come to an end. In essence, a similar kind of racism was going on under a different label: instead of directly dealing with racist issues, policy makers started to speak of culture. In this way, they tried to eliminate the racial differences and ease the assimilation of settlers' racial characteristics. Talking of culture instead of race is one of the characteristics of 'the new racism' as Martin Barker calls it:

> It is a theory that I shall call biological, or better, pseudo biological culturalism. Nations on this view are not built out of politics and economics, but out of human nature. It is in our biology, our instincts, to defend our way of life, traditions and customs against outsiders – not because they are inferior, but because they are a part of different cultures. (23-24)

Although policy-makers address the racial issues, they trade on 'culture' instead of 'race' which creates hidden racism. This point of view reformulates the concept of racism in a deracialized format and replaces the concern about colour with culture. The idea of superiority which was once coupled with racism is now abandoned to be replaced by an emphasis on difference as there was a call which stated that difference is not a threat to British people's lives or the British people did not need to dislike or blame the others just because of their difference (Barker 18).

Barker's way of analysis indicates the transformation of the racist codification. This shift is at the very centre of Thatcherite politics, which suggested that "people are really rather afraid that this country might be swamped by people with a different culture" (Barker 15). Margaret Thatcher voices her ideas in January 1978 as follows: "And, you know, the British character has done so much for democracy, for law, and done so much throughout the world, that if there is a fear that it might be swamped, people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in" (qtd. in Barker 15). As it is obvious in her words, the obsession to prevent the threat that the British character will face due to the flooding alien flux shaped the general stance of Thatcherite politics. This is a metamorphosed form of racism, and it is also mentioned by Stuart Hall, who, in his essay "New Ethnicities," points out how the black signification and identification are transformed, and demonstrates how it becomes untenable and useless to follow the certainties of anti-racist politics of the 1980s:

> You can no longer conduct black politics through a strategy of a simple set of reversals, putting, in the place of the bad old essential white subject, the new essentially good black subject. Now, that formulation may seem to threaten the collapse of an entire political world. Alternatively, it may be greeted with extraordinary relief at the

> passing away of what at one time seemed to be a necessary fiction. Namely, either that all black people are good or indeed that all black people are the same. *(1992:254)*

Hall criticizes the attempt to generalize individual characteristics of the black people and label them as part of a herd. In fact, Halls' statements can be discussed in relation to Homi Bhabha's understanding of hybridity, which will be discussed in detail in the theoretical background sub-section in the following pages. In a nut shell, it can be stated that, after the new immigration policy in Britain, the situation of the postcolonial subject is not referred to within the binary opposition of black and white but within a cultural frame, which, interestingly, functions as the third space enabling 'other' positions such as hybridity to occur. These assumptions are helpful to understand why Thatcher's highly popular and effective politics could not prevent the integration of the settler culture into the British culture.

In empirical reality, Hanif Kureishi has been exposed to discrimination reinforced by governmental politics, and feels disgusted when he remembers how he was treated in the 1960s. He recounts how he was humiliated by the racists and also expresses his fear of getting in touch with his white friends to avoid the possible racist insults. These humiliations were everywhere including the visual media: Pakistanis were the subject matter of television comics and their reflections were quite disgraceful. Kureishi says that he was afraid of watching those degrading, humiliating comics (*Dreaming and Scheming* 28-9). In "The Rainbow Sign" he explains how all the *hostility* went on during Thatcher's reign quoting Enoch Powell, who says: "We should not lose sight of the desirability of achieving a steady flow of voluntary repatriation for the elements which are proving unsuccessful or unassimilable" (*Dreaming and Scheming* 27). Then, he quotes Duncan: "The breeding of millions of half-caste children would merely produce a generation of misfits and create national tensions" (*Dreaming and Scheming* 27). Both quotations demonstrate how the settlers are marginalized within the society. However, ironically, the immigrants and their children perceived themselves differently from how the British perceived them. Likewise, being a half-caste child, Kureishi did not feel he was a misfit; just the

opposite, he felt like an Englishman, born and bred. However, after being exposed to cruel discrimination in England and after visiting India, Kureishi comes to the following conclusion: "I stress that it is the British who have to make adjustments. It is the British, the white British, who have to learn that being British isn't what it was. Now it is a more complex thing, involving new elements" (*Dreaming and Scheming* 55). As can be seen, his concept of Britishness is not static but is in contrast to the narrow boundaries of Thatcher's understanding of Britishness. Here, it should be remembered that Thatcher also excludes the white suburbanites from the definition of Britishness. She does not grant them the chance of social mobility which will enable the white suburbanites to rise above their status. In such a context, it would not be erroneous to say that Kureishi's personal experience echoes how masses of immigrants and their children feel. In his novels, he creates characters who prove that the notion of nationhood is constantly changing and identity is never finalized.

The Buddha of Suburbia and *The Black Album* are two Kureishi novels which focus on immigrants' experience demonstrating how they contribute to transforming the concept of Britishness. The novels also highlight the way the white suburbanites add up to the new definition of Britishness. As the preferences, life styles and viewpoints of the people living in England change, the notion of Britishness is reshaped. Against such a background, each character creates his or her own space to realize his or her existence in multicultural England and their formulation of individual identities modifies the so-called stable national identity. To analyze the fluidity of national identity in these novels, Homi Bhabha's key concepts of hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, the third space and interstitial spaces will be employed.

1.1 Theoretical Background

Homi Bhabha's criticism is important in postcolonial theory due to his key concepts such as agency, hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, liminality and the third space,

which are all inter-related and serve to explain the positioning of the postcolonial subject or the subject in a postcolonial world. Instead of talking about the power relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, Homi Bhabha demonstrated the limitations of Edward Said's claim that the colonizer possesses the colonial power and discourse. In reaction to this, Bhabha recommended that the attempt to orientalize has to fail since the colonial subject is constructed in "a repertoire of conflictual positions"; which leaves him or her in "the site of both fixity and fantasy" "in a process which cannot be uneven, divided, incomplete, and therefore potentially resistant" (qtd. in Easthope 341). Bhabha explains these fluctuating positions of the postcolonial subject with references to philosophers and critics such as Fanon, Derrida, Lacan and Kristeva among many others.

Hybridity can be taken as a starting point in Bhabha's theoretical universe since this key term somehow correlates with all the concepts suggested by him. In horticulture hybridity refers to "cross-breeding of two species by grafting or cross pollination to form a third species" (Ashcroft et al. 118). However, in Bhabha's context the term signifies more than creating a new form of identity by mixing two races or cultures. Homi Bhabha rejects the idea of pure cultures whose existence is accepted by colonialist discourse. In his *The Location of Culture*[1], Bhabha defines what hybridity is and explains how it functions as follows. It:

> is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the reevaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. For the colonial hybrid is the articulation of ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of

[1] *The Location of Culture* will be referred to as *LC* hereafter.

> desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory – or, in my mixed metaphor, a negative transparency. (159-160)

This quotation demonstrates how subversive hybridity is and how it attempts to disrupt the power relation between the colonizer and the colonized, which has always been to the advantage of the former. Bhabha further discusses hybridity:

> Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rules of recognition. Again, it must be stressed, it is not simply the content of disavowed knowledges – be they forms of cultural otherness or traditions of colonialist treachery – that return to be acknowledged as counter authorities. For the resolution of conflicts between authorities, civil discourse always maintains an adjudicative procedure. What is irremediably estranging in the presence of the hybrid – in the revaluation of the symbol of national authority as the sign of colonial difference – is that the difference of cultures can no longer be identified or evaluated as objects of epistemological or moral contemplation: cultural differences are not simply there to be seen or appropriated. (*LC* 162-3)

Bhabha's explanations demonstrate that not only individuals but also cultures are hybrid. Cultural diversity is a notion to strengthen the existence of pure and superior cultures and this viewpoint fits into colonial discourse. However, in postcolonial discourse the relation between cultures is ambivalent. For Bhabha, hierarchical cultural purity is untenable since cultural identity always emerges in a contradictory and ambivalent space (Ashcroft et al. 118). In his discussion of hybridity, to prove the hybrid nature of cultures, Bhabha refers to Fanon, who states that "psychic trauma results when the colonized subject realizes that he can never attain the whiteness he has been taught to desire; or shed the blackness he has learnt to devalue" (qtd. in Loomba 176). Bhabha uses Fanon's ideas to strengthen his claim as he suggests that the colonial identities are always a matter of flux and agony. In an essay in which he writes about the importance of Fanon in our time, he states that colonial desire is articulated in relation to the place of the Other, and further asserts that Fanon's image of black skin/white masks is not "a neat division" but:

> a doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once which makes it impossible for the devalued, insatiable evolué (an abandonment neurotic, Fanon claims) to accept the coloniser's

> invitation to identity: 'You're a doctor, a writer, a student, you're different, you're one of us'. It is precisely in that ambivalent use of 'different' – to be different from those that are different makes you the same – that the Unconscious speaks of the form of Otherness, the tethered shadow of deferral and displacement. It is not the Colonialist Self or the Colonised Other, but the disturbing distance in between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness – the White man's artifice inscribed on the Black man's body. It is in relation to this impossible object that emerges the liminal problem of colonial identity and its vicissitudes. (qtd. in Loomba 176-7)

Bhabha thinks that the image of "black skins white masks" suggests "an ambivalence that can be read not just as marking the trauma of the colonial subject but also characterizing the workings of authority as well as the dynamics of resistance". In his "Signs Taken for Wonders," Bhabha exemplifies this by showing the transformation of the Bible in colonial India and writes the way the Bible is hybridized to communicate to the natives and to address their needs, desires and existing beliefs. Thus, it is seen that hybridization does not have to be a political act or stance. Resistance can also be on a cultural level; and the hybridization process of the Bible in India proves that Homi Bhabha's discussion is on a transcultural level rather than focusing on the superiority of the colonizer over the colonized. The Indians do not adopt the Bible but they appropriate it: For example, they resist baptizing without which conversion is impossible. This is the empowering feature of hybridity, but it also implies disregarding the fact that Christianity is a historical religion whose teachings are not subject to change (*LC* 169). As in this example, hybridity "re-others the other in the service of deconstructing the metaphysics of the West" (Drichel 603) and the disavowed knowledges appear to turn the presence of colonial discourse into an uncertain situation. They may return in the form of opposing beliefs like the variety in some forms of native knowledges:

> "We are willing to be baptized, but we will never take the sacrament". Or they may be forms of mythic explanation that refuse to acknowledge the agency of the Evangelicals: "An Angel from heaven gave it [the Bible] us, at Hurdwar fair". Or they may be the fetishistic repetition of litany in the face of an unanswerable challenge to authority: for instance, Anund Messeh's "Not that which entereth into a man's mouth defileth him, but that which cometh out of the mouth." (*LC* 171)

The Bible is hybridized to communicate the needs of the native Indians; thus, the power of Christianity is weakened. The above mentioned examples of colonial doubling reveal how cultural difference works in postcolonial discourse: Cultural differences are not to be appropriated but to be negotiated. Instead of taking difference as a destructive feature, hybridity celebrates coexistence by undermining cultural hegemony. As Sakamoto puts it, "[g]iving up the desire for a pure origin, hybridity retains a sense of difference and tension between two cultures, but without assuming hierarchy. It is not just new identity but a new form of identity" (qtd. in Bolatagici 77).

This new form of identity, which is referred to as hybridity, signifies "an original mixedness within every form of identity" (Huddart 6-7) and proves the fact that cultures are not separate occurrences. Novelists like Salman Rushdie are interested in dealing with hybrid identities and use hybrid cultural forms in their novels. Like novelists, many anthropologists and sociologists such as Stuart Hall and Robert Young whose works undermine any assertion about the purity or authenticity of cultural identities or forms come to the fore in this content. However, it should also be kept in mind that Bhabha puts less emphasis on hybridity than on hybridization; to put it differently, Bhabha insists on hybridity's ongoing process. Here, what Huddart says commands attention: "In fact, for Bhabha there are no cultures that come together leading to hybrid forms; instead, cultures are the consequence of attempts to still the flux of cultural hybridities" (7).

Looking at the distinguishing features of cultural difference and cultural diversity mentioned by Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* may clarify cultural hybridity even more and may reveal more clearly the limitations of Said's assertions about the superiority of the colonizer over the colonized. Bhabha sees cultural diversity as the key to globalization which moves still within the ground of the binaries suggesting that there are pure cultural/racial origins and different cultures that come together forming a multicultural environment. On the other hand,

accepting the existence of cultural difference is what enables hybridity to occur. Shaobo Xie, in his review of Bhabha's recent essays, puts forward how Bhabha's notion of hybridity rejects the understanding which states that "within every society, each social agent is inscribed in a multiplicity of social relations, among others, of sex, race, nationality, and vicinity … and every social agent is therefore the locus of many subject positions and cannot be reduced to only one" (156). As Xie puts it, Bhabha does not agree with the notion of pluralistic counter hegemony implied in this statement since he argues pluralism begins with difference that is ultimately transcended. Hybridity is not restrained to cataloguing of difference as its unity comes into being thanks to the process which Homi Bhabha calls the third space within which different elements meet and transform each other; that is, unity is not located in the sum of its parts (Papastergiadias qtd. in Werbner&Modood 258). Bhabha's perception of hybridity indicates that it has become a "historical necessity, a birthmark of postmodern thinking" and in times of contra modernity, the subject has no other choice than being split, ambivalent, and interstitial (Xie 156).

To explain the function of hybridity better, the concept of mimicry should also be clarified. In his "Of Mimicry and Man" Bhabha talks about what mimicry is and how it functions as a means of renunciation:

> [M]imicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers. (*LC* 122-3)

Mimicry has a profound and disturbing effect on colonial discourse, as Bhabha repeatedly puts it: "[t]he menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (*LC* 126). Bhabha again refers to Fanon, whose writings demonstrate that colonial authority works by inviting black subjects to mimic white culture. In Bhabha's view such an invitation

itself undercuts colonial hegemony. While Fanon's black mimics are dislocated, Bhabha's mimicry has the power of weakening authority (Loomba 178). Although Bhabha's concept of mimicry is different from Fanon's understanding, Bhabha believes that Fanon's writing is powerful due to his refusal to make easy elision between the social and the psychological, between the individual and the universal, for Fanon speaks "most effectively from the uncertain interstices of historical change: from the area of ambivalence between race and sexuality; out of an unresolved contradiction between culture and class; from deep within the struggle of psychic representation and social reality" (Bhabha qtd. in Treacher 53).

Relations of mimicry and ambivalence overpower the dominant authorities. Like Fanon, Bhabha argues that the black subject can ever imitate but never identify. The colonized does not have to identify with the colonizer, that is why mimicry is an ambivalent practice which "represents two psychic processes– one the wish to be like, the same as; and it expresses the wish to be distant, a disavowal based on knowledge as it draws upon mockery and contempt" (Treacher 53-54). Actually, mimicry might be seen "as a response to stereotyping and to the impossible demands of colonial discourse" (Byrne 88). In this response, the power of mockery with ironic signification is seen; mimicry disrupts the colonial relationship working for the advantage of the colonized.

Mimicry embodies this ironic compromise in which the colonized is "almost the same but not quite" as the colonizer by appropriating the manners and the values of a recognizable Other. David Huddart, who defines mimicry according to Bhabha's understanding as "an exaggerated copying of language, culture, manners, and ideas," states that "mimicry is also a form of mockery, and Bhabha's postcolonial theory is a comic approach to colonial discourse, because it mocks and undermines the ongoing pretensions of colonialism and empire" (57). This humorous characteristic of postcolonial theory is important since colonial discourse is serious pretending to aim at educating and improving the colonized. The colonizer is haunted with this comic

discourse which becomes a menace to its very own identity. As Ashcroft puts it, the colonized subject never reproduces the colonizer's cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values as they are. The outcome of this mimicry is a "blurred copy" of the colonizer which can become quite threatening. That is the reason why postcolonial stance is very close to mockery (139). As stated above, the power of mimicry's irony has the potential to destabilize colonial authority, accordingly, in the configuration of imperial supremacy, the mimicry of the postcolonial subject "locates an area of considerable political and cultural uncertainty" (142). This area of uncertainty can be called "the third space" in Bhabha's terms, and: "It is the 'in-between space that carries the burden and meaning of culture" (119). The function of hybridity and consequently the third space is to reverse the effect of disavowal that the colonized experiences. This third space enables other positions to emerge, and in the process, becomes a site of negotiation and translation; or as in the words of Sakamoto: "[a] borderline culture of hybridity is a powerful and creative 'third space' through which newness enters the world, subverting the authority of dominant discourse" (qtd. in Bolatagici 78). It is because of this reason that the notions of mimicry, hybridity and the third space are very much related.

The third space is the territory where the interaction between the colonizer and the colonized becomes ambivalent so in this realm, the division between the self and the other, in other words the colonizer and the colonized is weakened. Bhabha's account does not suggest the overpowering of the colonized over the colonizer but suggests a simultaneous act in which both the colonizer and the colonized act. In his own words, Homi Bhabha illuminates how the relation between the I and the You takes place in the third space:

> The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious. What this unconscious relation introduces is an

> ambivalence in the act of interpretation. The pronominal I of the proposition cannot be made to address – in its own words – the subject of enunciation, for this is not personable, but remains a spatial relation within the schemata and strategies of discourse. The meaning of utterance is quite literally neither the one nor the other. This ambivalence is emphasized when we realize that there is no way that the content of the proposition will reveal the structure of its positionality; no way that context can be mimetically read from the content. (*LC* 53)

Homi Bhabha clearly explains the ambivalent nature of cultural translation which takes place in the third space. For him, the third space of enunciation turns the structure of meaning and reference into an ambivalent process and this intervention ruins the mirror of representation where "cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code"(*LC* 54). The unsettling temporality of enunciation takes the place of the originary Past which is taken as a unifying force (*LC* 54). To understand why hierarchical assertions about inherent originality of cultures are unsound, it should be accepted that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation. The third space is unpresentable in itself but it composes the discursive conditions of enunciation ensuring the lack of primordial unity and fixity of meaning and symbols. The very same sign can be "appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (*LC* 55). Thus, the postcolonial signification is never finalized; it is always subject to change.

Along with the third space, liminality is another important concept for Homi Bhabha since it also contributes to the "in-between" nature of colonial discourse and it can be called an "interstitial passage between fixed identifications" and this passage gives way to the emergence of hybridity which celebrates difference without an imposed hierarchy (Ashcroft et al. 131). Liminality is crucial in explaining the role of "in-between" space in which the cultural transformation may occur. It is:

> the transcultural space in which strategies for personal or communal self-hood may be elaborated, a region in which there is a continual process of movement and interchange between different states. For instance, the colonized subject may dwell in the liminal space between

> colonial discourse and the assumption of a new 'non-colonial' identity. But such identification is never simply a movement from one identity to another, it is a constant process of engagement, contestation and appropriation (130)

Liminality disrupts the traditional binary oppositions between the colonizer and the colonized. Going beyond the dichotomies, liminality enables the postcolonial discourse to function by challenging the colonizer's authority; thus arbitrary designations such as 'black' and 'white,' 'lower' and 'upper' classes are ceaselessly problematized. Rather than starting his argument with the idea of pure cultures interacting, Bhabha focuses on what happens on the borderlines of cultures to see the dynamics of the in-between spaces. For Huddart, liminality emphasizes that the formation of new cultural meaning is only possible thanks to "in-between settled cultural forms or identities" (7). To prioritize liminality is to challenge the fixed, authentic culture on the advantage of "unexpected, hybrid, and fortuitous cultures." It implies that the appropriate "location of culture is between the overly familiar forms of official culture." Since Homi Bhabha focuses on the creation of meaning instead of physical locations, that is, the border between nations, his position is left out as unrealistic and idealistic. Nevertheless, what he means by the location of culture is both spatial and temporal: "the liminal is often found in particular (post-colonial) social spaces, but also marks the constant process of creating new identities (their open-endedness or their 'becoming'). Hybridity and liminality do not refer only to space, but also to time" (Huddart 7). Since liminality refers both to space and time, Bhabha uses this concept to indicate that 'postmodernity, postcoloniality, postfeminism' signify nothing if the 'post' in those words simply means 'after'. As Ashcroft puts it:

> Each of these represents a liminal space of contestation and change, at the edges of the presumed monolithic, but never completely 'beyond'. The present can no longer be envisaged as a break or a bonding with the past or future; our presence comes to be revealed in its 'discontinuities, its inequalities, its minorities.'(131)

The liminal space is the territory where the postcolonial or the postmodernist subject acts to subvert, to attack or to challenge the power of any authority or fixed notion. This ability of the postcolonial subject to act or to perform an action is called

'agency' (8), which is important in postcolonial discourse since it highlights the ability to initiate an action freely and to resist the colonial power or to submit to it. For Bhabha and Spivak agency is a troublesome concept since it corresponds to much of the poststructuralist position on subjectivity. Nevertheless, many theories whose focus is on political action take agency for granted and suggest that it is not impossible for the subjects to escape the effect of forces which construct their identities (7-8). Actually, agency liberates the postcolonial subject from the boundaries, inscribed by colonial discourse such as race and ethnicity. Bhabha suggests that "[t]he postcolonial perspective resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation. It forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres" (*LC* 248). To explain the impossibility of forming "holistic forms of social explanation", Bhabha focuses on the nature of the "sign" which constructs histories along with identities:

> [Contemporary cultural studies] attempt to institutionalize a range of transgressive discourses whose strategies are elaborated around non-equivalent sites of representation where a history of discrimination and misrepresentation is common among, say, women, blacks, homosexuals and Third World migrants. However, the 'signs' that construct such histories and identities – gender, race, homophobia, postwar diaspora, refugees, the international division of labour, and so on – not only differ in content but often produce incompatible systems of signification and engage distinct forms of social subjectivity. To provide a social imaginary that is based on the articulation of differential, even disjunctive, moments of history and culture, contemporary critics resort to the peculiar temporality of the language metaphor. It is as if the arbitrariness of the sign, the indeterminacy of writing, the splitting of the subject of enunciation, these theoretical concepts, produce the most useful descriptions of the formation of 'postmodern' cultural subjects. (*LC* 252)

As it is obvious in Bhabha's words, it is not possible to fix the signification process, and the diverse nature of the 'sign' contributes to constituting cultural subjects who are distinct from one another. As a result, each subject performs his or her identity in the free inter play of the signifiers. To clarify the distinctive ways of being owing to the signification process, Bhabha refers to Stuart Hall, who writes "from the

perspective of the fragmented, marginalized, racially discriminated against members of a post-Thatcherite underclass":

> [T]he ideological sign is always multi-accentual, and Janus-faced – that is, it can be discursively rearticulated to construct new meanings, connect with different social practices, and position social subjects differently ... Like other symbolic or discursive formations, [ideology] is connective across different positions, between apparently dissimilar, sometimes contradictory, ideas. Its 'unity' is always in quotation marks and always complex, a suturing together of elements which have no necessary or eternal 'belongingness'. It is always, in that sense, organized around arbitrary and not natural closures. (*LC* 253)

Hall points out the impossibility of mentioning fixed notions emphasizing the new meanings which will come into being during 'rearticulation'. Actually, Hall's assertions with his emphasis on repetition with a difference echo mimicry and agency. Here, one should pay attention to the arbitrariness of the sign which occurs as a result of rearticulation and which makes the signification process performative.

When the performative power of agency is concerned, Butler's understanding of performativity should be mentioned since her perception is structurally similar to Bhabha's agency. (It should be stated that Judith Butler focuses on gender performativity; however, 'agency' and 'performativity' function alike in identity formation process). Moya Lloyd explains Butler's understanding of performativity, which has many parallelisms with Bhabha's mimicry and agency when the signification process is concerned:

> Agency, as Butler presents it, is intimately connected with signification. Signification, according to her, refers to the process that establishes the terms of intelligibility or meaning. Signification is thus practice. Moreover, it is a practice based on repetition . It is precisely the repetition of acts, gestures and discourses that produces the effect of an identity at the moment of action. Agency, for Butler, might be thought of, then, as an effect of signification and resignification. The possibility of producing 'alternative domains of cultural intelligibility', in particular non-heteronormative domains, rests on this necessity to repeat and on the potential to repeat differently. Indeed, for Butler, 'it is only within the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible'. It is the

> only way to challenge the 'rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms' that sustain heteronormativity (*GT*[2] : 185). What, therefore, might count as a subversive repetition capable of contesting the naturalization of heterosexuality? The short answer is those 'parodic styles' (*GT*:176), as Butler terms them, that are patently imitative; that denaturalize what they are performing by displaying explicitly the ways in which the natural is produced. These are repetitions, in other words, that openly reveal their status as performative constructions. (54)

Very much like Bhabha, Butler focuses on the importance of repetition which always has distinctive results. "Performance" starts with imitation but it becomes a subversive element which liberates the subject from the boundaries of pre-given identities. In Bhabha's case, the postcolonial subject mimics the colonial one and the repetition with a difference subverts the colonial power. Likewise, Butler proposes that in the course of repeating heteronormativity, the subject can challenge gender boundaries. In an interview conducted by Vikki Bell, Butler voices her ideas as follows:

> The real task is to figure out how a subject who is constituted in and by discourse then recites that very same discourse but perhaps to another purpose. For me that's always been the question of how to find agency, the moment of recitation or that replay of discourse that is the condition of one's own emergence. (qtd. in Drichel 596)

Both Judith Butler and Bhabha put strong emphasis on imitation with a difference when they explain the terms of 'performativity' and 'agency'. Reciting the very same discourse with another purpose or with irony becomes threatening for the dominant power; however, this ability to act empowers the marginalized subject. Derrida's 'iterability' is also helpful in explaining postcolonial agency or performativity. For Derrida the word *itara* means 'other' in Sanskrit and links repetition to alterity. While every iteration reinscribes the meaning of a sign, it does so in a subversive way (Drichel 601). In his own words, Derrida explains:

> Let us not forget that 'iterability' does not signify simply … repeatability of the same, but rather alterability of this same idealized in the singularity of the event, for instance, in this or that speech act… there is no idealization without (identificatory) iterability; but for the

[2] Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge, 1990.

> same reason, for reasons of (altering) iterability, there is no idealization that keeps itself pure, safe from all contamination. (119)

Iterability creates a double logic where "identity is both self-identical and forever different from itself; identity emerges from (identical) repetition, but in that repetition identity is no longer self identical" (Drichel 601). Iteration gives the chance to reintroduce a sense of alterity which is denied in the stereotype as a rigid form of otherness. Iterability is at the very center of Butler's performativity and Bhabha's hybridity along with agency. Bhabha adopts the Derridean idea of iterability and enthusiastically voices his ideas as follows: "What is interesting about iteration is that it introduces that uncanny moment where something may look the same, but in its enunciation, in the moment of its instantiation, in the thing that makes it specific, it reveals that ***difference*** of the same" (***Translator Translated*** np). Bhabha uses iterability with considerable political potential when he talks about the time lag between repetitions which enables the production of "new and hybrid agencies and articulations." The moment of iterability or reinscription is the "moment for revisions" for Bhabha:

> The process of reinscription and negotiation – the insertion or intervention of something that takes on new meaning – happens in the temporal break in between the sign … When the sign ceases the synchronous flow of the symbol, it also seizes the power to elaborate – through the time lag – new and hybrid agencies and articulations. This is the moment for revisions. (qtd. in Drichel 601)

At the time of repetition, the other emerges as the "hybrid agency." The "disjunctive temporality" enables postcolonial criticism to keep "the other" as a "politically foundational concept without falling prey to renewed stereotypes" (Drichel 601). Bhabha's reading of iteration suggests that iterated identities who escape the limitations of colonial discourse are liberated from colonial oppression. His point of view is satisfying since the re-iterated subject challenges the colonial discourse and turns the power relationships upside down. This indicates the power of postcolonial agency which is always ambivalent and which always takes place in liminal or in in-between spaces. (Here one feels obliged to note that Bhabha's reading of iterability becomes widely accepted in postcolonial studies.)

To conclude, indeterminacy in Bhabha, which is disruptive in nature, is the enabling condition of subaltern subjectivity. Mimicry, hybridity, agency are all related to each other via ambivalence and they function in the third space or in liminal spaces in an unfixed mode to challenge the colonial discourse. All these appear in Kureishi's novels where he evacuates the meaning of any stable notion and implies that none of the categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, family, religion or any established community can account for the formation of identity, which is a matter of performance. In ***The Buddha of Suburbia,*** the first generation immigrants (Haroon and Anwar), the second generation immigrants (Jamila and Karim) and the white British (Eva and Charlie) exemplify how it is impossible to talk about strict national boundaries and reveal the way identity is performed in reference to above mentioned categories. Likewise, in ***The Black Album,*** the notion of a stable identity is problematized in relation to the fundamentalist group Shahid joins in and his relationship with a postmodernist instructor, Deedee Osgood. Interestingly enough, Kureishi demonstrates the slippery nature of identity through different characters- both British and non British alike- in different contexts.

CHAPTER II

REDEFINING BRITISHNESS IN *THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA* AND *THE BLACK ALBUM* BY HANIF KUREISHI

2.1 *The Buddha of Suburbia*

2.1.1 Redefining Britishness in the liminal spaces as experienced by the first generation immigrants: Haroon and Anwar

The Buddha of Suburbia is composed of subplots which proceed through Karim's quest from childhood to adulthood. Revolving around a protagonist with an Indian father and a suburbanite English mother, the novel deals with the issues of race, ethnicity and social class in postcolonial discourse by mocking any fixed notion like nationhood and identity. This particular social context in which any established category is denied makes it impossible to see any stable identity. The novel takes place during the years Thatcher, a conservative MP who insists on keeping the British race pure, is active and ends up being elected the Prime Minister; and Kureishi attempts to demonstrate how Thatcher's understanding of Britishness which excludes the immigrants is invalidated. In this chapter, the possibility of a fixed national identity will be critiqued with a focus on the experiences of first generation immigrants Haroon and Anwar; second generation immigrants, Karim and Jamila; and the white suburbanites Eva and her son Charlie. First generation immigrants, Haroon and Anwar, in addition to the adjustment problems, face lots of difficulties due to racial discrimination. Since their predicament is reinforced by discriminatory attitudes, they can neither feel attached to their roots nor become integrated into the British society. Thus, to survive, they create their own spaces which leave them in liminality. Living in liminal spaces does not indicate that the settlers are outcasts but they mould their own hybrid identities. As a result, they find an in-between space to continue their lives and exemplify different ways of being, which, too, highlight the slippery nature of Britishness as experienced by first generation immigrants (Haroon

and Anwar) and which lead into multiculturalism with its plural understanding of truth.

To understand the arbitrary nature of British nationalism, it might be helpful to refer to Benedict Anderson's ideas on nation and nationhood. He defines nation as "an imagined community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (7). He explains the reason why he calls nation "an imagined community" by referring to Gellner: "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist" (in Anderson 6). Since 'nationalism' is 'invented', it implies that the definition of nation is always open to re-inventions. The way the immigrants integrate to the society proves how the assumed characteristics of a nation are subject to transformation. Referring to Anderson, Homi Bhabha in his "DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation" critiques the essentialist readings of nationhood. As Perloff puts it Bhabha argues "[n]ations and cultures ... must be understood as 'narrative' constructions that arise from the 'hybrid' interaction of contending national and cultural constituencies" (109). *The Buddha of Suburbia* demonstrates how Britishness is re-narrated by Britain's' citizens – both the migrants and the English - against the Thatcherite definition of it.

Among the first generation immigrants Haroon is the one who struggles most to be accepted as an Englishman and consequently he is the one who contributes to the redefinition of Britishness most. Since he has aristocratic roots in India, he has dignity and he does not let himself feel inferior to the colonizer. As Margaret, Haroon's wife, expresses his family is higher than the Churchills (*Buddha* 24). Karim also admires his father, particularly his outlook: "Like many Indians he was small, but dad was also elegant and handsome, with delicate hands and manners; beside him most Englishmen looked like clumsy giraffes" (*Buddha* 4). Haroon experienced the colonial years in India and believed that the English was a superior

sacred race. When he was sent to England for education, he was disappointed when he saw the British as ordinary citizens. Karim defines his father's disillusionment:

> Dad was amazed and heartened by the sight of the British in England, though. He'd never seen the English in poverty, as roadsweepers, dustmen, shopkeepers and barmen. He'd never seen an Englishman stuffing bread into his mouth with his fingers, and no one had told him the English didn't wash regularly because the water was so cold – if they had water at all. And when Dad tried to discuss Byron in local pubs no one warned him that not every Englishman could read or they didn't necessarily want tutoring by an Indian on the poetry of a pervert and a madman. (*Buddha* 24-25)

Through these details, Haroon's image of the holy British is shattered. These ordinary people are put side by side with the elite of their community. As Yousaf puts it, Kureishi does not intend to create a uniform group identity as either British or Asian. Instead, he illustrates various forms of membership of any community (51-2). Haroon sees that there is not any fixed image of the British, and on specific occasions, he even goes further to feel superior to the British thanks to his aristocratic roots. However, this awareness does not stop him from adopting their life style. Karim describes a Sunday routine of his father as follows:

> Dad was sitting on the white counterpane of his bed, cleaning his ten pairs, with patience and care, every Sunday morning. Then he brushed his suits, chose his shirts for the week- one day pink, the next blue, the next lilac and so on – selected his cufflinks, and arranged his ties, of which there were at least a hundred. (*Buddha* 47)

This is an ordinary Sunday of a middle class English man. However, Haroon's adoption of British habits does not imply that he has totally discarded his Indian roots. He likes kebabs which shows his devotion to Indian dietary habits and "he love[s] it when people [come] and [go], the house full of talk and activity, as it would [be] in Bombay" (*Buddha 47).* Thus, he brings together the eastern and the western customs confirming the impossibility of belonging to a pure culture.

The discussion of being Indian or English comes to the fore in Ted's and Jean's perception of Margaret's and Haroon's marriage. Being white British, Ted and Jean do not approve of Margaret's choice of marrying an Indian. They call Haroon as Harry, casting a new identity on him or they anglicanize him. When Ted learns Haroon's Buddhist practices he initially shows his outrage at Eastern philosophy: "Buddhism isn't the kind of thing she's [Margaret] used to. It's got to stop!" (*Buddha* 48). As Moore-Gilbert puts it, in Kureishi's earlier novels, it is seen that he attacks various forms of cultural nationalism. As Ted's and Jean's perceptions display, Kureishi sides with the opposing attempts to invalidate narrow definitions of nationalism and makes fun of the insistence on clear-cut designations (131-2). These polarities also assert the unlikelihood of stability of nationhood.

Haroon's case is a challenge to the Thatcherite understanding of Britishness which strongly claims that the concept of Britishness only includes people with British origin. He incarnates a hybrid identity as "the brown skinned Englishman" with his job as a civil servant who commutes from the suburbs into London with average English middle class expectations. He tries to keep away from trouble by warning his son not to date with Asian girls as they bring lots of trouble. However, with his dietary preferences, interest in yoga and tendency to deride the British, he never eradicates his Indian roots totally (Moore-Gilbert 132). Having one of the typical English jobs, he carries a briefcase and an umbrella with him (*Buddha* 29). Every morning he reads the *Daily Mirror* before joining other commuters on the train to the city. With his outlook Haroon is more English than he is Indian and his daily routine implies that Haroon's Englishness is a form of mimicry to avoid being racially visible.

Haroon starts to impersonate a Buddhist with Eva's initiation and he becomes a "Muslim commodifying himself for white suburbanites searching for the 'inner room' as an Oriental-Hindu 'Buddhist' guru" (Yousaf 40). In fact, he cannot be a 'Buddha' just like any white citizen as he is not a native Buddhist. Making use of his

exotic look, he creates an entirely new, hybrid identity (Wohlsein 45). Thus, Kureishi not only depicts how exoticism helps Haroon gain recognition among the white British but also mocks Buddhism by showing that a person who is not a native Buddhist embodies a Buddha. Kureishi reveals that no identity has clear-cut descriptions. That is why, Thatcherite Britishness is a myth which is always transformed by the preferences and life styles of the people living in Britain. The way the white British show interest in mysticism confirms how Thatcher's insistence on the purity of Britishness is futile. It also indicates that people living in Britain are ready to interact with each other.

Like his brother Haroon, Anwar has come to England for education. He too creates his liminal space to survive in racist Thatcherite Britain. Being from an aristocratic Indian descent, Anwar and Haroon used to play cricket at the weekends and tennis after school. Their cricket matches were generally against the British (*Buddha* 23). Originally, it is a western type of sport, which shows how they are exposed to the colonizer culture even before moving to England. Having led a wealthy life in India, the conditions in England for Haroon and Anwar were very challenging. However, they adapted to the harsh conditions by enjoying the freedom that the western ways of living offered them. While Haroon was called to pub every night, Anwar "loved the prostitutes who hung around Hyde Park" (*Buddha* 25). When Haroon dated with Margaret, Anwar was dating with one of Margaret's friends despite his marriage with Jeeta, a princess from India (*Buddha* 26). Both Anwar and Haroon use the opportunities offered by England without considering their families' values. This does not mean that they deny their Indian roots but indicates that with their hybrid identities both create a new site of living within which different positions emerge.

Anwar, who comes to England to study aeronautical engineering, wins a bet one day and buys a house. With his wife's initiation they open a shop called 'Paradise Stores'. Anwar's necessity to work fourteen hours a day cuts his chance to socialize with English people. This does not imply that he does not enjoy western life style:

"Anwar even scoffed pork pies as long as Jeeta wasn't looking" (*Buddha* 64). He enjoys western life style until he realizes that his daughter has become an emancipated woman. This is where his internal return to India or resistance to English culture starts. Forgetting his earlier years in England throughout which Anwar adopted a western life style and disregarding how Jamila acts against racism, he only focuses on the fact that Jamila has lost her ties with the Muslim life style. He is afraid that his native culture will totally disappear (Wohlsein 38). Appropriating Islam is a form of return to his native culture for Anwar. However, he ignores the fact that there are no original or pure cultures. His identity combining both eastern and western elements is a proof for the impossibility of talking about pure cultures devoid of interaction with the others. To impose Muslim values on his daughter, he goes on a hunger strike to convince Jamila to marry Changez, a groom imported from India. Jamila finally agrees to this marriage which does not indicate her submissiveness but which can be taken as the starting point of her rebellion. This marriage strengthens the fact that expectations concerning nationhood are futile. Changez, in contrast to Anwar's hopes, is not wholeheartedly tied to his Muslim practice or Indian roots. He is more interested in discovering the uncertainties of England than creating a family in Indian sense. Moreover, Jamila who is forced into this marriage, never lets Changez touch her, being aware of the fact that theirs is not a usual marriage. Changez, who is unwilling to help in Paradise Stores and who cannot give grandchildren to Anwar, turns out to be a big disappointment. Here, what Anwar bitterly realizes that one's national background is not enough to make him/her a good person. He sees that it is futile to blame the English for being immoral and corrupt. His desperate situation is strengthened when he feels abandoned by Allah despite his regular prayers and refusal to womanize (*Buddha* 172). With this feeling he wants to turn back to India, a plan which he can never put into practice. Although he states that he is an Indian at heart, he has lived in England for most of his life and his identity has been transformed as a result of the interaction between the colonizer and the colonized culture.

All in all, the integration process of Haroon and Anwar reveals the constant interaction between the colonizer and the colonized cultures, which re-defines the concept of Britishness. Both Haroon and Anwar integrate Western and Eastern values and life styles in the liminal spaces they create to survive in Britain. As Robert J. Young puts it "[Englishness] has never been successfully characterized by an essential, core identity from which the other is excluded. It has always like the Prime Meridian, been divided within itself, and it is this that has enabled it to be variously and counteractively constructed" (3). Thus, Thatcher's attempt to stabilize British nationality fails due to the interaction between the colonizer and the colonized cultures.

2.1.2 A New Way of Being British and Postcolonial Agency in the Case of Karim and Jamila

Being the second generation immigrants, Jamila and Karim experiment with different ways of being and in the course of experimentation their identities which are never stable go through many changes. Karim and Jamila are similar in the sense that they are born into families with Indian origin and they have never been to their fathers' country. Karim is slightly different from Jamila as his mother is a white suburbanite. However, this is not the thing that differentiates Karim and Jamila because Karim's mother is not a white British in the Thatcherite sense; that implies she too is excluded from the centre. Karim's and Jamila's distinction shows itself not in their mothers' heritage but in their perception of racism, resistance to the dominant culture and their understanding of the concept of Britishness. Despite the dissimilarity in their perspectives and the ability to resist the colonial power, both characters are strong enough to survive in Thatcherite Britain through postcolonial agency which can be defined as the ability to act or to perform an action (Ashcroft et al. 8).

Karim's and Jamila's ability to act starts with mimicry, which refers to imitation with a difference. This ironic stance of mimicry, later, turns out to be a tool against the colonial power and this power transforms the dynamics of the colonizer. Karim's and Jamila's transformation through postcolonial agency is a proof for how the society changes. Their initiative lets them gain a status in the society, which results in re-defining, expanding, re-formulating the notion of nationhood.

As Ranasinha claims Kureishi's characters "live the potentials and experience the pitfalls of mixing and métissage, emphasizing the precarious, ambivalent nature of all cultural translations. His work parodies the idea of homogenous, distinct, racially defined communities" (2007: 222). Being brought up in a similar atmosphere as the children of Pakistani families who are not allowed to be part of the British culture, Karim's and Jamila's experiences exemplify Ranasinha's claims revealing how they experiment with a variety of identities. These experiments become a kind of game for young Jamila and Karim : "Sometimes we were French, Jammie and I, and other times we went black American. The thing was we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it" (*Buddha* 53). Realizing that Thatcherite Britain excludes them from the mainstream society, they try other ways of being rather than identifying with the dominant British ideology. In the end, all these flexible identities which Karim and Jamila act out become part of Britain.

Karim obviously incarnates a new way of being British due to his racial origin, the environment he was born into and the experiences he is exposed to. Looking at Karim's character one can see that in Kureishi's novels there is a nation building process and nationality is always characterized by the people living in a particular society. Since England is a multicultural country, it is inevitable that people having various identities redefine the concept of Britishness. His novels show that it is the subjects that create the sense of a nation and in multicultural Britain the notion of nation is subtly changing due to the transformation of individuals living in Britain. Kaleta's arguments reinforce these ideas:

> At the root of his English storytelling … Hanif Kureishi suggests that the dogma of nationalism is in conflict with the reality of today's multicultural England. He demands that we accept the inherent contradictions of a pluralistic society within England. Contemporary English society is a paradox of overlapping communities, and told from his Anglo-Asian perspective, his stories proclaim that as individuals reinvent their identities, so too must nations. (3)

Kaleta's claim that the reformulation of individual identities results in a change on the idea of a nation strengthens Homi Bhabha's beliefs about the instability of a fixed national identity which he explains in his article "DissemiNation" in detail. His ideas are fictionalized in *The Buddha of Suburbia* by explicitly showing the way how characters invent their identities and how this reinvention results in a new definition of British identity. The very beginning of the novel vividly depicts Kureishi's understanding of Britishness :

> My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new bred as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don't care – Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London suburbs and going somewhere. (*Buddha 3*)

Although Thatcherite politics tries to exclude the people of different backgrounds from the definition of Britishness, there is a new bred 'Englishman'. This is proved in Karim's daily habits and choices. His father is a Pakistani but even his father lives like a British. As Karim articulates it, "for years they were both [Anwar and Haroon] happy to live like Englishmen" (*Buddha* 64). Karim is brought up seeing the British daily routine; consequently, he is more familiar with the British culture than he is with the Indian. Despite being a Pakistani, his father has always lived like the British and tried to raise his son as an Englishman. His father's mimicry of colonial culture makes Karim pursue British habits: "I loved drinking tea and I loved cycling" (*Buddha* 62). Haroon makes lots of effort to be more English-like; nevertheless, there are lots of things he is not familiar with in British culture. That is why, Karim likes having time with Uncle Ted since he knows the things that his dad does not know. Together "[They] ate corned-beef sandwiches and drank tea from [their] thermos flask. [Ted] gave [Karim] sporting tips took [him] to the Catford dog track and Epsom Downs. He talked to [Karim] about pigeon racing" (*Buddha* 33). Karim

points out that he loved Ted because he knew the things that the other boys' fathers knew about. He complains about his father's not knowing about "fishing and rifles, aeroplanes, and how to eat winkles" (*Buddha* 33). As Wohlsein puts it, Karim is more familiar with sandwiches than he is with pea curry, which indicates that he does not have ties with Indian culture but he is raised as an English man (50). He even mocks the way his father and Anwar take the trouble to adopt English life style and customs.

There are lots of efforts to stabilize Karim's identity: his mother and Eva make efforts to raise him as an Englishman while Shadwell, the owner of a theatre, wants to portray him as an authentic Indian in the play. Karim is neither the former nor the latter. With the position as a cultural translator, he creates a new territory to exist. In this realm, he switches between different identities sometimes foregrounding his Britishness and sometimes his Indianness. In fact, he makes use of his hybridity to overcome the difficulties he faces. Karim has a tendency to exploit his in-between status when he takes part in a play in which he plays the part of a character with an Indian origin. After the play, Karim talks about his performance with his mother and asks her:

> "Wasn't I good, eh, Mum?"
>
> "You weren't in loin-cloth as usual,' she said. 'At least they let you wear your own clothes. But you're not an Indian. You've never been to India. You'd get diarrhoea the minute you stepped of that plane, I know you would."
>
> "Why don't you say it a bit louder,' I said. 'Aren't I part Indian?"
>
> "What about me?" Mum said. "Who gave birth to you? You're an Englishman, I'm glad to say." (*Buddha* 232)

Thanks to his exotic look Karim, manages to take part in the play. Paradoxically, throughout his life he has tried to shed aside his Indian self but now, he is hired for his "eastern authenticity." As Karim states at the very beginning of the novel, he feels he is an Englishman and just like him, Karim's mother Margaret disregards the fact that his father is a Pakistani. Margaret does not realize that despite being white,

her suburban background does not allow her to be a white British in the Thatcherite sense. However, she perceives herself and her children as British and Karim wants everybody to hear his mother's strong insistence on his being English.

The discussion of Karim's Britishness has more sarcastic outcomes when he goes to the USA to perform a play. When he goes there, Charlie is already in America and he stays at Charlie's place. This time, instead of his Indian heritage, his Britishness is foregrounded. He calls himself and Charlie "two English boys in America" (*Buddha* 249). Ironically, they have never been British enough according to the norms of Britishness suggested by Thatcherite politics. Charlie who is a white suburbanite and consequently a misfit according to Thatcherite ideals, is perceived as an Englishman in New York and he makes use of his Englishness to gain popularity as a singer with his British heritage. In Karim's case the irony is sharpened. Charlie, who feels at home in New York, accuses Karim of looking so English when Karim hesitates to watch Charlie while he is making love with Frankie (*Buddha* 251). The conversation between Karim and Charlie demonstrates how Charlie perceives Britishness:

> "Sit down, Karim, for God's sake," said Charlie. "Stop farting about. You're not in Beckenham now."
>
> "I know that."
>
> "Well then, can't you stop standing there and looking so English?"
>
> "What d'you mean, English?"
>
> "So shocked, so self-righteous and moral, so loveless and incapable of dancing. They are narrow, the English. It is a kingdom of Prejudice over there. Don't be like it!" (*Buddha* 254)

It must be shocking for Karim to be accused of being British-like, since he has struggled to be accepted as an Englishman throughout his life. This conversation highlights how the perception of nationhood is arbitrary. In Britain, being accepted as an Englishman is a privilege for Karim and in the USA he is called British in a pejorative sense. These shifting perspectives on the concepts of Britishness prove the instability of the term. Experiencing a kind of culture shock in the USA, Karim feels

at home in England as he has never felt before. When he turns back to England he says: “I walked around Chelsea, happy to be back in London, relieved to test my eyes on something old again” (*Buddha* 258). Looking at Karim’s experiences one can see that Karim constructs his identity first by denying his racial background, then by appropriating it and consequently ending up with a feeling of Englishness. He both exploits and resists his ethnic identity as Kureishi himself does while writing his fiction, (Ranasinha 12) and just like Kureishi, Karim feels British rather than anything else.

In both Karim’s and Jamila’s experiences, the reader sees that they are part of Britain and unlike Thatcher’s narrow-minded Britishness, they form a new concept of being British with their Indian origin and lower social background. Compared to Karim, Jamila is more ambitious and she takes the control of her life instead of being a passive character. This dissimilarity of Karim and Jamila may be related to two things: first, Jamila is living in a poorer working class area where there are neo-fascists and she has to protect herself from those people. In order to defend herself she develops strategies. The second reason might be the education Jamila receives from Mrs Cutmore, the librarian who was once a missionary. Even Karim states that Jamila was more advanced than him and explains the reasons for that:

> There was a library next to the shop, and for years the librarian, Miss Cutmore, would take Jamila in after school and give her tea. Miss Cutmore had been a missionary in Africa, but she loved France too, having suffered a broken heart in Bordeaux. At the age of thirteen Jamila was reading non-stop, Baudelaire, Colette and Radiguet and all that rude lot, and borrowing records of Ravel, as well as singers popular in France, like Billie Holliday. Then she got this thing about wanting to be Simone de Beauvoir, which is when she and I started having sex every couple of weeks or so, when we could find somewhere to go – usually a bus shelter, a bomb-site or a derelict-house. Those books have been a dynamite or something, because we even did it in public toilets. Jammie wasn’t afraid of just strolling straight into the Men’s and locking the cubicle behind us. Very Parisian, she thought, and wore feathers, for God’s sake. It was all pretentious, of course, and I learned nothing about sex, not the

> slightest thing about where and how and here and there, and I lost none of my fear of intimacy (*Buddha* 52).

Karim clearly explains how Jamila gains the quality of agency which gives her the power to shape her life in the way she wants. However, the ability to initiate an action starts with mimicry at first. In the beginning, Jamila's attidute is not an internalized one; on the contrary, as Karim states "it was all pretentious". Nevertheless, these mimicking attitudes let Jamila find out her way. Through the books she reads, she educates herself and even comes to the conclusion that Mrs. Cutmore was trying to colonize her. After this realization, she chooses novels from black authors, which Karim calls in a humorous way "post-Cutmore books" (*Buddha* 52). This transformation indicates her ability to act. She proves that accepting or being at one with her blackness never means being devoted to the Indian traditions. Within her character she blends the respect for her heritage and the independent way of living. Thus she overpowers both the constraints of the colonizer's power and the pressure of Indian customs.

In Jamila's depiction, the irony lies in how well her initiative character applies to what Mrs. Thatcher expects from the successful white British citizens. With her combative character, she abandons the constraints imposed by racial heritage, gender and social class. Her ambition to start a street training to defend herself from the neo-fascists indicates how fearless she is and how she goes beyond the stereotype of a black woman who is generally depicted as a submissive individual accepting life as it is. The strong-minded character of Jamila which exemplifies Thatcherite values displays the impossibility of attributing specific qualities to specific nations. Karim describes Jamila's Thatcherite way of power which is necessary to be accepted as a successful individual by the society:

> She was forceful and enthusiastic, Jamila. She always seemed to be leaning forward, arguing, persuading. She had a dark moustache, too, which for a long time was more impressive than my own. If anything it resembled my eyebrow – I had only one and, as Jamila said, it lay above my eyes, thick and black, like the tail of a small squirrel. She said that for the Romans joined eyebrows were a sign of nobility; for

> the Greeks they were a sign of treachery. 'which will you turn out to be, Roman or Greek?' she liked to say. (*Buddha* 51-52)

Jamila, who is energetic enough to do whatever she likes, is also well aware of the arbitrariness of identity or the signification process, and exemplifies this showing how the indications of an eyebrow change according to different nations. For a young woman, who becomes independent enough to manage her life thanks to the education she gets, it is very difficult to be the daughter of an Indian immigrant who, after living many years in England like an Englishman, suddenly decides to turn back to his roots. Anwar, Jamila's father, wants Jamila to marry an Indian man who will be found by one of Jamila's uncles in India. Jamila, as expected from her political and intellectual stance, rejects this arranged marriage at first but seeing that her father will die because of the hunger strike which he holds to convince Jamila into marriage, she finally gives up.

In fact, her situation is very paradoxical: she seems to submit herself to her father's law; however, it is the very starting point of her rebellion against the patriarchal metaphor which can be called "rebellion against rebellion". The space she creates to preserve her personal dignity results in the formation of a new kind of identity. This is certainly not Indian or British in the traditional sense. However, considering the fact that Jamila was born in and lives in England, her transformation contributes to a change in the definition of Britishness. Just as Kureishi himself claims, this concept involves new elements. This newly formed notion of nationhood is only possible in a third space which enables different positions to emerge. Jamila's initiative is very English in spirit but she still respects her father's will and marries Changez.

Jamila seems to be submissive in accepting to marry Changez; however, she is very subversive in her marriage. She makes it clear that Changez and Jamila will never live as husband and wife; thus, she punishes both her arranged husband and her father who is looking forward to having grandchildren. They share the same house and in their marriage gender roles are subverted as she feminizes her husband and

reverses the traditional hierarchy between husband and wife. Karim explains how Changez is financially supported:

> Financially, Changez was supported by Jamila, who paid for everything by working in the shop in the evenings. And I helped him out with the money I got from Dad. Changez's brother sent him money, too, which was unusual, because it should have been the other way around as Changez made his way in the affluent West, but I was sure celebrations in India at Changez's departure were still taking place. (*Buddha* 98)

Karim states how Changez lacks financial power which prevents him from qualifying a man as Anwar expected. He does not work in the shop claiming "[b]usiness isn't his best side ... [H]e is the intellectual type, not of those uneducated immigrant types who come here to slave all day and night and look dirty" (*Buddha* 107). Anwar is frustrated twice: He cannot receive any help from Changez in the shop or grandchildren in his marriage. Thus, Anwar's insistence on having a Pakistani groom is sharply mocked. After her father dies, Jamila decides to live in a commune but she cannot leave Changez alone in England and agrees to take him with her provided that he works in the commune. However, she is still determined not to let her husband touch her. (*Buddha* 215).

Looking at Jamila's experiences one can call her a multi-voiced character who embodies different identities: She is the one who obeys her father's will about an arranged marriage; she is an activist living in a commune; she is a mother; she is a shopkeeper; she is a lesbian. Each and every identity of Jamila is interwoven with the society and the family she was born into. She harmonizes these conflicting parts of her life creating a new site of being. Following Kaleta's claim which states, as the individuals of a country change, the notion of nationhood also changes (3), Jamila can be given as an example to show how the synthesis of the east and the west is possible through the power of postcolonial agency without being looked down upon.

Comparing Karim's and Jamila's power of agency, Jamila is more aware of what she is doing. Karim is more naïve in the sense that he is led into mimicking the British since his mother is an English woman and his father mimics the British himself but one cannot deny that his mimicry later metamorphoses into postcolonial agency which results in a new way of being British. Jamila, unlike Karim, never tries to hide her Indianness. She owes the power of agency to mimicry too, but her mimicry is a deliberate one which results from the books Jamila reads. With the power she gains through agency, Jamila becomes an embodiment of subversion in the novel. She overpowers the colonial power; she rebels against her father's will- though she marries Changez she never touches him or has children with him; she has a lesbian relationship along with many heterosexual intercourses. Thus, she challenges each and every institution as she creates a new site of being for herself. Within the space she creates she is integrated to the society with her variety of identities all of which are constructed and shaped by Jamila's will. Whether it is a naïve way of imitation or a conscious one, Karim and Jamila find their way first with the attempt to mimic the colonizer culture and then they discover the power of agency which enables them to be a different kind of British and which bears no similarity to Thatcher's understanding of Britishness.

2.1.3 The changing notion of Britishness as experienced by the white suburbanites: Eva and her son Charlie

Kureishi also deals with the white British citizens and their changing notion of Britishness. In other words, the concept of Britishness is also defined and redefined through the experiences of the white suburbanites like Eva and Charlie in *The Buddha.* Like the black Indian characters, for Eva and her son Charlie, too, national identity cannot stabilize itself. These two characters are always on the move, active, energetic, and they follow their dreams to make them come true. Eva is a typical Thatcherite character who can adapt herself to the changing conditions to achieve her goals. However, she does feel marginalized like the Indian characters against a Thatcherite background and she struggles hard to get rid of her suburban stigma.

Refuting Thatcher's own statements, ironically, both Eva and Charlie rise above their status by gaining a notable position within the society they live.

With her ruthless ambition, Eva changes her priorities according to her advantage, and these changes also reflect how her notion of Britishness transforms itself, which contributes to the overall definition of the concept. Towards the end of the novel, Eva removes the suburban stigma on her becoming a white British in Thatcherite terms. Her case paradoxically proves that in contrast to Thatcher's claims, social mobility is possible if one follows the opportunities life offers. She changes her life style at any moment she has the convenient circumstances to do so.

Eva's physical, intellectual and psychological state is always displayed as lively and energetic, a feature which eases her job to transform both her life and the people around her. In such a context, Karim's words about her command attention:

> She [Eva] had no conventional beauty, her features were not exquisitely proportioned and her face was a bit chubby. But she was lovely because the round face with the straight dyed-blonde hair, which fell over her forehead and into her eyes, was open. Her face was constantly in motion, and this was the source of her beauty. (*Buddha* 86)

Her personality is consistent with her constantly changing physical topology. Like her face, her life is always on the move, a process in the novel which starts with her relationship with Haroon and continues further with the involvement of Karim and Charlie. As Karim emphasizes, Eva "was living outwardly, towards you, and her face was always watchable because she was rarely bored or dull. She didn't let the world bore her" (*Buddha* 86-87). To get rid of this sense of boredom she generates endless changes both for herself and the others in her life.

Thus, Eva's understanding of Britishness is closely related to the slippery nature of her "identity." She testifies to the idea that the identity markers of a nation are shaped according to the change experienced by the citizens of that nation: In order to

get rid of the suburban disgrace on her and to be pure 'British', Eva not only changes her life style, her job and the place she lives in but also the lives of the people around her. To start with, she becomes interested in Haroon, Karim's father, who is of Indian origin. She pushes him into Buddhism disregarding the fact that he is not a Buddhist. Her interest in Haroon turns into love and despite Haroon's marriage they start a relationship which forces Haroon to leave his wife. Eva, realizing that Haroon's mystic side helps them gain recognition among important people, makes use of this case. Interacting with important people thanks to Haroon's oriental performance promises an opportunity to move up socially.

The way she reshapes her future is quite significant to lay bare her Thatcherite ambitions. After convincing Haroon into both mysticism and into a life without Margaret, his wife, Eva plans to decorate their house with the help of Karim and his uncle, Ted. Haroon witnesses her combative character, for the first time, when decorating the house:

> Eva knew what she wanted: she wanted the whole house transformed, every inch of it, and she wanted energetic, industrious people around her. We got down to it immediately. With relief, I abandoned any pretence at being clever and became a mystic assistant labourer. I did the carrying and loading and smashing, Eva did the thinking, and Ted ensured her instructions were carried out. Dad fastidiously avoided the whole muck of building, once spitting an Arab curse at us: 'May you have the builders.' Ted replied with an obscurity he thought would delight Dad. 'Haroon, I'm kissing the joy as it flies,' he said, laying into a wall with a hammer. (***Buddha*** 111-2)

Along with the whole house, she changes her life style together with the people living with her. After decoration, Eva's next plan is to alter their lives totally by moving to Kensington from Beckenham. Haroon, who is used to the image of a submissive woman who accepts everything as it is, is very much amazed when he sees Eva's insistence on leaving the suburbs. However, he cannot help moving into Kensington. She is so determined to be part of central London that she never lets Haroon see the house they will be moving into knowing that Haroon will not agree to live in that old house. Since the property prices are moving upwards, Eva's plan is to decorate the flat like their former house and then move on to another one (***Buddha***

128). Even living in Kensington is not an end point for her. She never stays stable, but is obsessed with endless plans to move on. She never accepts the lot life offers her; in contrast, she struggles to better her financial situation and social position, which becomes a kind of touchstone in the Thatcherite manner.

Ironically, in contrast to Thatcher's claims, Eva shows how social mobility is possible. Eva arranges a flat-warming party with the help of Shadwell and during the preparation she makes sure that she aims to cut her ties with her past (mysticism, suburbs, and so forth) (*Buddha* 132). Despite encouraging the Buddhist practices of Haroon in the past, she has a totally different attitude when they move to central London: "For Christ's sake, can't you cut down on the bloody mysticism. We're not in Beckenham now. These are bright, intelligent people, they're used to argument, not assertion, to facts, not vapours" (*Buddha* 151). In the suburbs, Haroon's mysticism attracts attention and creates an environment for Eva to achieve her goals in business. In West Kensington, however, this mysticism is only a burden. In other words, Eva, as a pragmatic person, wants to get rid of this "bloody mysticism" as she plans to get rid of her suburban stigma. Her radical transitions testify to the idea that both the mystic people in her recent past and the ones who are accustomed to the facts belong to the same British culture, a slippery category which defies homogenization. In other words, Britishness as an identity marker itself is on the flow.

Eva's strength nullifies the belief that life in the suburbs is stoic, stable and there is no chance to overcome this inertia. Thus, she becomes Thatcherite ideals incarnate. She even goes so far as to parrot Thatcher from time to time and very much like the Iron lady, she is remorseless. When Haroon feels sorry for Margaret thinking that she is alone, Eva is far from sympathizing with her and warns him not to pity her: "Please, please, clear it out of your mind" (*Buddha* 117). At the end of the novel, Eva rises above her status and totally looks fresh and businesslike. She becomes a glorious middle-aged woman. When she is interviewed by a journalist about decoration, she again echoes Thatcher:

> We have to empower ourselves. Look at those people who live on sordid housing estates. They expect others –the Government – to do everything for them. They are only half human, because only half-active. We have to find a way to enable them to grow. (*Buddha* 263)

As can be seen in this remark, Eva's dynamism alters her preferences and view of life, a transformation which reflects the changing national identity markers. She started as a person interested in oriental mysticism but ends up as an arch-Thatcherite at the end of the novel.

Charlie's case is similar to Eva's in the sense that he sells Britishness to find a place in the society. He is also depicted as glamorous, lively, ambitious and initiative like Eva. Very much like her mother, Charlie achieves success through Thatcherite ideals demonstrating that Thatcher's teachings will help a suburbanite rise above his or her status. Karim is right, then, when he says that it is only Charlie who has high expectations among the school boys (*Buddha* 68). Charlie's deal with Britishness starts when he moves to the USA as a pop singer. His living style is also full of ironies back at home as he prefers a punk style of life to the certainties of British culture. However, in the USA he acts as if he were part of mainstream British culture. He is a Machiavellian figure since he exploits British culture for his own purposes (Buhanan 46). Charlie was 'the other' in Britain being a suburbanite and he had a long way to go to rise above his status. In the USA he is again 'the other' but this time his otherness brings positive discrimination with itself and he makes use of his British origins to gain popularity in the USA.

Charlie easily adjusts to the conditions in the USA and has a tendency to benefit from the potentials that New York offers him. Buhanan explains Charlie's easy adaptation as follows: "When Karim and Charlie arrive in London, Charlie is enthralled by the punks they encounter, whereas Karim feels that an insuperable class barrier still exists between him and them" (46). As Yousaf emphasizes, Charlie speaks with a Cockney accent as soon as he moves to New York. Karim remembers how their school friends mocked Charlie because of his pompous Cockney accent which turned out to be an advantage for him in the USA. Karim has no doubt that

Charlie is selling Englishness (*Buddha* 247). Yousaf claims in relation to Charlie that perception of national identity always changes:

> Charlie's striking of this pose reflects something of the fluidity and popular cultural currency of working class markers… In this way, Kureishi draws in the discourses of nationalism and patriotism and the commodification of "Englishness" with those of race and community, and attempts to deny any reductive reading. (38)

To sum up, Kureishi depicts the multicultural Britain in his novel with an effort to illustrate how this multiculturalism results in a new way of being British. As Moore-Gilbert puts forward, Kureishi's novels also critique the hostile attitudes towards the pluralistic society. He displays how the experiences of people with non- British heritage add up to the cultural diversity of England and demonstrates the change in the preferences of the white British which also plays a role in characterizing Britishness. In fact, Kureishi makes obvious the pointlessness of racial attitudes by proving the incoherent category of Britishness. People following Thatcherite ideals aim to fix Britishness and exclude the ones who are of non-British heritage and of lower social strata from this category. However, in a multicultural world nationhood becomes an unstable term which is constantly open to transformations. That is why, as the novel nicely fictionalizes, the concept of Britishness is always subject to changes.

2.2 *The Black Album*

2.2.1 Hybridity: creating a new site of existence in the case of Shahid

Homi Bhabha problematizes the earlier notion of nation emphasizing its arbitrary nature and its constructedness or rather its narrated status. As it is obvious in the previous pages, Kureishi's understanding in his novels runs parallel to Homi Bhabha's emphasis on the slippery nature of nationalism and nationhood as Kureishi, too, vividly challenges the mainstream definition of nationalism and offers a new definition of a space of nationhood where all the previous parameters are shattered. While narrating the notion of nation, Bhabha emphasizes the function of the other

and quotes Chaterjee to explain how nationalism destroys itself by trying to reconfigure its existence and by accentuating its difference from the other cultures:

> Nationalism ... seeks to represent itself in the image of the Enlightenment and fails to do so. For Enlightenment itself, to assert its sovereignty as the universal ideal, needs its Other; if it could ever actualise itself in the real world as the truly universal, it would in fact destroy itself. (in *NN*[3] 293)

To affirm its power, the British define Britishness by excluding its Other from the definition of nationhood. As Addison and Jones put forward, "Although they were from the Commonwealth, black and Asian migrants arriving in Britain were seen as a threat to Britishness, and became the main internal 'others' against which Britishness was defined" (103). Like *The Buddha of Suburbia, The Black Album* too fictionalizes how the dominant national discourse defines its boundaries by referring to its Other and how its Other becomes a threat to the dominant nationhood of Britishness, against the background of Thatcherite Britain. As a result, Thatcher's attempt to draw clear lines for the definition of Britishness by excluding the migrants created a resistance on the side of the colonized, a resistance which has the power to transform strict boundaries of nationality. This part of the thesis attempts to reveal the way the definition of Britishness is shaped due to different and differentiating elements such as religion, race and politics.

The Black Album with Shahid as its protagonist with a non-British origin vacillating between the uncertainties the Western life style offers and the absolutism Islam suggests reveals how Britishness can be perceived differently from the way Thatcher does and how this new understanding results in a new space of being. With Shahid's characterization Kureishi depicts the transformation of the notion of nationhood as Shahid's hybridity allows him to experience the pluralities demonstrating the arbitrariness of each 'so called' fixed category such as religion or nationhood. Referring to Bhabha's explanation of hybridity will clarify Shahid's situation:

[3] Hereafter, *Nation and Narration* will be referred to as *NN*

> [H]ybridity is never simply a question of the admixture of pre-given identities or essences. Hybridity is the perplexity of the living as it interrupts the representation of the fullness of life; it is an instance of iteration, in the minority discourse, of the time of the arbitrary sign – 'the minus in origin' – through which all forms of cultural meaning are open to translation because their enunciation resists totalization. (*NN* 314)

As in the words of Bhabha, Shahid does not combine two pre-given identities to experience the multiplicity of life but thanks to his already hybrid nature his character is open to living various potentialities that life offers. Shahid's identity is hybrid due to his family background, so he starts life from 'the minus in origin': He was born in England as the son of a middle class Pakistani family earning an agreeable amount and working as travel agents. His family does not put strong emphasis on following the religious rituals and they do not force their children to adopt the Pakistani values. In fact, they act as if racist discrimination did not exist. However, the white British do not perceive him as part of the British nation, which leaves Shahid in an in-between space. This liminality forces Shahid to reconfigure his identity which also reconfigures the understanding of Britishness.

Shahid's first conversation with Riaz, the leader of a Muslim group who tries to befriend him, reveals a lot about Shahid's family's perception of Islam, ethnic culture and how they adjust to British society. The first thing Riaz asks about Shahid's family is the extent of their attachment to Pakistani values. Shahid is very much surprised to hear Riaz's question: "And did they lose themselves when they came here?" Shahid thinks it is a strange question but he realizes that this was the reason why "he had come to college, to distance himself from the family and also think about their lives and why they had come to England?" (*Album* 7). Riaz's question makes him think about his family's loyalty to their roots and he replies to Riaz as follows: "You could be right. Maybe that is what has happened. My family's work has always been to transport others around the world. They never go anywhere themselves, apart from Karachi once a year. They cannot do anything but work. My brother Chili has a ... a looser attitude. But then he is a different generation" (*Album*

7). Hearing Shahid's comments about Chili, Riaz wants to learn whether Chili is a dissipater or not, which makes Shahid very angry; however, his curiosity makes Shahid question the nature of his family and their attitude to religion and ethnicity. His family's attitude to life in general is very important since they create their own space in Britain which is also a hybrid space, and which shaped Shahid's identity as a child. Rather than having strong ideas about religion and comradeship to decrease the effects of racism, they put their defence mechanism at work: they acted as if racism did not exist.

Having a non-devout father, Shahid is never a strict follower of Islam who accepts its teachings or the practices his friends offer without contemplating on them. His father's understanding of religion reveals why Shahid cannot feel at one with his comrades who live within the boundaries of religion:

> At home Papa liked to say, when asked about his faith, 'Yes, I have a belief. It's called working until my arse aches!' Shahid and Chili had been taught little about religion. And on the occasions that Tipoo prayed in the house, Papa grumbled and complained, saying, why did he have to make such noises during repeats of his favourite programme, *The World at War*? (*Album* 92)

However, before getting to know Riaz, Chad, Hat and the other fundamentalists, Shahid comes across religious fanaticism in his larger family:

> In Karachi, at the urging of his cousins, Shahid had been to the mosque several times. While their parents would drink bootleg whisky and watch videos sent from England, Shahid's young relatives and their friends gathered in the house on Fridays before going to pray. The religious enthusiasm of the younger generation, and its links to strong political feeling, had surpassed him. One time Shahid was demonstrating some yoga positions to one of his female cousins when her brother intervened violently, pulling his sister's ankles away from ears. Yoga reminded him of 'those bloody Hindus'. This brother also refused to speak English, though it was, in that household, the first and common language; he asserted that Papa's generation, with their English accents, foreign degrees and British snobbery, assumed their own people were inferior. They should be forced to go into villages and live among the peasants, as Gandhi had done. (*Album* 91-92)

As it is seen in the quotation Shahid observes his parents who lead a Western lifestyle on the one hand, and his cousins who strictly follow religious rules on the other hand, a case which leaves Shahid in limbo. In addition to these different views of religion in his family, Shahid confronts his mother's extreme reactions to racism. Their mother avoids talking about racial issues trying to live as if they never existed. Shahid's first story is called 'Paki Wog Fuck of Home' and it "featured the six boys who comprised the back row of his class at school, who, one day when the teacher left the room in despair, chanted at Shahid, 'Paki, Paki, Paki, Out, Out, Out!' He banged the scene into his machine as he relieved it, recording the dismal fear and fury in a jagged, cunt-fuck-kill prose that expressed him, like a soul singer screaming into a microphone" (*Album* 72). After reading the story his mother really becomes angry and tells Shahid that no one will be interested in his story since "[p]eople don't want this hate in their lives" (*Album* 73). The reader learns that "[m]ore than anything she hated any talk of race or racism."

Before learning about his attempt to write a story about racism, the reader sees how Shahid has a strong urge to be a racist which is revealed in his conversation with Riaz and Chad, a follower of Riaz's religious group. His mother's extreme attempts to turn a blind eye to racial discrimination and his experiences of feeling dislocated since he is the only black person everywhere he goes might have let Shahid think that racists are superior beings. When Riaz, Chad and Shahid try to get to know each other through questions, Shahid naively declares how he wanted to be a racist (Album 10). He expresses that "[his] mind [is] invaded by killing-nigger fantasies" (*Album* 11) and explains he dreams: "Of going around abusing Pakis, niggers, Chinks, Irish, any foreign scum. I slagged them under my breath whenever I saw them. I wanted to kick them up the arse. The thought of sleeping with Asian girls made me sick. I'm being very honest with you". This quotation reveals how Shahid wants to reinvent his identity; he wants to recreate himself as a character who is accepted by the dominant ideology, that is, the traditional understanding of Britishness. He thinks he is not a black subject and he hates the black. His arrogance might be related to his middle class background in addition to having been born in

England and feeling English. His further expressions prove how he dislikes Asian culture:

> Even they [Asian girls] came on to me, I couldn't bear it. I thought you know, wink at an Asian girl and she'll want to marry you up. I wouldn't touch brown flesh, except with a branding iron. I hated all foreign bastards' ... 'I argued ... why can't I be a racist like everyone else? Why do I have to miss out on that privilege? Why is it only me who has to be good? Why can't I swagger around pissing on others for being inferior? I began to turn into one of them. I was becoming a monster. (*Album* 11)

Chad wants to finalize the issue and firmly asserts "You didn't want to be a racist... I'm telling you that here and now for definite. And I'm informing you that's all right now". However, Shahid insists "I'm a racist ... I've wanted to join the British National Party". His words imply that he feels British in the Thatcherite sense and wants to be part of British community. Shahid is certain about his ideas but feels muddled thinking that he has disturbed his new companions and he fears that he will lose their company. But he is relieved after Riaz announces that he is pleased to have met Shahid.

Having been raised with different perceptions about religion and cultural values, Shahid can perform his identity in quite different ways. Thanks to his family background, he can easily accept religious comradeship and sexuality offered by his postmodernist instructor Deedee Osgood at the same time. In his quest in London, he believes that "there had to be ways in which he could belong" (*Album* 16). Shahid is fascinated by the opportunities the city offers. And Chad reminds him that the city has temptations as well as opportunities (*Album* 15). Chad was right in the sense that plurality of life in London offers many choices for the young to experience. What Shahid does is to embrace the pluralities to invent his identity. To demonstrate how Shahid celebrates plurality, Kureishi wittily displays the scenes in which Shahid juxtaposes his moments of religious service with the fantasies about Deedee. While his attachment to the religious group satisfies his need to have a sense of belonging, he cannot create his character within the certainties Islam offers. That is why, his

experiences with Deedee Osgood offer a chance to escape the absolutism of religion in his life.

Kureishi never takes sides with religious absolutism or postmodernist uncertainties but evacuates the meaning of actions, beliefs, institutions in Shahid's characterization by combining the opposites such as sexual fantasies with his religious work, practice or rebellions. Ranasinha believes that "[t]he insistent juxtaposition between Shahid's sexual life with Deedee and his encounter with the 'rave' scene of 1989, and the Islamic group 'forbidden to kiss or touch' is overdone (*Album* 126)" (2002: 84). However, these juxtapositions display how it is easy to live the opposites if one's identity is hybrid and how it is possible to live without the boundaries the national or religious identities suggest. While typing Riaz's religious poems he was imagining Deedee: "His typing fingers, sensing Deedee's body beneath them, danced on the keys too euphorically for the subject matter he told himself that concentration was the cornerstone of creativity. He pulled himself together, but got an erection which just wouldn't go away" (*Album* 76). As the quotation demonstrates Shahid does not think that Riaz's religious poetry is something holy.

Shahid's desire to be with his new friends correlates to his sense of belonging. Unable to escape fantasies about Deedee at anytime and anywhere, he feels insecure in her first meeting with her whereas he feels better near Riaz and Chad:

> But this woman who had invited him out – he had to be careful not to call her Miss – seemed tense. She seemed to be the type who imagined they had a lot of problems, which they would discuss constantly with their friends and therapists; whereas, compared to most people, it was obvious that she led an agreeable life and was probably quite frivolous. Hadn't she admitted that, saying she longed for pleasure? Anyway, she was making him nervous. What did she want to do with him? (*Album* 57)

In fact, Kureishi cunningly shows how uncertainty makes Shahid nervous although he seems to be enjoying postmodernist uncertainties. The unrest caused by lack of a sense of belonging makes Shahid feel attached to the Islamic group. As Ranasinha claims; "[i]n a manner now characteristic of the Kureishi hero, Shahid is equivocal about belonging to 'his people'" (2002:86). Shahid is at first willing to be a member of the group of Muslim students at the college out of loneliness because:

> Now, though, Shahid was afraid his ignorance would place him in no man's land. These days everyone was insisting on their identity, coming out as a man, woman, gay, black, Jew – brandishing whichever features they could claim, as if without a tag they wouldn't be human. Shahid, too, wanted to belong to his people. But first he had to know them, their past and what they hoped for. (*Album* 92)

Shahid's relation with Riaz and his group is not because of his religious devotion but because of the urge not to get lost in translation. He just pretends to be with the fundamentalists but at heart he cannot fit in this society. Kureishi again invalidates the holy nature of religion proving that one can pretend to follow its teachings without having any devotion to it:

> While praying, Shahid had little notion of what to think, of what the cerebral concomitant to the actions should be. So, on his knees, he celebrated to himself the substantiality of the world, the fact of existence, the inexplicable phenomenon of life, art, humour and love itself – in murmured language, itself another sacred miracle. He accompanied this awe and wonder with suitable music, the 'Ode to Joy' from Beethoven's Ninth, for instance, which he hummed inaudibly. (*Album* 92)

It can be claimed that Shahid has an urge to fix his identity when his tendency to be with the religious group is concerned; however, he shows his reluctance to be stabilized by going on his relationship with Deedee which is always full of uncertainties. Nevertheless, his comrades help destabilize his identity by imposing strict values on or offering national dress to Shahid. He wears the salwar but he feels strange in it as a member of a religious group implying their Asian heritage. In addition to attending prayers and wearing national dress, the group members reconfigure their identities through religious story telling: "[Shahid's] friends told stories, in religious form, about the origin of everything... They were old and useful

stories, except today they could easily be mocked and undermined by more demonstrable tales, which perhaps made those who held to ancient ones even more determined" (*Album* 133). Shahid's perception of those stories is quite different from that of his comrades:

> [W]hen [Shahid] was with his friends their story compelled him. But when he walked out, like someone leaving a cinema, he found the world to be more subtle and inexplicable. He knew, too, that stories were made up by men and women; they could not be true or false, for they were exercises in that most magnificent but unreliable capacity, the imagination, which William Blake called 'the divine body in every man'. Yet his friends would never admit no splinter of imagination into their body of belief, for that would poison all, rendering their conviction human, aesthetic, fallible. (*Album* 133)

Shahid's utterances prove his postmodernist views on fiction. He respects stories as long as they trigger one's imagination. However, Islam, as an absolutist religion, devalues the power and the function of imagination. That is why, Shahid's attachment to this particular religious group becomes very ironic when his urge to satisfy the need to belong somewhere is considered on the one hand, and his mocking the fixed categories which leaves him in ambivalence is considered on the other hand.

Frederick M. Holmes approaches this ambivalence in a different light; he believes that there is still a need for stability although Shahid chooses Deedee over Riaz:

> Kureishi, like Rushdie, celebrates the hybrid combinations of peoples and cultures that result from the postmodern erosion of boundaries and definitions, but both writers are cognizant, too, that what is sacrificed in such a fluid world is stability and enduring purpose. For example, although Kureishi has said what he 'liked about [Shahid's and Deedee's] relationship was the provisionality of it', it lacks any ***raison d'être*** beyond the fleeting pleasures of the moment. At the novel's conclusion, Deedee and Shahid agree, in a sort of compact, to stay together ' " [u]ntil it stops being fun" ' (*Album* 287) 'That shouldn't take long,' I scrawled in the margin of my copy of the novel. However necessary 'fun' is, it is hardly the sole basis for a lasting partnership... Shahid, clearly, is troubled by the apparent absence in their

> relationship of higher values, which he recognized in Islam, for all that religion proved untenable for him. (qtd in Thomas 108)

Holmes' arguments do not seem agreeable since he states that Shahid is after higher values. His relation with Islam is not a spiritual bond but an adopted one in order to avoid limbo. However, at the end of the novel, Shahid sees that he does not fit in this religious society and prefers the uncertainties offered by Deedee. His choice demonstrates that his western identity overpowers his eastern side; and leaving the marginalized group and having a western style of life, Shahid is on the way to deconstruct the Thatcherite binaries.

To conclude, it can be claimed that Shahid's hybridity allows him to experience whatever he wants unlike the characters who try to fix their identities like the fundamentalists. He makes use of his in-betweenness to satisfy his different needs such as a sense of belonging by being a member of a fundamentalist group and sexuality by having an affair with Deedee and by performing the limitlessness of identity. The plurality within which Shahid is incarnated is a proof of the impossibility of drawing strict boundaries concerning national identity. Having multiple experiences, although he feels lost in some cases, Shahid feels that he belongs to England and his character combining the Eastern values with the Western ones proves how it is possible to expand the idea of nationality.

2.2.2 The reaction of fundamentalist groups against British authority

through postcolonial agency

Riaz's group is formed to defend themselves against racist attacks and humiliation. Being marginalised by Thatcher's racial politics, they create a new site of being with people of Asian origin. Their challenge to authority implies that they go for a new way of being British in which they will feel more secure and worthy since they do not accept the share given to them. Bhabha's key term, agency, may help to understand the reasons for their reaction and the function of their ability to initiate

action. As Bhabha claims, "Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the world order" (*LC* 245). The postcolonial perspective opposes holistic forms of social explanation (*LC* 248). Thus, the representation of culture is given utmost importance since it becomes the only way for the postcolonial subjects to assert their identities. Homi Bhabha claims:

> Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational ... The transnational dimension of cultural transformation – migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation – makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. The natural(ized), unifying discourse of 'nation', 'peoples', or authentic 'folk' tradition, those embedded myths of culture's particularity, cannot be readily referenced. The great, though unsettling, advantage of this position is that it makes you increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition. (*LC* 247-8)

Bhabha's assertions are vividly seen when the actions Riaz's group involved in are observed. Characters like Chad, Hat and Tahira, the students working for Riaz's group, go beyond the boundaries of the notion of nation and reconfigure their identities through Islamic rituals and solidarity which represent the power of postcolonial agency.

To explore the causes of the revival of Islam among the young generation Asian students in ***The Black Album,*** Kureishi's portrayal of those students should be examined. Ranasinha thinks that "[Kureishi] begins by presenting the Muslim students' militancy not as 'aberration' but as a concrete response to social aggression" (2002:86). Kureishi creates scenes in which the reader cannot help sympathizing with the fundamentalists. Riaz is very particular about protecting the people attending his surgeries. When he hears that one of the Bengali families have been "stared at, spat on, called 'Paki scum' –and finally attacked" (***Album*** 90) he takes immediate action to help them. Riaz contacts George Rugman Rudder, a leftist politician, to arrange for the family a Bengali estate, a task that will not actualize immediately. Riaz finds a quick solution: "Until the family moved, he would guard the flat and seek out the culprits, along with Hat, Chad, Shahid and other boys and girls from the college" (***Album*** 90). There is strong solidarity within the group which

implies their awareness of the fact that they need to act together to reduce the negative effects of racism.

With the comradeship they create, the fundamentalist Muslims can resist the colonial oppression and degradation. This comradeship also serves to satisfy the need to belong somewhere for the left out Asians. As Ranasinha states, "*Black Album* implicitly suggests that the drive towards fundamentalism is not simply a response to exclusion, but is equally motivated by a desire to possess a more clearly defined identity" (2002:87). Especially Chad's characterization indicates how Riaz's group help people formulate their identities. Deedee reveals Chad's story to Shahid, which surprises him: Chad was adopted by a white couple and his foster mother was a racist who always talked about Pakis all the time stating that they had to fit in the British society (*Album* 106). Deedee says "Chad would hear church bells. He'd see English country cottages and ordinary English people who were secure, who effortlessly belonged" (*Album* 106). He realizes that he is a nowhere man when he becomes a teenager as Deedee claims:

> When he got to be a teenager he saw he had no roots, no connections with Pakistan, couldn't even speak the language. So he went to Urdu classes. But when he tried asking for the salt in Southall everybody fell about his accent. In England white people looked at him as if he were going to steal their car or their hand bag, particularly as he dressed like a ragamuffin. But in Pakistan they looked at him even more strangely. Why should he be able to fit into a Third World theocracy? (*Album* 107)

After revealing Chad's story Deedee continues: "Trevor Bus's soul got lost in translation, as it were. Someone said he even tried the Labour Party, to try to find a place. But it was too racist and his anger was too much" (*Album* 107-8). Chad's story makes it easier to understand why he avoids any action that will harm his Muslim identity, a case in point is, he does not listen to music although he likes it very much. Thus, Chad's extremism is explained in terms of his early life experience in Britain. As Moore-Gilbert claims:

> Brought up in the country by white foster-parents who are determined to extirpate every trace of his roots, Chad's turn to 'fundamentalism' is presented as an understandable, if overstated, attempt to recover

> legitimate parts of his cultural identity. From their first meeting, Shahid is struck by the residual hurt from his early life in Chad's eyes, which also generates the 'mad kindness' (*Album* 66) the latter initially displays to his new friend. If Chad is a soul 'lost in translation' (*Album* 89), the most ironic lesson of his trajectory is that it is precisely the intolerance of the host society towards its 'Others' which generates the physical and ideological resistance that the dominant ethnicity most abhors or fears. (136)

Chad who states that he has no country (*Album* 108) tries to fulfil his sense of belonging in Riaz's group. His nowhere man status makes him reject any other ways of being except outside this religious group: He believes that the socialists live at the lowest level, for example. Thus the Muslim characters should resist integration and assimilation: "We must not assimilate, that way we lose our souls. We are proud and we lose our souls. We are proud and we are obedient. What is wrong with that? It is not we who must change, but the world!" (*Album* 81) In fact, his ideas echo Kureishi's own statements: "It is the British, the white British, who have to learn that being British isn't what it was. Now it is a more complex thing, involving new elements" (*Dreaming and Scheming* 55); and combining Chad's attitude and Kureishi's claim one can see how the Thatcherite understanding of Britishness is invalidated.

Chad and Shahid differ in the sense that Shahid feels comfortable in Britain (Moore-Gilbert 136). However, like Chad he wants to be a member of this religious group in order not to get lost in multicultural London. Although he does not approve of all the actions of the group and he is not a devout believer, Shahid enjoys being with his Muslim friends since it brings with itself a sense of security.

While Islam provides an identity for the Asian immigrants, its representation in England becomes a very strong challenge to Thatcherism, which bases its politics on hierarchies, namely the colonizer over the colonized. The way the mosque is described exemplifies how people from different layers of society come together breaking the hierarchies which have been created according to one's race and class:

> Here race and class barriers had been suspended. There were businessmen in expensive suits, others in London Underground and Post Office uniforms; bowed old men in salwar kamiz fiddled with beads. Chic lads with ponytails, working in computers, exchanged business cards with young men in suits. Forty Ethiopians sat to the side of one room, addressed by one of their robes. (*Album* 132)

In addition to going beyond class and race barriers, Islam represents solidarity in the novel, which is again a challenge to Thatcherism which supports individual initiation and self help. Shahid defends Riaz against Deedee, who claims that "Riaz was kicked out of his parents' house for denouncing his father for drinking alcohol" (*Album* 109). For Shahid, "Riaz is one of the kindest people" (*Album* 109) and "[h]e is an individual who's gone against the whole society" (*Album* 110). Shahid really appreciates him since Riaz "in an era of self-serving ambition and careers, had taken on a cause and maintained his unpopular individuality. In the end he was more of a nonconformist – and one without affectation – than anyone Shahid had met. Where anyone else zigged, Riaz had zagged" (*Album* 109). In Thatcherite Britain which only supports self initiation and development, Riaz challenges the dominant authority by actively working for the benefit of the others.

This fundamentalist group reverses the power relationships also by defining the characteristics of their group with an emphasis on their difference from the other groups, the Western ones. In this reversal the colonized becomes the "gaze" and judges the colonizer. As their values are despised by the colonizer culture, they counter-react by humiliating the British way of thinking and behaviour. To exemplify, when Hat informs Shahid and Riaz that "Honest people abused" and they need "protection racket," Riaz replies "We're not blasted Christians ... We don't turn the other cheek. We will fight for our people who are being tortured in Palestine, Afghanistan, Kashmir! War has been declared against us. But we are armed" (*Album* 82). Referring to Christian values, Riaz underlines that they will not welcome the unfair treatment his people face.

Religion is the most powerful tool which defines what Muslims can or cannot do; in other words, the fundamentalists owe their agency to Islam which shapes their actions. Very suitably, the agency of the group members is limited to what their religious leader Riaz suggests. In his consultation hours, Riaz prepares the ground for the Asian to shape their daily routine and to formulate a world view which is not consistent with the dominant British ideology. In his surgeries:

> He may have begun his talk under the guise of discussing Islamic identity, for instance, but soon he would be expatiating on the creation of the universe, the persecution of Muslims world—wide, the state of Israel, gays and lesbians, Islam in Spain, face-lift, nudity, the dumping of nuclear waste in the Third World, perfume, the collapse of the West, and Urdu poetry. (*Album* 81)

To conclude, *The Black Album* depicts the way the marginalized groups translate their culture into a new way of being, which unsettles the dominant one. As Moore-Gilbert puts forward, Kureishi challenges Islamophobia by many aspects of his portrayal of Riaz's group. Its longing for social justice, its opposition to the uncontrolled capitalism of the Thatcher era and the second chance in life which it offers characters like Chad are all presented positively (135). By reconfiguring their identities through Islamic principles, Riaz and his group challenge the Thatcherite ideals proving that another way of being other than the one preached by Thatcherism is possible by acting together and working for the other's benefit instead of seeking for individual profits.

2.2.3 Chili as an arch-Thatcherite

Their family's in-between situation or rather rootlessness leads into hybridity in Shahid's case and into Thatcherism in Chili's. Kureishi's choice of black characters as Thatcherites is again a kind of attack on the dominant understanding of Britishness since Thatcher "lent political respectability to the notion of Britishness as a cultural attribute applicable only to white English people by claiming that they had a right not to be 'swamped by alien cultures'. In this way, she excluded black British people who had been maintaining that they too were part of Britain" (Lena 40). Chili's

adoption of Thatcher's ideals despite her harsh attitudes towards the immigrants becomes another indicator of the impossibility of drawing strict national boundaries. Interestingly, Chili's elder family members, the first generation immigrants, perceive themselves as part of the British culture, and lead a kind of life which differenciates them from the other black British citizens, a case which makes Chili's Thatcherism understandable:

> Their family house was an immaculate 1960s mansion, just outside the town, a caravanserai, as filled with people as a busy hotel. Papa had constantly redecorated it, the furniture was replaced every five years and new rooms were necessarily added. The kitchen always seemed to be in the front drive, awaiting disposal, though it appeared to Shahid no less 'innovative' than the new one. Papa hated anything 'old-fashioned', unless it charmed tourists. He wanted to tear down the old; he liked 'progress'. "I only want the best," he'd say, meaning somehow, the most ostentatious.' (*Album* 39)

The family's consumerist attitude and strong emphasis on 'change' and 'progress' show how Chili is led to Thatcherism. Owning the 'best' becomes a matter of asserting their identity for them as they configure the characteristics of their family through the things they possess, showing off their wealth, an indicator how successful someone is in Thatcherite terms.

Chili's Thatcherism and his family's consumerist life style can be seen in Chili's ability of self initiation, and ruthlessness on the way to success in financial terms. He is a character who believes in self help to improve. Just like Eva in ***Buddha***, Chili always has better places to go to (*Album* 45). His words echo Thatcher, who despises the immigrants and the suburbanites for not improving their lives. Just like Thatcher, he claims that if someone is unsuccessful it is his or her own fault since one can achieve success through the opportunities life offers. When Shahid tries to persuade Chili to do the family business, Chili explains the reason why he does not want to deal with it by emphasizing his hatred towards the Pakistanis:

> You see them, our people, the Pakis, in their dirty shops, surly, humourless, their fat sons and ugly daughters watching you, taking the money. The prices are extortionate, because they open all hours. The

> new Jews, everyone hates them. In a few years the kids will kick their parents in the teeth. Sitting in some crummy shop, it won't be enough for them. (*Album* 201)

Chili's words indicate how he blames his people for not having decent lives; and with his initiative character he does not want to work for the family business which will force him to have contact with Pakistanis. He believes that just like him the new generation Pakistanis will not accept the share offered by their families and they will start new lives. His Thatcherite appetite for progress is also seen in the following quotation:

> Chili's basic understanding was that people were weak and lazy. He didn't think they were stupid; he wasn't going to make that mistake. He saw, though, that people resisted change, even if it would improve their lives; they were afraid, complacent, lacking courage. This gave the advantage to someone of initiative and will. (*Album* 51)

One can see exactly the same attitude in his relation with women as he takes them as a different form of commodity:

> Chili thought, for instance, that men were scared of making fools of themselves with women, so they held back when they should have been going forward. Chili called himself a predator. When a woman offered herself – it was the most satisfying moment. Often, it wasn't even necessary to sleep with her. A look in her eyes, of eagerness, gladness, acquiescence, was sufficient. (*Album* 51)

As a 'predator' he can start any affair as he can start any job spontaneously. His power of initiation is reflected on both financial and personal affairs, a situation which seems to be the direct impact of his father's understanding of financial strength and success. When his father sees that Shahid has an interest in art he warns Shahid telling him "these artist types are always poor" (*Album* 75) and being poor is something to be ashamed of. Shahid's and Chili's family had come to England to make a wealthy life in a country which was not run by tyrants. Once this goal was achieved their dreams extended into their sons' success, especially Chili's. However, Shahid is suspicious whether their father would approve of Chili because of his vulgar life style:

> [Chili's] most recent ambition was to take it in America, though it wasn't so much the voice of liberty that called Chili, as the violent

> intensity. Time and again he watched *Once upon a Time in America, Scarface,* and *The Godfather* – as careers documentaries. He had even cursed Papa- out of earshot – for coming to old England rather than standing in line on Ellis Island with the Jews, Poles, Irish and Armenians. England was small-time, unbending; real glory was impossible in a country where the policemen wore helmets shaped like sawn-off marrows. Chili thought he could be someone in America, but he wasn't going to go there poor. He'd get himself more established in London and then hit New York with a highly 'rep', or reputation. (*Album* 53-4)

When Chili blames England for lack of opportunities, the reader cannot see his concrete plans to be triumphant. Interestingly, having reconfigured himself within the Thatcherite ideals he wants to get lost in uncertainties in the USA. Achievement seems easy to be attained for Chili and he does not care about the way he realizes his ambitions. Here it might be interesting to give a hearing to his uncle Asif who thinks that the problem about Chili was that the money had come too easily to him: "He didn't respect where it came from. 'It's easy for people, especially if they're young,' he said, 'to forget that we've barely arrived over in England. It takes several generations to become accustomed to a place. We think we're settled down, but we're like brides who've just crossed the threshold." (*Album* 53-4) Since Chili identifies with a dominant ideology which is Thatcherism, he does not suffer from a sense of limbo. The readers can smell that he can adjust to any place he moves to and creates a home for himself. Not feeling marginalized, he has the self confidence to follow his dreams. In fact, his situation shows the vulgarity of Thatcher's ideals. In an interview, Kureishi expresses his ideas about capitalism and Thatcher's manipulation of it:

> It was around 1989: there was the collapse of Marxism, of an ideology that was of equality and fraternity. There was also the fatwa against Rushdie, the rise of fundamentalism as an alternative ideology in the world – things suddenly began to change. And, also, the accumulation of wealth for its own sake stopped being morally unacceptable. The dream of most of my life through the 50s, the 60s and the 70s was this notion of equality: that the gap between the children of the rich and the children of the poor would not be so great, that the children of the poor wouldn't have fewer life chances, and would not be humiliated. That dream really blew up with the collapse of Communism in '89. (http://www.euronews.net/2008/10/15/kureishi-financial-crash-a-legacy-of-thatcherism/)

With his appetite for wealth and what it brings, Chili's case seems to exemplify Kureishi's references above concerning a departure from fraternity and concentrating on material benefit:

> In Chili's hand were his car keys, Ray-Bans and Malboros, without which he wouldn't leave his bathroom. Chili drank only black coffee and neat Jack Daniels; his suits were Boss, his underwear Calvin Klein, his actor Pacino. His barber shook his hand, his accountant took him to dinner, his drug dealer would come to him at all hours, and accept his cheques. At least he wasn't smoking a joint. (*Album* 38)

Chili is reflected as a consumerist in the true sense of the word who only cares about respect and about making useful contacts around. That is why his personal relationships are characterised by Machiavellian features. As it is stated in the novel; "He consumes relationships as he consumes the goods. "Chili didn't have friends; he had pals, mates, and those he called 'personal' friends, who were, usually, criminals. He gave his girlfriends too much grief and respect to be able to speak to them" (*Album* 42). The novel is full of examples of how he aims to attract people through what he possesses:

> At home he had a wall of suits, linen for the summer, wool for the winter, arranged according to colour, hanging in his wardrobe like a spectrum. There were cashmere coats, Paul Smith scarves, Cardin umbrellas. His luggage was the finest, the leather spongy. There was a drawer full of sunglasses, inscribed with their designer names; a cupboard was stacked with electronic toys – calculators, video players, a portable CD, personal organizers – all in the unyielding colour of that time, matt black. On a shelf were his colognes, by Guerlain and purchased in Paris. (*Album* 199)

His possessions help him gain respect in parties: "At parties Chili would open his jacket to virtual strangers, displaying the label, beautifully sewn pockets or lovely buttons, and laughing." (*Album* 199)

Chili as an arch-Thatcherite undermines Thatcher's extreme racism towards the Asian people. With his possessions and with his self-confident and ruthless manners, Chili deconstructs the myth of the white British since Britishness was coupled with strong Thatcherism at the time novel was written. Chili's characterization is also

employed as a touchstone as it works to demonstrate that "the group [Riaz's group] is seen favourably in comparison with the extreme assimilationism represented by the 'arch-Thatcherite (*Album* 72)' (Moore-Gilbert 135). Demonstrating different kinds of Pakistani people, particularly Chili, Kureishi proves that he does not take sides with any particular type and national identity cannot be fixed according to the dominant power's desire. Any character can reconfigure his or her identity according to the criteria they want to adopt.

CHAPTER III

IDENTITY AS A PERFORMATIVE ACT IN *THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA* AND *THE BLACK ALBUM* BY HANIF KUREISHI.

3.1 *The Buddha of Suburbia*

3.1.1 Buddhism and Islam performed as part of identity formation process in Haroon's and Anwar's experiences

Postmodernist theories suggest that identity is a performative act, that is, one's actions are not the outcome of his or her pre-given identity but actions themselves constitute an identity for them. In his *The Location of Culture,* Bhabha negates the assumptions about a priori identity:

> The emergence of the human subject as socially and physically authenticated depends on the negation of originary narrative of fulfilment, or of an originary coincidence between individual interest or instinct and the General Will. Such binary, two-part, identities function in a kind of narcissistic reflection of the One in the Other, confronted in the language of desire by the psychoanalytic process of identification. For identification, identity is never a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality. (72-3)

Emphasizing that identity is not pre-given, Bhabha points out the perfomative nature of identity which can never be finalized. Referring to Butler may clarify the nature of performativity: Quoting Nietzsche, Butler notes that "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming: 'the doer' is merely the fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything (*GT*: 33)". The nature of identity is fluid and always open to changes since it is the outcome of 'deed'. This chapter will try to point out the above mentioned points in the context of *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album,* which fictionalize the fluid nature of identity with an emphasis on its performative aspect. Rather than appropriating a given identity, each character in the novel re-configures different identities. Karim and Charlie self-construct their identities

through the medium of art. Music is a way to express his rebellious manners for Charlie and acting enables Karim to re-configure his identity in the process of performance on the stage. Sexual and religious practices are also employed to build one's own identity. In the case of Anwar and Haroon, identity is performed through Islam and Buddhism as both characters make use of religious practice. This chapter also attempts to explore various mediums such as religion, artistic performance and sexual practice in configuring identity with references to the experiences of the characters Haroon, Anwar, Karim, Charlie, Jamila and Changez.

Haroon and Anwar being brothers with an aristocratic Indian heritage experiment with different ways of being after moving to London from Bombay for education. The novel, with references to the change in their notion of national identity and the way different identities are adopted by them, explores the performative nature of identity construction. On their arrival, both Anwar and Haroon have made lots of effort to be more English-like in order not to be discriminated against. Ironically, however, when they realize that their Indian heritage may provide opportunities for them, they re-create their Indian side to be recognized by society or by their families. Thus, Haroon's and Anwar's quest for identity vacillates between home and host cultures. First, they mimic the British ways of living and perform a British-like identity; then, they turn back to eastern mysticism which is Islam in Anwar's case and Buddhism in Haroon's case. Neither Haroon nor Anwar wholeheartedly have any spiritual sense. However, they pretend to have a sense of belonging to those religious disciplines by mimicking their teachings. Thus, their practices become not unlike artistic performance. Whichever they try to adopt, the fact that they do not own a pre-given identity is underlined in the novel. They build up their original 'selves' through experimentation.

Haroon's incarnation of Buddha is one of the most vivid examples for the idea that identity is a performative act. Throughout his life Haroon mimicked the colonizer to be less ethnically detectable in society. When he realizes that he can attain his lost

recognition by pretending to be a Buddhist, he buys books to learn the philosophy of Buddhism and the practice of yoga. Another reason for Haroon's involvement in Buddhism is visible in Karim's words: "Beneath all the Chinese bluster was Dad's loneliness and desire for internal advancement" (*Buddha* 28). Upon Haroon's re-invention of himself as a Buddhist, Thomas claims that posing an identity may be a rehearsal for the real thing just like children learn by imitating their parents. He can transform his identity and change for the better by acting out a role (66-7).

Haroon's experimentation with Buddhism is humorous as he is not an inborn Buddhist. So he can relate himself to Buddhism only as much as any other Englishman. He learns Buddhism from the books published in England and to look more Buddha-like, he changes his English accent underlining the Indian accent (here one cannot help remembering his previous persistent efforts to speak English smoothly). In other words, Haroon, having mimicked the colonizer culture for years, shifts the direction of mimicry to Indianness. His son Karim is surprised to see this change in his father's choices:

> [T]he thing that made me realize that 'God', as I now called Dad, was seriously scheming, was the queer sound I heard coming from his room as I was going up to bed. I put my ear against the white paintwork of the door. Yes, God was talking to himself, but not intimately. He was speaking slowly, in a deeper voice than usual, as if he were addressing a crowd. He was hissing his s's and exaggerating his Indian accent. He'd spent years to trying to be more of an Englishman, to be less risibly conspicuous, and now he was putting it back in spadeloads. Why? (*Buddha* 21)

Imitating the British or the Indian implies the same thing when the function of mimicry is concerned. In both cases, Haroon acts out different identities and his actions constitute who he is. Here one should underline Karim's address to his father as 'God'. Buhanan states:

> [Karim] facetiously calls Haroon 'God', but beneath the smirk there is a serious point: Haroon has shown Karim the Godlike power to reinvent oneself in another's image. Thus Karim finds it merely peculiar, and by no means objectionable, that Haroon has suddenly

> embraced Buddhism and is 'exaggerating his Indian accent' in order to appear more genuinely guru-like (*Buddha* 21) (44).

Buhanan's juxtaposition of Godlike power with the reinvention of identity is highly agreeable. Acting like God, Haroon recreates his identity through mimicry. That is why it is not interesting to see that two different selves are embodied within a person. His previous desire to become racially invisible is now replaced by a desire to be culturally visible.

Performing the Buddha alters Haroon's life to a considerable extent. As Wohlsein puts it:

> In becoming the 'Buddha of Suburbia" – which is an invented identity and therefore highly hybrid – Haroon achives two goals at a time. On the one hand, he has finally found a profession that he loves and is truly interested in, and, on the other hand, he has found a way to be accepted by the white English. (44)

Moreover, in the course of his attempts to embody a Buddha, Haroon prepares the ground for the British to reconfigure their own identities. Although the yoga practice does not make Eva totally a different person, she tries to look Eastern with a full-length multi-coloured kaftan and bare feet (*Buddha* 8). That is, the pretentious way of mimicking Asian style clothing does not turn Eva into a person valuing spirituality but through imitation she performs a new way of being. Another instance of mocking the social categories is seen when Eva and Haroon are making love. Haroon was crying out "Oh God, oh my God" (*Buddha* 16). Hearing this in a humorous way Karim makes his astonishment clear. He finds it weird to hear "Christian curses from the mouth of a renegade Muslim masquerading as a Buddhist" (*Buddha* 16). So in their case identity is nothing but performance.

Just like Haroon, Anwar performs various identities throughout his life. Moving to London as an aristocratic Indian, he too imitates the colonizer's culture to be ethnically invisible. However, when he realizes that he is losing authorial power in

his family, to assert his authority again, he reappropriates a Muslim identity. As Ranasinha argues, "Anwar's metamorphosis is presented as a performance: Anwar suddenly starts behaving like a Muslim" (2002:69).

Anwar's abrupt adoption of Muslim rules is the outcome of the need to assert his existence or rather authority. When he first comes to England, he is thrilled by the opportunities England offers and loses his ties with his Indian self. However, at a point where he fully realises that he cannot identify with the British identity, he feels in chaos; then, he tries to compensate for his lack of belonging by adopting Islamic rules. He has never been a devout believer before but he believes that if he wants to identify with Asian culture, he can do it only through religion. In other words, Anwar, unable to feel integrated into British society, finds relief in adopting the Indian values. However, the novel underlines that this is not a real spiritual devotion but a pretentious performative act to affirm his presence. Karim expresses how Anwar develops the habit of visiting the mosque:

> For a few weeks [Anwar]'d been visiting the mosque regularly, and now I occasionally went with him. The mosque was a dilapidated terraced house nearby which smelled of bhuna gost. The floor was sprinkled with onion skins, and Moulvi Qamar-Uddin sat behind his desk surrounded by leather-bound books on Islam and a red telephone stroking the beard which reached to his stomach. Anwar complained to the Moulvi that Allah had abandoned him despite regular prayers and a refusal to womanize. (*Buddha* 171-2)

As the quotation clearly shows, he does not go to mosque since he is a Muslim, but to be accepted as a Muslim man. He performs the Islamic practices and follows its doctrines to be rewarded by Allah. His choice of Islam may be related to Anwar's weariness to live in the third space and his desire to stabilize his identity via Islam. He is estranged from English freedom which includes "the prostitutes who hung around in Hyde Park" (*Buddha* 25). In other words, evoking Islam is a tool to have a "fixed" identity which allows him to recover his connections with his Asian background (Yousaf 44). However, revealing the evacuated nature of his Muslim practice, Kureishi deplores and satirizes Anwar's plight. With the humorous

depiction of the mosque and Anwar's opportunistic perception of Islam, Kureishi once again attacks the medium of religion to form a fixed identity.

The novel by imposing a Muslim identity on Anwar underlines the impracticality of talking about fixed categories displaying that as a religion of absolutisms even Islam is not able to stabilize one's identity. In the quest for an unwavering identity, Anwar's adoption of Islam could not lead to fix either his life or his family members' lives. Moreover, Jeeta's ambitious progress in Paradise Stores despite Anwar's negative reinforcement exemplifies the uncontrollability of performing various identities.

Jamila's case too exemplifies religion's failure to put someone in boundaries: Anwar wants to exert his authority on his daughter Jamila by forcing her to marry a Muslim Indian. Thus, he believes, his daughter will not forget her roots and form an Indian family. He disregards the fact that despite being born into an Indian family, Jamila has been in England and exposed to the British way of living all her life. Her daily practice is different from that of the Indians. Her distance to Islam as a religion or to Indian customs does not demonstrate that she acts against her ethnic background. On the contrary, she makes her race visible and fights against any discriminatory acts but not through the medium of religion. She acts out her individuality with the power of the books she has read and internalized.

It might also be interesting to look at how Haroon and Anwar are perceived by the others. Karim thinks his father is a 'charlatan' (*Buddha* 22), Jamila is sure that he is a 'complete phoney' (*Buddha* 72). Interestingly, despite being recognized like this by Karim and Jamila, Haroon gains credibility as a wise man when his brother in law Ted turns to him for help. Ted was against Haroon's Buddhist practices at first, but he asks for his help later on, another reference to the changing notions of identity markers (Thomas 67-8). Anwar's case is not so different when his efforts to form a

unified self against the background of Islam collapse. Instead of gaining recognition, he loses all his power in his family after forcing Jamila to marry Changez through hunger strike. He ends up in a desperate situation as Karim expresses:

> Uncle Anwar didn't sleep at all now. At night he sat on the edge of his chair, smoking and drinking un-Islamic drinks and thinking portentous thoughts, dreaming of other countries, lost houses, mothers, beaches. Anwar did no work in the shop, not even rewarding work like watching shoplifters and shirtlifters. Jamila often found him drunk on the floor, rancid with unhappiness, when she went by to see her mother in the morning before work. (*Buddha* 208)

Seeing that adopting a Muslim identity cannot solve his problems, he transgresses religious teachings by drinking un-Islamic drinks. In both characters' depiction, the reader sees that identity is not inherent but it floats.

3.1.2 Performing identity through sexual discourse in the case of Karim, Charlie, Jamila and Changez

Being a postcolonial/postmodernist novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia* depicts the performative nature of identity by its references to sexuality, too. Homi Bhabha points out how the identity formation process is very much affected by sexuality:

> The postcolonial perspective forces us to rethink the profound limitations of a consensual and collusive 'liberal' sense of cultural community. It insists that cultural and political identity are constructed through a process of alterity. Questions of race and cultural difference overlay issues of sexuality and gender and overdetermine the social alliances of class and democratic socialism. The time for 'assimilating' minorities to holistic and organic notions of cultural values has dramatically passed. The very language of cultural community needs to be rethought from a postcolonial perspective, in a move similar to the profound shift in the language of sexuality, the self and cultural community, effected by feminists in the 1970s and the gay community in the 1980s. (*LC* 251)

Just like Bhabha, Foucault also believes in the power of sexuality in shaping the essence of the century. He believes that contemporary truth is configured through sexual practice. (It should be remembered that postmodernist thinking favours contemporary truth instead of the grand narratives which are all-knowing). In his *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault states:

> The essential point is that sex was not only a matter of sensation and pleasure, of law and taboo, but also of truth and falsehood, that the truth of sex became something fundamental, useful, or dangerous, precious or formidable: in short, that sex was constituted as a problem of truth. What needs to be situated, therefore, is not the threshold of a new rationality whose discovery was marked by Freud – or someone else- but the progressive formation (and also the transformations) of that "interplay of truth and sex" which was bequeathed to us by the nineteenth century, and which may have been modified, but, lacking evidence to the contrary, have not rid ourselves of. Misunderstandings, avoidances, and evasions were only possible, and only had their effects, against the background of this strange endeavour: to tell the truth of sex. (56-7)

As stated by both Bhabha and Foucault, sexuality plays an important role in forming the discursive patterns along with individual identities. In postmodernist modes of thinking, truth is coupled with the interplay of sexuality making references to the transformational nature of identity.

As in Foucault's and Bhabha's lines of thinking, sexuality in *The Buddha of Suburbia* is an important constituent of identity formation process, and sexual practice in the novel becomes a challenge to any hierarchy including gender limitations. Jamila is the one who consciously disrupts the binaries thanks to the novels she reads (the novels by Simone de Beauvoir). She tries to free herself from the constraints imposed by the society both for being an Indian and for being a woman through free sexual practice. As Karim points out, they make love at any time, in any place trying various positions (*Buddha* 52) and Jamila's attack on patriarchy goes on after marrying Changez upon her father's will. She refuses to have sexual intercourse with Changez and continues to make love with Karim. Despite this close physical contact, however, there is no emotional intimacy between them, which makes all the process dreary. In his relation with Karim, she is more dominant and like a commanding boss, she gives instructions: "' More effort, please' and 'Yes, but you're making love not cleaning your teeth'" (Buddha 107). There is no intimacy between them; Jamila subverts the gender roles by overpowering Karim through their sexual intercourse by giving instructions to him.

Interestingly, some other characters too blur the binaries of gender roles through bisexual relationships. The obscurity created by not desiring one or the other sex but desiring both sexes proves the ambiguous nature of identity which always transforms itself according to the way it is performed. Karim explains how he feels about desiring both sexes:

> It was unusual, I knew, the way I wanted to sleep with boys as well as girls. I liked string bodies and the backs of boys' necks. I liked being handled by men, their fists pulling me; and I liked objects – the ends of brushes, pens, fingers – up my arse. But I liked cunts and breasts, all of women's softness, long smooth legs and the way women dressed. (*Buddha* 55)

Although Karim thinks that his desiring both sexes is unusual, the novel implies the opposite. Charlie and Karim have sexual intimacy in addition to sleeping with women; Jamila makes love with Karim and Simon besides having a lesbian relationship with Joanne; Pyke is involved in both sex relationships too. The common point of all those is how they blur the lines of the absolutisms of traditional gender roles showing the power of performativity. As Karim puts it:

> It would be heart-breaking to have to choose one or the other, like having to decide between the Beatles and the Rolling Stones ... When I did think about it I considered myself lucky that I could go to parties and go home with anyone from either sex – not that I went to many parties, none at all really, but if I did, I could, you know, trade either way. (*Buddha* 55)

Not being able to select one sex or the other the characters in the novel are always in a limbo.

As in the above given references, just as people appropriate and exploit religion and ethnicity while performing their identities, sexuality too becomes a means of exploitation for them. Karim finds Charlie attractive in his early life, and feels ecstatic when Charlie "comes in his hand": "it was, I swear, one of the pre-eminent moments of my earlyish life. There was dancing in my streets. My flags flew, my trumpets blew!" (*Buddha* 17). However, Charlie is not as delighted as Karim is. When Karim wants to kiss him, Charlie avoids his lips, which indicates that Karim

has been used and he does not feel emotionally tied to Karim (Thomas 79). Charlie's being less enthusiastic about their intimacy does not negate the fact that he also challenges the gender binaries through sexual performance.

Likewise, Karim's sexuality is exploited by Pyke, the owner of the famous theatre Karim works for. He makes special effort to foreground Karim's Oriental self in the play he puts on the stage. Pyke tells Karim that Marlene, his wife, wants to make love with him and invites him to his house with his girl friend Eleanor, who is an actress in Pyke's theatre. Karim is naively thrilled by the idea that he was desired by the rich and the famous but he cannot realize that he was humiliated by the way he was treated. After his copulation with Marlene, he sees "Pyke's body was carrying his erection in [Karim's] direction, like a lorry sustaining a crane" (*Buddha* 202). Karim childishly takes this as a privilege although he is irritated by the imposition. Kureishi does not lose humour even in the wake of portraying such a disgrace. Karim naively voices what he thinks: "[Pyke] could have asked politely. So I gave his dick a South London swipe – not viciously, nor enough to have my part in the play reduced – but enough to give him a jolt" (203). Despite Karim's 'swipe' Pyke enjoys his performance showing his approval with his murmuring. (203)

This degradation goes on with Eleanor's passion for Pyke and their intercourse. Karim is unpleasantly amazed to see how Eleanor desires Pyke. Marlene too finds the situation strange and closely watches them in amazement. Eleanor draws Karim and Marlene into this relationship too. Marlene is fascinated with the idea: "There's so much we can do tonight! ...There's hours and hours of total pleasure for us. We can do whatever we want. We've only just begun. Let me freshen our drinks and we'll get down to it" (*Buddha* 204). Both Marlene and Pyke see Karim as their sexual object and they are not concerned with his preferences. Here it is necessary to remind how Pyke accentuated Karim's Indianness to make commercial profit out of it. Therefore, their sexual exploitation of Karim is a reflection of their exploitative nature in general.

What makes Karim feel bad is Eleanor's appetite to be with Pyke and her refusal to go on her relationship with Karim. It reminds Karim of how Helen's father Hairy Back insulted him for being an Indian: "' We're with Enoch. If you put one of your black 'ands near my daughter I'll smash it with a 'ammer! With a 'ammer!'" (*Buddha* 68). Thus, sleeping with white women becomes a matter of race and class issue and making love with Helen becomes a way of revenge on Hairy Back, namely on the dominant discourse which aims to leave out the immigrants (Thomas 80). When Karim leaves a farewell note for Eleanor, he makes it clear that he is not an underprivileged outcast but someone who can go beyond the limitations imposed by the colonizer:

> And we pursued English roses as we pursued England; by possessing these prizes, this kindness and beauty, we stared defiantly into the eye of the Empire and all its self regard – into the eye of Hairy Back, into the eye of the Great Fucking Dane. We became part of England and yet proudly stood outside it. But to be truly free we had to free ourselves of all bitterness and resentment, too. How was this possible when bitterness and resentment were generated every day? (*Buddha* 227)

As Thomas emphasises, Kureishi displays the "relationship between white women and non-white men as complex: a way of gaining acceptance, a revenge against racism, and an attempt to transcend both" (80).

All the sexual practices, when looked at from afar, exemplify "transcendence" as, although the white seems to be overpowering, the traditional understanding of Oriental other is deconstructed in the novel. Moore-Gilbert claims that "Jamila's powerful sexual appetite is [an] instance of [Kureishi's] rebuttal of the Orientalist figure of the silent, passive, native woman whose fate is to be both 'saved' by the colonizer and used as his sexual object" (123). He further states that the oriental stereotype is attacked in Changez's characterization too. Refuting the traditional perception of the feminized homoerotic Indian, he is the only person involved in a heterosexual relationship among the younger generation (Moore-Gilbert 123).

Changez reconfigures his identity through sexual performance. Being refused by his wife and having nothing and nobody to feel attached to in England, Changez experiments with life through sexuality with the help of Shinko, a Japanese prostitute. This is the only thing in his life that he can boast about. When he talks to Karim about Shinko, he attempts to "move his pompous features significantly" (*Buddha* 106). He tells Karim about the new positions he has been reading about and shows his enthusiasm to try all those. Trying different positions is equal to asserting his identity for him. In another encounter with Karim he proudly tells him that he has been in more positions than most men and reveals his idea of preparing a manual (*Buddha* 183). Within Changez's characterization, lots of traditional roles are deconstructed. Being imported from India, Changez is expected to act as a patriarchal husband but he passively accepts Jamila's refusal of him. He is feminized by his wife and becomes dependent on her as he is not the breadwinner of the family. Jamila works to support their family (if theirs can be called a family) in Paradise Stores. He has extra-marital intercourse; moreover, he witnesses Jamila's and Karim's copulation in his bedroom and cannot blame Jamila for this. Later on, in their life in the commune, he looks after Simon's and Jamila's child accepting his share in life. It is only when he learns about Jamila's lesbian relationship that he feels humiliated. However, he does not talk about the issue trying to ignore it and he does not ask anything to Jamila about her relationship with Karim. Changez with his sexual practice and his conduct with his wife shatter many of the stereotypical expectations from him as an ordinary Indian. He reconfigures for himself a new identity, in fact, he opens a space for himself, in England, to achieve a sense of belonging. In other words, sexual practice with Shinko becomes an area to assert himself.

In conclusion, against the background of the above characters, Kureishi consciously blurs the lines between female and male identities and gender roles; and demonstrates the power of sexuality in constructing one's self. He also uses sexuality to subvert the Oriental view of men and women. As Moore-Gilbert comments

"hybridity is much figured through" (113) the discussion of sexuality and gender by demonstrating how it allows different positions to emerge.

3.1.3 Identity as performed through the medium of art in the case of Karim and Charlie

Art too becomes a means to articulate and to reconfigure one's identity in *The Buddha of Suburbia.* In Karim's and Charlie's cases, art is what shapes their stance in life and their perception of the events. Karim's being an actor and Charlie's being a pop singer have strong bearings on the performativity of identity because their art is not the outcome of their established inner selves but they construct their identities while performing their art. One feels obliged to underline here that the novel also fictionalizes the relation of art to the dominant discourse and the subversive function of art in identity formation with references to these two characters.

Nahem Yousaf points out the in-between nature of Karim's identity which makes his situation performative: "Karim sees identity as something one invents on the one hand and as something one may choose to inherit on the other" (49). The sites of being he creates on the stage offer critique of the assumptions like Indianness, Britishness or in-betweenness. Being the son of an English mother and an Indian father who try to raise their sons as Englishmen, Karim has never been exposed to Indian culture explicitly. Accordingly, he is amazed when he is perceived as an authentic Indian by Shadwell, the owner of a theatre, who has a tendency to underline Karim's blackness. Shadwell says to Karim "Everyone looks at you I'm sure, and thinks: an Indian boy, how exotic, how interesting, what stories of aunties and elephants we'll hear now from him" (*Buddha* 141). By emphasizing his Indian heritage, Shadwell attempts to remove any similarity between the British and Karim. This "misconception" forces Karim to perceive himself differently. Although Karim does not want to be portrayed as an Indian man, he does not object to this in order not to put his acting career at risk. Shadwell, who takes Karim's hybridity as a threat

to rigid definitions of Britishness, tries to accentuate Karim's non-British root with an imposed Indian accent and brown make up. Thus to preserve the hegemonic English self, Shadwell attempts to remove Karim's ethnical unintelligibility into something more obvious. However, his plans do not go in the way he intended. Schoene claims:

> Shadwell's strategy backfires. Rather than further clarifying what is already commonsensically obvious to him, his (re)production becomes a parody and Karim's central performance some kind of farcical ethnic drag act. The credibility of the stereotype collapses due to Shadwell's overemphasis on accuracy, and with it evaporates the very idea of originary ethnic authenticity. (qtd. in Thomas 70-1)

Shadwell's overemphasis on Karim's authenticity turns to be a parody and this demonstrates the lack of originary selves. After watching Karim's performance as Kipling's Mowgli, Karim's father explicitly criticizes his role saying: "Bloody half-cocked business... That bloody fucker Mr Kipling pretending to whity he knew something about India! And an awful performance by my boy looking like a Black and White Minstrel!" (*Buddha* 157) Haroon's statements too imply that exaggerating Karim's characterization of Mowgli decreased its credibility and Shadwell's attempt to highlight Karim's Indian self resulted in a mockery having no ties with reality.

After this play, Pyke offers Karim a part in his theatre. Shadwell fails to make Karim's Indianness distinctive but Pyke makes him realize his Indian heritage by asking him to create a black character for the play. Karim, being raised with the feeling that he is British, innocently states, "I didn't know anyone black, though I'd been at school with a Nigerian. But I wouldn't know where to find him (*Buddha* 170). When Karim asks Pyke who he means by black, Pyke answers: "What about your family? Uncles and aunts. They'll give the play a little variety. I bet they're fascinating" (*Buddha* 170). Pyke was telling him to write about the lives of people who he has never known. Upon hearing this, Karim is perplexed since he was bred as an English man by his family, none of his family members is black for him.

His first attempt to portray Anwar results in a fiasco and after this he decides to base his character on Changez although he does not want Karim to display his personality on stage. It is the first time Karim has a moral dilemma: "If I had defied Changez, if I started work on a character based on him, if I used the bastard, it meant that I was untrustworthy, a liar. But if I didn't use him it meant I had fuck-all to take the group after the 'me-as-Anwar' fiasco" (*Buddha* 186). At last, he decides that he has no other choice than appropriating Changez's identity for the creation of his character. His construction of the character for the stage requires a process just as identity formation does; in fact, he mimics his own attempts to reconfigure an identity for himself in his creation of a character for the stage. Karim works very carefully:

> With a beer and notebook on my desk, and concentrating for the first time since childhood on something that absorbed me, my thoughts raced: one idea pulled another behind it, like conjurer's handkerchiefs. I uncovered notions, connections, initiatives I didn't even know were present in my mind. I became more energetic and alive as I brushed in new colours and shades. (*Buddha* 217)

To invent a character through observation and turning to his inner self, Karim becomes aware of the performative nature of identity. He notices that "creation [is] an accretive process which [cannot] be hurried, and which [involve] patience and, primarily, love" (*Buddha* 217). Karim admits that creating Tariq based on Changez enabled him to find out hidden realities about himself. As he speaks out working on this role he "add[s] up the elements of [his] life" (*Buddha* 217).

Changez does not realize that Karim bases Tariq on himself; as Thomas claims this does not demonstrate Changez's blindness but shows that "Karim has discovered something about himself in the process of impersonating another" (70). However, the fact that Karim "add[s] up the elements of [his] life" (*Buddha* 217) never means that embodying this character ends the question of subjectivity. As Ranasinha expresses Karim is as "confused as ever over his cultural dilemma" (*Buddha* 284) at the end of the novel. "For Karim the question of 'who am I?" remains unanswered (2002:72-3) and this again indicates the impossibility of reaching a unified self.

While Karim acts out his identity through theatrical performance, Charlie uses pop music to articulate his "self." As Helbig argues, in the novel the function of music is to show Kureishi's "urge to dissolve... any kind of borderlines, categories, and hierarchies" (qtd in Thomas 90). Moore-Gilbert also states that "Kureishi felt that by the 1960s pop music had become a mature cultural form, capable of comparison with much longer-established genres. Indeed, he has described it as "the richest cultural form of post-war Britain" (*MLB*[4], qtd. in 116). This means that, in Kureishi's understanding, "[l]ike music and fashion styles, empire and colonialism, individualism and assimilation, freedom and exile are now often inverted." (Kaleta 9)

Charlie, being capable of transforming himself through performance, chooses his role models from the music world. When he was a young boy, he was among the few students who attended school regularly (*Buddha* 68) and Karim states the reason for this as follows:

> It was Bowie's influence, I knew. Bowie, then called David Jones, had attended our school several years before, and there, in a group photograph in the dining hall, was his face. Boys were often to be found on their knees before this icon, praying to be made into pop stars and for release from a life time motor mechanic, or a clerk in an insurance firm, or a junior architect. (*Buddha* 68)

David Bowie, one of the most popular figures of the 1970s, is Charlie's idol and he models himself on Bowie. Bradley Buhanan claims that Charlie has a capacity to impersonate whoever he wishes: "For instance, Charlie reinvents himself as a Ziggy Stardust-like 'space man' with 'short, spiky, hair dyed white' as well as 'silver shoes and a shiny silver jacket" (*Buddha* 35). Charlie's new look, which he explains as an attempt 'to have more fun', convinces Karim that 'a new hair era' is at hand (*Buddha* 37)" (Buchanan 45).

[4] *My Beautiful Laundrette and Other Writings.* London: Faber, 1996.

Charlie's performing his identity through music raises the question whether his adoption of pop music has a political stance or not. In general, during the 1960s, as Moore-Gilbert puts it:

> For Kureishi pop epitomises the liberating energies of the 'cultural revolution'... On one level, it is always associated with pleasure in Kureishi's novels, particularly sexual and drug experimentation, and such is set against the 'straight' world's emphasis on duty and self-denial, particularly in Thatcherite discourse. Conversely, pop is also prized for its involvement in political protest. Kureishi suggests that music as diverse as the Beatles and punk has at times taken on the same role of agitation as some of his own work. (115)

His remarks remind Charlie's substitution of The Beatles's 'Come Together' for a piece of classical music at school, and how he was caned (Buhanan 45). He later identifies with Nazism as a punk wearing a swastika and this displays "pop's power metaphorically to explode the comfortable certainties of British culture" (Buhanan 46). These acts seem to have political protest inside; however, as the novel progresses, it is seen that Charlie's stance is not political but Machiavellian (Buhanan 46); he uses music to gain popularity among the youth. As Berthold Schoene puts it, "Charlie turns into a pop commodity ... [he] appropriates working class youth culture as his mother appropriates Indianness, and for the same reason, which is to become culturally visible at any cost" (qtd. in Buhanan 46).

Observing Karim's and Charlie's ways of performing identity one can claim that through the medium of art, it is possible to blur the hierarchies which have been imposed by antiquated social traditions. The failure of Pyke's efforts to portray Karim as an authentic Indian by using brown make up shows Kureishi's perception of identity which is always vague. He just mimics Indian accent and plays the part of a farcical character, which underlines nothing at all about his identity. Likewise, Charlie's musical performance does not go beyond being a duplication of David Bowie and this situation is a challenge to the political power of pop music. Charlie does not support the political views his music implies but he appropriates it to gain popularity in the USA. In other words, his identity does not precede his musical performance but his performance provides him with an identity as a rebellious singer.

To conclude, one cannot talk of pre-given, stable, determined identities; identity is performed for different reasons in different ways as it is seen in the case of these characters.

3.2 *The Black Album*

3.2.1 Liminality: Identity performed as a political act

Bhabha supports the idea that people are not configured by the pre-givens of their ancestors but their identities are invented through endless negotiation among different parameters in interstitial spaces. To explain the lack of originary identities, Homi Bhabha states:

> The move away from the singularities of 'class' or 'gender' as primary conceptual and organizational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions – of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation – that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world. What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (*LC* 2)

Since the postcolonial subject cannot identify with the dominant political authority, s/he has to resist it to assert his or her identity. Bhabha, theorizing on the agency and desire to explain the performative nature of identity of the postcolonial subject, refers to Fanon to elaborate on the power of these terms which allows the colonized to create himself in the liminal spaces:

> As soon as I desire I am asking to be considered. I am not merely here-and-now, sealed into thingness. I am for somewhere else and for something else. I demand that notice be taken of my negating activity in so far as I pursue something other than life; insofar as I do battle for the creation of a human world – that is a world of reciprocal recognitions.

> I should constantly remind myself that the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence.
>
> In the world in which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate my circle of freedom. (*LC* 12)

Against the background of different constituents such as politics, sexuality, pop culture and arts which play an important role in the identity formation process, this part of the thesis will analyze the performative nature of identity in *The Black Album*. Like *The Buddha of Suburbia, The Black Album* too demonstrates that identity is not pre-given but is a performative process. The novel portrays many people with various political stances and clearly depicts how politics affects the way one performs his or her identity. Kureishi creates a set of characters who are communist, liberal, fundamentalist, or arch-Thatcherite. Each character lives within the domain of the political view s/he supports. While the characters reconfigure themselves through political acts, the ones who challenge the dominant discourse are pushed to margins. Thus, not identifying with the dominant ideology, they live in liminal spaces to act out who they want to be. In the novel, Deedee represents liberal postmodernism, while her husband Brownlow believes in Marxism. Riaz's and Chad's politics is in line with their religious belief. Shahid, the character occupying the liminal space in most radical terms, represents an in-between situation.

In reference to these characters, Fanon's emphasis on desire for recognition gains significance because postcolonial agency pops out as a reaction to the colonial oppression to make the postcolonial subject culturally visible. That is why Riaz and his group lay bare the power of postcolonial agency by challenging the colonial power in the interstitial spaces. The representation of the fundamentalist group is political since they are trying to assert their identity through religion attacking the dominant ideology. Instead of being defined by negation, that is, being defined by not being British they choose to be identified with religion. They formulate a Muslim identity to get rid of the humiliating label of being a Paki, that is, fundamentalist group members reinvent their identities through religion which has a political power. As Chad cries out, they want to be called 'No more Paki [but] a Muslim' (*Album*

128). To overcome the uncertainties of Western life style, they engage with Islam which promises a unified self. Despite the fact that one cannot deny the political aspect of their action, it should be reminded that one's translating himself or herself into Islam is not easy and one can be lost in the liminal spaces or in "translation" to use Deedee's words. Thus, the religious group having Riaz not only as a leader but accepting him like a prophet witnesses that smooth transition is not possible. That is why their political agency leaves them in liminal spaces.

The politics of this group is not only related to the concern to be recognized but also to improve their living conditions. While the British are leading more privileged lives, the immigrants live in the suburbs with low standards. This is another strong reason for them to rebel against the British authority:

> Sometimes Shahid found himself agreeing with Riaz. Surely these people (the British) had just enough to make their lives bearable? None of them was starving. They were not peasants. But in this place there was no God, political belief or spiritual sustenance. What government or party believed that these people mattered? Any available work was the meanest kind. The woman told Shahid that their condition might improve only if they drew attention to themselves. (*Album* 136)

Shahid believes that to make life bearable for the dwellers of the estate, they need to be educated. He decides to talk about this topic with Riaz as he feels responsible for his people. (*Album* 137)

The immigrants who already live in inferior conditions face racist attacks, which makes Riaz's group more politically ambitious. They decide to protect the families who are disturbed by the racists and start to live with them taking turns. In one of the shifts of monitoring, Sadiq, Chad, Tahira and Shahid hear "a brick being hurled at the reinforced window beside the door." They go outside and see that it was a woman with her two children. Shahid yells at the woman: "Can't you leave these people alone? What have they ever done to hurt you? Have they come to your house

and abused you or thrown stones? Did they make you live in these mildewed flats?" However, the woman's answer demonstrates the other side of the coin: "Paki! Paki! Paki! ... You stolen our jobs! Taken our housing! Paki got everything! Give it back and go home!" (*Album* 139). Giving the attacker's point of view, Kureishi proves that he does not favour one side over the other. Thus, there is a reciprocal political contest between them.

The political discussion becomes very ironic with the exploration of a holy aubergine: "[Chad] told them [Shahid, Tahira, Hat] that a devout local couple had cut open an aubergine and discovered that God had inscribed holy words into the mossy flesh. Moulana Darapuria had given his confirmation that the aubergine was a holy symbol" (*Album* 171). The aubergine becomes a tool to prove the dignity of their political stance and strengthen their power with a miracle. However, Shahid being a critical thinker does not like the idea of the holiness of the aubergine and also knows that Deedee will not appreciate his involvement in this exhibition of the aubergine: "He wanted to ring Deedee... How could he say he'd been overseeing an aubergine" (*Album* 180). With these sentences Kureishi, in a humorous way, emphasizes the illogicality of attributing religious meanings to a vegetable.

The widest and the most organized political reaction by the fundamentalist group is against Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses.* Mark Stein explains the effects of the novel which was published in 1988:

> The publication of *The Satanic Verses* in 1988 was an extremely significant event, not only for black British literature but also in the context of British politics. The publication of Rushdie's novel antagonized British Muslims, and indeed many Muslims worldwide, who considered the text blasphemous. When the fatwa was declared in 1989 by the Ayatollah Khomeini, Rushdie had to go into hiding for nearly a decade. At the same time the heterogeneity among Asians in Britain, and Asian Muslims in Britain, became all too obvious, with some defending the right to freedom of expression while others felt personally and spiritually antagonized. (124)

As Stein states, fatwa is an important political event, a point that makes Shahid distressed. Proving Stein's arguments, in contrast to the fundamentalists, Shahid supports freedom of speech. Being actively involved in literature as a reader and even as a writer, he cannot figure out the reason why a person should be killed because of writing a novel. Seeing that Riaz is in favour of fatwa, Shahid states that the idea of killing a man for writing a book makes him sick (*Album*172). Ironically, Riaz considers fatwa as freedom of speech which will protect their fellows' rights. He believes that having the privilege of being educated, people like him and Shahid should defend the political rights of their illiterate companions. (*Album* 175)

Shahid initiates a discussion in the group to persuade them to go against fatwa and respect literature as it is. (Their perception of literature will be discussed in the last part of this chapter.) Riaz and the other members in the group are in favour of fatwa and discuss the issue together. At last, they decide to arrange a book burning meeting to use their right for democracy. Deedee sees the group when they prepare for the demonstration and criticizes them since they attempt to burn the book without reading it (*Album* 224). The fundamentalists burn the book without physically harming anyone but Deedee calls the police to have Riaz and Chad arrested (*Album* 226). The group members claim that this is a very hypocritical act; according to them, although Deedee claims to be against authority "she turned the British state on [them]"(*Album* 228). Under the mask of democracy, the religious group violates the freedom of expression in literature. Likewise, Deedee, who is against any authority, asks help from the police to protect the freedom of speech. Kureishi's sarcasm implies that in political struggle, everybody can become hypocritical to assert their thoughts and live according to the principles they favour.

This notion of hypocrisy is strengthened also when the relationship between the Marxists and the fundamentalists is concerned. Brownlow can be considered as a marginalized character since he supports a Marxist Party, not the right wing one which rules Britain. However, his depiction is also full of humour and Kureishi

invalidates the ideals supported by Marxism through his characterization. The reader learns that Brownlow is a Marxist in a conversation among Riaz, Chad, Hat, Sadiq who are all members of the fundamentalist group, and Shahid. They talk about Brownlow as follows:

> "He come from upper-middle classes. He could have done any fine thing. They wanted him at Harvard. Or was it Yale, Chad?"
>
> "He refused them places down."
>
> "Yeah, he tol' them to get lost. He hated them all, his own class, his parents – everything. He come to this college to help us, the underprivileged niggers and wogs an' margin people. He's not a bad guy – for a Marxist-Communist."
>
> "Leninist,' said Sadiq."
>
> "Yeah, a Marxist-Communist-Leninist type," Hat said. "He always strong on anti-racism. He hate imperialist fascism and white domination, yeah, Riaz?" (*Album* 32)

This conversation reveals a lot about the ambiguity and arbitrariness of the politics. The religious group feels sympathy for Brownlow since he refuses to be part of the dominant ideology and reacts against it just like themselves. In other words, feeling marginalized, the group members respect Brownlow who wants to act in favour of the left-outs. Their discussion about Brownlow's political stance is very ironic as for them, there is no difference between Marxism or Leninism and the situation is reflected in a parodying conversation. Irony is strengthened by Riaz's ideas about the nature of communism. In fact, Riaz finds the principle of solidarity in communism sympathetic as it may go beyond race and class barriers. However, atheism, a significant feature of Marxism, "doesn't really suit humanity" for Riaz. In the end, he concludes that "[t]hose revolutionaries weren't even able to achieve socialism in one room. Altogether we are seeing the shrivelling of atheism" (*Album* 33). Thus, Kureishi harshly criticizes leftists through these fundamentalists. Moore-Gilbert states concerning the representation of Brownlow and the communists in the novel as follows:

> Kureishi is harsher still about seemingly more self-aware and sophisticated radical-Left anti-racist politics ... In *The Black Album*, ...

> Brownlow is personally compromised in a number of obvious ways. The descent of this representative of the 'upper-middle-classes' (*Album* 26) on the oppressed Bangladeshi family smacks of the 'political tourism' associated with his visit to Soweto. His attitude of 'unmistakable lewdness' (*Album* 78) towards Tahira aligns with him the male Orientalist gaze anatomised by Said and his consistent misrecognition of Shahid (whom he believes to be Tariq) implies that even to Brownlow all British Asians 'look the same'. (139)

Moore-Gilbert's ideas on Brownlow command attention; Brownlow is seemingly on the side of the oppressed immigrants but he is only after gaining political popularity by helping them with his friend Rudder, another member of Labour Party. He is not aware of individual differences of the group members and he sees Tahira, one of the Muslims, as an attractive sexual object.

Kureishi's attack on Marxist ideals comes more to the fore when the issue of fatwa is concerned. Brownlow has a close relationship with the fundamentalists and a close analysis of his relationship with the group may reveal his political point of view and consequently his in-between position. He takes literature as a political power and supports the book burners in order to lessen the dominance of the liberals. As a professor, instead of encouraging his students into intellectual engagement, Brownlow acts in favour of the fatwa affair. In his dialogue with Shahid, Brownlow reveals his ideas: "If only- if only this were merely a book matter but you don't believe the liberals – who are working for themselves up into a pompous lather – are fighting for literary freedom, do you?" (*Album* 215). Brownlow politicizes literature stating that freedom of speech strengthens liberals' power. That is why he acts with the fundamentalists. Without waiting for Shahid's answer he adds:

> They're just standing by their miserable class. When have they ever given a damn about you – the Asian working class – and your struggle? Your class is arguing back. No one will colonize you, put you down or insult you in your own country. And the liberals – always the weakest and most complacent people- are shitting their pants, because you threaten their power. Liberalism cannot survive these forces. And if you meet any of them, be sure to tell them that their pants are going to be on fire pretty soon. (*Album* 215)

Like Brownlow, Rudder displays how hypocritical the Marxists are. Brownlow joins one of the meetings of the fundamentalist group with Rudder, who helps to find shelter for one of the immigrant families that have been attacked by the racists. He gives a speech upon his good deed:

> Naturally I have been generous enough to use my influence, as you surely appreciate, against very racialist opposition, to open a private house in this way ... It is because our party supports ethnic minorities, you have my fullest assurance of that. The Seventh Day Adventists have expressed deep satisfaction, and, it is said, mention my ailments in their prayers. Rastafarians shake my hand as I walk my dog. (*Album* 178)

His speech is an obvious propaganda to gain settlers' sympathy. Rudder's two-facedness is seen even more vividly when he states that he will defend the settlers until the labour party is elected again. His further utterances emphasize his insincerity: "Of course, revelations are faith's aberration, an amusement at the most. Let's hope they curry this blue fruit. Brinjal, I believe it's called. I could murder an Indian, couldn't you, lads?" (*Album* 179-180) Moore-Gilbert believes that Rudder's "professed solidarity with Riaz's group is clearly an opportunistic means to winning votes. Kureishi wickedly deflates his anti-racist credentials by giving the hungry activist the line 'I could murder an Indian'" (140).

Deedee, with the change in her political views, reveals that each ideology tries to fix one's identity and the best way to live is to live in uncertainties. She too is involved in political activism in her youth, but she changes her perception in her later years. She criticizes her husband Brownlow since politics is the only thing he knows about. Ironically Deedee and Brownlow has started their relationship thanks to their interest in rebellion. She describes those years of political activism in the following words:

> There was a period, in the mid-seventies, when we imagined history was moving our way. Gays, blacks, women were asserting and organizing themselves. Less than ten years later, after the Falklands, CND and the miners' strike, even I could see the movement was in a contrary direction. Thatcher had concentrated the struggle. But she'd

> worn everyone down... I don't want to be certain anymore. (*Album* 116)

She chooses to be lost in postmodernist ambiguity believing that even activism leaves her in boundaries:

> [Deedee] said that women in the 1980s, even the lefties, had aimed to get in powerful positions, be independent, achieve. But it had cost them. They'd worked themselves into the ground, drawing too deeply on their resources, having to support themselves as well as friends. Too many had forfeited the possibility of children. For what? In the end a career was merely a job, not a whole life. (*Album* 116)

She believes that this is not an enjoyable way of life since commitment brings certainty and it leaves the world unchanged. In a world like this even pleasure is provisional and guilty. However Deedee is interested in other things than politics now. She says "I'm trying to find out. Other things. Culture. Where I can, I do a lot of nothing. And I make stabs at pleasure" (*Album* 55). Thus, having pleasure becomes her ideology with the means of music, drugs and sexuality. (Her pleasure seeking identity will be discussed further in the following parts of the thesis). Not supporting Thatcherism, Marxism or fundamentalism, Deedee performs a politics of uncertainties which makes her a postmodernist.

However, Deedee's postmodernist liberalism is contaminated with the elements of a colonial oppressor in some parts of the novel. She provides lodging for three female students, two of whom are British-Asian women and believes to have liberated them from an oppressive home environment (Moore-Gilbert 141). This recalls "white man's concern to save black women from black men". The ironic situation of Deedee is voiced by Chad: "Would I dare to hide a member of Osgood's family in my house and fill her with propaganda? If I did, what accusations? Terrorist! Fanatic! Lunatic! We can never win. The imperialist idea hasn't died" (*Album* 191). Chad's words underline the colonialist overtones of Deedee's help.

As a teacher, she allows any topic to be discussed in her sessions for hours since she believes in the power of pop culture. However, one scene in the novel, where she criticizes the way an Asian girl is dressed up, depicts her as a colonial oppressor again. The setting of the lesson reinforces Deedee's racist perspective: Shahid passes by the hut in which she teaches a class of black women fashion students. He sees one of them standing embarrassedly on a chair when the other students are giggling and clapping together with Deedee, who is pointing at her shoes (*Album* 184). Moore-Gilbert comments on this scene:

> The location (a 'hut'), the 'spectacle' which the black student is making of herself at her teacher's behest, the emphatic use of the possessive adjective – all contribute to making this scene a parodic reinscription of a common trope in colonial discourse, the gaze of the coloniser on the 'manners and customs' of the subject peoples. (141)

Although Deedee claims to be saving the black subjects by showing them the limitless possibilities life offers, she also seems to be orientalising them from the vantage point of a Western gaze. Actually, here Kureishi seems to be revealing the wickedness and weakness of any ideology. As he demonstrated the hypocrisy of Islamic group and the Marxists, he also shows the two-facedness of liberalism.

Kureishi exposes the fluidity and arbitrariness of any ideology in the novel and Shahid is a case in point as he vacillates between liberalism and secularism Deedee offers and the sense of belonging the fundamentalist group provides. Thus, he is the most liminal character on the way to reformulate his identity. As Ranasinha puts it:

> Shahid is initially attracted to the group of Muslim students at college out of loneliness and because, 'These days everyone was insisting on their own identity, coming out as a man, woman, black, Jew – brandishing whatever features they could claim ...' He fears 'ignorance' about his 'own people would place him in no man's land (*Album* 92)'. At first he is drawn to the sense of purpose and belonging created by joining the group: 'He couldn't leave his friends; they had something to fight for; they were his people; he had pledged himself to them (*Album* 125). Ultimately he finds the group too oppressive and stifling. (2002:85-6)

When he observes the group's reaction against Rushdie's work and witnesses that they attach significance to an aubergine, he feels estranged from the group. After the book burning event, Shahid chooses Deedee over Riaz. He questions his engagement with the fundamentalists: "How could anyone confine themselves to one system or creed? Why should they feel they had to? There was no fixed self; surely our several selves melted and mutated daily? There had to be innumerable ways of being in the world" (*Album* 274). Thus, the novel ends with the scene where Shahid and Deedee decide to start an adventure until it stops being fun (*Album* 276). Kureishi gives a postmodernist ending which is no ending at all in traditional terms, a point which again marks the open-endedness of life, art and politics.

To conclude, in the light of the above argument one can say that Kureishi portrays the fluid nature of any ideology in his novel. He attacks fundamentalism, Marxism and even goes so far as to question Deedee's liberalism. In the end, like Deedee, Shahid comes to the conclusion that there are multiple ways of performing one's identity; that is why it is not meaningful to be committed to an ideology which will fix his life within dull boundaries. As Ranasinha claims, with the novel, "Kureishi is presented as a subversive crusader against 'uninterrogated religious and cultural pieties.'" (2002:107)

3.2.2 Identity as performed through sexual practice

The Black Album is a postcolonial/postmodernist novel since it attacks the dominant ideology by subverting its hierarchy of power. Sexuality is one of the postmodernist correlatives which play an important role in attacking the fixed notions suggested by the Enlightenment project. Thus, the function of sexuality becomes very important to prove that identity is always fluid and can never be stabilized. Steven Connor claims that postmodernist situation owes its ambiguity to transcending sexual boundaries:

> Perhaps the most extraordinary example of the generalization of postmodernist thinking in the rich cultures of the North is in the area

> of sexuality. If, as Jameson suggests, the world has been taken over by "culture," then there is a more recent assimilation of culture in general to the culture of sex. Sex used to be proclaimed to be the secret, forbidden truth of human life. It is now the most manifest, ubiquitous, and compulsory truth. Sex can no longer be stopped or avoided. From being the accessory that assisted the packaging and consumption of a range of commodities, sex has become the product that other commodities exist to sell. Sex has come into its own, because sex wants to be more than sex. This is why everything is sex – because sex has become the form and the name of transcendence. Sex has become the only and ultimate quality. Eros has become life. Sex has been subject to economic transaction, to buying and selling as a commodity, for centuries. But what seems to have come about in the last couple of decades is a situation in which sex becomes the very medium in which other exchanges take place. You do not pay for sex with money; you pay for everything in the currency of sex (11).

Connor's arguments are echoed in the novel when the nature of relationship between Deedee (a white British citizen) and Shahid (a Muslim Pakistani) is observed. They transcend gender boundaries through subversion of gender roles and prove that their identities are configured and performed through sexuality. In the same line of reading as Connor, their affair too becomes a challenge to grand narratives such as Thatcherism and Islam since Thatcherism refutes close connection with Pakistanis and Islam forbids extra-marital relationships .

Deedee's and Shahid's relationship is subversive in many aspects: Deedee is married to Brownlow and has extra-marital relationship with Shahid, who is her student. To make the matter worse, she is older than Shahid. Thus, Kureishi reverses the common practice of the relationship between elder male instructors and younger female students. The subversion is strengthened as Deedee and Shahid switch gender roles. Deedee is the dominant one in their relationship and shapes the nature of their intimacy. While Deedee is acting like a man, Shahid welcomes her dominance in the intercourse: "Don't worry," she had panted. "Leave it to me" (*Album* 112). Buhanan states that "Deedee's take-charge demeanour is evidently intended as a sign that she wishes to take the role of masculine aggressor" (62). Buhanan's claims are reinforced

when Deedee wants Shahid to wear make-up. She was sure that Shahid would look good with make-up:

> [Deedee] crossed the room and put on Madonna's 'Vogue'. Madonna said, 'What are you looking at?' he loved that track. Deedee fetched her bag and lay everything out on a white towel. He sat beside her. She hummed and fussed over him, reddening his lips, darkening his eyelashes, applying blusher, pushing a pencil under his eye. She back-combed his hair. It troubled him; he felt he were losing himself. What was she seeing? (*Album* 117).

Deedee obviously creates a different self for Shahid or helps Shahid discover his hidden self. While "he [was] losing himself" Shahid was performing a different way of being:

> For now, she refused him a mirror, but he liked the feel of his new female face. He could be demure, flirtatious, teasing, a star; a burden went, a certain responsibility had been removed. He didn't have to take the lead. He even wondered what it might be like to go out as a woman, and be looked at differently (*Album* 117-8).

Shahid feels distressed by gender switching at first but enjoys the freedom it brings later. Losing himself and creating a new identity frees him from the burden of responsibilities. To help Shahid act out different identities, Deedee tells him to walk like a model and Shahid feels the spirit of his new appearance. He passes beyond embarrassment and "swung his hips and arms, throwing his head back, pouting, kicking his legs out, showing her his arse and cock" (*Album* 118). Their experiences indicate the pluralities the postmodernist mode of thinking offers through sexuality. However, some critics disregard the liberating effects of sexuality and claim that Shahid becomes the object of Deedee's desire. Buhanan puts forward:

> While some critics have suggested that this scene is liberating in its play with gender roles, the reversal of the usual trajectory of the objectifying gaze hardly seems a positive development. In adopting the mindless posture of a 'model' Shahid has essentially been turned into a commodity for Deedee to consume and identify with, and he has lost his autonomy in precisely the same way that feminism argues that women have lost theirs when their bodies are objectified by men. This scene also carries unpleasant overtones of Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, which describes the process whereby Asian male bodies are seen as feminine, perverse and abjectly animalistic. (63)

Despite Buhanan's claims it could still be argued that this scene is a liberating one because Shahid enjoys his new self and wants to experiment with life disguised as a woman. Moreover, if this can be called objectification, it can also be argued that Deedee objectifies herself as a sexual commodity for Shahid's gaze. On the very same day when Shahid wears make-up and female clothing, Deedee "tore an open condom, rolled the rubber on to a finger and anointed it with KY" (*Album* 118). The way Deedee masturbates to please Shahid demonstrates that the previous experience of putting on make-up is not a kind of oppression but exchange of pleasures. The rest of their sexual performance also proves the mutual sharing of enjoyment: "The flesh around Deedee's stomach folded together like fingers. She fell forward on to her knees and frigged herself busily, with concentration, curling her hand into her crotch.... He got on to his knees and spat in his hand; face to face, they jerked off together, and fell over laughing when, simultaneously, they came" (*Album* 119). The fact that both Shahid and Deedee enjoy playing with gender roles eliminates the possibility of talking about oppression. They experiment with different ways of having sexual pleasure, which shows that they are not living within the boundaries of the traditional understanding of sexuality and gender. Looking at Shahid's and Deedee's gender role switching it is seen that "gender attributes ... do not express a stable identity preceding the act of performance ... Instead, they consist in a provisional repertoire depending on reiteration for its existence, and hence are potentially fluid and variable. (Sheehan, 34)

In addition to playing around gender roles, Kureishi challenges the grand narratives also by juxtaposing sexual activity and pornography with the events or thoughts related to religion in the very same scenes. Shahid is interested in the pleasures of pornography. He thinks "Maybe pornography presented a complete and uplifting adventure, like the world in children's books. The other pleasure was the way pornography differed from real sex: there was no need for anyone else" (*Album* 149). While communicating his thoughts, Shahid plays with himself: "Clumsily, not entirely sure where to put his fingers, he tugged on one of the stockings Deedee had given him, and a pair of her French knickers, which were a little tight. He was

applying lipstick inaccurately" (*Album* 150). (Here one should remember that Shahid wears Deedee's knickers and socks with his own will and he wears some make-up. This demonstrates that Deedee is not an oppressor pushing Shahid into gender switching). While Shahid is experimenting with his sexuality, Riaz knocks on the door. Shahid thinks of getting changed; inviting Riaz in; leaving the pornographic magazine open and pretending to go for a pee to see how Riaz reacts against pornography. However, he decides that "Riaz lacked a taste for the vulgar": "Shahid didn't like to criticize Riaz, but there was one thing you could say about him: his laughter was always astringent and sardonic. Folly didn't entertain him; he wanted to correct it. Like pornography, religion couldn't admit the comic." (*Album* 150)

The attack on the grand narrative of religion, mingled with superstition, through sexuality is also seen when Deedee and Shahid argue because of the "holy aubergine". Deedee severely criticizes Shahid since he acts like an illiterate person when he is involved in the aubergine event. Throughout this discussion Deedee attacks the Marxists, too. As Shahid states "Mr Rubber Messiah has stated that he wants a closer association with [their] community. If aubergines are what [they] believe, it's gonna be respected" (*Album* 209). Deedee thinks that "Rubber's a totally cynical bastard" who tries to win the black people's votes. Thus, Kureishi attacks the grand narrative of Marxism showing Rubber's opportunist actions. Deedee gets very angry with Shahid and shows her anger saying "I'm not going to respect a communicating vegetable and I'm not going to compete with one either" (*Album* 209). However, they find each other attractive and their quarrel ends with making love.

To conclude, the performance of sexuality challenges the fixed notions pointing out a postmodernist world. Pornography also serves for the same aim. Maria Degabriele states

> Kureishi ... probes the meanings and experiences of pornography as an expression of postmodernity. It is in the blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction, eros and the sacred, that desire is located. So too in *The Black Album* it is in the blurring of the boundaries between the 'fact' of the sexual encounter between Shahid and Deedee, and the 'fictions' of pop culture that their desire is located. The sexual relationship between Shahid and Deedee is very political. They both push experience until it overflows, like popular culture itself, with its promise of 'something more,' especially in [the] context of 'gender-benders' like Prince and the explicit iconography of Madonna. (qtd in Thomas 115)

As Degarbriele puts it, Kureishi fictionalizes a postmodernist world where the lines between fact and fiction are blurred. When sexuality and pornography which arouse fantasises are performed, fiction turns into reality and this proves how one can create reality by performing sexuality.

3.2.3 The effect of popular culture and art on identity formation

Popular culture and art play an important role in the identity formation process of Shahid and Deedee. Especially contemporary music and literature are the elements which shape their lives. Their perception of art and popular culture reveals a lot about their understanding of life reflecting their viewpoints on religion, politics and personal relationships. Popular art functions to integrate different elements into a meaningful unity for Shahid and Deedee, that is, the crucial events are weaved in relation to music or literature. Moreover, Deedee and Shahid become closer thanks to their common interest in music, namely *The Prince* as a singer with a hybrid identity. This part of the thesis attempts to explore the function of popular culture and art to shed light on the performative aspects of identity with a close analysis of Deedee's and Shahid's experiences.

As stated above, popular music functions as a unifying element in Shahid's and Deedee's case. The novel seems to emphasize this point with its title which is also the title of Prince's album. Deedee, a postmodernist and a feminist instructor, and Shahid, a student with a Pakistani origin and a member of an Islamic group, come together thanks to their interest in music. Frith thinks "[m]usic is thus the cultural form best able both to cross borders – sounds carry across fences and walls and oceans, across classes, races and nations – and to define places; in clubs, scenes, and raves, listening on headphones, radio and in the concert hall, we are only where the music takes us" (125). Music takes them to a transcendental space where they can liberate themselves from the restrictions of practical living.

Deedee gets to know Shahid's interest in Prince when he visits her in her office. Seeing that he is looking at Prince's poster, she asks why Shahid likes Prince. He simply answers "Well, the sound!" (*Album* 25). Deedee starts talking about Prince: "He's half black and half white, half man, half woman, half size, feminine but macho too. His work contains and extends the history of black American music, Little Richard, James Brown, Sly Stone, Hendrix" and Shahid adds: "he's a river of talent, he can play soul and funk and rock and rap" (*Album* 25). Prince as a character with an ambiguous identity serves to enhance the postmodernist issues in the novel. Regarding the significance of Prince in the novel, Moore-Gilbert suggests that "[t]he integrative dynamic which Kureishi attributes to certain kinds of pop is best symbolised by the figure of Prince," and he adds:

> Insofar as Prince's LP gestures critically towards the Beatles' seminal *White Album* (1969), the performer does not simply rewrite the histories of black music but draws on 'white' pop, too. In Prince, famous for his makeovers and aliases, Kureishi most graphically represents pop as the crossroads not only of different cultural influences but as a site in which plurality of identity – whether at the level of ethnicity, class, gender or sexuality- is celebrated. As such Prince's music symbolises these trends in the contemporary world which Kureishi most prizes. (117-8)

Moore-Gilbert's arguments are highly convincing when it is considered that the integrative dynamic of Prince's music is parallel to the integrating elements in

Deedee's and Shahid's relationship. A white postmodernist instructor has a relationship with a black student, who has ties with an Islamic group, thanks to the power of music. With its multiplicity, music enables them to go beyond class and race barriers. Being a postmodernist instructor, Deedee appreciates contemporary trends just like Kureishi himself and accepts any topic for her term papers as long as her students are interested in it. That is why she wants Shahid to prepare his term paper on Prince; and their first meeting at Deedee's house is to watch the Prince videos becomes the starting point of their relationship. Later on, they mostly have time together against the background of music which generally fosters their enthusiasm to live in postmodernist uncertainties:

> Suddenly Shahid was hearing something that made his knees bob. Was it the Doors? No, crazy, it was something new, the Stone Roses or Inspiral Carpets, one of those Manchester guitar groups. Whoever it was lifted him. Music could act like an adrenalin injection on him, and he wanted to go woo-woo-whoa for being here with his lecturer who was taking him out. (*Album* 58)

In one striking scene, when Shahid is overjoyed with music he is in a taxi with Deedee and he does not know where they are going. Thus, the delight of ambiguity and curiosity for uncertainties are coupled with the pleasure of music again. In another taxi at the same night Deedee and Shahid feel a strong need for music: "They clambered into the silence of the taxi and discovered their ears were yearning for music much as one's stomach complains for food, but there was none available" (*Album* 64). In order to suppress their "yearning for music" Deedee wants Shahid to tell a story which is "something romantic and dirty." Their moods are elevated by voicing their fantasies out and storytelling becomes a medium to objectify one's thoughts and inner self. Here one might even go so far as to suggest that storytelling may also be a sign of how the lines between life and art are blurred, which is also an indicator of postmodernist ambiguities.

Deedee's appropriation of music has always been political. Accordingly, in her youth the politic effects of music united her life with Brownlow: "We liked the Beatles. We had activism and talk in common. We imagined we were on the Left Bank, running

into lovers in cafés, living without bourgeois jealousy, committed to personal and political change. Sartre and De Beauvoir have much to be responsible for" (*Album* 115). Now that her political stance has changed, her choice of music has transformed too. In her later years, music itself has become the politics of her life as she deals with culture (popular music, art and sexuality) instead of political struggle.

The ambiguities and multiplicity music evokes are the reason why Deedee is drawn towards it. However, for the same reason, that is, because of its ambiguous nature, Chad and other fundamentalists demonise music. For Chad music is like a drug and he claims to be better without those drugs (*Album* 79). Chad tries to convince Karim that music and dance degrade people turning them into 'dancing monkeys' (*Album* 80). His rejection of music can be clarified by Maria Degabriele's explanations about the fundamentalists' reaction to it. They find:

> popular music [dangerous], claiming that it corrupts and thus leads to amorality and to drugs, and so to complete destruction. But they also fear the flattening, or deculturing effect of Western imperialism. And this is where more ambivalence surfaces. They fully understand what is going on but will not admit any criticism of or deviation from their own orthodoxy. (qtd in Thomas 114)

Since the students in the religious group are seeking to form a stable identity, they reject the 'deculturing' effect of music which eliminates class or race barriers. They intend to be culturally visible to assert their identities; that is why they reject postmodernist ambiguities which music dancing or the drugs provide.

Like music, literature plays an important role in forming and performing new identities in Shahid's and Deedee's lives but it should again be censored according to the fundamentalist group. Deedee, as an instructor, deliberately chooses novels from Black Women's writing as well as popular genres for her courses:

> Deedee makes considerable efforts to adjust the traditional syllabus of English studies to make it more sensitive to the experience of the marginalised constituencies she is addressing (she herself used a

> literary education to emancipate herself from a deprived early life). Thus, she introduces more Black and Women's writing, as well as popular genre fiction to the curriculum. To make explicit the historical links between metropolitan 'high' culture and imperialism, moreover, she offers a course on 'colonialism and literature' which leaves Shahid 'in a fog of inchoate anger and illumination'. (Moore-Gilbert 119)

What Deedee obviously does is to help her students re-invent their identities through the medium of art as she too has changed her life thanks to literature. However, Shahid is a little bit disturbed by her insistence on interfering with her students' lives that much. He criticises the way she suggests novels and music, thinking that she should not be the one to shape people's tastes. He reacts:

> Could literature connect a generation in the same way? Some exceptional students would read hard books; most wouldn't and they were not fools.
>
> The music her students liked, how they danced, their clothes and language, it was theirs, a living way. She tried to enter it, extend it, ask questions. It wasn't pleasure telling people that culture would benefit them, particularly if they couldn't see what it was for. As it was, they were constantly being informed of their inferiority. Many of them regarded the white elite culture as self deceiving and hypocritical. For some this was an excuse for laziness. With others it was genuine: they didn't want to find the culture that put them down profound. (*Album* 134)

Actually, Shahid thinks that Deedee imposes contemporary literature on her black students and this indicates a kind of humiliation because it suggests that black students cannot understand high literature. Shahid perceives her as a colonial oppressor (though he does not explicitly state this in the novel) since she imposes popular culture on those students. However, considering the fact that Deedee is a postmodernist instructor and as Jameson puts it, postmodernism aims to erase the difference between the high and low cultures (Constable 48), she cannot be blamed for being a colonial oppressor. Besides, Deedee herself is interested in light literature which actively helps her shape the way she lives:

> Deedee confessed to reading 'shopping and fucking' novels secretly, as others ate chocolate in bed, for the clothes, sex, restaurants, hotels. She was, though, more ashamed of dozens of self-help books she got

> through. Many women read them, she said, trying to figure out why they weren't happier, and why their expectations hadn't been fulfilled. She was interested in thinking what needs such books supplied rather than attempting to disturb people with literature, which only academics imagined central to anything, and real people only read on holiday. (*Album* 135)

This quotation implies that Deedee does not mind confessing the fact that she has transformed her identity though contemporary writing while Shahid still appreciates canonical literature and talks about the value of Turgenev, Proust, Barthes, Kundera and emphasizes that their work cannot be equal with popular literature or art: "He didn't always appreciate being played Madonna or George Clinton in class, or offered a lecture on the history of funk as if it were somehow more 'him' than *Fathers and Sons.* Any art could become 'his', if its value was demonstrated. He wouldn't be denied the best" (*Album* 135). Shahid wants to be educated through canonical works like the white students at other colleges instead of being trained through postmodernist works which remind him of his marginalized situation. Shahid's reaction against excluding high literature from the curriculum becomes comprehensible when his interaction with novels throughout his childhood is taken into consideration. He had the chance to read novels when he was a little boy thanks to his Uncle Asif, who left his books in Shahid's father's house:

> Shahid had picked up Joad, Laski and Popper, and studies of Freud, along with fiction by Maupassant, Henry Miller, and the Russians. He had also gone to the library almost every day; desultory reading was his greatest pleasure, with interruptions for pop records. He had moved from book to book as on stepping stones, both for fun and out of fear of being with people who had knowledge which might exclude him. (*Album* 20)

Reading has always been a significant component of his life and he has created an identity for himself through reading, a case which demanded respect from the intellectual people. Having a solid background of canonical works, Shahid wants to discuss them in the lessons instead of talking about contemporary issues. One scene in the novel reveals the significance of canonical works in Shahid's life best; a Lorca play in his childhood triggers his enthusiasm to deal with other types of art, the narrating voice says:

> The feelings animated in him by his 'Lorca night' made him yearn for other experiences as affecting. He taped opera, jazz and pop records from the library. He listened repeatedly to composers he had learned weren't as bad as they sounded, like Bartok, Wagner and Stravinsky. He searched out good movies. His wish was granted. He extended the Lorca experience again and again, each time being brought to think and feel in new ways. He never lost his appetite for the compelling exhilaration. (*Album* 75)

While popular culture and arts are very important constituents for Shahid and Deedee, the fundamentalist group determinedly believes that arts should be avoided. In the face of a lot of problems concerning housing, education and health, Chad claims that literature is only for children. He thinks "[t]here's more to life than entertaining [themselves]!' (*Album* 21). Being a character who has created his identity thanks to literature and other arts, Shahid believes '[n]ovels are like a picture of life' and '[l]iterature is more than entertaining [themselves]!' (*Album* 21). Like music, Chad thinks, literature is useless. When Shahid discusses literature with Chad, he voices his ideas about the effect of reading on refining one's ability to think critically. The fatwa business against Rushdie shows that it is not only Chad who reacts against literature but it is the common reaction among the members of the fundamentalist group. During Rudder's visit, the group discusses literature with initiation of Shahid. He questions whether any form of censorship will protect them. Riaz in a calm manner replies:

> [A]ll fiction is by its very nature, a form of lying – a perversion of truth... There are harmless, perverted tales of course, which make us chuckle. They pass the time when we have nothing to do. But there are many fictions that expose a corrupt nature. These are created by authors, who cannot, we might say, hold their ink. These yarn-spinners have usually grovelled for acceptance to the white élite so they can be considered "great authors". They like to pretend they are revealing the truth to masses-these uncultured, half illiterate fools. But they know nothing of the masses. The only poor people they meet are their servants. (*Album* 182)

Hat, Chad, Sadiq, Tahira and other members of the group agree with Riaz but Shahid tries to defend literature saying that it is only fiction and it helps them reflect on their nature. Shahid reminds Riaz that he is a poet and Riaz defends himself stating that he is not writing in a way to make people perverts. Kureishi again becomes sarcastic

in his depiction of Riaz, a poet himself, being against literature and critical thinking (*Album* 183-4). He can see that the fundamentalist group tries to get rid of daily uncertainties through the absolutisms Islam offers. Being very much against uncertainties, the fundamentalists find Rushdie's book detrimental to their culture and arrange a book burning exhibition. Like Shahid, for whom literature plays an important role, Deedee cannot stand the desire of Riaz's group to burn the novel. She advises them to read the novel before burning it but she cannot convince the group (*Album* 224). Shahid is unhappy to witness the event but he tries to look neutral (*Album* 225). Shahid's rewriting of Riaz's poetry in a form of erotic epic is a vivid example for the power of literature to subvert traditional way of thinking. Susie Thomas refers to Frederick M. Holmes: "the narratives that emerge from religious and literary activity have no special authority". He claims *The Black Album* "is concerned with stories .... Just as Riaz, as it were, reinvents Islam to suit him, ... Shahid is doing the same with Riaz's poems ... The point is that life is reinterpreted all the same as we live it" (116). Holmes' assertions point to the performative nature of one's character while at the same time accentuating the postmodernist nature of the novel.

To conclude, in the novel art helps characters transform their identities, and contemporary art along with popular music has a fluctuating nature and opens up new horizons for them. This is the very reason why fundamentalists avoid arts in their lives. Even if it is canonized literature, it causes a form of transformation and this is threatening for the fundamentalists. Instead, they try to perform their "original" culture, as if "originality" were possible in a postmodernist world.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Against the background of Homi Bhabha's key concepts hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, the third space, liminality and agency, this thesis has attempted to explore how Hanif Kureishi's novels *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album* unsettle and demystify the credibility of fixed categories such as nationality, religion, ethnicity, race, gender, family and political power. Kureishi re-evaluates the attempts to establish one's identity in relation to the above mentioned categories and demonstrates that identity cannot be stabilized, and he even goes further to stress the impossibility of freezing both national and individual identity. Against the background of Thatcherite politics, the notion of Britishness is also problematized in both novels. He also attracts the attention of his readers to the category of identity as a performative act/process which is shaped according to the above mentioned variables. Thus, the novels, with a postmodernist and a postcolonial mode of representation, challenge the grand narratives that produce the above mentioned categories and lay bare their floating nature.

Kureishi's novels also offer counter arguments to Thatcherism, which is the social context within which the characters move. Thatcher's strict arguments for excluding the immigrants from the category of Britishness increased racism and racist discourse in England, which she used as a tool to gain votes during the elections. In such a context, Kureishi's novels reveal the absurdity of the attempts to draw narrow boundaries for the concept of Britishness. In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, the notion of nationality is problematized through the experiences of first generation immigrants Haroon and Anwar, second generation immigrants Karim and Jamila and the white British Eva and Charlie. The novel is interwoven with satirical stories which question national identity. In Haroon's and Anwar's cases, being British is equal to being

ethnically invisible. In their early years in England, they adopt the British manners and do their best to be acknowledged as Englishmen. However, when they realize that other ways of being are also possible to lead an honourable life, they adopt the Indian values. While Haroon turns to Buddhism to gain recognition in the society, Anwar adopts Muslim values to make his family obey him. Both cases are depicted in a trope in the end qualifying the fact that they are British regardless of which identity they try to appropriate. Moreover, their Indian values add up to Britishness by modifying its definition. Jamila's and Karim's quests in Britain make the issue of Britishness more controversial. Being born in England, they are not familiar with their inherited origin. They do not have any other choice than appropriating Britishness since it is the only culture they are exposed to. However, the dominant British ideology marginalizes them and they invent survival strategies to exist in the liminal spaces they create. Jamila lives like an independent western woman, engaging in political struggle in addition to rebelling against his father's and husband's will by not having sex with her husband and consequently preventing her father from having grandchildren. Never refusing her Indian origins, Jamila can survive while leading a western life style. Likewise, Karim has no chance except for creating his own psychic territory to exist. He is slightly different from Jamila in the sense that he is not a political activist. On the contrary, he acts in accordance with his personal benefits. He switches between his Indian side and British side to be acknowledged by the others, namely by the important people such as the theatre owners. He does not mind humiliating the black in his plays if success is guaranteed after the performance. Through his attempts to create characters for the plays, he constantly reinvents his identity. With Karim's identity transformation the notion of Britishness is transformed, too. Ironically, the white British in the novel also contribute to the transformation of Britishness. For Thatcherism, being successful means having a good income and leading a "decent" life. In Thatcher's terms, being British requires being successful. That is why when she describes Britishness, she excludes the suburbanites from the definition of the concept. However, Charlie and Eva rise above their status with their own efforts and prove that social mobility is possible.

The Black Album also lays bare the different understandings of Britishness and how each understanding adds new elements to this definition. The protagonist Shahid accepts his in-between situation which allows him to adopt different identities at different times. On the one hand, he is in close touch with a fundamentalist Islamic group, on the other hand, he has an affair with a postmodernist instructor, Deedee Osgood. His ties with the fundamentalists provide Shahid with a seemingly stable identity. He acts as if he felt at one with the group; however, he is not wholeheartedly attached to the group. A case in point is, during the prayers or religious service, he usually dreams of making love with Deedee. He experiences the freedom Western life offers, despite acting with the fundamentalists on certain occasions. His fluctuation between the opposites reminds one of Karim's experiences. Like Shahid, Karim foregrounds his Indian aspects or the British qualities in certain situations. Their vacillation between two opposites testifies to the difficulty of stabilizing individual experience. The fundamentalist group's reaction challenges the Thatcherite understanding of nationality and in their rebellion against the dominant ideology, the concept of nationhood is revised. Instead of accepting their share offered by Thatcherite politics they make their voice heard through exhibitions and meetings. Their reaction demonstrates that they seek for new modes of being in Britain, and instead of following Thatcher's competitive individualism, they prove how they can help each other through solidarity. Thus, their search for ways of self-representation expands the boundaries of British nationality. It is very ironic that Kureishi portrays Chili, who is Pakistani in origin, as an arch-Thatcherite. His consumerist attitudes, the ambition to move forward, the way he accuses people of living in poverty all echo Thatcherite ideals. Thus, Thatcherism is harshly attacked through Chili, a Pakistani character adopting Thatcher's values. All these examples testify to the fact that national identity cannot be frozen. In addition to problematizing national identity, Kureishi underlines that individual identity cannot be stabilized either. Thus, one can say that all forms of identity as performative acts/processes lie at the very centre of Kureishi's novels. He uses different parameters to highlight the performative nature of identity such as religion, art,

sexuality and political act. In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Haroon reconfigures his identity through yoga sessions while Anwar does the same through Islamic practice. Charlie and Karim construct their social representation through performing arts. Karim reinvents his identity in the course of impersonating his characters and Charlie realizes his identity by turning himself to a pop commodity. Along with arts, playing with gender roles shapes their identity markers. Like Charlie and Karim, Jamila and Changez objectify their identities through sexual performance and the experiences of each character display the constantly evolving nature of identity. In *The Black Album* the performativity of identity is concretized through political activism in Riaz's, Shahid's, Chad's, Deedee's and Brownlow's experiences. Kureishi underlines the hypocrisy of each political belief and points out their floating nature. In their case too, sexual practice is a correlative of identity formation process. In Shahid's and Deedee's sexual practice, they even switch gender roles and foreground postmodernist ambiguities. Popular culture is also a configuring element when Deedee and Shahid are concerned. Each character's identity markers are shaped according to various parameters and distinctive experiences; however, there is one thing in common: identity is always on the move.

To conclude, this thesis has attempted to explore the fluid nature of identity which is configured according to many variables such as religious practice, political activism, the arts and sexual discourse. Kureishi's novels fictionalize that identity can never be reified by the essentialist pre-givens of the traditional ideologies. In a multicultural world, rather than assimilation, it is important to grasp the unstable nature of identity in order to respect cultural differences. Thus, in a world where the dominant voices do not/cannot suppress the marginal ones, identity, national or individual, will keep on transforming itself.

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