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Author: Agnieszka Stanecka

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Agnieszka Stanecka

**UPROOTEDNESS: HANIF KUREISHI'S EARLY
WORKS AND THE QUESTION OF POSTCOLONIAL
(DIS)ORDER**

**Supervisor:
Prof. dr hab. Zbigniew Białas**

Katowice 2009

**UNIwersytet Śląski
Wydział Filologiczny
Instytut Kultur i Literatur
Anglojęzycznych**

Agnieszka Stanecka

**WYKORZENIENIE: KONDYCJA POSTKOLONIALNA
W ŚWIECIE WCZESNYCH UTWORÓW
HANIFA KUREISHI**

**Promotor:
Prof. dr hab. Zbigniew Białas**

Katowice 2009

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Contents

| | |
|---|--------|
| Introduction | p. 4 |
| Chapter I | |
| HERITAGE – FROM ROUTES TO ROOTS | p. 18 |
| 1.1. Traditional Ambivalence – Ambivalent Tradition | p. 19 |
| 1.2. Religious Fervour | p. 41 |
| 1.3. From the Suburbs to Postcolonial London | p. 51 |
| Chapter II | |
| CLOSENESS AND DISTANCE | p. 59 |
| 2.1. Mimic Souls, Oriental Bodies | p. 60 |
| 2.2. Hybridity of In-Betweens | p. 78 |
| 2.3. Racism and Domestic Colonialism | p. 90 |
| 2.4. Postcolonial Disorders: Inferiority Complex, Depression and Madness | p. 98 |
| Chapter III | |
| POSTCOLONIAL MEN AND WOMEN | p. 115 |
| 3.1. Divine Fathers, Sinful Sons | p. 115 |
| 3.2. Women – Absent and Marginalized | p. 129 |
| 3.3. Masculinity at Risk | p. 146 |
| Conclusions | p. 156 |
| Bibliography | p. 160 |
| Streszczenie | p. 165 |

INTRODUCTION

*Bad times, after all,
traditionally produce good books!*

Salman Rushdie

The subject of the dissertation was provoked by frequent and incomprehensible confusion around many postcolonial writers, including Hanif Kureishi. There seems to be much trouble with clear and obvious classification of such writers. What is more, they themselves often do not agree with being put on a shelf with postcolonial literature. The unexplained fear of being placed among postcolonial, which does not mean minoritarian writers, leads us to a further discussion of reasons and results of becoming a voice of one's community.

When asked about the label of postcoloniality, Hanif Kureishi answers: "I can't think about myself as a postcolonial writer"². The term seems to be threatening, even repulsive for Kureishi and it makes him evade the uncomfortable and restrictive area to cross the frontiers of categorization. The author's endeavour to avoid being marginalized by duality of his identity and biracial heritage results in his constant combat: "[c]ritics have written that I'm caught between two cultures. I'm not...I'm British; I've made it in England"³. Concurrently, Kureishi often complains that such a classification is unnecessary and it imposes limits on writers. Kureishi claims that "the postcolonial label has always bothered [him] slightly", and it is "a narrow term" which makes him feel "squashed into a category that [he doesn't] quite fit"⁴. All these aspects dishearten Kureishi and elucidate, to some extent, his unwillingness to accept the

¹ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, London: Granta Books, (1981) 1992, p.3.

² Nahem Yousaf, *Hanif Kureishi's 'The Buddha of Suburbia'*, London: Continuum Books, 2002, p. 15.

³ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, Austin: University of Texas, 1998, p. 7.

⁴ Nahem Yousaf, *Hanif Kureishi's 'The Buddha of Suburbia'*, op. cit., p. 16.

terminology. “Perhaps people will get bored with postcolonialism and carry on reading my stuff”⁵, commented the writer in an interview in 2001. In his recent writing Kureishi refuses to re-write endlessly the story of an ethnically mixed man, and most of all, his own experiences. But does it make him less postcolonial than in the 1980s and 1990s? Kureishi’s deep feeling of being limited and trapped in a stuffy, claustrophobic category induced him to abandon “ethnic” matters and experiment with new forms, but mainly with new subjects. “I want to feel free to not only be an Asian writer but a writer who is also Asian”⁶, says Kureishi.

In the light of the above discussion, the dissertation aims to answer the question concerning Kureishi’s literary belonging. Regardless of what one thinks at this point of discussion, Hanif Kureishi is often classified as a postcolonial. A secondary subject of the dissertation is thus to show why it is possible to place Kureishi among postcolonials. What makes him a postcolonial writer? To what extent and how is his writing shaped and influenced by his dual heritage? What is his attitude towards the issues of “ethnicity” and “race”? How does he cross the frontiers of postcoloniality and where does it take him?

Hanif Kureishi’s undeniable involvement in racial and gender issues became the fact as early as in 1970s. He began his career of a writer with short stories published in pornographic magazines, but soon the minimalist form of ‘fringe’ drama and burning political matters of 1970s, injustice and disillusionment of the society with the Labour Party, unemployment and racism drew his attention. 1985 opens the period of Kureishi’s career which I am mostly interested in: he published *My Beautiful Laundrette*, a play about racial conflicts, sexual experiences and experiments, fluid genders and subverted clichés. The following works, *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid* (1988), *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), *The Black Album* (1995) and *My Son the*

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Colin MacCabe, “Interview: Hanif Kureishi on London”, in Ruvani Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, Devon: Northcote House Publishers, 2002, p. 103.

Fanatic (1997) only confirm Kureishi's position as both the voice of Asian society and the opponent of prevalent social and sexual order.

1970s and later 1980s was a difficult time for ethnically mixed writers living in Britain. The themes of minorities or racialism were not popular and Kureishi was frequently warned against entering "a writers' ghetto". Nevertheless, the author unconcerned about alerting remarks cleared a path for a new generation of British-Asian or simply ethnically mixed writers such as Monica Ali, Gautam Malkani, Hari Kunzru or Zadie Smith. Kureishi focused in his works on British Asian lifestyle with its tradition, elements of culture and techniques of assimilation. Bart Moore-Gilbert argues that Kureishi "has acted as a pathfinder for (...) [the] explosion of British-Asian cultural expression in a number of domains"⁷. Indeed, his writing, and most of all, the films based on his scripts allowed many people of British-Asian origin to start or expand their careers. Numerous actors or film directors have emerged in the wake of Kureishi's success. Some of the most interesting ones are Rita Wolf, who played Tania in *My Beautiful Laundrette* and later developed her career in the theatre, Gordon Warneke – Omar in *My Beautiful Laundrette* or Ayub Khan Din – Sammie in *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*. All of them continued their professional careers in theatres or films confirming the advantage of playing first in Kureishi's films⁸. Undoubtedly, he helped to create British-Asian cinema and introduced the theme of minorities to media.

Today's unrestricted interest in Bollywood films, Indian cuisine or even style of dressing has much to do with the popularization of Asian culture in general. The readers, loyal to Kureishi's novels and plays, have an opportunity to discover the nature of Asian sentimentality, complex but refreshing spirituality and eastern conception of the world. In Sukhdev Sandhu's view "Pakis were unknown material, off the cultural radar" and "young Asians had no cultural ambassadors or role models"⁹. Hanif Kureishi became the representative of the visibly increasing community. Although Salman

⁷ Bart Moore – Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001, p. 190.

⁸ After Ruvani Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 122.

⁹ Sukhdev Sandhu, *London Calling: How Black and Asian Writers Imagined a City*, in Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 1.

Rushdie or V.S. Naipaul had started their careers before Kureishi, what differentiates them is the fact that Kureishi is not “a displaced postcolonial writing *back* to the centre; he writes *from* the centre”¹⁰. He seems to be fully authorized to represent Asian minority and write in their name because of his insider/outsider point of view, mixed background and experiences of a hyphenated Anglo-Asian. Unfortunately, the author was and still is frequently accused of failing to provide “positive images” of his community. He is criticised not only for homo- and bisexual characters or unconventional minority protagonists but also for his personal separation from the Asians. He has never lived in derelict, poor areas but in affluent suburbs, and later in the centre of London. What is more, he acquired good education, his language is polished and sophisticated, and he does not speak Urdu or visit Pakistan frequently enough to be entitled to represent Asian community. Even Kureishi’s mother admitted in an interview that her son tried to make impression on his readers by telling untrue stories: “I suppose it’s trendy nowadays for an author to pretend they had a working-class background, but Hanif had everything he wanted as a child”¹¹.

Regardless of the above debates Kureishi’s first novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia* brought him fame, commercial success and numerous awards, for instance Whitbread Prize for Best First Novel of 1990. Somewhat political, full of veiled humour and lively action, the novel is said to be the epitome of *Bildungsroman* genre concurrently becoming the symbol of growing up in London of 1970s. It mirrors multi-ethnic Britain and agrees with Yousaf’s view that “[n]one of the characters lives in an ethnicity-free no-man’s-land”¹². Interestingly, the novel is claimed to be highly autobiographical. The story which initially was supposed to be about the city became a story of an Anglo-Asian hybrid. Kureishi focused on the subjects of unstable identity, gender and shaken sexuality juxtaposed to hypocritical and binaries – based English society. Its popularity was provoked by the fact that it was a novel ahead of its time and Kureishi,

¹⁰ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 1.

¹¹ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 15.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 74.

unconcerned by the forthcoming ‘death of the novel’, made it his most outstanding and invigorating work. It gained the acceptance and approval of not only traditional readership but also homosexual, bisexual, minoritarian and feminist audience.

The Black Album, Kureishi’s second novel, was a response to the fatwa issued by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1988 against Rushdie after *Satanic Verses* were published. The event became only a point of departure for pivotal discussion of fanaticism, the impact Islam exerted on its followers, hostility evoked in Britain by the controversial religion and reciprocal intolerance. Obviously Kureishi “took a vocal stand against the censorship, violent threats, and terrorism”¹³, but it did not influence his sensitive perception of racially and culturally hybrid identities, negligence of tradition and mimic command of “mixed” protagonists. Similarly, *My Son the Fanatic* which originally was a film script, discusses the role of religion, subversion of a traditional father – son relation and deconstruction of morality in its pure form.

It seems though that Kureishi’s discussion of fluid and complex identity as well as his frequent mentioning of two dissonant cultures and traditions within one protagonist place him within the range of postcolonial studies. Although the attention of feminists is constantly provoked by Kureishi’s works, he consciously evades the theoretical debates of lesbian or female matters. Instead, he concentrates on various kinds of “othering” accessible to his characters and lost/invented/dislodged and androgynous identities. The undeniable biracial and bicultural experience corroborates the protagonists’ disenchantment with nationalism and jingoism for the benefit of liberalism, same sex relationship and a prolonged process of self-discovery.

In his treatment of dual identity and celebration of difference Kureishi is undoubtedly indebted to Salman Rushdie who not only encouraged him to publish his works but, most of all, cleared the passage for complexity, deconstruction of trait models of nationality and volatile closures. Kureishi shares Rushdie’s postmodernist idea of exile which, in case of culturally crossed subjects, is an ever present but also enabling experience. Kureishi, however, goes a step ahead as his tangible England

¹³ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 121.

surpasses the ‘magical’ and imaginary dreamland. It is therefore, not a rapid exile into the selfhood, but rather a permanent and long lasting peregrination to a satisfactory state of nirvana. Kureishi’s realistic vision of contemporary postcolonial Britain makes his oeuvre credible and approachable although, as Bradley Buchanan thinks, his “awareness of the arbitrariness and contingency of identity (be it racial, religious, or cultural)”¹⁴ brings him closer to postmodern writers.

Kureishi questions not only traditional views of gender, identity, religion, tradition and singularity of meaning. He also effectively employs the elements of British history dovetailing with Indian past and present and makes the readers aware of the indissolubility of colonial times with contemporary condition of a postcolonial man. He poses a note of interrogation about the impact of the past on particular protagonists. Their unique position of “in-betweeners” allows the author to employ the concept of ambivalence in relation to cross-cultural and cross-historical experiences of the characters. In such a way, although Kureishi used the term defined by Homi Bhabha and deriving from psychoanalysis, he depicted its application in modern multicultural society. Mimicry, as one of the stages between love and hate approach to western values is utilized and, not incidentally, juxtaposed to complete debasement of the prevalent and popular features. Similarly, Kureishi’s dominant thematic preoccupation with Edward Said’s ideas of oriental structures, subaltern positioning and “the other” helps the author to redefine and redraw the proclaimed but hackneyed and old-fashioned issues of hetero-sex relationships, purity of culture and nationality and, already subjugated, heteronormative values.

Interrogating traditional gender roles demands a fresh disposition of father – son relations in a reliable settlement, and a new view on a position of a masculine protagonist. Much space is devoted to the Freudian idea of Oedipus complex but, what Kureishi focuses on, is not the relation of sons and their mothers but sons and fathers. Kureishi in his plays and fiction concentrates on the insecure and blurred placement of a postcolonial man, and he proclaims and anticipates “a death of masculinity” which is

¹⁴ Bradley Buchanan, *Hanif Kureishi*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 14.

itself often a subject of critique. Interestingly, the author does not identify himself with either of the genders as his concurrent negligence and debasement of female characters in his fiction exclude him from supporting the feminist or lesbian criticism as well. The strategies of abrogation and appropriation introduced by Kureishi follow Bill Ashcroft's (et al.) discussion traced in *The Empire Writes Back*, which again takes the readers back to ambivalent attitude to metropolitan culture.

Hanif Kureishi's oeuvre has already provoked the attention of numerous academics and theoreticians. Consequently, there have been published six monographs on the writer. The first critical biography was Kenneth C. Kaleta's *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller* (1998). Kaleta treats Kureishi both as a novelist and an essayist, but also as a screenwriter. The author, himself a professor of Radio-TV-Film at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey, is deeply interested and involved in Kureishi's adaptations of his novels and scripts. On the other hand, as the first biographer, Kaleta interviewed Kureishi frequently and read his works in their first original unpublished copies. In spite of few critical remarks, Kaleta's work is a profound and versatile analysis of Kureishi's works beginning with *My Beautiful Laundrette* and finishing on *Love in a Blue Time*.

The second publication is Bart Moore-Gilbert's *Hanif Kureishi* (2001), a volume adding to the series of Manchester University Press: Contemporary World Writers. The book discusses Kureishi's literary output in the following groups: the plays, the films, the novels and recent work up to *Sleep With Me*. Moore-Gilbert's critical overview is an objective and accessible source. What is important, the author does not refrain from criticism and negative evaluation of some of the works by Kureishi, supporting his views with critical material from academic journals, newspaper articles, reviews or even Kureishi's explanations.

Another work is a reader's guide, an introductory study of Kureishi's first and most acclaimed novel. Nahem Yousaf's *Hanif Kureishi's "The Buddha of Suburbia"* (2002) represents the series entitled Continuum Contemporaries. After a short biographical introduction probably the most interesting part of the guide follows, that is

an interview with Hanif Kureishi. Then Yousaf continues with a full-length interpretation of the novel and summary of the novel's reception. The author pays attention to the adaptation of the novel, finishing his work with useful questions for discussion and a list for further reading. Although Yousaf's work is rather an inspiration for students' discussions, it contributes to general comprehension of Kureishi's humour, his idea of postcolonialism or his attitude towards the issues of remembering and memory.

More critical and feminist view is presented by Ruvani Ranasinha in her study entitled *Hanif Kureishi* (2002). She discusses Kureishi's works in particular thematic groups like political commitment, identity, muslimophobia or mid-life crisis. There is, however, a strong connection and common feminist idea for all the discussed works which makes Ranasinha's study exigent and demanding. She frequently draws attention to Kureishi's negligence, and even failure to create reliable and honestly depicted female characters. She is equally critical of the picture of Islam, as in her opinion, "Kureishi never explores any forms of Islam that are not 'fundamentalist'"¹⁵, which, on the other hand, results from his lack of first-hand experience. Ranasinha's severe remarks represent, in fact, extremely useful and interesting female views providing the reader with new look and fresh ideas. What is important, as the first critic, she discusses *Gabriel's Gift* published in 2001.

The next monograph on Kureishi is Susie Thomas's *Hanif Kureishi* (2005). The edition gives the reader an opportunity to explore Kureishi's unknown statements and opinions. Thomas explores the critical material which Kureishi's work has received and equips the reader with a wide range of critical perspectives. The monograph includes nine essays, each devoted to one of the works, and a conclusion pointing to Kureishi's future projects.

Bradley Buchanan's *Hanif Kureishi* (2007) provides an approachable introduction to Kureishi's writing placing his fiction and plays in cross-cultural and historical

¹⁵ Ruvani Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 100.

contexts. It also offers a recent interview with the author and supplies the reader with an extended discussion of Kureishi's most popular works.

As far as Polish publications are concerned, there has been only one PhD written at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań by Dagmara Drewniak entitled *'Imaginary Homelands' Lost and Found in the Selected Texts of the Postcolonial Literature Written in English* (2002). Dagmara Drewniak discussed three postcolonial writers: Salman Rushdie, Philip Michael Ondaatje and Hanif Kureishi. No theoretical work has been written or translated yet.

My dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. All the mentioned issues overlap and are analyzed from the point of view of postcoloniality. The first chapter: "Heritage – From Routes to Roots" discusses the attitude of two generations of Asians towards tradition brought from once colonized countries to metropolia. It deploys Edward Said's theory of "the Orient" and assumed but overrated sex involvement of the east to discuss the issues of geographical conditioning of sexual discipline and propensity to such an activity. The chapter also applies the term of Hindutva or root fascination utilized by Dilip Hiro to present one of the feasible approaches to oriental culture. Homi Bhabha's views of ambivalent nature of postcolonial subjects are employed to discuss the cultural elements present in life of the characters. The code of dressing, food fascination, search for authenticity, purity of culture, arranged marriages, misinterpretation of patriarchy in new cultural context – all the themes are subject to Bhabha's theory of acceptance and rejection. Gayatri Spivak's theory of "the burden of English" overlaps with Bill Ashcroft's (et al.) discussion of abrogation and appropriation of the language. This section of the first chapter discusses, to a large extent, a mental and sentimental journey of Kureishi's protagonists to India and Pakistan. The complex issue of Islam evoking confusion, fear and fanaticism is another subject of deliberation. It is depicted not only from the perspective of ethnically mixed protagonists but also their white friends. Salman Rushdie's voice is introduced to the discussion to supply objectivizations of the religious issues opposed by Ruvani Ranasinha's accusations. Frantz Fanon's stages leading from assimilation to rebellion

serve the purpose of penetrating the structure of dissonant elucidations of the good and the evil. The last part of the chapter discusses the problem of dual estrangement: from society and, more literally, from the centre of the capital. It is not only a recurring motif in Kureishi's writing, but it also became a symbol of a minoritarian protagonist who cannot evade the inferiority complex of a suburban boy and the unrestricted desire to move "to the centre".

Chapter Two: "Closeness and Distance" discusses the metaphorical space between racially mixed subjects and the assumed stage of assimilation or "nirvana". Deploying Fanon's theory of psychological marginalization the possible techniques of absorption and being absorbed are discussed. Homi Bhabha's understanding of the phenomenon of mimicry is to present and confirm the fact that hyphenated protagonists find it indispensable both to adapt and adopt the western values which frequently leads them to "mental colonization". Searching for the reasons of the desperate attempt to become one with often debased culture I hope to point to the malleability of biracial identity or even "double consciousness" suggested by Philip Tew. Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity helps to explain the constant feeling of alienation and being in-between. Being "stuck" between two countries, two cultures, two languages and two traditions results in amalgamation of two opposing selves. It is to corroborate the fact that sexual and racial hybrids lack a clear division into the Occident and the Orient (Edward Said). The next part of the chapter devoted to aggression and mutual hostility of racial groups is the result of an unsatisfactory situation and location in the dreamland of Asian minority. Violence and lack of tolerance induce the readers to assume that the process of colonization/ghettoization is not over and it constantly exerts an impact on hybridized subjects. Numerous questions about the moral side of the unresolved but still peripheral conflict are posed. London is presented as the place where colonial order prevails and domestic colonialism is practised. The last part of the chapter deals with postcolonial heritage, namely various disorders accompanying a subject in new reality. The protagonists' tendency to melancholy, depression or even madness is discussed in the context of their 'postcoloniality'. Michel Foucault's theories of madness are helpful

in categorization of numerous sorts and reasons for madness of the disempowered group members.

Chapter Three: “Postcolonial Men and Women” anatomizes the contemporary position of a postcolonial subject. I begin with the discussion of a struggle and dependence relationship between ex-colonial fathers and their postcolonial sons. In order to search it I deploy Jacques Lacan’s notion of the-Name-of-the-Father and I endeavour to prove that from among three assumed “fathers”, the Symbolic Father becomes the signifier in Kureishi’s works. I also apply Julia Kristeva’s view on permanent conflict between the two. Literal (fathers’ knowledge of Punjabi or Urdu) and metaphorical misunderstandings (generational and cultural gaps) become the core of the dynamic and ever changing relations. The (in)significance of a female character in Kureishi’s writing is another subject of research. The identification of a postcolonial (and not only) woman with moral defection, frivolity, irresponsibility and oriental seduction or even aggression corroborates Said’s theory of a sexually exaggerated female representative which, on the other hand, offers a limited perception of her versatile activity. I point to moral and emotional bonds of the married characters, and their marital and extramarital relations. The “silent shadows”, as Said tends to call postcolonial women, are portrayed as transparent, absent, marginalized, inert figures, therefore “doubly colonized”. Another group of Kureishi’s female characters represents overwhelmingly strong and dominating women who “colonize” men in order to deprive them of their historical role of an authority. The last point takes us to the last part of the chapter devoted to male characters who lost their assumed features. They tend to be helpless, immature, unable to deal with their fatherhood, marriages and every day problems. The crisis of masculinity and constantly ongoing erosion of the assumed male toughness and resistance are identified with Leela Gandhi’s assumption that India always lacked real men and therefore became subject of colonization. Freudian concept of “unheimlich” and Wulf Sachs’ idea of “Hamletism” are utilized as possible explanations of the general impotence of men.

Methodologically, the discussion will be placed in the framework of postcolonial studies with reference to their historical and social contexts. The initial placement of Hanif Kureishi's works results from the fact of social qualification of the biracial writer and similar contextualization of his protagonists. Peter Childs and Patrick Williams' statement that postcolonial population are "peoples formerly colonized by the West"¹⁶ seemingly facilitates the categorization as the definition creates in fact "an exclusive ghetto"¹⁷, as Salman Rushdie calls the group subject to classification. Obviously, it is important to understand the variety of categories and sorts of postcoloniality. There is a large kaleidoscope of postcolonial experiences and it is, therefore, advisable to refrain oneself from simplifications and stereotyping. John McLeod's crucial remark that "historical, geographical and cultural specifics are *vital* to both the writing and the reading of a text"¹⁸ might be a helpful piece of advice for those who intend to enter the world of postcolonial literature.

Although the dissertation is based predominantly on postcolonial studies, it seems all too easy to disqualify other realms, theories and approaches. The frequency but also the way of introducing female protagonists links Kureishi's writing with feminist and lesbian issues. The studies are applied in the dissertation to originate the dialogue on a situation and role of a postcolonial woman, or even a white woman observed by Kureishi and described in his postcolonial works. Interestingly, "feminism and postcolonialism share the mutual goal of challenging forms of oppression"¹⁹, and it seems inappropriate to avoid the subjects of unequal treatment, double colonization, oppression, the analysis of a subaltern woman in relation to patriarchy. The discussion evolves around the way of presenting women both in relation with men/sons but also with other women.

¹⁶ Peter Childs, Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, Essex: Longman Pearson Education, 1997, p. 12.

¹⁷ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 63.

¹⁸ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 174.

In spite of the dominance of feminist theories in the discussion of gender studies, it is impossible to discredit male studies while reading Kureishi's works. In order to keep some balance concerning men and women in postcolonial literature the analysis is extended to critical insight from psychoanalysis, which seems to be extremely useful while discussing male relations and father - son bonds. Freud's understanding of a male role and paternity, broadened later on by Julia Kristeva and Jacques Lacan seems to be helpful in analysis of Kureishi's postcolonial crisis of masculinity and unbalanced attitude to fatherhood.

Obviously, it is indispensable to resort in the dissertation to cultural studies. Kureishi's specific ethnic situation provokes the perception of postcolonialism as "the right of all people on this earth to the same material and cultural well-being"²⁰. Therefore, it is essential to place not only the author of our dispute in a particular historical, cultural and social context, but also to comprehend the dilemmas and numerous elements of tradition incorporated to the new lifestyle by the protagonists of Kureishi's works. The dissonant cultures of the east and the west become the structural matrix in which the postcolonial plot is placed. The protagonists absorbing and adapting to both of the worlds include both cultures and allow the readers for cross-cultural reading of the texts.

All the methods mentioned above apply the strategies of comparative studies. It seems, thus, well-grounded to use for comparison the works of other writers who come under the term of postcolonial literature and are nowadays active in Britain. I resort to such writers wherever they appear relevant to my argument and their works help to illustrate or support my discussion of Kureishi's works. Such an application of postcolonial writers' oeuvre serves the purpose of making the discussion more global not only from geographical point of view (*Zadie Smith's On Beauty* is partially placed in America) but also as far as genres are concerned (Moniza Alvi's poetry). An additional reason for resorting to other British writers is to place Kureishi's literary

²⁰ Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 2.

output within the framework of contemporary British literature. Nevertheless, so as not change the point of departure of our discussion, all the authors whose writing is applied in the dissertation work and live in the United Kingdom.

It is important to emphasize once again that the dissertation is monographic and it discusses Hanif Kureishi's literary output only from his "postcolonial period". The reason for exclusion of other works is that it is in fact this phase of writing that made Kureishi a successful, world-wide known writer and film maker. The 'fringe' period is said to be the time of searching for the right place in literary world. The second period called "postcolonial", for a change, is described as the successful and mature writing with accurate themes and points of discussion. What comes later, that is film making and 'male crisis' literature, is rather discussed in terms of desperate escape from burning but limiting issues of race and ethnicity. The works which are classified as "postcolonial" are *My Beautiful Launderette* (1986), *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid* (1988), *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), *The Black Album* (1995), *My Son the Fanatic* (1997). The thesis attempts to demonstrate Hanif Kureishi's preoccupation with postcolonial issues and to observe them anew.

CHAPTER I

*O, my shoes are Japanese
These trousers English, if you please
On my head, red Russian hat -
My heart's Indian for all that*¹

Salman Rushdie

HERITAGE – FROM ROUTES TO ROOTS

The value and strength of society or an ethnic group depend on numerous factors. Its cultural achievements, inherited tradition, language, history, and religion are just a few issues that go under the heading term of “heritage”. It is of special value for minorities, whether religious or ethnic, because heritage allows to define identity and place an individual in society. Theoretical sources explain heritage as “a measure of genetic inheritance” claiming that each “organism is the product of both inheritance and environmental influence”². No wonder Hanif Kureishi’s writing deals with the idea of being dependent on the past and all that it offers and, on the other hand, being soaked deeply in the present. Kureishi’s protagonists are not free of generational dilemmas as their biracialism does not make them automatically a part of multiracial society.

The first part of the chapter discusses the role of tradition and Asian culture in the life of two generations of Asians. Arranged marriages, mother tongues brought from India or Pakistan and typical roles ascribed to Asian women living in Britain, these are just a few of important issues discussed in the first part of the chapter.

In the second part of the chapter special attention is paid to a significant and influential factor, i.e. religion. After the explosions of 2005 in London and the trials of

¹ Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, London: Vintage Books (1988), 2006, p. 5.

² Ellis Cashmore (ed.), *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*, London: Routledge, (1984) 1996, p. 160.

terrorist attacks at Heathrow in August 2006 Islam and its followers arouse suspicion, and the problem of religion appears to be more and more complex. The author of the dissertation through the prism of Kureishi's works will analyse the differences in attitude of both generations towards Islam. Although it seems to be difficult to discuss faith in modern reality, Kureishi had been aware of the complexity of the issue even before September 11. His religious interests, although he claims to be an atheist, influence his protagonists as well.

The last part of the chapter is devoted to the constant feeling of alienation and, connected with it, the motif of an ever-lasting escape. It is a recurrent thematic element in Kureishi's works and it seems to be inseparably linked to the protagonists of mixed origins. Kureishi's characters are united by emotional and physical disability to settle in one place. The dominant escape dream concerns the movement from the suburbs to London, which often proves to be a great disappointment for Kureishi's protagonists. There are significant discrepancies between real London and the imaginary London of the postcolonials.

1.1. TRADITIONAL AMBIVALENCE – AMBIVALENT TRADITION

Tradition shapes attitudes and influences life, as long as one respects it or resorts to it. It is a particular mode of behaviour and state of mind which is passed down from generation to generation. Kureishi's protagonists are involved in the debate about the role of memory and history, just like the author himself is. "Where your own life and that of your family intersects with general history is significant in terms of personal, psychological and social history",³ comments Kureishi. Needless to say, the characters of his novels and plays cannot escape the impact of historical events on their lives. How much has survived and how much is lost? Are young Asians in Kureishi's works interested in their parents' mother country, religion or language? Does their cultural

³ Nahem Yousaf, *Hanif Kureishi's 'The Buddha of Suburbia'*, op.cit, p. 12.

heritage obstruct or facilitate the process of assimilation? These are some of the questions to be discussed in the present chapter.

It is worth noting that the immemorial generational conflict has a new dimension in postcolonial Britain. The representatives of the first group of Indians who had arrived to England, and London, particularly in 1950s, settled there and created the Asian diaspora. According to Robin Cohen, a diasporic group consists of people “living together in one country who ‘acknowledge that “the old country” – a nation often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore – always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions”⁴. According to *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*, diaspora means “practically any community which is transnational, that is, whose social economic and political networks cross the borders of nation-states”⁵. Without doubt, diaspora is the outcome of “forced migration, either as a quest for employment (...) or as the result of enslavement”⁶.

Diaspora however, is not only a social category, but mostly a state of consciousness. Kureishi places his protagonists in diasporic reality of London. In spite of cosmopolitan appearance, the city’s unfriendliness forces its biracial or Asian dwellers to search for new solutions and ways of living. Each of the characters domesticates English reality in his own way endeavouring to settle there and strike roots in the soil. There are, therefore, different faces of diasporic people. Papa, the protagonist of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, used to be a great journalist and “the clever one”⁷ in Bombay. After many years of living in London he is not able to shape his own world of values. Dispirited and broken by his wife’s suicide, he never managed to generate the mechanism for survival or assimilation. For a contrast, Nasser, Papa’s brother grabbed his big chance, in fact he tore it “from [an Englishman] with [his] hands” (p. 20) becoming a wealthy businessman. Nasser pursuing his economic dream achieved

⁴ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* in John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 207.

⁵ Ellis Cashmore, *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*, op. cit., p. 100.

⁶ Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999, p. 368.

⁷ Hanif Kureishi, *My Beautiful Laundrette* in *Collected Screenplays 1*, London: Faber and Faber, (1986) 2002, p. 19 (All quotations in the text will be from this edition).

a financial success but he lost contact with his “brothers” and traditional values. Although he speaks Urdu and wears traditional clothes at home, his Muslim upbringing does not prevent him from having a love affair with an Englishwoman, Rachel or despising his poor fellow-citizens.

Within the kaleidoscope of ethnically mixed people another aspect perhaps needs critical attention, namely the seductive features of diasporic people. If the reader analyses Rachel’s attitude towards Nasser, he/she can be struck by its predictability. Edward Said in *Orientalism* suggested that “the Orient seems still to suggest not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, deep generative energies”⁸. Similarly, Dorota Kołodziejczyk discusses, in historical context, the relation between geographical conditioning and sexual impulse⁹. She claims that such an opinion is in concordance with the view of the British people on ruling the subaltern in XIX-th century.

Without doubt Kureishi’s protagonists engage the eastern spirituality to create and give shape to *modern diaspora*. Modernity in this context means development of “distinctive cultures which both preserve and often extend and develop (...) originary cultures”¹⁰. The dreamy nature of the Asians and their tendency to resort to mysticism and supernatural forces appear to be the source of seduction for “the colonizers”. Eva Kay, a volatile and charismatic white woman (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) is fascinated not by Haroon himself but rather by his originality and otherworldliness. Even Haroon’s son appears to be “(...) so exotic, so original!” that Eva follows the Amirs’ reasoning deprived of her “armour on her feelings”¹¹. Except for Mrs Kay, there are also many young girls lured by the mixture of “Occident” (English features) and “Orient” (Asian

⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London: Penguin Books, (1978) 1995, p. 188.

⁹ Dorota Kołodziejczyk, “Uwiedzeni Orientem – europejskie fantazje o haremie”, in *Czas kultury*, no 1/2003, Poznań, p. 56 (translation mine, A.S.).

¹⁰ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts*, London: Routledge 2000, p. 70.

¹¹ Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, London: Faber and Faber, 1990, pp. 9-10 (All quotations in the text will be from this edition).

features).¹² Both Haroon and Nasser become objectified by white women's desire. Unaware of it, they are turned into a commodity subject to obnoxious evaluation and incidental placement within the society. On the other hand, Oriental is seductive, tempting, invigorating, occasionally dangerous, worth combating prevalent class and race order. It is confirmed by Bhikhu Parekh's report where he claims that

sexual rivalries in sexist and patriarchal contexts exacerbate fears and fantasies among white people about the supposed sexuality, promiscuity and fecundity of people believed to be racially different¹³.

Not surprisingly the Asian characters in white people's views often tend to be "closer to nature, unreason and instinct"¹⁴ which obviously places them in an inferior position and makes them both sexually attractive, exotic and instinctive but also threatening and volatile.

It might be interesting to add to the discussion the voice of another biracial writer. Zadie Smith was born to an English father and a Jamaican mother in 1975 in North London. Her acclaimed novel *White Teeth* not only brought her fame, but also placed her among the most prominent ethnic writers. Although her background is different from Kureishi's, their ideas seem to cross in many points of representation of multiethnic society in Britain. Smith's definition of tradition cooperates with Kureishi's understanding of western fascination with oriental remnants. Smith claims that tradition is "dangerous" as it is "a far homelier concoction: poppy seeds ground into tea; a sweet cocoa drink laced with cocaine; the kind of thing your grandmother might have made"¹⁵.

Smith's appreciation of tradition and its comparison with alluring magic of eastern spirituality resemble Kureishi's depiction of Haroon (*The Buddha of Suburbia*). From the very beginning of the séance offered to Eva's friends "[Haroon] seemed to know he had their attention and that they'd do as he asked" (p. 13). It was left

¹² More about the juxtaposition of the two in Said's "Orientalism" chapter II. According to Said Orient is mystical and seductive whereas Occident is a rational and practical pattern to follow. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, op. cit., pp. 252-253.

¹³ Bhikhu Parekh, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, London: Profile Books, 2000, p. 67.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, London: Penguin Books, 2000, p. 193.

unnoticed, however, that he resorted rapidly to his oriental skills when he began to lose control over his personal and emotional life with Margaret. He searched for internal peace, balance and expression of his true self: “I don’t care about money. There’s always money. I must understand these secret things” (p. 27), says Haroon meaning more advanced state of happiness and inwardness.

The term of “reversed imperialism”¹⁶ used by Kureishi applies to the situation as, metaphorically speaking, Haroon Amir becomes the colonizer of the depressed white people crushed by every day life difficulties. Not only does he accept the role of a spiritual leader and uses his charm to entertain people but he also gives them hope for catharsis. Not surprisingly then, Ted, Eva’s deceived and domesticated husband, becomes the epitome of the “followers” who get addicted to Papa’s teachings and, according to John McLeod, he is subject to the process of “colonizing the mind”¹⁷. The term obviously referred originally to the western culture overflowing and dominating the culture of the colonized. In this “reversed” context, however, Kureishi emphasizes that it also works the other way round. Similarly, Bart Moore-Gilbert claims that Kureishi allows Haroon to take over the role of a colonizer whose undeniable impact on the colonized brings him to the centre of attention:

[he] parodies the narrative of empire as an evangelising project and reverses the power relations embodied in colonial proselytism. Instead of Indian natives compliantly absorbing the religious wisdom of the West, the native British seek deliverance from their ersatz immigrant *guru*¹⁸.

Shahid, the protagonist of *The Black Album*, is seduced by poetry and high literature, and therefore looks for deeper emotions and intelligence in western culture and women. He appreciates “security and purpose”¹⁹, but still he is not satisfied with lack of morality and shallow life in England. Subconsciously he feels that Asian culture has more to offer. During his visit at Deedee’s, after watching the video Shahid, tried

¹⁶ Hanif Kureishi, *The Rainbow Sign*, in Hanif Kureishi, *Dreaming and Scheming*, London: Faber and Faber, 2002, p. 40.

¹⁷ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 18.

¹⁸ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 123.

¹⁹ Hanif Kureishi, *The Black Album*, London: Faber and Faber, 1995, p. 8 (All quotations in the text will be from this edition).

desperately “to think of a comment to make. The word “seamless” kept entering his head. *That was the level to aim at*” (p. 48)²⁰. To Shahid’s frustration, seamless assimilation is impossible which will soon become the reason for his subversive actions. Bill Ashcroft claims that postcolonial subjects “realize their identity in difference rather than in essence”²¹ which might be a discouragement and negation of all aspirations and efforts of mimic men. Therefore, Shahid, colonized by high culture of the colonizer, feels entrapped and disillusioned with its lack of application and meaning in every day life of London/metropolis. Convinced about the superiority of western pattern of intellectual and social development, the boy cannot transcend prevalent order of things.

If one accepts Francis Fukuyama’s view that radical actions of “the subaltern” are “the effect of looking for identity”²² it is possible to draw the conclusion that “voluntary othering” to which some of Kureishi’s protagonists are subject, is a more peaceful way of searching for one’s place in society. Clothes seem to identify people and reflect their inward considerations. Shahid agrees to become “the Other” for a brief moment when he tries on a white cotton salwar kamiz. To his great disappointment, he feels “a little strange” (p. 131). Crossing the dress code means for Shahid liberation from social and racial hierarchy. He believes that western clothes would place him at the top of the social ladder but his English “costume” is not in keeping with his Indian features and sentimental soul. Nevertheless, the moment of experimenting with his identity is valuable for him. He looks back to his parents’ culture even, as Rushdie writes, “at the risk of being mutated into pillar of salt”²³. Rushdie’s words used in this context confirm the speculation over Shahid’s unstable and complex personality which might have led him to radical Islamists. Bart Moore-Gilbert, however, gives us three

²⁰ Emphasis mine, A.S.

²¹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, London: Routledge, (1989) 1991, p. 167.

²² Francis Fukuyama, “Kłeska wielokulturowości” in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 3/2007, p. 19 (translation mine, A.S.).

²³ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 10.

possible interpretations of the last scene and none of them suggests Shahid's prolonged emotional attachment to Riaz's group²⁴.

In order to compare the techniques of resorting to native culture of other immigrants and exiles in European countries it might be useful to depict the situation of African diaspora. The concept of Negritude might be introduced here in the context of inclination of many immigrants to appropriate some elements of African culture to their lifestyle. Negritude was initiated by Aime Cesaire and Leopold Senghor²⁵. The former was born in Martinique, the French colony in the Caribbean, and the latter in Senegal, French African colony. Negritude is "the awareness and development of African values"²⁶ practiced to emphasize the pride and interest in its achievements. Expanding slightly the definition, it is possible to quote L.V. Thomas who claimed that Negritude can also signify "the rediscovery of one's past, one's culture, one's ancestors and one's language"²⁷, without pointing to any particular country. While in Dilip Hiro's view, Negritude involved "looking as African and fearsome as possible"²⁸, *Hindutva* evokes even more threatening connotations. Tamara Sivanandan claims that "Hindu-ness provides a socially malign example"²⁹ as such nationalist movements frequently involve violence and aggression. Regardless of the implications, both terms induce postcolonial subjects to consider their Oriental, subjugated cultures as templates for placing themselves within western but frequently hostile cultures.

²⁴ Moore-Gilbert gives three possible interpretations of the ending in *The Black Album*. It is possible that Shahid accepts Deedee's point of view, confirming at the same time his wrong choices. Another way suggests that the situation overwhelmed the young boy and he simply escaped from London, and finally it is possible that Shahid accepts Deedee's choice but only partially and temporarily as they both declare to be together "until it stops being fun" (p. 276). The interpretation in Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 147.

²⁵ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit. p. 77.

²⁶ Leopold Senghor in Ellis Cashmore (ed.), *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*, op. cit. pp. 257-258.

²⁷ L.V. Thomas, *Senghor and Negritude*, in Ellis Cashmore (ed.), *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*, op. cit., p. 258.

²⁸ Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British*, London: Grafton Books, (1971)1991, p. 72.

²⁹ Tamara Sivanandan, "Anticolonialism, national liberation, and postcolonial nation formation", in Neil Lazarus (ed.), *Postcolonial Literary Studies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 63.

Nina, the protagonist of Kureishi's short story *With Your Tongue Down My Throat*, re-discovers Pakistani culture when her half-sister, Nadia visits her in London and offers her a gift:

And to me? I've always been a fan of crepe paper and wrapped in it is the Pakistani dress I'm wearing now (with open-toed sandals – handmade). It's gorgeous: yellow and green, threaded with gold, thin summer material³⁰.

Nadia, brought up in Pakistan, does not realize that her sister, Nina "a hybrid Londoner, dreams she can find [Elsewhere] by accepting her Asian heritage"³¹. When Nina walks in the street in her new dress, she becomes an object of racial attacks. The practical application of *Hindutva* only partially proved Edward Said's fear of negative effects of the phenomenon:

to leave the historical world for the metaphysics of essences like *negritude*, Irishness, Islam, or Catholicism is to abandon history for essentializations that have the power to turn human beings against each other (...)³².

Although Kureishi's protagonist poignantly experiences her "root fascination", she finds it an essential and rewarding experience. The assertion of her Pakistani half gives her the feeling of self-confidence and helps her to solve her dilemmas rather than make her boycott English culture. Unfortunately, the affirmation of her Asian identity turns out to be a failure because, as Bradley Buchanan claims, it "earns her the unwanted attentions of "communists and worthies" who see her as an archetypal woman"³³.

Obviously the first generation is more inclined to emphasize their identity through traditional apparel. Omar's uncle (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) is "lying on his bed wearing salwar kamiz", "he eats Indian sweets" (p. 38), and there are "numerous photographs of India" (p. 21) on the walls of his luxurious house. Although his daughter, Tania "wears jeans and T-shirt" (p. 17), there are many guests at his party who wear saris or salwar kamiz. Nasser's wife, Bilquis not only wears traditional

³⁰ Hanif Kureishi, "With Your Tongue Down My Throat", in Hanif Kureishi, *Love in a Blue Time*, London: Faber and Faber, 1997, p. 68.

³¹ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 149.

³² Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994, pp. 228-229.

³³ Bradley Buchanan, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 72.

clothes but mentally she is still in India: she does not comprehend English, she is illiterate and she “is making magical potions from leaves and bird beaks and stuff” (p.68). It is not enough to say that Bilquis continues eastern tradition in London: limited by her husband she never has a chance to recognize what London, the embodiment of western luxury and civilization, has to offer.

In order to present female view on the position of Asian women in Britain it might be interesting to quote Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*. Ali, a daughter of English and Bangladeshi parents came to Britain at the age of three. She represents the youngest generation of diasporic writers and successfully explores the British immigrant experience. Ali’s protagonist, Nazneen, a teenager from a Bangladeshi village leaves her country as a result of an arranged marriage and moves to London to join her husband, Chanu. Although she does not speak English, her observations and conclusions are surprisingly accurate. Most of the time she is kept in awareness of having married a “westernized, (...) educated man” which was obviously “a stroke of luck”³⁴. Both Bilquis and Nazneen find it difficult, if necessary, to assimilate with the British. They both seem to be uneducated and dependent but, at the same time, having their own opinion not only about Britain but also about their husbands and their conduct. However, their respect for Asian tradition and sentiments towards their mother countries are worth emphasizing. The women struggle to survive and to link successfully the two dissonant cultures. Without their husbands’ endorsement they bequeath the elements of their Oriental upbringing, the patterns of behaviour and tradition to posterity.

Nowhere else is “ambivalence” more visible than in dressing styles of the protagonists. The notion of ambivalence itself derives from psychoanalysis and describes “the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizer and colonized”³⁵. It is, in Gregory Castle’s opinion,

³⁴ Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*, London: Black Swan, 2004, p. 45.

³⁵ Bill Ashcroft (et al.), *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts*, op. cit., p. 12.

plainly related to “the multiplicity of choices offered to colonial subjects for identity-formation”³⁶. Kureishi’s young protagonists face the split between Eros (in Freud’s understanding love and fascination) and Thanatos (associated with hatred and fear)³⁷.

Therefore, Karim (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) in spite of his disinclination to modern and weird clothes of his friend, and later lover, white Charlie Hero, chooses to wear “turquoise flared trousers, a blue and white flower-patterned see-through shirt, blue suede boots with Cuban heels” (p. 6), and “a scarlet Indian waistcoat with gold stitching around the edges” (p. 6). His clothes seem to be a courteous bow in direction of his Asian heritage but, just like Nina, he is ridiculed and criticised by the object of his admiration.

For Karim’s father, rediscovery of his traditional clothes is not only connected with the desire to impress Eva but also with Haroon’s need to rediscover his own “authenticity”. His outfit impresses his son:

[u]nder his car coat my father was wearing what looked like a large pair of pyjamas. On top was a long silk shirt embroidered around the neck with dragons. This fell over his chest and flew out at his stomach for a couple of miles before dropping down to his knees. Under this he had on baggy trousers and sandals. But the real crime, the reason for concealment the hairy car coat, was the crimson waistcoat with gold and silver patterns that he wore over the shirt. If Mum had caught him going out like that she would have called the police (p. 29).

Unaware of his unconventional appearance, Haroon becomes an object of caustic remarks and mischievous speculations of two Englishmen who wonder whether he came on a camel or on a carpet. To his own surprise, not cognizant of his feelings, Karim gave the joker “a sharp kick in the kidney” (p. 12) trying to defend his father’s honour.

There is much similarity between Karim’s rediscovery of his father’s culture and Zadie Smith’s protagonist’s search for “authenticity”. Irie, half- Jamaican, half-English protagonist of Smith’s *White Teeth*, tried to state her place in society in a similar way – by resorting to her mother’s abandoned heritage. Having escaped from her parents’

³⁶ Gregory Castle, *Postcolonial Discourses. An Anthology*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001, p. 504.

³⁷ Peter Childs, Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, op. cit., p. 124.

house, Irie lends weight to the history of her ancestors told by her Jamaican grandmother. As a result, she sets on her route to imaginary Jamaica:

Why bother when there was now the other place? (For Jamaica appeared to Irie as if it were newly made. Like Columbus himself, just by discovering it she had brought it into existence). This well-wooded and watered place. (...) No fictions, no myths, no lies, no tangled webs – this is how Irie imagined her homeland. Because *homeland* is one of the magical fantasy words like *unicorn* and *soul* and *infinity* that have now passed into the language. And the particular magic of *homeland*, its particular spell over Irie, was that it sounded like a beginning³⁸.

Native culture is thus represented as something profoundly valuable and worth researching. Although both Kureishi's and Smith's heroes live in England, they yield to the temptation of stating their identity through return to their heritage.

One more aspect of heritage needs critical attention as it is tightly connected with Asian female characters found in Kureishi's writing. "Gendering" and traditional gender roles prescribed to female characters provoke much discussion. Kureishi is occasionally accused of negative stereotyping as the women of the Orient are morally passive, chaste and helpless. In McLeod's opinion they tend to be treated as if their only purpose was to give birth to children:

biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities, women are encouraged (...) to believe that it is their duty to produce children to replenish the numbers of those who "rightfully" belong to the nation for reasons of ethnicity³⁹.

As if to confirm McLeod's opinion, Dorota Kołodziejczyk draws our attention to the way women of Orient were presented in various paintings and drawings. Their main characteristic was "passive waiting which is never time limited"⁴⁰. Kołodziejczyk calls it a way of being between life and death, or even non-existence.

Consequently, whenever Omar asks Nasser (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) about his wife, the answer is the same: "She's at home with the kids" (p. 13). This "shy, middle-aged Pakistani woman" (p. 17), as Kureishi describes her, is "warm and friendly" (p. 17) but, at the same time, uneducated and simple minded. The reader has the

³⁸ Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, op. cit., p. 402.

³⁹ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 117.

⁴⁰ Dorota Kołodziejczyk, "Uwiedzeni Orientem – europejskie fantazje o haremie", in *Czas kultury*, no 1/2003, Poznań, p. 60, (translation mine, A.S.).

impression that her state of culture and civilization is not as high as her husband's. Kureishi in *The Buddha of Suburbia* introduces Jeeta who "couldn't speak English properly" (p.26) and her husband makes hell of her life, occasionally hits her and later, threatened by his daughter, "knows how to make her [Jeeta's] life terrible without physical violence" (p. 58) because "he's had many years of practice" (p. 58).

If one agrees with Lois Tyson that gendering allows to describe a woman as "emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive"⁴¹ it becomes clear why Tania's father "wouldn't think of asking [her]" (p. 22) to take over his profitable business – the achievement of his life. Nasser cannot imagine his daughter in a different than stereotypical role. Such an oversimplification is one of the accusations against Kureishi. Even though he seemingly refuses to misrepresent minorities in his novels and he gives them complex personalities, he finds it difficult to abandon the cliché model of an Asian woman subject to her husband and father and relegated to the position of a servant.

Once again it might be useful to resort to Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* where she presents the female character's allegiance to her husband in similar to Kureishi's light. What Nazneen appreciates is the fact that her husband offered her life in luxury and did not try to abuse her:

Chanu had not beaten her yet. He showed no signs of wanting to beat her. In fact he was kind and gentle. Even so it was foolish to assume he would never beat her. He thought she was a "good worker" (...)⁴².

Nevertheless, Nazneen's seemingly unconditioned obedience towards Chanu is distorted by her critical remarks and opinions which, unfortunately, are never vocalised. On the other hand, an instrumental treatment of Nazneen reflects Chanu's strong attachment to the traditional prescription of gender roles in Asian society. According to Chanu, "(...) a blind uncle is better than no uncle"⁴³, and such a degrading and humiliating comparison only confirms Trinh's statement: "(...) everywhere we go, we

⁴¹ Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, op. cit., p. 83.

⁴² Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*, op. cit., p. 22.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 23.

become Someone's private zoo"⁴⁴. Indeed, Kureishi's disability to deconstruct stereotypical assumptions concerning female characters and their debased role in ethnically mixed society elucidate their absence in his works. The author's concomitant approval of homosexual binaries leads to individuation of a man and woman and creation of new matrix in which the protagonists might be located. Heteronormative structure of society gives way to homosexual, both gay and lesbian relations and gendering becomes a blurred concept.

There are numerous signs showing that it is impossible to preserve "cultural purity" of Asian diaspora in England. Kureishi, being a pragmatist, makes Jamila (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) verbalise her mother's concerns: "Families aren't sacred, especially to Indian men, who talk about nothing else and act otherwise"(p. 55). On the other hand, Zadie Smith's protagonist, Neena (*White Teeth*), a representative of the second generation of Asian women instructs her aunt Alsana that "[i]t's not like back home. There's got to be communication between men and women in the West, they've got to listen to each other (...)"⁴⁵. Both women unconsciously articulate the same message, namely that the world changes, and even though many conflicts result from cultural impurity, there is no return to pre-colonial separation of two cultures.

It might be interesting to discover all the dilemmas of Kureishi's female characters of first generation in postcolonial lyrics of Moniza Alvi. Alvi, born in Lahore, Pakistan came to Britain as a few month old girl. Her dual heritage and experiences result from her biracial origin: her father being a Pakistani and English mother. Alvi in her poem entitled *Exile* expressed her deep understanding of limited choices and lower social position of a child with hybrid identity:

The old land swinging in her stomach
she must get to know this language
better – key words, sound patterns
word groups of fire and blood

Try your classmates with

⁴⁴ Minh_ha M.Trinh, *Woman, Native, Other*, in Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory. A Critical Introduction*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998, p. 85.

⁴⁵ Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, op. cit., p. 76.

the English version of your name.
Maria. Try it.
Good afternoon. How are you?⁴⁶.

“This language” becomes the metaphor of the whole culture. It is not only that the women need to acquire the vernacular, but often they also have to reject their Asian forms of names. In spite of the fact that it is the language of “fire and blood”, courteous forms seem to be the first step towards poignant assimilation. Both Zadie Smith’s and Moniza Alvi’s protagonists, although representing different generations, reveal the truth: to survive and to be successful in western society one needs to dip into its culture and become an amalgam. Only by being grafted to new reality and by accepting the situation can the postcolonial women assimilate and feel comfortable. Unfortunately, it does not seem feasible to evade the impact of Asian culture.

The controversial issue related to Asian heritage is the institution of an arranged marriage. It emerges in Kureishi’s literary output as it is still practised not only in India but, in Dilip Hiro’s view, it “is transferred almost intact when people from the Indian subcontinent emigrate”⁴⁷. *Zulma (The Black Album)* is the epitome of a feministic emancipation. Discussing the character in a context of “dual colonization” it is obvious that she makes an attempt to become culturally emancipated as well. She managed not only to avoid an arranged marriage but she also does not feel connected with Asian tradition any more:

(...) religion is for benefits of the masses, not for the brain-box types. The peasants an all – they need superstition, otherwise they would be living like animals. You don’t understand it, being in a civilized country, but those simpletons require strict rules for living, otherwise they would still think the earth sits on three fishes (p. 186).

According to Dilip Hiro, it is possible to compare the arranged marriage to “two countries wishing to sign an important treaty”⁴⁸. *Anwar (The Buddha of Suburbia)* hoped that Jamila would accept “the treaty” and marry Changez but she opposes her father. Anwar persistently guards an Asian family model, therefore he initiates a hunger strike. When Karim tries to convince Anwar that arranged marriages are old fashioned

⁴⁶ Moniza Alvi, “Exile” in *A Bowl of Warm Air*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 33.

⁴⁷ Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British*, op. cit., p. 147.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

and “no one does that kind of thing now” (p. 60), Anwar answered: “That is not our way, boy. Our way is firm. She must do what I say or I will die. She will kill me.”(p. 60). Anwar takes on the traditional function of “the boss, the provider and disciplinarian”⁴⁹ whereas in Jamila’s view it only confirms the fact that Asian culture is “ridiculous and (...) people [are] old fashioned, extreme and narrow-minded” (p. 71).

It might be interesting to quote Hanif Kureishi at this point of discussion who claims that those living in India and Pakistan happen to be more progressive than those who live in Britain:

(...) life in Pakistan, in India, changes. But immigrants who came here keep the same attitudes that they had when they were young in Pakistan, in India. It all seems rather backward. Issues of arranged marriages, for instance, in Pakistan and India today may be more liberal there now than they would be for Asians here⁵⁰.

It is then a desperate trial of diaspora people to maintain the heritage and the elements of tradition and keep the relations with the country of their origin.

An attitude towards sexuality is another element of tradition of a given society. There are remarkable discrepancies in the treatment of the topic in Kureishi’s novels. They do not, however, depend much on generational differences but rather on the attitude of particular protagonists towards heritage in general. Kureishi is frequently reproached for excessive use of sex scenes which, in Moore-Gilbert’s view, resemble “‘eroticism’ of men’s magazines”⁵¹. Kenneth C. Kaleta wonders “whether [sexual activity] has a genuine place in the story or whether it is simply sensationalistic”⁵². To defend Kureishi it is enough to say that sexuality and sex relations are a significant element of postcolonial literature as they have much in common with the attitude towards tradition and they reflect the transformation of a given society. According to Susie Thomas, postcolonial perspective appears to “obscure sexuality” and relations between the sexes “are central to Kureishi’s understanding of individual identity and society”⁵³.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.146.

⁵⁰ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 203.

⁵¹ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 145.

⁵² Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, p. 117.

⁵³ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 78.

Without doubt sexuality is far from traditional in Kureishi's works. Omar's (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) inability to fall in love with girls places him among sexual hybrids and makes his father wonder whether "his penis is in full working order" (p. 7). In Leonard Quart's opinion, "Omar is also a man without a defined identity or set of moral values".⁵⁴ Such a strict judgement is in accordance with the opinion of both the English and the Asian members of the society as the film provoked numerous controversies and even riots when it was released. Although Kureishi presents a beautiful and long lasting relationship, there is a general hostility towards "Romeo-meets-Romeo"⁵⁵ love affair.

Tania's repressed sexuality finds an outlet in secret and discreet signs sent to Omar. She is the one who seems to have abandoned Asian traditions, however it is her father's ostentatious relation with a white woman that seems to be a double betrayal and a complete departure from patterns of honesty. First of all, because Rachel is British and "[i]f a black and white couple are screwing, it involves colour, class, and relations between the sexes"⁵⁶. Secondly, because Nasser commits an obvious adultery. Tania reveals her erotic visions, just like she reveals her breast to Omar, but concurrently she is not able and not ready to tolerate her father's liberated sexuality. It is evoked by the clash between her traditional Asian upbringing and her propensity to "western contamination".

Bill Ashcroft (et al.) employed the term of "colonial desire" which involves the discussion of colonizer/colonized relation and the idea of "sexualized exoticism"⁵⁷. The concept is not alien to Hanif Kureishi who endowed Deedee (*The Black Album*) with inter-racial sex curiosity. Shahid, on the other hand, breaks sexual conventions of his society as he not only enters a relationship with an elder woman - his lecturer, but he also abandons his religious rules and colleagues to try drugs, controversial sex and

⁵⁴ Leonard Quart, *Cineaste*, in Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 30.

⁵⁵ Marcia Pally, "Kureishi Like a Fox", in Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 231.

⁵⁶ Marcia Pally, "Kureishi Like a Fox", in Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 44.

⁵⁷ Bill Ashcroft (et al.), *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts*, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

freedom. The protagonist observes his friends, Nina and Sadiq who need to find some replacement for hugging and kissing characteristic of teenagers in love:

Forbidden to kiss or touch, they liked to fight: Sadiq had pinched her and now Nina was poised for the chance to pinch him back, regarding Chad and Shahid suspiciously, as if they were teachers (p. 126).

The relationship of the teacher and her student can be analysed through the prism of colonial discourse analysis discussed widely by Edward Said. In its light, Deedee and Shahid represent “a seat of power in the West, and radiating out from it towards the East a great embracing machine”⁵⁸. The collision of West and East in postcolonial London is not very different from Kipling’s clash in *Lispeth*⁵⁹. It only confirms timelessness of Oriental model created by imperial nations and meaningfulness of ambiguity.

The Buddha of Suburbia is often referred to as “the novel of class mobility and sexual discovery”⁶⁰. Avaricious sexuality not only facilitates the process of stating the protagonists’ identity, but it is also a natural stage of their maturation process. Karim learns a lot about himself, getting to know secret places of his soul and body. It is, however, not easy, even for Karim to state his sexual preferences:

It was unusual, I knew, the way I wanted to sleep with boys as well as girls. I liked strong bodies and the backs of boys’ necks. I liked being handled by men, their fists pulling me; and I liked objects – the ends of brushed, pens, fingers – up my arse. But I liked cunts and breasts, all of women’s softness, long smooth legs and the way women dressed. I felt it would be heart-breaking to have to choose one or the other, like having to decide between the Beatles and the Rolling Stones (p. 55).

Karim never identifies himself as gay or bisexual. He seems to enjoy encounters with both sexes, just like he enjoys and derives profits from both cultures he represents. His sexuality is a complex and impenetrable mystery for him but he explores it without any psychological or physical restraints. Susie Thomas claims that “*The Buddha* not only plays with traditional gender roles, it deconstructs the binaries of homosexuality

⁵⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, op. cit., p. 44.

⁵⁹ Rudyard Kipling, “Lispeth” in *Plain Tales from the Hills*, London: Penguin Books, 1994.

⁶⁰ Steven Connor, *The English Novel in History 1950-1995*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 94-95.

versus heterosexuality”⁶¹ observing Jamila and Karim’s inclinations to both sexes. Their numerous sexual intercourses seem to be a fascinating testimony of their brave discoveries and intricate personalities but at the same time they become obnoxious and illusionary liberation from normative rules and assumptions about human sexuality. Bradley Buchanan observed that “there is plenty of sex going on, love in the novel is perpetually vexed”⁶² which only emphasises phantasmagorical and debased feeling.

Charlie became Karim’s first male partner. The strong emotional involvement was a painful and long lasting experience for young Amir. Their first sexual intercourse was a significant moment in the protagonist’s life as he “had never kissed a man” (p. 17). Karim’s unrestrained and uncontrollable acting during his visit in Charlie’s room reveals the importance of the event:

I laid my hand on Charlie’s thigh. No response. I rested it there for a few minutes until sweat broke out on the ends of my fingers. His eyes remained closed, but in his jeans he was growing. I began to feel confident. I became insane. I dashed for his belt, for his fly, for his cock, and I took him out into the air to cool down. He made a sign! (...) I tried to kiss him. He avoided my lips by turning his head to one side. But when he came in my hand it was, I swear, one of the preeminent moments of my earlyish life. There was dancing in my streets. My flags flew, my trumpets blew! (p. 17).

The concept of contemporary sexuality is altered and Kureishi discusses it in its new form without inhibitions. The undeniable aversion of society to homosexuality can be explained by Radhika Mohanram’s statement that “(...) the effete homosexual body, like the racialized body, signifies a threat to the myth of ontological purity of the nation”⁶³. Homosexuality and deficiency are juxtaposed, and the idea of “going native”⁶⁴ is combined with sexual intercourse with a person of the same sex but different race.

Sexuality for Kureishi’s protagonists takes various shapes. It can occasionally become a passage to adulthood. More often sexually liberated semi-Asian characters

⁶¹ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 79.

⁶² Bradley Buchanan, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 46.

⁶³ Radhika Mohanram, “Postcolonial Spaces and Deterritorialized (Homo)Sexuality: The Films of Hanif Kureishi”, in Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 37.

⁶⁴ There is a danger of “contamination of the colonizers’ pure stock” involved in “inter-racial sex” in Ashcroft’s definition. Its result might be degeneration and impoverishment of the colonizers’ race, in Bill Ashcroft (et al.), *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts.*, op. cit., p. 115.

discover their route of escape from monotony and racialism in frequent and intensive change of sexual partners. For others, it is purification and liberation from social norms and boundaries. Kureishi's father- Shannoo Kureishi, in one of his unpublished books described an encounter and an accidental sex of the Asian protagonist with a stranger:

I had had a wonderful time. I had thrown off the shackles which Pakistani society had imposed on me. I felt liberated. I was back again, pulsating with life⁶⁵.

This metaphysical experience is also familiar to Kureishi's heroes as it symbolizes rebirth of confidence and establishes new norms of sexual behaviour. The standards and borders are crossed and, although some relationships seem to be morally wrong and repulsive, they appear to be a valuable process of cognition. The sad conclusion is drawn by Haroon who claims that "you don't have romantic love in the West any more. You just sing about it on the radio. No one really loves" (223). Higher feelings and emotions are denied to western society by the representative of Asian spirituality.

The last element of heritage which cannot be ignored is language. The first generation of protagonists has an excellent command of their vernacular, mostly Punjabi or Urdu. They resort to it occasionally but the reader is usually informed by the author that there is a switch from one language code to the other. Obviously, the whole discussion is described in English as Kureishi himself, representing the second generation of immigrants, does not speak Urdu. Kureishi's "grammar, syntax and vocabulary conform overwhelmingly to the norms of Standard Received English"⁶⁶ which is sometimes criticised as bearing "little resemblance to the practices of many 'world' and postcolonial writers"⁶⁷. Although Salman Rushdie claims that English "needs remaking for our own purposes"⁶⁸, Hanif Kureishi only occasionally resorts to subcontinental languages in his works.

⁶⁵ Hanif Kureishi, *My Ear at His Heart*, London: Faber and Faber, 2004, p. 110.

⁶⁶ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 30.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 29.

⁶⁸ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 17.

Hardly ever does the second generation show intention of learning the vernacular of their fathers. When Chad, the unstable character of *The Black Album* in search of his identity endeavours to find his place in Asian, or rather Muslim society, he begins with learning Urdu. Visiting a victim of racial abuse, Chad desperately tries to communicate with her in her native language. Unfortunately his trials threatened the woman:

She would look at him as if he were speaking Welsh, and the frantic mimed motions that accompanied his attempts obviously agitated her (p. 130).

His trial is fruitless and his discouraging experiences are similar to those mentioned by Moniza Alvi in the poem *Hindi Urdu Bol Chaal*. The author describes the unsuccessful attempts of a character to communicate and understand the languages of India:

Separating Urdu from Hindi- it's like
sifting grains of wild rice
or separating India from Pakistan
(...)
I introduce myself to two languages
but there are so many – of costume
of conduct and courtesy⁶⁹.

Alvi realizes that there is much more in language than language itself. It is the whole culture and tradition, and Chad being “lost in translation” is not able to acquire the vernacular.

Similarly Shadwell (*The Buddha of Suburbia*), an Englishman, made an attempt to initiate with Karim a conversation in Urdu or Punjabi. To his great disappointment, the boy did not understand a word. Regardless of the fact that the protagonist claimed to understand “dirty words” and he knew when he was called “a camel’s rectum” (p. 140), Shadwell could not hide his frustration:

What a breed of people two hundred years of imperialism has given birth to. If the pioneers from the East India Company could see you. What puzzlement there’d be. 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. And you’re from Orpington (p. 141).

⁶⁹ Moniza Alvi, „Hindi Urdu Bol Chaal” in *A Bowl of Warm Air*, op. cit., p. 6.

According to Leela Gandhi, Shadwell finds Karim “culturally impoverished and disappointingly British” which does not disturb him to make Karim “smear himself with brown polish before he appears on stage”⁷⁰ as Mowgli.

Salman Rushdie discusses the idea of English as an obstacle in the description of Indian matters. He claims that the ethnically mixed citizens must be careful with the traditional attitude towards English language:

[They]can't simply use the language in the way the British did; that it needs remaking for [their] own purposes. Those of [them] who do use English do so in spite of [their] ambiguity towards it, or perhaps because of that, perhaps because [they] can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world, struggles between the cultures within [themselves] and the influences at work upon [their] societies⁷¹.

The language becomes thus the bone of contention, even a tool for colonizing the minds of the Other. Gayatri Spivak talks about the burden of English, and she understands it either as “the task of teaching and studying English in the colonies” or “as a singular load to carry”⁷². There is also an optimistic view presented by Salman Rushdie who claims that although “(...) something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained”⁷³. Similarly, Bill Ashcroft confirms that there are two possible processes to which English is subject: abrogation or appropriation⁷⁴. Kureishi represents those who acquired English in a natural way as their mother tongue and those who refuse to speak the native language of the ancestors.

The significance of the issue of language cannot be denied or ignored. It is, however, possible to be trapped in a code of communication one does not approve of. English, in such a case, can be understood as an uncomfortable and imposed colonial tool. It should come as no surprise that some writers reject English and resort to their native languages. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a Kenyan writer, was in fact baptised as James

⁷⁰ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory. A Critical Introduction*, op. cit., 1998, p. 127.

⁷¹ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 17.

⁷² Gayatri Spivak, *The Burden of English*, in Gregory Castle, *Postcolonial Discourses. An Anthology*, op. cit., p. 54.

⁷³ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 17.

⁷⁴ Bill Ashcroft (et al.), *The Empire Writes Back*, op. cit., p. 38.

Ngugi. After a few years of successful literary career he rejected not only his name, but also Christianity which, in his view, brought too many connotations with colonialism. In 1986 in his famous work entitled *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Culture*, the writer made it obvious that “language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people’s experience in history”⁷⁵. Therefore, Thiong’o refused to write in English and returned to his native languages, Gikuyu and Swahili. Such determination is worth the appreciation although Rushdie does not agree with it calling Thiong’o “an overtly political writer” who, at the conference, was reading his work in Swahili leaving the audience “completely bemused”⁷⁶. Such actions find reflection in Kureishi’s writing when his characters make a similar effort to learn and communicate in their parents’ native language. Unfortunately, they are dually unsuccessful as the vernacular appears to be completely alien to them, and without doubt English appears to be indispensable for their existence in the United Kingdom.

Kureishi’s interesting manipulation to introduce numerous words in Urdu or Punjabi serves several purposes. First of all, the text sounds more original and oriental. The words sparkled in the text are not only ornamental elements, but they also deepen the text. Foreign names of dishes, parts of clothes or personal names even, lend flavour to a literary work. Although occasionally foreign words appear to be redundant and they give the reader the feeling of exclusion, they facilitate the process of geographical placement of the protagonists. Kureishi is said to be a cultural translator, rather than linguistic one. Nevertheless, the foreign words used by him allow the reader to understand the message: here, it is another language and it has its own meaning. For a brief moment, Kureishi’s literature becomes a political message rather than literary. For Kureishi’s bilingual protagonists “[l]anguage is both disabling and enabling”⁷⁷ as occasionally they use Urdu to attract and impress people. On the other hand, the second generation finds it an obstacle to communicate with their parents in their vernacular.

⁷⁵ Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Culture*, in John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 126.

⁷⁶ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

⁷⁷ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 197.

Summing up, it is not easy to answer the questions posed at the beginning of the discussion of tradition. Without a doubt it offers the lore which seems to be precious rather for fathers than sons. Surprisingly, numerous elements of Asian culture are present in English streets: clothes, particular words, cuisine or Bollywood films are familiar elements of London environment. It must be, however acknowledged that these are due to fashion rather than sincere interest of the young generation of Asians or British people. If so much is conveyed from India to metropolis, it is mostly due to the first generation's attachment and emotional involvement. Young Asians have ambivalent attitude in relation to their parents' heritage. In Kureishi's view, they like and desire some elements of it, but on the other hand they avoid it in fear of being ridiculed. What is more, the tradition appears also ambivalent itself as it seems attractive but it hinders the process of full assimilation with white society. There is however one element of heritage with which young Asians willingly identify and it helps them to smooth their painful feeling of alienation - that is Islam.

1.2. RELIGIOUS FERVOUR

“Useful recognition (...) sees more than you can, enlarging the self; however, it can only come from elsewhere, and if there is no God how do you find it?”⁷⁸. The rhetorical question posed by Kureishi is the one to which his protagonists look for an answer as well. God and religion seem to mark out the area of search for eternal truth. Is there in Kureishi's works liberation in religion or maybe religion can destroy one's personality? Where are the limits of the self and the other? What role does Islam play in the lives of both generations of Asian minority in Britain? Such questions and problems seem to bother postcolonial subjects.

First of all, religion is an important component of heritage. Kureishi was agitated by the fatwa which was inflicted on Salman Rushdie by Khomeini on February 14, 1989⁷⁹. The author's silent wonder resulted in *The Black Album*, *My Son the Fanatic*,

⁷⁸ Hanif Kureishi, *My Ear At His Heart*, op. cit., p. 158.

⁷⁹ Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British*, op. cit., p. 184.

and numerous articles and interviews. It seemed beyond Kureishi's comprehension how a written word can evoke public rallies, firebombing of bookstores or burning the controversial book. His observations, visits to Bradford which "seemed to be a microcosm of a larger British society that was struggling to find a sense of self" and where "important issues of race, culture, nationalism, and education were evident"⁸⁰ resulted in Kureishi's deep interest in religion and its role in life of both generations of Asians.

Kureishi predicted to some extent the rising problem of fundamentalism and writes about it in *Sex and Secularity*:

I had been aware since the early 1980s, when I visited Pakistan for the first time, that extreme Islam, or "fundamentalism" – Islam as a political ideology – was filling a space where Marxism and capitalism had failed to take hold⁸¹.

Kureishi's concern about radical Islam finds vent when one of his uncles calls Islam "a guiding star"⁸² in his biography. The author reacts resolutely:

To read this shocks me; when I think about it, I lose my bearings. I'd never imagined a liberal and literary man finding a combination of social hope and justice in a religion which, for me, can only seem a betrayal of our family's values. It is inevitable that you would break with your family in different places at different times. But for us to be divided on this particular point – Islam – is to be faced with more questions than answers⁸³.

Although, after his father's death, Islam still "didn't make sense to [him]"⁸⁴, it became a frequently returning motif of Kureishi's literary output.

Similarly Kureishi's protagonists find themselves at the crossroads of significant decisions and choices concerned with religion. Shahid (*The Black Album*), after painful experiences with his girlfriend's late abortion comes to live in London and carefully considers joining Muslim community. He is a typical "Third Wordler" who can "either envy Western ideals and aspire to them, or [...] envy and reject them"⁸⁵ He constantly needs to be challenged intellectually, and stability becomes the source of boredom and

⁸⁰ Hanif Kureishi, *Dreaming and Scheming*, op. cit., p. 58.

⁸¹ Hanif Kureishi, „Sex and Secularity” in *The Word and the Bomb*, London: Faber and Faber, 2005, p. 83.

⁸² Hanif Kureishi, *My Ear at His Heart*, op. cit., p. 92.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 167.

⁸⁵ Hanif Kureishi, „Sex and Secularity”, in *The Word and the Bomb*, op. cit., p. 84.

frustration for the young boy. In London he is split between Deedee, intelligent, charismatic and attractive lecturer, and Riaz, the leader of radical Islamists active in academic environment.

Farid, on the other hand, the protagonist of *My Son the Fanatic* lacks “[b]elief, purity, belonging to the past”⁸⁶. Kureishi presents an amazing and reversed situation as the teenager seems to be fascinated by Islam. The religion became his tool in his long lasting conflict with his father, Parvez, a taxi driver who works extra hours to pay for his son’s education. He criticises the English as they are, in his opinion “[a] society soaked in sex” (p.333), where people “live in pornography and filth” (p. 333). Except for being disappointed with western society, Farid’s devotion to Islam is, to a big extent, the result of his anger and rebellion:

Whatever we do here we will always be inferior. They will never accept us as like them. But I am not inferior! Don’t they patronize and insult us? (p. 334).

Both Farid and Shahid are subject to “cultural racism” which is defined by Tariq Modood as “the forms of prejudice that exclude and racialize culturally different ethnic minorities”⁸⁷. What comes with cultural racism theory is latent criticism of unwillingness of the white to discover and comprehend new cultures. They tend to perceive the surrounding through the prism of stereotypical assumptions. It is interesting what Salman Rushdie said in an interview about feeling a minority representative:

I have never belonged to majority. I’ve never known in my life what it means to belong to majority. If somebody, just like me comes from an Indian Muslim family, he is minority. Then he goes to England and he is again in minority immigrant society⁸⁸.

Rushdie, to some extent, explains the reason for frustration and makes it clear that even a successful career does not provide him with self-confidence and success. Being an Indian Muslim places him even lower in domineering society of white citizens

⁸⁶ Hanif Kureishi, *My Son the Fanatic* in *Collected Screenplays 1*, London: Faber and Faber, (1997) 2002, p. 313 (All quotations in the text will be from this edition).

⁸⁷ Ruvani Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 81.

⁸⁸ Jerzy Jarniewicz, *Lista obecności. Szkice o dwudziestowiecznej prozie brytyjskiej i irlandzkiej*, Poznań: Rebis, 2000, p. 274 (translation mine, A.S.).

representing an unknown religion, if any at all. Their existence, anonymous and free from persecution, is guaranteed by their race. Kureishi draws the readers' attention to the fact of complete misunderstanding of differences between Muslim community and fundamentalism: "(...) many Muslims believe in democracy and tolerance; it is only fundamentalists who see the West as the enemy, and they have reason for doing so"⁸⁹.

It becomes visible when one analyses Chad's submission to Allah (*The Black Album*) and his uncritical treatment of Riaz. The story of his life makes it clear that religion is an escape from drugs, despair and humiliation. It gives Chad a sense of self and, rejecting many painful memories from his childhood, he seems to be settled and comfortable with his new reality and new friends.

Both Chad and Riaz emphasize the superiority and significance of Islam in their life. It is "a spiritual and controlled conception of life", "a serious business", and "an idea of pure living" (p. 129). Shahid is surprised by "[t]he religious enthusiasm of the younger generation, and its links to strong political feeling"(p. 91). It seems that Islam is more seductive to young Asians than to their fathers as mostly teenage protagonists join radical Islamists. Hanif Kureishi himself admits that it was difficult to condemn the boys:

I started going to the mosque in Whitechapel, hanging around with them. I wondered why normal blokes got to the point where they wanted to see the author killed. I tried to be fair. I really liked the kids – I still see them. I felt sympathetic; they seemed lost, and fundamentalism gave them a sense of place, of belonging. So many were unemployed, and had friends involved in drugs; religion kept them out of trouble⁹⁰.

Similarly Moniza Alvi noticed how innocent and naïve the young Islamists were. In one of the poems entitled *Shoes and Socks* she describes what she observes, not only in front of the mosque:

Azam's socks have gaping holes,
One for each of his teenage years?
And through them slip his studies,
Political career, his rebellion⁹¹.

⁸⁹ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., pp. 122-123.

⁹⁰ Maya Jaggi, "A Buddy From Suburbia", *The Guardian*, available on www.guardian.co.uk, accessed on August 18, 2005.

⁹¹ Moniza Alvi, „Shoes and Socks” in *A Bowl of Warm Air*, op. cit., p. 17.

The hole in Azam's sock becomes a metaphorical escape route for his shipwrecked dreams and possibilities. Alvi realizes that

Those who desire to fulfil their desires,
Or wish to free themselves of desire,
Leave their footwear paraded on the steps,

Each shoe a small vessel for prayer⁹².

Just like Kureishi, Alvi contrasts the innocence of the teenagers with the significance of their, often unaware, choices: they lose the opportunity of making a career or acquiring academic education only to "fulfil their desires" of revenge.

In spite of the fact that only 5-8 per cent of all Muslims become fundamentalists, and only 3-10 per cent of fundamentalists are terrorists, the fear and oversimplified conception of Islam prevail⁹³. Kureishi's agitation evoked by overflowing wave of fanaticism found its vent in his novels. Some of his characters are endowed with similar apprehension, like Zulma in *The Black Album*. She is an independent, well-educated young Pakistani rooted in Britain but cherishing the memory of her parents' country and respecting tradition. As one of few Zulma realizes how threatening Islam can be. She warns Shahid that "they [fundamentalists] are entering France through Marseilles and Italy through the south"(p. 190). The mosques are, in her opinion, the places "where the disorder is fomented" (p.191). Similarly Edward Said wrote about "the Islamic Orient" which is juxtaposed with "militant" Orient⁹⁴. The direct association of violence with Islam leads to rejection of the Oriental as it seems to employ intensive force and ferocious cruelty to influence the West.

Nevertheless, Ruvani Ranasinha posed an accusation against Kureishi's work which, in her view, "offers little prospect of any kind of constructive dialogue between polarized communities"⁹⁵. It cannot be denied that the novels leave the questions unanswered and problems unsolved. On the other hand, Kenneth C. Kaleta rightly

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ John L. Esposito, *Unholy War. Terror in the Name of Islam*, in Agata Marek, *Islam*, Warsaw: Vox Humana, 2006, p. 12 (translation mine, A.S.).

⁹⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, op. cit., pp. 74-75.

⁹⁵ Ruvani Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 82.

claims that “asserting an answer, any answer, would manipulate the fiction”⁹⁶. Literature becomes the mirror of life, and just like reality it provides no answer. Kureishi presents the situation of growing danger and uncertainty. He stays impartial and he admits: “I’m interested in all sides of the argument”⁹⁷.

Rana Kabbani claims that “[f]or Muslims, cultural and political identity is indissolubly tied to religion so that to attack the latter is to undermine the former”⁹⁸. Agata Marek, as if to explain the deep nature of Islam, expands the issue of the holy war emphasising the difference between Muslims and terrorists. Jihad should be, in Marek’s view, “**defence** against an aggression or oppression, not armed attack”⁹⁹. Salman Rushdie, himself an atheist, confirms Kabbani’s statement in his essay entitled *In God We Trust*. Rushdie seems to appreciate the inherent separation of church and state in Christianity. He confronts the rules of Islam, emphasising impossibility of such a division:

In the world of Islam, no such separation has ever occurred at the level of theory. Of all the great sacred texts the Qur’an is most concerned with the law, and Islam has always remained an overtly social, organizing, political creed which, again theoretically, has something to say about every aspect of an individual life¹⁰⁰.

Rushdie, the advocate of secularism, makes it clear that to live in the world inseparably connected with religion limits and murders the freedom of an individual. He also claims that violence incorporated into religion is the result of discrepancy between dreams and imaginative picture-making:

We live in our pictures, our ideas. I mean this literally. We first construct pictures of the world and then we step inside the frames. We come to equate the picture with the world, so that, in certain circumstances, we will even go to war because we find someone else’s picture less pleasing than our own¹⁰¹.

Rushdie criticises intolerance and confirms what the reader later finds in *The Satanic Verses*: “[f]rom the very beginning men used God to justify the

⁹⁶ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 139.

⁹⁷ Maya Jaggi, “A Buddy From Suburbia”, *The Guardian*, available on www.guardian.co.uk, accessed on August 18, 2005.

⁹⁸ Rana Kabbani, *A Letter to Christendom* in Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British*, op. cit., p. 132.

⁹⁹ Agata Marek, *Islam*, op. cit., p. 28 (emphasis mine, A.S.).

¹⁰⁰ Salman Rushdie, “In God We Trust”, in *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 380.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 378.

unjustifiable”¹⁰². Aggression in the name of God appears to be more dangerous as the aggressors feel recognized representatives of the divine. Reversed aggression, so frequently encountered in Kureishi’s works, is nothing but revenge. It accompanies the Islamists in *My Son the Fanatic* when they attack the prostitutes in London. ”If you feel excluded it might be tempting to exclude others”¹⁰³, writes Kureishi. And that is what happens to Farid and Bettina. The boy “looks at her for a moment, then, with the Maulvi’s eye on him, spits in her face” (p. 378). His superficial knowledge of this woman and stereotypical treatment of the prostitute allow him, in his view, to humiliate her. He takes revenge on her not only for white society of which she is a representative, but also for his father’s infidelity.

Kureishi makes an effort to find an explanation of such an intense enchantment and fascination with Islam. In his view, it is usually weakness and a cry for help that push young boys and girls to the Islamists. “No more Paki. Me a Muslim” (p. 128), says Chad, the protagonists of *The Black Album*, as he is oversensitive to the offensive nickname. His identification with the group confirms Dilip Hiro’s statement that Islam is “a unifying force which often transcended nationality and race”¹⁰⁴. Deficient relations with parents and disillusionment with modernity added to the feelings of disorientation and confusion. Children who find it impossible to satisfy their ambitious fathers find shelter and uncritical acceptance among the Fundamentals. It is possible here to use Philip Tew’s view on regression evoked by Islamist groups. He claims that some of the hybrid protagonists, just like Millat in Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*, are too easily influenced by western values. Millat, in Tew’s opinion, is an easy target influenced by

(...) popular culture that leads him to an affiliation with a militant Islamic group. Rather than develop a hybrid identity, in fact, Millat regresses as fundamentally as much an imperial-style nationalist might, wanting to identify types where he might project himself¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰² Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, op. cit., p. 95.

¹⁰³ Hanif Kureishi, “The Road Exactly”, in *The Word and the Bomb*, op. cit., p. 57.

¹⁰⁴ Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British*, op. cit., p. 134.

¹⁰⁵ Philip Tew, *The Contemporary British Novel*, London: Continuum Books, 2004, p. 158.

Sometimes, like in *My Son the Fanatic*, children observe their parents' evil deeds, and religion becomes their escape from double-dealing, wickedness and absence of spiritual values offered by the adults. Presenting *Shahid* in *The Black Album*, Kureishi admitted that he endeavoured to show his complete confusion and self-destruction:

I wanted a picture of a bloke going mad with an identity crisis. He was so fucked up he wanted to join the National Front. His father has died, his brother's a junkie, he's looking for something. That was the springboard for joining the fundamentalist group¹⁰⁶.

It is possible to adopt here three phases described by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*¹⁰⁷. The first stage is "assimilation", which could be interpreted in the context of "the young and angry" generation of racially hybrid inhabitants of Britain. Seemingly they appear assimilated, but then the second stage of "turning backward" comes, and finally the "fighting phase". Each of Kureishi's rebellious characters went through all of them and, not satisfied with the picture of society, turned towards radicals. Not only works of fiction, but also reality confirmed literal interpretation of Fanon's theoretical assumptions.

The difference in radicalism of two generations is an important issue discussed in postcolonial literature. It is confirmed in Helen Rumbelow's article entitled *A Literary Guide to Britain's Terrorists*. Rumbelow tries to find justification for the second generation's fury:

the rage of the second-generation immigrants can be greater than that of the first. The fictional young men who turn against their fellow citizens draw their ire from their experience of Western society, not from their isolation from it.¹⁰⁸

To make the discussion more global it might be interesting to resort to Zadie Smith's last novel entitled *On Beauty*. It is full of disappointments, racism and betrayals but all the negative phenomena seem to be the sign of the fin de siècle of the XX-th

¹⁰⁶ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 102.

¹⁰⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, in John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 86-87.

¹⁰⁸ Helen Rumbelow, "A Literary Guide to Britain's Terrorists", *The Washington Post*, available on www.washingtonpost.com, accessed on August 18, 2005.

century. Claire Malcolm, one of the characters of the novel in her conversation with her academic colleague says: “We’ve let down your kids, we’ve let down everybody’s kids. Looking at this country the way it is now, I’m thankful I never had any kids myself”¹⁰⁹. The fact that her words concern America only adds to the globalization of the problem of lost values and aimless existence of societies. Dilip Hiro tries to excuse the generation of fathers who concentrated on their standard of life in the United Kingdom and neglected spiritual values:

[c]aught in the conflict between religious identity and economic interest (...) submitted to the material need, but only at the cost of suffering a sense of spiritual degradation¹¹⁰.

Their sons and daughters are disillusioned with western values or their lack. They do not feel comfortable in white Britain and they object to being doomed to constant diaspora and hybridity. Chad’s (*The Black Album*) contempt for the English relates to intellectual level as well:

It’s true, people in the West, they think they’re so civilized and educated an’ superior, and ninety percent of them read stuff you wouldn’t wipe your arse on. (...) There’s more to life than entertainment (p. 21).

Chad’s frustration stems partially from his mixed origin and partially from difficulty with finding the identity to assimilate with. Religion therefore, becomes the third way – it gives him the chance to become a member of a strong and influential group, even at the cost of becoming a fanatic. According to Hanif Kureishi, young Islamists need leaders:

[they] love the idea of authority, for a start; they love the idea of faith and believing in things. It gives them a terrific energy and a great sense of direction and purpose¹¹¹.

Ruvani Ranasinha draws the readers’ attention to Kureishi’s lack of inventing “a polarity between Islamic fundamentalism and detached liberal individualism or secularism”¹¹². Therefore, in her opinion, he “ignores the range of different forms of

¹⁰⁹ Zadie Smith, *On Beauty*, New York: The Penguin Press, 2005, p. 120.

¹¹⁰ Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British*, op. cit., p. 128.

¹¹¹ “Faith, love and fundamentalism”. An interview with Hanif Kureishi, *The Guardian*, available on www.guardian.co.uk, accessed on May 15, 2004.

¹¹² Ruvani Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., pp. 88-89.

Islam that are not extreme or aggressive”¹¹³. She also claims that Kureishi only confirms the stereotypes the British have about Islam, its followers and Asian society in general. Kureishi, however finds no advantage of Islamization claiming that it “built no hospitals, no schools, no houses; it cleaned no water and installed no electricity”¹¹⁴.

If national pride and heritage enabled the first generation to preserve their language, customs and cherish the memory of “old India” in their hearts, it does not seem to have an impact on the second generation of “in-betweens”. Kureishi seems to be aware of the problem, he presents it with all its variations but he also makes it clear that he does not accept the state of constant fear and madness.

To sum up, Kureishi is aware of the limits of Islam but also of its power. Liberation and consolation which are the aim of young Asians are illusory as they result from violence. Religion, in this case, destroys not only protagonists of the novels but also real people and confidence of societies of the whole world. The attitude of two generations towards Islam differs. The first generation arrived to Britain in 50s looking for economic asylum. Assimilation to the norms existing in society was easier and reasonable. Their children, born in UK are more demanding. They do not want to follow their parents’ careers, they strive for more acceptance and equality. Unfortunately, they are not able to separate religion from politics and, therefore terrorism from a dialogue. In fervour of religious progress they forget about communication, and, as Salam Rushdie wrote: “[t]errible things are being done in the name of Islam”¹¹⁵.

In 2001 Kureishi wrote “[I]like the racist, the fundamentalist works only with fantasy”¹¹⁶. The protagonists of his novels reflect the author’s assumptions and attitude towards numerous tensions and conflicts taking place in the UK and the world. His novels, essays and articles aim at a constructive dialogue, or at least controversial discussion which, after summer of 2005 seems to subside into silence.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Hanif Kureishi, “The Rainbow Sign”, in Hanif Kureishi, *Dreaming and Scheming*, op. cit., p. 35-36.

¹¹⁵ Salman Rushdie, “Naipaul Among the Believers”, in *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 375.

¹¹⁶ Hanif Kureishi, “Sex and Secularity” in *The Word and The Bomb*, op. cit., p. 87.

1.3. FROM THE SUBURBS TO POSTCOLONIAL LONDON

An escape is a recurring motif in Kureishi's early writing. It has also become a part of postcolonial heritage as the protagonists seem, not only to have constant dilemmas and difficulties with stating their identity, but they also tend to be "on the move" all the time. "People always need to escape"(p. 201), says Strapper, one of the characters of *The Black Album*. Postcolonial escapes, so frequent and painful, stem from the feeling of entrapment in "oriental" stereotypes and alienation of the protagonists. They experience two sorts of escape: the literal one and the metaphorical one, and it is often impossible to state which escape is more significant. The motif of exodus preoccupies the protagonists' minds and becomes the focus of their efforts. Whether aware of it or not, the characters of mixed origin are subject to changes evoked by their invariable need to "move to the centre". The most common direction, of course, is the one from the suburbs to the centre of London - the imaginary city. Katarzyna Nowak in *Melancholic Travelers* confirms that postcolonial subjects tend to be permanently in motion, "always already on the move, never stable, impossible to pin down, and finding creative potential in such circumstances"¹¹⁷.

Kureishi's characters reflect his own aspirations in that matter as he used to dream about the significant movement which would change his life. Similarly, his protagonists hope to leave the derelict and poor areas of Bromley and to get rid of suburban stigma. The author's "cosmopolitan characters see who they are and dream who they want to be"¹¹⁸, perhaps not fully aware that the city is, in Rushdie's opinion, just like England "no more than a dream"¹¹⁹. London used to be the desired place for the generation of 1950s. The Colonial Office issued at that time a document arguing that the arrival of colonial people should not be limited in any way:

¹¹⁷ Katarzyna Nowak, *Melancholic Travelers. Autonomy, Hybridity and the Maternal*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2007, p. 15.

¹¹⁸ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 3.

¹¹⁹ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 18.

The people living in the British colonies are British subjects; and there can be no restrictions whatsoever on their movement into or out of Britain¹²⁰.

People travelled then full of hopes and good intentions to England of their dreams, and mostly to imaginary London. The reason for leaving India was mainly economic and metropolis was supposed to secure the living and shelter. Half a century later, the disillusionment of the first generation became the rebellion of the second, and London became its scene.

Kureishi, an ardent devotee of the capital deserves, in Sukhdev Sandhu's opinion, the title of "perhaps the first – and certainly the best and most important – Asian chronicler of London"¹²¹. It became the setting for the initiation process of many hybrid protagonists, and Kureishi frequently confirms his sentiments towards the city:

I am writing about London, what I like about London, and trying to write about London in a slightly romantic way, I suppose. There are good things to do in the city, like having breakfast in certain places, having breakfast with someone you've fucked for the first time. Fantastic. Wonderful. The feeling again¹²².

London in Kureishi's novels offers freshness, progress and adventure. Sammie, whose real name is Samir (*Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*), echoes the author's views. The capital becomes a perfect place to hide the unwanted. "We love our city and we belong to it. Neither of us are English, we're Londoners, you see"¹²³. London, therefore, allows Samir to state his brand new identity and hide behind it. According to Moore-Gilbert, London "becomes a kind of laboratory for working out some of (...) new possibilities in terms of cultural identity"¹²⁴, so the city gives opportunities to become a component of a mass and the subconscious dream of becoming its full right dweller fulfils.

It is interesting to observe in Kureishi's works an agreed and symbolic border between the poverty and affluence. The bridges spanning the Thames are the route to

¹²⁰ Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British*, op. cit., p. 18.

¹²¹ Sukhdev Sandhu, *Pop Goes the Centre: Hanif Kureishi's London*, in Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 61.

¹²² Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 133.

¹²³ Hanif Kureishi, *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*, in *Collected Screenplays 1*, London: Faber and Faber, (1988), 2002, p. 140.

¹²⁴ Bart Moore-Gilbert, "London in Hanif Kureishi's Films: Hanif Kureishi in Interview with Bart Moore Gilbert" in *Kunapipi. Journal of Post-Colonial Writing*, vol. XXI, no. 2/1999, p. 6.

a better world as they join the North with the South London¹²⁵. The division of *The Buddha of Suburbia* in two parts: “In the Suburbs” and “In the City”, makes the distance even more significant. In one of the interviews Kureishi confirms the significance of the river:

For us the important place, really, was the river. And when you got on the train and you crossed the river, at that moment there was an incredible sense that you were entering another kind of world. And being in the suburbs, we could get to London quite easily on the train – about fifteen or twenty minutes – but it was a big jump...And so, for me, London became a kind of inferno of pleasure and madness¹²⁶.

Repulsive features of the suburbs for a contrast, are often stressed by young characters who strive for better and wealthier existence. Although Frederic Luis Aldama claims that “[t]he London suburbs grew fat off British imperial expansion”¹²⁷, it is difficult to trace prosperity of the outskirts in postcolonial novels. Karim (*The Buddha of Suburbia*), for instance, likes being reminded of how much he loathes the suburbs: “(...) I had to continue my journey into London and a new life, ensuring I got away from people and streets like this” (p. 101). He recollects his journey from South to North London:

The train took Ted and me and our sandwiches up through the suburbs and into London. This was the journey Dad made every day, bringing keema and roti and pea curry wrapped in grey paper in his briefcase. Before crossing the river we passed over the slums of Herne Hill and Brixton, places so compelling and unlike anything I was used to seeing that I jumped up, jammed down the window and gazed out at the rows of disintegrating Victorian houses. The gardens were full of rusting junk and sodden overcoats; lines of washing criss-crossed over the debris. Ted explained to me, “That’s where the Niggers live. Them blacks” (p. 43).

Even when he became a successful actor, Karim compared the two parts of the city. South London appears as a “poor and derelict” place, where “the unemployed were walking the streets with nowhere else to go, the men in dirty coats and the women in old shoes without stockings”, “the housing estates looked like makeshift prison camps”, shops selling “inadequate and badly made clothes”, “everything looked cheap and shabby”(pp. 223-224). Such an impossibility to cut off from the suburbs is characteristic

¹²⁵ Kenneth C.Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 76.

¹²⁶ John McLeod, *Postcolonial London*, London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 138-139.

¹²⁷ Frederick Luis Aldama, *Postethnic Narrative Criticism*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003, p. 59.

not only of Karim but also Kureishi, who in spite of the fact that seems to have settled in the recipient culture, admits: “[w]hether the suburbs are out of me is another matter”¹²⁸.

Susie Thomas claims that Kureishi’s London is his “postcolonial playground”¹²⁹ where his young and inexperienced protagonists taste drugs, sex, alcohol, spiritual emptiness, and bustling city with all its benefits and drawbacks. The city is “chaotic and vicious interface of ignorance, greed and desire”¹³⁰, writes Philip Tew. Karim’s obsession of London however, does not allow him to rest:

In bed before I went to sleep I fantasized about London and what I’d do there when the city belonged to me. There was a sound that London had. It was, I’m afraid, people in Hyde Park playing bongos with their hands; there was also the keyboard on the Doors’s ‘Light My Fire’. There were kids dressed in velvet cloaks who lived free lives; there were thousands of black people everywhere, so I wouldn’t feel exposed. (...) You see, I didn’t ask much of life; this was the extent of my longing. But at least my goals were clear and I knew what I wanted. I was twenty. I was ready for anything (p. 121).

Interestingly, Bradley Buchanan notices that the peregrination to the city “is intended as a search for an authenticity not found in Bromley” but it soon appears that “there is no greater reality to be reached”¹³¹. Kureishi’s characters, however, seem to overlook the fact as for them London is an imaginary place representative of Englishness to which they aspire so desperately. It represents an ideal state of reality. It is important to emphasise that such an attitude is hereditary as the protagonists, just like their parents, live in irrational worship of the city and exaggerated complex of the suburbs. Still Kureishi’s characters believe that London “doesn’t belong to the English, it’s international”, it is a place “to which anyone can belong, regardless of ethnicity or inherited cultural traditions”¹³².

¹²⁸ Robert McCrum, “I Got Out of the Suburbs, But Did They Get Out of Me?”, *The Observer*, available on www.guardian.co.uk, (February 25, 2001), accessed on May 15, 2002.

¹²⁹ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 108.

¹³⁰ Philip Tew, *The Contemporary British Novel*, op. cit., p. 96.

¹³¹ Bradley Buchanan, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 154.

¹³² Bart Moore-Gilbert, “London in Hanif Kureishi’s Films: Hanif Kureishi in Interview with Bart Moore Gilbert” in *Kunapipi. Journal of Post-Colonial Writing*, vol. XXI, no 2/1999, p. 9.

The technique of the description of London introduced by Kureishi resembles what Henri Lefebvre discusses in *The Production of Space*¹³³. It involves a special usage of a language “for speaking at once of the town and of the country (...). This language was a *code of space*”¹³⁴. Philip Tew claims that in this case urban surrounding is “codified”, and therefore veiled. Nina, the protagonist of Kureishi’s short story *With Your Tongue Down My Throat*, confirms to some extent Tew’s deliberations when she talks about “honeyed London”¹³⁵. It is the improved version of the city. Bart Moore-Gilbert compares London presented in English Heritage films with Kureishi’s postcolonial capital which tends to be “aggressively different, more modern or progressive, more democratic, more cosmopolitan”¹³⁶.

Kureishi’s attempts to make the city attractive result from his constant fascination with it. He personifies the capital and in Kaleta’s opinion, “his presentation of London elevates it from merely providing a setting to actually being a character”¹³⁷. Kureishi finds the city inspirational, cosmopolitan and magnetic:

My love and fascination for inner London endures. Here there is fluidity and possibilities unlimited. Here it is possible to avoid your enemies; here everything is available¹³⁸.

Compared to Monica Ali’s stuffy and limited London in *Brick Lane*, and Zadie Smith’s “suburban, multicultural, secularized London defined by oddities [and] incongruities”¹³⁹ of *White Teeth*, Kureishi’s city appears harmonious “metaphor for the new national identity”¹⁴⁰. The author’s postcolonial self finds consolation and comfort in urban logic and Pakistan serves as a contrastive point to emphasize Indian chaos and disorder.

¹³³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* in Philip Tew, *The Contemporary British Novel*, op. cit., p. 90.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Hanif Kureishi, “With Your Tongue Down My Throat”, in *Love in a Blue Time*, op. cit., p. 72.

¹³⁶ Bart Moore-Gilbert, “London in Hanif Kureishi’s Films: Hanif Kureishi in Interview with Bart Moore Gilbert” in *Kunapipi. Journal of Post-Colonial Writing*, vol. XXI, no 2, 1999, p. 8.

¹³⁷ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 236.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 237.

¹³⁹ Philip Tew, *The Contemporary British Novel*, op. cit., p. 150.

¹⁴⁰ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 239.

Karim (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) reflects Kureishi's attitude towards the capital as it "blew the windows of [his] brain wide open", "nothing gave [him] more pleasure than strolling around [his] new possession all day" (p. 126). It reminded Karim "a house with five thousand rooms, all different" and "the kick was to work out how they connected, and eventually to walk through all of them" (p. 126). To inhale the city with all its fascinating colours and sounds was an extremely refreshing and enriching experience although it did not provide solutions to all the problems and burning questions. Karim had "no idea what [he] was going to do", he felt "directionless and lost in the crowd" and obviously "couldn't see how the city worked" (p. 126). Nevertheless, all these factors did not discourage him from taking a new direction and leaving his mother and a younger brother in the suburbs.

Obviously Kureishi's protagonists are city men who do not see themselves in any other milieu. The urban imagery provides them with the feeling of safety, possibility of becoming invisible but, on the other hand, with alienation and loneliness. London, in Moore-Gilbert's opinion, becomes the equivalent of a jungle and can be compared to Kipling's *The Jungle Books* because

[j]ust like Mowgli must negotiate between his identities as man and wolf-cub, so Karim is torn between different cultural identifications and, like Mowgli, he is in a process of maturation which involves choices between conformity to moral law and the promptings of nature¹⁴¹.

The previous colonial centre became a metaphorical jungle, dangerous and wild. Bart Moore-Gilbert in his interview with Hanif Kureishi called the situation "a parodic reversal"¹⁴² as the civilized capital reminds Kipling's vision of India. This time the Asians find it hard to comprehend western reality which seems more complex and abstract than simplicity of the jungle based on binaries of black and white or good and bad.

The postcolonial capital in Kureishi's novels is full of contradictions, and occasionally the protagonists become tired of it. In such cases their awareness and

¹⁴¹ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 125.

¹⁴² Bart Moore-Gilbert, "London in Hanif Kureishi's Films: Hanif Kureishi in Interview with Bart Moore Gilbert" in *Kunapipi. Journal of Post-Colonial Writing*, vol. XXI, no 2/1999, p. 11.

disillusionment make them escape. In the last scene of *The Black Album*, Deedee and Shahid are on a train abandoning London. They intend to stay together “[u]ntil it stops being fun” (p. 276) but not in the intolerant surrounding. Similarly, Tania in *My Beautiful Laundrette* escapes not only from her father, but also from the immoral city (p. 90). Clint, the protagonist of *London Kills Me* (it is one of few works by Kureishi with action placed outside London) leaves London to find solitude and come to terms with his life after six months at rehabilitation centre, and to get “bit of fresh country air up (...) nostrils”¹⁴³.

Just like “the city is in conflict”¹⁴⁴ in Tew’s opinion, the young postcolonial generation’s nihilism results from inner struggle and lack of meaningful values. The characters are torn between London’s “utopian potential and its sobering realities”¹⁴⁵. It is a place of opportunities and limitations where, in Robert Lee’s view, “[e]thnic intercommunalism can flourish (...) or turn divisive”¹⁴⁶. Not surprisingly, in moments of despondency and despair when Karim’s assertiveness decreased, he “wanted to run out of the room, back to South London, where [he] belonged, out of which [he] had wrongly and arrogantly stepped.” (p. 148). Karim’s weakness stems from his awareness of being an inferior suburban boy. What is more, he

put (...) scepticism down to [his] South London origins, where it was felt that anyone who had an artistic attitude – anyone, that is, who’d read more than fifty books or could pronounce Mallarme correctly or tell the difference between Camembert and Brie – was basically a charlatan, snob or fool (pp. 189-190).

According to Bart Moore-Gilbert, postcolonial London “reproduces in microcosm the geographical differentiations of the former empire”¹⁴⁷, especially by marginalizing minorities and pushing them to the suburbs. Therefore, the constant feeling of being “almost a Londoner” is present in postcolonials’ life.

¹⁴³ Hanif Kureishi, *London Kills Me*, in Hanif Kureishi, *Collected Screenplays 1*, London: Faber and Faber, (1991), 2002 p. 236.

¹⁴⁴ Philip Tew, *The Contemporary British Novel*, op. cit., p. 109.

¹⁴⁵ John McLeod, *Postcolonial London*, op. cit., p. 139.

¹⁴⁶ A. Robert Lee, *Changing*, in Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit. p. 204.

¹⁴⁷ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 208.

It is necessary to appreciate the role of London in Kureishi's works. Both the author and his ethnically mixed characters are brought up in the suburbs and desire the city life. They have the dream of going to the centre, which can be understood literally, as moving out of the suburbs or metaphorically as climbing the social and racial ladder. The protagonists cannot change their ethnicity, therefore they strive for professional or social career. Considerably early do they realize that imaginary London does not exist. The postcolonial capital is racially prejudiced and intolerant place but still seductive and full of charm. It is difficult not to agree with John McLeod who claims that "London occupies a particularly significant place in the evolution of postcolonial oppositional thought and action"¹⁴⁸. Kureishi does not fail to consider rebellious nature of suburban characters which comes to voice in the city. The outskirts did not offer them any opportunities or progress. Unfortunately, it seems that a total and successful escape from the suburbs is only a dream.

To sum up, Kureishi's characters placed in western culture but rooted in eastern do not comprehend multi-facetedness of their self. In order to approach and facilitate the process of understanding they travel mentally, and often physically to India or Pakistan, only to discover that the culture surpasses them as well. The peregrination from routes – their unstable, volatile and dislodged positioning in Britain, to roots – phantasmagorical and alien culture, does not bring salvation or elucidation. The violent and unscrupulous city, religion which becomes an impediment rather than solution and avaricious western civilization allow the protagonists to gesture towards the moment of application of various strategies of assimilation. Their self-discovery becomes a painful but also a thrilling experience as they realise that to deconstruct the prevalent social and cultural order they need to cross the boundaries of two worlds. Destabilization of rigid concepts of identity, racial and religious belonging and culture in general prompt the protagonists to resort to mimicry and other kinds of figuration of selves.

¹⁴⁸ John McLeod, *Postcolonial London*, op. cit., p. 6.

CHAPTER II

*In France one says, "He talks like a book".
In Martinique, "He talks like a white man"*¹

Frantz Fanon

CLOSENESS AND DISTANCE

It is not easy to state the place of a postcolonial subject in white society. Obviously in multicultural society the love and hate relation is conditioned by various political, historical and social changes taking place both in metropolitan countries and ex-colonies. The representatives of ethnic minority groups resort to various techniques allowing for assimilation, one of them being mimicry. It is, however, often understood as a menace to white society as the similar is never the same but usually crippled and alien. The first part of the chapter therefore, is devoted to the discrepancy between the feeling of having a white soul and reality of "carrying" an oriental body. It leads us to a further discussion of "Coconuts, Bounty bars, Oreo biscuits"², as Gautam Malkani calls such people, who are perceived as Others or hybrids. This, on the other hand, results in constant awareness of inferiority and, as a result, it evokes a lust for revenge and hatred. Consequently, the last part concerns the conflict of what/who one is, and what/who one would like to be which is obviously the source of misunderstandings and violence, not only within one ethnic group but mostly between the white representatives of English society and the Asians.

¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, New York: Grove Press, Inc., (1952) 1967, p. 21.

² Gautam Malkani, *Londonstani*, London: Fourth Estate, 2006, p. 23.

2.1. MIMIC SOULS, ORIENTAL BODIES

Postcolonial subjects need to resort to various techniques of avoidance or assimilation to state their place in society, and most of all, their identity. One of the techniques is “mimicry”, the term derived from similar figures depicted in Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*. Although Fanon’s perspective seems to be distant from our debate of postcolonial issues rooted in Britain, it is possible and beneficial to apply his ideas to the discussion. Franz Fanon, a black skin French-born psychologist published in 1952 a highly polemical but momentous book entitled *Black Skin, White Masks*. He drew attention of the readers to the impact made by colonialism on millions of people who either experienced it themselves or were descendants of the colonised. Fanon devoted much of his discussion to the trauma of being categorized as “a Negro” and limited to the role of a black man. Himself a subject of “thingification”, the author created theories which “brought together the concept of alienation and of psychological marginalization”³. Prejudice of white society, racialism, the feeling of exclusion and psychological nakedness are exactly the point of intersection with postcolonial studies. In spite of cultural differences and approximately fifty years between Fanon’s and Kureishi’s works, the points of tension are similar.

Coming back to the discussion of mimicry it is useful, therefore, to use Fanon’s terms and theories. In his view, mimic men were obviously the copies of the colonizers who adopted, to some extent, their “cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values (...)”⁴. The result was far from satisfactory as the outcome was usually a blurred image and a crippled copy of the model. Forty-two years later Homi Bhabha claims that to mimic means to become “almost the same but not quite”⁵, and he tends to use the terms “mockery” and “colonial imitation”⁶ next to “mimicry”. Consequently, in Ania Loomba’s view,

³ Bill Ashcroft (et al.), *The Empire Writes Back*, op. cit., p. 124.

⁴ Bill Ashcroft (et al.), *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts*, op. cit., p. 139.

⁵ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994, p. 89.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 86.

[t]he process of replication is never complete or perfect, and what it produces is not simply a perfect image of the original but something changed because of the context in which it is being reproduced⁷.

It is vital, at this point of the discussion, to search for the reasons of copying. Historically analysing, Elleke Boehmer claims that Indian elites were always “mentally colonised” and “European cultural centrality was axiomatic”⁸. It is, however, difficult to agree with Ania Loomba who implies that imitation means today “an act of straightforward homage”⁹. When set beside Loomba’s opinion, postcolonial subjects hardly ever strive for perfection in copying an ex-colonizer. Rather they search for their own Asian English way of existence which is usually a mixture of both cultures. Although it may seem imperfect and unsatisfactory, it is far from being infatuated with Englishness.

Looking back to Frantz Fanon’s study, “the Prospero complex” is one of the reasons for unrestrained desire to become “a climber”¹⁰. Elleke Boehmer, on the other hand, claims that in contemporary world mimicry appears “[w]here other channels of self-expression were closed”¹¹. It would suggest, to some extent, that a mimic man is not the effect of main stream culture but more of a side effect. It results from the fact that he/she needs to find “other channels” as the dominant ones are closed to his/her activity. An interesting suggestion of Jacques Lacan adds to the discussion as he states that mimicry serves the purpose of merging into the background in order to achieve a particular aim:

[t]he effect of mimicry is camouflage...It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled – exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare¹².

Lacan understands mimicry as a voluntary and conscious choice serving a particular purpose. Menacing as it may seem, it leads to the conclusion that a colonial

⁷ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, London: Routledge, 1998, p. 89.

⁸ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 169-170.

⁹ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 89.

¹⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, op. cit., pp. 33-37.

¹¹ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, op. cit., p. 171.

¹² Jacques Lacan in Nahem Yousaf, *Hanif Kureishi’s ‘The Buddha of Suburbia’*, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

subject does not disavow his/her own heritage and roots. Quite the contrary, imitation is used in order to emphasize the sentimental attachment towards one's fatherland. It is possible to find a practical application of Lacan's definition in Gautam Malkani's first but already famous novel *Londonstani*. The main character, Jas, becomes a member of an Asian gang assimilating all the values and elements of culture, including slang and enchantment with Pakistani girls who "dress like desi versions a Britney Spears"¹³. Only on the last pages of the novel, does the reader discover that Jas is, in fact, "Jason Bartholomew-Cliveden, aged nineteen, white, male"¹⁴. Not only was the reader deluded, but most of all, Jas himself. Unsatisfied with his parents, school, posh accent and even his name, Jason believed that by adopting a new culture he would be able to become a different person. Lacan's idea of mimicry is expressed by one of the representatives of the first generation immigrants from Malkani's novel. The man claims that in spite of the fact that he applies the technique of camouflage, its only purpose is to stay within the scope of his homeland:

(...) though my son keeps complaining that his mother and I speak like British royalty, you know what the Crown jewels make me think of? **India**¹⁵.

Obviously, the 1950s generation living in Britain makes a significant effort to sooth their longing for India and to sink into new reality. Kureishi observes their endeavours to settle and make a career, if this is the right term to be used to describe their existence in London. Being "an employee of the British Government", "a Civil Service clerk" (p. 7) commuting for over twenty years, Haroon Amir, the protagonist of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, learned to hide his emotions, needs and aspirations and to "keep [his] mind blank in constant effortless meditation" (p. 8). At the same time Haroon realized how big his advancement must be to adjust to the norms of white society. For this reason he carried a "tiny blue dictionary" (p. 28) on his way to work and learned daily a new sophisticated word giving Karim a lesson: "You never know when you might need a heavyweight word to impress an Englishman" (p. 28). Haroon's

¹³ Gautam Malkani, *Londonstani*, op. cit., p. 52.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 340.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 182 (emphasis mine, A.S.).

dreams and ambitions concerning his son are also influenced by outside world “requirements” as he wants Karim to become a doctor and date white girls only.

Years elapsed in England and Haroon realized that he “was going nowhere” (p.26) so, to save his soul and mind, he “turned to Lieh Tzu, Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu” and started to absorb them “as if they’d been writing exclusively for him” (p. 26). Haroon, a white collar worker, feels that his existence in the consumer society is fruitless and hopeless. He needs to discuss “the Yin and Yang, cosmic consciousness, Chinese philosophy, and the following of the Way” (p. 27).

It is true, to some extent, that, as Susie Thomas claims “Haroon starts off as the mimic Englishman and, when this fails, he becomes a mimic Indian”¹⁶. Karim is surprised when his father endeavours to speak with strong Indian accent during his séances, whereas “[h]e’d spent years trying to be more of an Englishman, to be less risibly conspicuous” (p. 21). On the other hand, Karim is the only one who is cognizant of the fact that there is a deeper sense of Haroon’s behaviour:

[b]eneath all the Chinese bluster was Dad’s loneliness and desire for internal advancement. He needed to talk about the China-things he was learning. (...) He wanted to talk of obtaining a quiet mind, of being true to yourself, of self-understanding. (p. 28)

It seems that Haroon’s soul strives for mimicry, but his oriental body prevents him from complete assimilation. Contrary to Thomas’ statement, Haroon cannot be denied his sincere sentiments and emotionality towards eastern tradition, which can be confirmed by his “dietary preferences, love of yoga, and propensity to mock the British”¹⁷. In fact, although India and Indianess were softened in Haroon’s mind for many years, they never vanished from his heart. The malleability of his identity results from Haroon’s deep sense of loss rather than conformity.

Interestingly, many postcolonial protagonists tend to reflect, what Lois Tyson calls “a double consciousness” or “double vision”¹⁸. They seem to be settled in

¹⁶ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 66.

¹⁷ Bart Moore – Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 132.

¹⁸ Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, op. cit., p. 368.

antagonistic cultures and ethnic groups. Shahid (*The Black Album*) experiencing religious enlightenment realized that it was not really his destination:

[w]hen he 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. (p. 133)

Fanon's early consideration that a man of colour "(...) has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man"¹⁹ can be applied many years later for explanation of biracial characters' emotions. In Kureishi's postcolonial world duality of perception is evoked often by voluntary mimicry, which consequently creates an artificial split between traditional, heritage-oriented upbringing, and demanding surroundings. It is possible that Kureishi's characters use the elements of imitation consciously because it is "a strategy of exclusion through inclusion"²⁰. Shahid, Karim, Omar and similar biracial characters immerse themselves in white culture, they experience it, partially because they cannot avoid it. On the other hand, being aware of the fact that they are going to live in it, they choose the elements they like, and accept what might be useful to exist in white society. In other words, they exclude some elements of "whiteness" by previous inclusion/immersion in it.

It cannot be denied, however, that mimic identity is frequently imposed and enforced by unified society. Haroon's selfhood became endangered when his wife's sister, Jean and her husband permanently avoid calling Karim's father by the original form of his first name. An English version of the name, "Harry", seemed more convenient as "it was bad enough his being an Indian in the first place, without having an awkward name too"(p.33). Similarly, Zadie Smith's Asian protagonist of *White Teeth* objects to having his name changed:

Don't call me Sam. (...) I'm not one of your English matey-boys. My name is Samad Miah Iqbal. Not Sam. Not Sammy. And not – God forbid – Samuel. It is Samad²¹.

As the others want to see them different both protagonists are forced to adopt new simplified versions of their names. In their understanding, they get sealed in

¹⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, op. cit., p. 17.

²⁰ Peter Childs, Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, op. cit., p. 129.

²¹ Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, op. cit., p. 112.

imposed mimicry which makes a significant impact on their personalities and self-awareness.

Karim (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) is apparently a chameleon like figure in Kureishi's novel. He is affected by all kinds of mimicry, and therefore, the discovery of his identity is hindered. Being a teenager, Karim finds himself at the crossroads of childhood and maturity, dependence and freedom, innocence and demoralization. His choices, dilemmas and achievements attained by various techniques of mimicry confirm the fact that "the immigrant is the Everyman of the twentieth century" (p. 141). He needs to adapt to environment and adopt new conventions, as if to support Rushdie's statement that a man of colour "could only become integrated when he started behaving like a white one"²².

Karim's career of an actor allows him for innumerable changes and possibilities. The symbolic, in this context, "profession of mutation"²³ leaves all personalities, genders or ethnic groups open for analysis and interpretation. Unfortunately, it appeared difficult to avoid the stereotypical roles even while working in a theatre. The boy's first role, Mowgli from Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, costs Karim a lot of humiliation. His body was covered "from toe to head in the brown muck" (p. 146). But even more degrading for Karim was the problem of his accent. Shadwell forces the boy to speak with Indian accent and when Karim tried to negotiate the changes, Shadwell exclaimed: "(...) you've been cast for authenticity and not for experience. (...). Try it until you feel comfortable as a Bengali" (p. 147).

In Ranasinha's opinion, Karim's later performances of an immigrant "exaggerate the process of construction of a sense of self"²⁴ but they also confirm a stereotypical idea of a crippled and reduced identity. Tracey, a black girl, accuses Karim of creating a picture "of what white people already think of [them]" and defining

²² Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 137.

²³ Philips Dodd, *Requiem for a Rave*, in Ruvani Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 70.

²⁴ Ruvani Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 70.

minorities as “funny, with strange habits and weird customs” (p. 180). By experimenting with mimicry, Karim betrays, in Tracey’s opinion, his own people.

As if to justify Karim’s mimicry, Bradley Buchanan claims that “in pursuing or representing an inauthentic self, one discovers a more pleasurable, profitable or useful way of being”²⁵. Obviously, it becomes the matter of discussion whether the protagonist’s acquired personality is “inauthentic”. Whenever the boy accepts a new role, either as an actor or in real life, he seems to be quite comfortable with it. He strives to become successful in it and does not consider it in categories of artificiality or as a derivative phenomenon. On the contrary, his chameleonic nature allows him to resort to his newly gained selves and makes it feasible to discover and occupy new but often temporal positions.

In fact quite early did Karim begin his mutability processes, first “changing his wardrobe as if (...) trying on new roles or identities”²⁶, then, pretending with his friend, Jamila to be someone else as they were prohibited to be English:

(...) sometimes we were French, Jammie and I, and other times we went black American. The thing was, we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it. (p. 53).

Similarly, Shahid’s uncle, Asif (*The Black Album*) talks about many roles which the Pakistanis are forced to fulfil. They have to “do everything, win the sports, present the news and run the shops and businesses, as well as (...) fuck the women”(p. 6). In Asif’s opinion, it is “the brown man’s burden” (p.6) and the Pakistanis’ role imposed by white society is overpowering.

The Asians have to equal the white man on a communicative level as well. It cannot be denied that postcolonial London became a linguistic phenomenon. An infinite number of accents and dialects of English makes it obvious that language became the tool of imitation. All postcolonials, whether representing the first or the second generation of Asians, adjust their identity by the manipulation of the way of speaking.

²⁵ Bardley Buchanan, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 44.

²⁶ Bart Moore-Gilbert, “London in Hanif Kureishi’s Films: Hanif Kureishi in Interview with Bart Moore – Gilbert”, in *Kunapipi. Journal of Post-Colonial Writing*, vol. XXI no. 2, 1999, p. 13.

“(…) A choice of language is a choice of identity”²⁷, claims Simon During, hence, it is impossible to overestimate its significance. Haroon’s obsession with an acquisition of new vocabulary makes him seemingly “more English than the English”²⁸ and only intensifies his disillusionment when, after his arrival to London, he attempts to discuss Byron in a pub and discovers that “not every Englishman could read or that they didn’t necessarily want tutoring by an Indian on the poetry of a pervert and a madman”(p. 24). His polished command of the vernacular led him astray evoking mostly, what John McLeod calls, “worrying threat of resemblance”²⁹ in his white colleagues.

The Man of a Thousand Voices and a Voice, Saladin Chamcha, the protagonist of *The Satanic Verses* by Rushdie is the epitome of linguistic mimicry:

On the radio he could convince an audience that he was Russian, Chinese, Sicilian, the President of the United States. Once, in a radio play for thirty-seven voices, he interpreted every single part under a variety of pseudonyms and nobody even worked it out³⁰.

It seems that Chamcha managed to deceive the audience only because he worked on the radio and his origin remained anonymous. Years elapsed and this “self-made man” returned to India with a group of actors to present the role of an Indian. To his horror, on a stage, his native vernacular dominated his English:

(…) those long-suppressed locutions, those discarded vowels and consonants, began to leak out of his mouth out of the theatre as well. His voice was betraying him³¹.

The character experiences “linguistic schizophrenia” as his communicative tool is out of control. Consequently, his contact with reality and environment is limited and denied by his disobedient tongue. Similarly in Malkani’s *Londonstani* the protagonist’s father uses correct English for business, but

he flips back into Bombay mode whenever he gets angry or drunk and that pisses Aunty off big time cos she reckons he sounds straight off the bloody boat³².

²⁷ Simon During, “Postmodernism or Postcolonialism Today” in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, London: Routledge, 1995, p. 126.

²⁸ Bill Ashcroft (et al.), *The Empire Writes Back*, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁹ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 55.

³⁰ Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, op. cit., p. 60.

³¹ Ibid, p. 49.

³² Gautam Malkani, *Londonstani*, op. cit., p. 179.

The subconscious linguistic attachment to the mother tongue is so strong and emotional that it becomes the curse of the first generation immigrants. The vernacular betrays and enslaves in stereotypical categories of “us” and “them”.

The Asian characters mimic the white ones, and often it is not easy to decide whether it results from their fascination with “white culture” or from genuine affection and emotionality towards a particular person. Karim Amir, (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) begins to follow the lifestyle of white Charlie Hero because he is unsatisfied with his own complex and problematic identity. On the other hand, it is possible that he truly conceived a new idea of himself and a pattern to strive for. Considerably early does he reveal his increasing obsession with his idol:

I admired him more than anyone but I didn't wish him well. It was that I preferred him to me and wanted to be him. I coveted his talents, face, style. I wanted to wake up with them all transferred to me. (p. 15).

Consequently, the boy abandons accuracy of his sexual preferences, which affects the relations with his parents. He also changes his way of dressing and becomes interested in particular sort of music and books. Even Charlie's silver hair makes Karim wonder whether London was “entering a new hair era that [he]’d completely failed to notice” (p. 37).

The blind admiration and hopeless love to Charlie are Karim's passage to puberty and stable self-identity. Accordingly, it is possible to agree with Radhika Mohanram that “heterosex mimes homosex and vice versa”³³, assuming that sexual mimicry becomes a stepping stone in the characters' lives. On the other hand, in Kaleta's opinion, “to say that it is the homosexual love affair is a simplification” as “the boys are in love not with each other's maleness but with their own”³⁴. Obviously, Kaleta suggests that it is not only about ethnicity and sexuality but most of all about maleness and maturity process that become so meaningful at that point.

³³ Radhika Mohanram, *Postcolonial Spaces and Deterritorialized (Homo)Sexuality*, in Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 38.

³⁴ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 179.

Radhika Mohanram expands her discussion of sexual mimicry to Omo and Johnny, the protagonists of *My Beautiful Laundrette*. She compares the boys having sexual intercourse hidden behind one-way mirror to Nasser and Rachel, who dance across the launderette. According to Mohanram, the male lovers mimic the heterosexual couple³⁵. However, it is possible to draw conclusions that Omo and Johnny imitate Nasser and Rachel not in terms of their gender roles, but rather ethnic affiliation. Omo's subconscious choice of a white lover can be, therefore, juxtaposed to Nasser's choice of white Rachel.

In Kaleta's view, such an unconventional love story reveals Omo's intentions as he approaches Johnny "as a sex object and maybe sees mounting him as a way to assert himself against racial discrimination"³⁶. The instrumental treatment of the sexual partner disturbs an ideal picture of a "Romeo-meets-Romeo"³⁷ romance, but it also corroborates the fact that mimicry itself is profoundly intentional as it serves specific purposes and often allows to fulfil a dream.

It seems adequate to resort again for a brief moment to the definition of mimicry which will help us to proceed with our discussion. In Ashcroft's (et al.) opinion there is a significant menace associated with mimicry:

threat inherent in mimicry (...) comes not from an overt resistance but from the way in which it continually suggests an identity not quite like the colonizer. This identity of the colonial subject (...) means that the colonial culture is always potentially and strategically insurgent³⁸.

As a result, Omo and Karim become the epitome of the danger to the purity of the colonizers' culture. Following Mohanram's reasoning, "Omar is always a reminder of Johnny and John Bull's fading unstable identity"³⁹, just like the protagonists' homosexuality and verified ethnicity mean the end of standard, heterosexual, white

³⁵ Radhika Mohanram, *Postcolonial Spaces and Deterritorialized (Homo)Sexuality*, in Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 38.

³⁶ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 226.

³⁷ Marcia Pally, *Kureishi Like a Fox*, in Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 231.

³⁸ Bill Ashcroft (et al.), *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts*, op. cit., p. 141.

³⁹ Radhika Mohanram, *Postcolonial Spaces and Deterritorialized (Homo)Sexuality*, in Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 40.

society. Mimicry is, in this case “at once resemblance and menace”⁴⁰, as Homi Bhabha claims.

Similarly, Shahid and Deedee’s relationship becomes a threat to metropolitan stereotypes denying the features associated with imaginary John Bull, the embodiment of society. They not only break age taboo (Deedee is much older), relation taboo (Deedee being Shahid’s lecturer), but most importantly, ethnic taboo. The couple’s love affair “threatens to collapse the Orientalist structure of knowledge”⁴¹ deconstructing fossilized but generally accepted beliefs and assumptions.

Shahid, except for being a mimic Muslim, becomes a mimic woman. When Deedee suggests that he should put make-up on his face, he thinks that it is not really “his destiny to look like Barbara Cartland”(p. 117). Soon he changes his attitude and allows Deedee to apply cosmetics on his face. It is interesting that only for a brief moment “he felt he were losing himself”(p. 117). Next thing he felt was “a relief”:

he likes 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 (pp. 117-118).

Impressed by his new image, Shahid discovers female features in himself. His make-up mask seems to be more comfortable than his Asian face. Kenneth C. Kaleta draws the reader’s attention to the boy’s astonishing comfort:

Shahid feels not the embarrassment of playing the female role, but, rather , the power of being female. Shahid feels not as a woman seen by men feels; rather, he feels as a woman feels⁴².

Shahid’s strong attachment to his new body and his rapid and smooth transformation from a man into a woman emphasize his unstableness, alienation and desperate need to strike roots in soil, any soil. The lovers exchange their sexes for a moment destabilizing traditional and commonly acknowledged gender roles. “ Deedee

⁴⁰ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, op. cit., p. 86.

⁴¹ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 55.

⁴² Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 130.

becomes a guy who wears make up; Shahid becomes a woman. If you're a Muslim, you can't play with your identity in that way"⁴³, comments Kureishi.

In pursuit of the blurred sense of self, Kureishi's protagonists are united by the dream of economic success and financial prosperity. Partially, it is their inherent ambition, but most frequently, it seems to be evoked by constant comparisons and the inferiority complex of the minority. Omo's cousin, Salim claims that the Pakistanis are "nothing in England without money" (p. 61) and his opinion is shared by most of the first and second generation Asians and semi-Asians. Not devoid of this feeling, Omar intends to become one of the *nouveau riche*. In spite of his father's accusation that he "kisses the arses of the English" (p. 26) to make a career, he has his aim clearly stated: "I want big money. I'm not gonna be beat down by this country"(p. 65).

Nasser influences Omar with his wealth and courage. His opinion that "there's money in muck" (p. 22) makes an impact on Omo's future as he hopes to make a chance for himself and begins his laundrette business. Nasser is determined to "squeeze the tits of the system" (p. 14) and his deep belief in England is conditioned by his view that "[i]n this damn country which we hate and love, you can get anything you want." (p. 14). Although Nasser is ridiculed by Johnny who calls him contemptuously "[s]ome kinda big Gatsby geezer" (p. 72), the businessman realizes that the English boy is his employee, being at the same time subject to reversed colonialism.

Rafi, Sammy's father (*Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*), is quite sarcastic about the country of ex-colonizers. "For me England is hot buttered toast on a fork in front of an open fire. And cunt fingers"⁴⁴, says Rafi. When in India, Rafi was a politician focused on making his fortune. Then, back in London he feels secure and happy, but does not refrain from criticising the city. In accordance with Nasser's belief, both men feel "professional businessmen" rather than "professional Pakistanis" (p. 50). They want to

⁴³ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 140.

⁴⁴ Hanif Kureishi, *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*, in Hanif Kureishi, *Collected Screenplays*, op. cit., p. 97.

believe that “[t]here’s no race question in the new enterprise culture” (p. 50). Nevertheless, Kureishi makes it clear that reality is painfully different:

[t]o the English all Pakistanis were the same; racists didn’t ask whether you had a chauffeur, TV and private education before they set fire to your house⁴⁵.

Economic mimicry is a fruitless endeavour of assimilation and “provides no safeguards against racism”⁴⁶, claims Bart Moore-Gilbert.

Nevertheless, it seems impossible for the Asians to achieve western advancement in another way than by economic mobility. Disappointingly, numerous situations prove that an honest struggle to make a career is not always possible. Karim’s father appears to be disillusioned and showing utter hopelessness:

The whites will never promote us. (...) Not an Indian while there is a white man left on the earth. You don’t have to deal with them – they still think they have an Empire when they don’t have two pennies to rub together. (p. 27)

Anger and jealousy become motive power for Sanjay, one of the protagonists of *Londonstani* who worships money and comfort. He thinks that “affluence (is) becoming mainstream culture”⁴⁷ and despises shiftlessness and poverty:

The word bling has made it into the *Oxford English Dictionary* precisely because it isn’t some passing phase, boys. This lifestyle, these material possessions, this is how you big yourself up, as they say. You will forever be judged and judge yourselves by your luxury, consumerist aspirations, your nice stuff. And if you stop trying to big yourself up, others around you will make you look small pretty quickly, believe me⁴⁸.

Kureishi’s characters mimic the white men in their pursuit of economic prosperity regardless of emotional and ethical price they have to pay. They despise eastern values and spirituality, heritage and religion just to follow western consumerism. Hanif Kureishi points to the fact that “crime, greed, and materialism, like honor and intelligence, come in all colors, shapes and persuasions in a pluralistic society”⁴⁹. Paradoxically, all characters placing property above inwardness and emotionality end up abandoned, solitary and alienated.

⁴⁵ Hanif Kureishi, *Dreaming and Scheming*, op. cit., p. 46.

⁴⁶ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 52.

⁴⁷ Gautam Malkani, *Londonstani*, op. cit., p. 171.

⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 167-168.

⁴⁹ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 220.

A verified kaleidoscope of personalities offered by postcolonial literature seems an immense advantage as the characters mirror emotions and reactions of all colours. Salman Rushdie claims that reliability of literature is important:

[t]he real gift we can offer to our communities is not the creation of a set of stereotyped positive images to counteract negative ones, but simply the gift of treating black and Asian characters, in a way that white writers seem rarely able to do...as fully realized human beings, as complex creations, good, bad⁵⁰.

Consequently, the postcolonials are subject to “negative mimicry” as well. They often imitate “the white oppressor”, frequently in order to take revenge. Shahid (*The Black Album*), for instance, admitted that he “wanted to be a racist” (p. 10) as a result of racial prejudice encountered by him every day. He started to behave in a very violent way to prove that evil is approachable and not denied to him:

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. (p. 11)

Postcolonial reality evokes demand for negative copying not only in biracial subjects but also in the white ones. Johnny (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) becomes “a fascist with a quarter inch of hair” (p. 26). Jas (*Londonstani*) tries to identify himself with Nazis:

I wonder if it'd be possible for a guy like me to be a Nazi. I'll daydream that I'm a Nazi. I know it sounds like I'm being a wanker cos there were scum like suicide bombers, killin all them people an that. (...), at least nobody 'd take the piss outta them. Fucking saluted them instead⁵¹.

Regardless of skin colour, the boys seem to be seeking for security and purpose. Having experienced cruelty and persecution they need to create friendly, albeit illusionary space to exist in. Negative mimicry is supposed to help them in stating their place of belonging. It also adds to reliability of the protagonists who, open for new experiences, release all kinds of emotions.

⁵⁰ Salman Rushdie, *Minority Literatures in a Multi-cultural Society*, in Ruvani Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 51.

⁵¹ Gautam Malkani, *Londonstani*, op. cit., p. 32.

Hanif Kureishi pays even more attention to the mimicry of the white when he allows Charlie Hero, Eva's son to experiment with his identity. First, in school environment Charlie becomes a star singer. Then, fascinated by punk music, he wears "a slashed T-shirt with a red swastika hand-painted on it. His black trousers were held together by safety pins, paperclips and needles." (p. 151). Charlie goes through numerous transformations which result from his personality crisis, loneliness and incapability of dealing with his mother's love affair and divorce. England, "the Kingdom of Prejudice" (p. 254) does not provide any purpose or opportunities. While in America, Charlie, bored with sexual adventures, plays with his accent. He mimics cockney although, when at school he was "mocked by the stinking gypsy kids for talking so posh" (p. 247). Karim realizes that Charlie "was selling Englishness, and getting a lot money for it" (p. 247). The biracial character despises his idol for turning his identity and class belonging into a commodity. In order to acquire financial profits and attention of American audience Charlie voluntarily abandoned what Karim strives for: stable and authentic self.

As far as appearance is concerned there is another sort of mimicry among the white - the imitation of eastern values, fashion and spirituality. The reasons for copying the culture of the colonized are revealed in Rafi's (*Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*) conversation with Anna, his son's English friend:

For you the world and culture is a kind of department store. You go in and take something you like from each floor. But you're attached to nothing. Your lives are incoherent, shallow⁵².

Rafi, just like Samad, the protagonist of Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, sees the emptiness, meaninglessness and pernicious impact of England. "I have been corrupted by England, I see that now – my children, my wife, they too have been corrupted"⁵³, complains Samad, and his friend, Shiva, wonders whether it is possible to "pull the West out of 'em once it's in"⁵⁴.

⁵² Hanif Kureishi, *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*, in Hanif Kureishi, *Collected Screenplays 1*, op. cit., p. 145.

⁵³ Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, op. cit., p. 144.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 145.

No wonder, Eva Kay falls in love not only with Haroon's oriental appearance, but most of all, with his mental stability and spirituality. Eva, seduced by Asian fashion herself wears "a full-length, multi-coloured kaftan. (...) Her feet were bare" (pp. 8-9). She practices "meditation, self-awareness and yoga. Perhaps a little chanting to slow the mind down" (p. 262). She appreciates Karim mostly because "[he] is so exotic, so original" (p. 9).

Eva's friends, Carl and Marianne seduced by India and its culture, divide people into two categories: "those who have been to India and those who haven't" (p. 30). Their house is decorated with oriental "sandalwood Buddhas, brass ashtrays and striped plaster elephants which decorated every available space" (p. 30). The couple welcomes their guests "barefoot (...), the palms of their hands together in prayer and their heads bowed as if we were temple servants" (p. 30). They open their hearts and minds for Haroon's teaching although he is a stranger in their house. All the people gathered at their party expect Karim's father to fill the space of their fruitless existence and loneliness.

Similarly Shadwell, the theatre director, endeavours to impress Karim with his knowledge and appreciation of India:

You've never been there, I suppose. (...) You know where. Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Trivandrum, Goa, the Punjab. You've never had the dust in your nostrils? (p. 141).

He embarrasses Karim, but also annoys him as he denies the boy's right to identify with India, refusing at the same time to accept him as an Englishman. Unconsciously, he displaced the boy once again refusing to locate him in particular culture. Instead, Shadwell suggests the position between the cultures. It might be interesting to discover Shadwell's alter ego in the poetry of already introduced Moniza Alvi. Giving Karim a lesson about Asia, Shadwell behaves like the geography teacher from Alvi's poem:

(...) who leapt across
Ditches on field trips, and enlightened [her]
Briskly as to where [she] was born⁵⁵.

Once again the white protagonists/colonizers appropriated the culture of the colonized. They conquer it anew only to choose the elements which they lack in their consumerist western society. This time, however, they conduct this “spiritual colonization” not for imperialistic reasons but, as Charlie Hero claims, because England lacks the essential:

England’s decrepit. No one believes in anything. Here, it’s money and success. (...) England’s a nice place if you’re rich, but otherwise it’s a fucking swamp of prejudice, class confusion, the whole thing. Nothing works over there. And no one works. (p. 256)

The words define deficiency of, seemingly, outdated values: love, faith, attention, reality of feelings, safety and strongly developed idea of self.

Even though Bart Moore-Gilbert claims that the Asians in Kureishi’s novels make “their difference a commodity”⁵⁶, the author himself confirms to some extent, but at the same time suggests it is rather mutual exchange of positive and precious elements of culture:

ethnicity is a commodity which is bought and sold, but you could also say in a way that it’s cultural interchange. Like Picasso taking African masks and making something else with them. You wouldn’t only say that he was exploiting Africa for images. This is how culture works⁵⁷.

In order to keep the balance it must be mentioned that the postcolonial subject’s application of mimicry is frequently unsuccessful as it becomes the source of his/her frustration and disappointment. Jacques Lacan’s theory of a mirror phase according to which “the subject makes himself an object by striking a pose before the mirror”⁵⁸ serves as an explanation. Lacan claims that even if the subject “achieved his most

⁵⁵ Moniza Alvi, “Half- and-Half”, from Moniza Alvi, *How the Stone Found Its Voice*, Northumberland, Bloodaxe Books, 2005, p. 22.

⁵⁶ Bart Moore-Gilbert, “London in Hanif Kureishi’s Films: Hanif Kureishi in Interview with Bart-Moore Gilbert” in *Kunapipi. Journal of Post-Colonial Writing*, vol. XXI, no 2/1999, p. 11.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self*, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, (1968) 1981, pp. 11-12.

perfect likeness in that image, it would still be the *jouissance* of the other”⁵⁹. Even if the postcolonial subject, therefore, makes himself/herself an object by pretending to be one and by accepting its features, he/she will soon become disillusioned and aware of artificiality of the situation. Struck by its inconvenience, the subject is prone to return to his/her roots. On the other hand, it is feasible that he/she will make an uncountable number of attempts to mimic the object of desire or admiration as if doomed to constant peregrination. Indeed, Kureishi asked about the Lancanian aspect of a mirror phase in his works admits that he was trying to “write about the ones living in the small, narrow world of this kind of suburban village being confronted by this multiplicity, this incredible range of possible identifications”⁶⁰.

On the whole, mimicry in Kureishi’s works serves the purpose of depicting different ways and techniques of looking for one’s identity, trying on different social and ethnic roles and stating one’s identity. Kureishi’s works, just like Rushdie’s are “written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis...that is the migrant condition”⁶¹ which adds to their exploratory features. Kureishi endeavours to answer the question whether there is one Englishness to identify with. “There must be a new definition of today’s national identities, just like Kureishi’s attitude toward his characters and telling their stories is new”⁶², claims Kenneth C Kaleta. Stuart Hall draws our attention to the fact that we should be “aware that identities are never completed, never finished; that they are always as subjectivity itself is, in process”⁶³. Finally, Susie Thomas adds that “[n]ational identities...are inevitably presented as a matter of cultural performances”⁶⁴.

Karim, the protagonist of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, unaware of this fact, strives for his unfulfilled dream, only to discover a painful confirmation of Peter Childs and

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Bradley Buchanan, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 122.

⁶¹ D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, *Salman Rushdie*, London: Macmillan Press, 1998, p. 74.

⁶² Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 232.

⁶³ Stuart Hall, *Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities*, in Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 41.

⁶⁴ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 69.

Patrick Williams' definition of mimicry which "relies on resemblance, on the colonized becoming like the colonizer but always remaining different"⁶⁵. Interestingly, Hanif Kureishi pays much attention not only to the mimicry of Asian or semi Asian characters, but also to the mimicry of the white. It seems surprising that both groups are subject to various processes of imitation searching for similar, if not the same, features in the opposite. They all painfully experience deficiency of higher feelings and honesty of emotionality as London became truly "the city of love vampires"⁶⁶. The protagonists fall into the traps of mimicry unaware of imperfection of the other subject which places them in a vicious circle of unanswered questions and unfinished explorations.

It cannot be denied that mimicry leads, to some extent, to alterations which make the subject look "hybrid". The original, pure form is either lost or changed, and the outcome is frequently menacing and threatening even for the postcolonial subject as it is somewhere "in-between".

2.2. HYBRIDITY OF IN-BETWEENS

"Hybridity is... itself a hybrid concept", notes Robert Young in *Colonial Desire*⁶⁷. It is, in fact, a complex term deriving from "an act of mimicry that is at the bottom insurrectionary"⁶⁸. It is, just like mimicry, recognized as a menace to colonial discipline and order, because as Homi Bhabha claims, it is "neither the one thing nor the other"⁶⁹, and such crossings possibly lack the clarity and purity of the original. Whether it is in art, culture or literature, hybridity may "signify a freeing of voices, a technique for dismantling authority, a liberating polyphony that shakes off the authoritarian yoke"⁷⁰. On the other hand, it becomes the tool of postcolonial writers motivating them to generate the stories to create space for hybrid characters. It seems, therefore, that it is the role of a writer to place biracial protagonists in a safe and

⁶⁵ Peter Childs, Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, op. cit., p. 130.

⁶⁶ Hanif Kureishi, "Nightlight", in *Love in a Blue Time*, op. cit., p. 142.

⁶⁷ Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire*, In Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 194.

⁶⁸ Gregory Castle, *Postcolonial Discourses. An Anthology*, op. cit., p. 505.

⁶⁹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, op. cit., p. 33.

⁷⁰ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, op. cit., pp. 238-239.

friendly environment. Occasionally, the terms “syncretism” and “synergy” can be used interchangeably with hybridity, although they both occur in religious studies and theological texts rather than in literary theory⁷¹.

Cashmore claims that hybrid subjects seem to be settled “within the contact zone produced by colonization”⁷². They retain “links with the territories of their forbears but [come] to terms with a culture they inhabit”⁷³. They stay in-between, enjoying advantages of both cultures and resisting assimilation with any of them. According to Kaleta, not only do they cross, but are also crossed by two cultures⁷⁴, which makes them sensitive to both of them, but at the same time, leaves them at the crossroads, unaccepted. As Katarzyna Nowak writes, the travelling subjects are undefined and thus misinterpreted:

the migrant is neither here nor there, speaks neither the language she [he] was born into, nor the language of an adopted new homeland, and belongs neither to the past nor the future. She [he] is neither whole nor fragmented⁷⁵.

Kureishi is often appreciated, as well as criticized, for being “the hyphenated Anglo-Asian author” and for his unique “insider/outsider point of view”⁷⁶. His biracial/hybrid identity allows him to comprehend the sense of being lost in the world and belonging nowhere. At the same time, Kureishi realizes that when you are in the middle, between the cultures “you can see the end and the beginning”⁷⁷.

Not surprisingly, postcolonial protagonists carry the burden of representation and stereotyping, aware of their otherness. Karim Amir states his hybridity in the very first lines of *The Buddha of Suburbia*:

My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, **almost**⁷⁸. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed 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. (p. 3)

⁷¹ Bill Ashcroft (et al.), *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts*, op. cit., p. 229.

⁷² Ibid, p. 118.

⁷³ Ellis Cashmore, (ed.) *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*, op. cit., p. 165.

⁷⁴ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 204.

⁷⁵ Katarzyna Nowak, *Melancholic Travelers*, op. cit., p. 14.

⁷⁶ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op.cit., p. 7.

⁷⁷ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 163.

⁷⁸ Emphasis mine, A.S.

The word “almost” excludes Karim from homogenous society and makes him different. Karim is denied his “Englishness” and aware of “the new breed” he represents. He places himself between “two old histories”, between two antagonistic cultures and even two continents. Although he is not enchanted with his hyphenated identity, he is “going somewhere” and following his dreams and aspirations.

Zadie Smith’s hybrid character of *White Teeth* adds a similar angle to this discussion. Although half Jamaican, half English, Irie faces a similar complexity of nature. Unsatisfied with her “cocktail” nature, she admires, if not adores the white Chalfens’ family. She wants “to merge with the Chalfens, to be of one flesh; separated from the chaotic, random flesh of her own family and transgenically fused with another. A unique animal. A new breed”⁷⁹. Both Karim and Irie are of mixed origin and, therefore, they both seem to be enslaved in “Cinderella complex”⁸⁰. They are made inferior which makes them dream about, what Fanon called in his groundbreaking book *Black Skin, White Masks*, “lactification”⁸¹, the miraculous whitening. The “breed” issue occupies their attention as they realize that they are subject to categorization on the basis of their skin colour and ancestors.

The hybrid appearance, though, seems to be less troublesome than cultural split which affects them. Kureishi’s young characters acquired English language and culture but their identity is “at once plural and partial”⁸², as Salman Rushdie writes. Indian tradition, in which they were brought up, is already a part of their personality, they were “contaminated” with it. Shahid (*The Black Album*) confides to Riaz his feelings of exclusion:

I began to feel... in that part of the country, more of a freak than I did normally. I had been kicked around and chased a lot you know. It made me terrifying sensitive. I kept thinking there was something I lacked. (p. 10).

⁷⁹ Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, op. cit., p. 342.

⁸⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, op. cit., p. 77.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 47.

⁸² Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 15.

Shahid discovers that he is unable to identify himself with any of the groups: the white, the Asians or even the Nazis. The shaky position makes him feel insecure since he constantly experiences displacement:

[he] discovers through the course of events that he is always – already all of these people and none of them.
He cannot place himself with certainty – and more important without questioning – within any of the narratives that the other characters inhabit⁸³.

Karim's behaviour and preferences make him a hybrid subject as well: he adores tea and cycling and listens to "King Crimson, Soft Machine, Captain Beefheart, Frank Zappa and Wild Man Fisher" (p. 62). He knows, as a typical Englishman, where to buy the blends of tea he likes and where the best music shops in the High Street are. He feels great in London but his love for the city is not reciprocated. When he tried to date Helen, a white girl, her father reminded Karim where his place in society is: "She doesn't go out with boys. Or with wogs. (...) We don't want you blackies coming to the house"(p. 40). He seems to differentiate between "boys" and "wogs", occasionally called "blackies". What Helen's father does is placing Karim in an uncomfortable "master – slave relationship"⁸⁴. The white man feels that he can establish some rules and limit Karim's sense of liberty, only because he feels more rooted in the country.

Omar (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) is, according to Susie Thomas, "a "wog" to the white fascists and an "in-between" to his Pakistani relatives"⁸⁵. Salim accuses Omar of having "too much white blood" (p. 31) He thinks it made the boy "weak like those pale-faced adolescents"(p.31) who call the Asians wogs. On the other hand, Omo shares English experiences with his white boyfriend, Johnny and rejects the idea of being "Other". Both sides alienate him, though he himself refuses to select one identity. He is frequently punished for the refusal as he is in Bhabha's view, "less than one and double"⁸⁶ at the same time. He seems to be rejected by both cultures but also taking from both.

⁸³ B.T. Williams, "A State of Perpetual Wandering" in Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 122.

⁸⁴ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory. A Critical Introduction*, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

⁸⁵ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 26.

⁸⁶ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, op. cit., p. 116.

Once again it might be significant to resort to Zadie Smith's novel categorized as a postcolonial one. Millat (*White Teeth*), just like Shahid, is disturbed by his split between Islamic desires and English lifestyle. Although born to Asian parents he never visited their homeland and culturally he is rooted exclusively in Britain. As a result he feels that he has to satisfy the tastes of all people:

To the cockney wide-boys in the white jeans and the coloured shirts, he was a joker, the risk-taker, respected lady-killer. To the black kids he was fellow weed-smoker and valued customer. To the Asian kids, hero and spokesman. Social chameleon. And underneath it all, there remained an ever present anger and hurt, the feeling of belonging nowhere that comes to people who belong everywhere⁸⁷.

His displacement is evoked by desperate need to be accepted, therefore, he wants to adjust his behaviour to the environment. Unfortunately, emulation made him even more hybrid, because according to Roma Sendyka, this sort of species is "considered to be a separate entity"⁸⁸, the one which defines itself by difference and strangeness. No wonder Millat became an incomprehensible creature, even to those who once loved him: his mother and Irie, when he joined the Islamists. Neena, Irie's cousin is the only one aware of Millat's blurred identity:

One day he's Allah this, Allah that. Next minute it's big busty blondes, Russian gymnasts and a smoke of sinsemilla. He doesn't know his arse from his elbow. Just like his father. He doesn't know who he is⁸⁹.

Interestingly, Salman Rushdie presented the most striking sort of a hybrid in *Satanic Verses*. Saladin Chamcha becomes a doubly modified character. Not only is he "an Englishman" of Indian Muslim background, but he also becomes literally a mutant or "a fallen angel – hairy, horned and hoofed"⁹⁰ as Dorota Kołodziejczyk calls him. Regardless of differences between Kureishi's and Rushdie's hybrids, they all have similar feelings:

⁸⁷ Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, op. cit., p. 269.

⁸⁸ Roma Sendyka, "W stronę kulturowej teorii gatunku" in Michał Paweł Markowski, Ryszard Nycz, *Kulturowa teoria literatury*, Kraków: Universitas, 2002, p. 262 (translation mine, A.S.).

⁸⁹ Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, op. cit., p. 284.

⁹⁰ Dorota Kołodziejczyk, „Salman Rushdie” in Krystyna Stamirowska, *Współczesna powieść brytyjska*, Kraków Universitas, 1997, p. 170 (translation mine, A.S.).

The humiliation of it! He was- had gone to some lengths to become – a sophisticated man! Such degradations might be all very well for riff-raff from villages in Sylhet or the bicycle-repair shops in Gujranwala, but he was cut from different cloth!⁹¹.

Chamcha's notion of being "cut from different cloth" results from his being highly westernized. If one accepts that hybridity is much about "the production of discriminatory identities that secure the "pure" and original identity of authority"⁹² it becomes visible that mortification and offence serve the purpose of preserving "the Occident" in its virgin form. That is why, hybridity "displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination"⁹³.

It might be interesting to notice that there are important differences between the postcolonial protagonists who represent the second generation of "in-betweens" and their parents who had arrived to the "dream land" years before. The second generation's hybridity is frequently the result of miscegenation. They were born in Britain thus the feeling of being expatriated racially is stronger than cultural expulsion. Their parents, on the other hand, seem to experience a more painful and aggravated sort of hybridity. Elleke Boehmer claims that such people are still emotionally rooted in India:

[e]x-colonial by birth. "Third World" in cultural interest, cosmopolitan in almost every other way, he or she works within the precincts of the Western metropolis while at the same time retaining thematic and/or political connections with a national background⁹⁴.

They experienced the beauty and ugliness of India and were brought up in Asian culture so they find it difficult to submit to cultural amnesia. It seems impossible to forget "home". Pursuing economic prosperity, the 1950s generation came full of expectations and desires. Hanif Kureishi claims that it seemed obvious for the immigrant communities that one day they would be accepted as full right citizens:

"belonging", which means, in a sense, not having to notice where you are, and, more importantly, not being seen as different, would happen eventually. (...) The "West" was a dream that didn't come true. But one cannot go home again. One is stuck⁹⁵.

⁹¹ Salman Rushdie, *Satanic Verses*, op. cit., p. 159.

⁹² Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, op. cit., p. 112.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, op. cit., p. 233.

⁹⁵ Hani Kureishi, "The Road Exactly" in *Dreaming and Scheming*, op. cit., p. 219.

It would be even more adequate to use the word “trapped”, in relation to the first generation. Their tragic choice makes them torn between go and stay, between preserve and reject, between remember and forget. Seemingly, they live in two countries, but in reality they live in neither of them which makes them hybrid even to themselves.

Rafi (*Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*) tired of England, endeavours to convince his son to go with him to India: “I mean, home to your own country where you will be valued, where you will be rich and powerful”⁹⁶. In spite of the fact that he appreciates and admires London, he is threatened by racial turmoils and hostility of the English. For him, the English are profoundly ignorant and prejudiced, and Rafi cannot imagine living in the “department store culture”. Quite the contrary, Parvez (*My Son the Fanatic*) thinks that it is impossible to keep the cultures apart. He desperately wants to believe in Rushdie’s optimistic vision of an indestructible migrant:

“We are. We are here.” And we are not willing to be excluded from any part of our heritage. (...) [W]e are now partly of the West. (...) Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools⁹⁷.

Haroon Amir and his friend, Anwar (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) are the immigrants who have the strong awareness of living between two cultures. They realize that they are not treated as hybrids by the white members of society exclusively, but even worse, they think about themselves in the same way. From the very first moment of their existence in London, they made an effort to adopt the culture of the white. Disappointingly, as Edward Said notices, “[i]n time, culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or the state; this differentiates “us” from “them”, almost always with some degree of xenophobia”⁹⁸. One might assume that it is a natural axiomatic process of a gradual transformation from a human being into a hybrid within the acquired culture. Lois Tyson confirms to some extent Said’s idea of progressiveness, as she claims that postcolonial identity is “necessarily a dynamic, constantly evolving *hybrid* of native and colonial cultures”⁹⁹. Obviously, the division

⁹⁶ Hanif Kureishi, *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*, op. cit., p. 138.

⁹⁷ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 15.

⁹⁸ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, op. cit., introduction, p. xiii.

⁹⁹ Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, op. cit., p. 369.

that takes place in society is the effect of universalistic tendencies taking place on both sides: the colonized and the colonizer's. Both communities subconsciously drift away in opposite directions divided by their sentimental attachment to their heritage and social phobias. The myth of preserving the purity of culture is still alive though unrealistic.

Haroon's son observes the nostalgia for "home" and is surprised by his Dad and Anwar's sentiments as previously they had seemed well settled in Britain:

[f]or years they were both happy to live like Englishmen. (...). Now, as they aged and seemed settled here, Anwar and Dad appeared to be returning internally to India, or at least to be resisting the English here. It was puzzling: neither of them expressed any desire actually to see their origins again. "India's a rotten place", Anwar grumbled. "Why should I want to go there again. It's filthy and hot and it's a big pain-in-the-arse to get anything done. (p. 64)

Both men try to convince themselves that England became their dreamland. However, the white do not allow them to forget about their "otherness". When Dad complains that the old Indians "come to like this England less and less and (...) return to an imagined India"(p. 74), Helen, Karim's white girlfriend, tries to console Haroon saying: "We like you being here. You benefit our country with your traditions"(p. 74). Ruvani Ranasinha claims that what lurks in Helen is "taste for exoticism" and "desire to comfort Haroon" but she is just an "eager, well-meaning liberal" who "bears the racist taints of orientalism"¹⁰⁰. Similarly, Shadwell confirms Ranasinha's statement when he tries to convince Karim that it is his "destiny (...) to be a half-caste in England. That must be complicated (...) to accept – belonging nowhere, wanted nowhere" (p. 141).

The postcolonial "misfits" are afraid of emotional wasteland and displacement. The knottiness of the situation is beyond their comprehension. Surprisingly, the characters, just like Chamcha from *Satanic Verses*, in their hybrid complexity reject the idea of returning to India. They hear the voice which tells them: "don't come back again. When you have stepped through the looking-glass you step back at your peril. The mirror may cut you to shreds"¹⁰¹.

¹⁰⁰ Ruvani Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 64.

¹⁰¹ Salman Rushdie, *Satanic Verses*, op. cit., p. 58.

It is possible to draw the conclusion that to be a hybrid one needs to be stronger and more resistant than an average human being. It can be understood metaphorically in reference to Kureishi's protagonists. Bisexual Karim juggles with his personalities and, surprisingly, he does not feel a stranger in his own skin. Quite the contrary, inconsistency and unpredictability allow him to experience both worlds, male and female. Karim's unlimited nature consisting of opposing features and qualities reminds that of Prince (in *The Black Album*), who is "half black and half white, half man, half woman, half size, feminine but macho too" (p. 25). Shahid, on the other hand, seduced by the possibility of becoming half and half realizes that his complex nature facilitates the process of evolving into a different human being. He felt that "there had to be ways in which he could belong" (p. 16). When he becomes a woman, exchanging genders with his lover, he discovers new possibilities and ways of "belonging". It became a sort of revelation to Shahid, "a burden went, a certain responsibility had been removed" (p. 117). Having recognised the new opportunities offered by London, Deedee and academic environment, Shahid, a cross-breed already, used the opportunity to try on new roles.

Omar and Johnny's relation (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) is the epitome of "bringing two diverse communities together and creating a new hybrid community made stronger by benefits of (...) enterprise"¹⁰². Omar worships prosperity but, in Gurinder Chadha's view, "having a British identity is not as important as having a cultural identity"¹⁰³. The boys reach beyond stereotypes of gender and race, and shape their complex world of discrepancies. They are "other" to the milieu but never to themselves.

Zadie Smith presented a flagrant example of hybridization. Irie (*White Teeth*), half Jamaican, half English, half caste, as described by a hairdresser, feels so uncomfortable in her skin that she decides to bring into reality her biggest dream: to have her hair straight and dark red. Unfortunately, the experiment is far from success, as

¹⁰² Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 59.

¹⁰³ Gurinder Chadha in Nahem Yousaf, *Hanif Kureishi's 'The Buddha of Suburbia'*, op. cit., p. 55.

“hair that once come down to her mid vertebrae was only a few inches from her head”¹⁰⁴. The girl is so desperate that she buys eight packets of “dead straight hair” which belonged to “some poor oppressed Pakistani woman who needs the cash for her kids”¹⁰⁵, and the hairdresser plaits and glues it to Irie’s head. It is painful, profoundly humiliating but Irie looks like “the Negro Meryl Streep” or “the love child of Dina Ross and Engelbert Humperdinck”¹⁰⁶. Nevertheless, the truth is, Irie hybridized herself to such an extent because, as she says, “[s]ometimes you want to be different. And sometimes you’d give the hair on your head to be the same as everybody else”¹⁰⁷. Escaping her own inborn hybrid appearance she mimics the white women but she is still “other”, a stranger, a threat to stereotypical purity. Irie is stripped of her identity and self-respect, but most of all, of her natural beauty. Andrew Smith writes about the dangers of “miscegenation, warning of a dissolution of the blood of the higher races and suggesting that the resulting mulattos, cross-bred humans, would prove to be sterile or retarded”¹⁰⁸. Irie’s awareness of self is obviously destroyed and she is denied the entrance to the “higher races” in spite of her manipulated and adjusted appearance.

Biracial Nina, the protagonist of Kureishi’s short story, *With Your Tongue Down My Throat*, is similarly humiliated and crushed by her own father. Half Pakistani, half English, brought up in London, on a visit in Pakistan, Nina is hybridized and deprived by her father in just a few sentences of both possible places of belonging:

A half-caste wastrel, a belong-nowhere, a problem to everyone, wandering around the face of the earth with no home like a stupid-mistake-mongrel dog that no one wants and everyone kicks in the backside¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁴ Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, op. cit., p. 278.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 283.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. 283, 289.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 284.

¹⁰⁸ Andrew Smith, “Migrancy, Hybridity, and Postcolonial Literary Studies”, in Neil Lazarus, *Postcolonial Literary Studies*, op. cit., p. 250.

¹⁰⁹ Hanif Kureishi, „With Your Tongue Down My Throat” in Hanif Kureishi, *Love in a Blue Time*, op. cit., p. 100.

She is nobody's child in nobody's land. Her hope for feeling in Pakistan at home disappeared. On coming back to London, Nina abandons her biological mother as she finds it impossible now to live with the white woman.

It is interesting that while in Pakistan, Nina, to her own surprise, missed England and felt excluded, not only from her father's scope of interest, but mostly, from Asian culture. She was not respected by her step mother and her daughters because she was half English. In London she was disrespected for the other half of her identity. Kureishi likewise claims that "the word 'Pakistani' had been made into an insult"¹¹⁰ in London environment and he could not tolerate being himself anymore. Therefore, at the age of twenty-nine, he decided to visit Pakistan where he was torn again between his two identities:

(...) when I said, with a little unnoticed irony, that I was an Englishman, people laughed. They fell about. Why would anyone with a brown face, Muslim name and large well-known family in Pakistan want to lay claim to that cold little decrepit island off Europe where you always had to spell your name? Strangely, anti-British remarks made me feel patriotic, though I only felt patriotic when I was away from England¹¹¹.

Both fictional Nina and the author himself appear to be stuck between England and Pakistan. They feel emotional attachment to Pakistan but they miss England. The most suitable place, therefore, seems to be somewhere "in-between". In Leena Dhingra's case it is the airport, the place of symbolic transition and passage from one country/culture to the other. In her autobiographical story *La Vie en Rose*, she makes a remark about her sentimental attitude towards airports:

There was always something comforting, familiar about airports and air-terminals. They gave me a sense of purpose and security. I was there with a definite destination – usually home, somewhere. In London, I came "home" at the end of the day. During the holidays, I came "home" to Paris and family. And once every two years, we went "home" to India on "Home Leave"¹¹².

The postcolonial protagonists seem to be the embodiment of what Steven Connor calls "melting together of selfhood and otherness"¹¹³. Their metaphorical

¹¹⁰ Hanif Kureishi, "The Rainbow Sign" in *Dreaming and Scheming*, op. cit., p. 28.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 33.

¹¹² Leena Dhingra, „La Vie en Rose”, in David Jarrett, Tomasz Kowalewski, Geoff Ridden, *Packing and Unpacking Culture*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu M. Kopernika, 2001, p. 132.

¹¹³ Steven Connor, *The English Novel In History 1950-1995*, op. cit., p. 121.

journey does not necessarily take them literally to the airports but the process of transition from one culture to another and back again gives them the opportunity to experience both the “selfhood” and “otherness” at the same time.

Rushdie’s advise seems to be valuable as he claims that multiplicity is better than insufficiency and he recommends:

an emigrant to consider the culture and values of both homelands, both “native”, and “adopted”, and to choose with consideration material to create a new, hybrid identity¹¹⁴.

Not only does Salman Rushdie encourage to take the best from both cultures but he also expresses his affirmation of diversity and changeability. Hybrid protagonists are indeed constantly in motion and under the process of transformation. John McLeod emphasises that it is both exhausting and motivating for the postcolonial subjects:

[h]ybrid identities are never total and complete in themselves. (...) Instead, they remain perpetually in motion, pursuing errant and unpredictable routes, open to change and reinscription¹¹⁵.

Consequently, Kureishi’s novels are full of unexpected discoveries, decisions impossible to foretell, forbidden love affairs and limitless dreams which possibly come true. On the other hand, McLeod warns that postcolonial London is not the place where “anything goes” like in a “multicultural supermarket”¹¹⁶. It is the place of valuable explorations and revelations, like in case of Karim Amir. In the least expected moment, on his uncle’s funeral, he realizes where he belongs:

(...) I did feel, looking at these strange creatures now – the Indians – that in some way these were my people, and that I’d spent my life denying or avoiding that fact. I felt ashamed and incomplete at the same time, as if half of me were missing, and as if I’d been colluding with my enemies, those whites who wanted Indians to be like them. (p. 212).

Such a miraculous discovery experienced by a mimic postcolonial subject confirms the idea of encouraging and enriching changeability inscribed into hybrid

¹¹⁴ Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, *Historia anglojęzycznej literatury indyjskiej*, Dialog: Warszawa, 2007, p. 450 (translation mine, A.S.).

¹¹⁵ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 219.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 225.

identities. In Tyson's view hybridity is "a productive, exciting, positive force in a shrinking world that is itself becoming more and more culturally hybrid"¹¹⁷.

Kureishi draws our attention to the fact that it is not only identity that is in motion but also the whole culture which, in fact, is mostly about mutation. Hanif Kureishi claims that one has to "pick up bits and pieces from wherever [he goes], and that all has to change continuously, otherwise culture's not alive"¹¹⁸.

All in all, Hanif Kureishi, by equipping his characters with hybrid "in-betweenness", hindered their assimilation but at the same time he facilitated the process of mutation and intermingling. He supplied them with a variety of techniques of camouflage and mimicry. The survival methods acquired by postcolonials allow them to create multicultural and multiethnic society. "There can be no one way – religious, cultural, or linguistic – of being an Indian; let difference reign"¹¹⁹, writes Salman Rushdie in *Imaginary Homelands*. Celebration of impurity which results from "postmodern erosion of boundaries and definitions"¹²⁰ is shared by most of the characters who, unfortunately, are made by milieu to feel uncomfortable with their "otherness". In Moore-Gilbert's opinion, a postcolonial writer's role is not to be overestimated as his/her protagonist is "a cultural translator"¹²¹ who, standing between the two sides, translates one to the other, and vice versa.

2.3. RACISM AND DOMESTIC COLONIALISM

Kureishi's works are full of violence and hatred represented by all ethnic groups. Identity is, to some extent, defined by colour and the biracial characters have to face racial prejudice every day. It is, obviously, impossible to explain the essence of the conflict but the most common reasons for racial tensions are worth the attention.

¹¹⁷ Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, op. cit., p. 369.

¹¹⁸ Bart Moore-Gilbert, an interview with Hanif Kureishi, in "Kunapipi. Journal of Post-Colonial Writing", Vol. XXI no. 2, 1999, p. 12.

¹¹⁹ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 44.

¹²⁰ Frederick M. Holmes, „The Postcolonial Subject Divided Between East and West“, in Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 108.

¹²¹ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 200.

Whatever one thinks about “race”, it cannot be denied that it remains “a powerful motivating force behind people’s thoughts and behaviour”¹²². If one perceives the other as “genetically and permanently different”¹²³, he/she is frequently prone to recognize the other as inferior as well. It is possible to assume that racism works both ways but, on the other hand, it is not groundless, to look for its roots in colonies. The master - slave relationship introduced the division into the civilized and the savage. Racism can be, therefore, understood as “a direct extension of colonial policy” which “continued to receive both overt and covert support from the ex-colonial powers”¹²⁴. Elleke Boehmer believes that “racial and cultural supremacy obviously played a key role in validating imperial rule”¹²⁵ but it is no coincidence that the supremacy is mostly in accordance with European concepts and rules. It is tempting to agree with Frantz Fanon, who claimed in *Black Skin, White Masks* that a “white man [is] enslaved by his superiority”¹²⁶, and is not able to place himself in any other than dominant position. In spite of the fact that many years lapsed, colonial habits seem unchanged.

It is impossible to discuss postcolonial literature without touching the subject of racism and violence. As Salman Rushdie wrote, “racism is not a side-issue in contemporary Britain; (...) it’s not a peripheral minority affair. I believe Britain is undergoing a critical phase of its postcolonial period”¹²⁷. It is vital to realise the fact, as to ignore it would be immensely dangerous. The overwhelming wave of racial discrimination makes one wonder where the hatred and discrepancies come from. Hatred, Fanon wrote, “is not inborn; it has to be cultivated, to be brought into being, in conflict with more or less recognized guilt complexes”¹²⁸. Obviously, it is not a commodity brought from India but somehow it flourishes and endures for ages.

¹²² Ellis Cashmore, (ed.) *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*, op. cit., p. 303.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Bill Ashcroft (et al.), *Postcolonial Studies. The Key Concepts*, op. cit., p. 50.

¹²⁵ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, op. cit., p. 36.

¹²⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, op. cit., p. 60.

¹²⁷ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 129.

¹²⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, op. cit., p. 53.

Postcolonial characters experience fear and anxiety when they face racism and prejudice. Sometimes they stay passive, occasionally they fight for their rights and dignity. Karim (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) reflects on Jamila's behaviour when they were both offended in the street:

Compared to Jammie I was, as a militant, a real shaker and trembler. If people spat on me I practically thanked them for not making me chew the moss between the paving stones. But Jamila had a PhD in physical retribution. Once a greaser rode past us on an old bicycle and said, as if asking the time, "Eat shit, Pakis". Jammie sprinted through the traffic before throwing the bastard off his bike and tugging out some of his hair, like someone weeding an overgrown garden. (p. 53)

Incapable of taking the action, Karim becomes a social impotent unable to defend his friend and he unintentionally resigns of self-respect and pride. The fear dominated boy admits that he is unable to cope with violent environment and his impotence in face of intensive aggression.

Shahid (*The Black Album*) not only has to deal with fundamentalism which seizes his soul, but also with manifestation of hostility around him. His first piece of writing was a story full of racism and entitled *Paki Wog Fuck Off Home*:

It featured the six boys who comprised the back row of his class at school, who, one day when the teacher had left the room in despair, chanted at Shahid, "Paki, Paki, Paki, Out, Out, Out!" (p. 72).

Shahid who "banged the scene into his machine" (p. 72), relieved his fury and helplessness "like a soul singer screaming into a microphone" (p. 72). Nevertheless, he feels entrapped in his humiliation and abandoned when his parents refuse to discuss the matter out of fear. They are both scared by what they discovered:

Even when Shahid vomited and defecated with fear before going to school, or when he returned with cuts, bruises and his bag slashed with knives, she behaved as if so appalling an insult couldn't exist. And so she turned away from him. What she knew was too much for her. (p. 72)

Omar (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) becomes an object of abuse when he drives a car with Salim and his wife, Cherry inside. When the gang members notice that there are Pakistanis in the car, they "gather round the car and bang on it and shout" (p. 23). One of the boys "climbs on the bonnet of the car and squashes his arse grotesquely against the windscreen" (p. 23). It is not difficult to imagine the humiliation and

embarrassment of the affluent Pakistani businessman and his wife. In spite of the fact that they felt secured by their economic position, they painfully discover that it “isn’t the England of fair play, tolerance, decency and equality – maybe that place never existed anyway, except in fairy-tales”¹²⁹. Kureishi does not present “honeyed” England. It is a realistic and cruel account of what happens in the streets of London.

An interesting perspective is used by Kureishi in a short story entitled *We’re not Jews*. It is racism (mis)understood and reported by a little boy. A white woman, Yvonne, with her biracial son are attacked and offended on a bus by a white man, once rejected by the woman. She is now “a slut who marries a darkie”¹³⁰. The child does not comprehend the words of his mother, who, both ashamed and angry with indifferent “passengers sitting like statues”, whispers: “we’re not Jews”¹³¹. Interestingly, she invokes, in Kaleta’s view, “a hierarchy of prejudices, distinguishing her Asian husband (...) from the Jews she has been brought up to believe are intruding immigrants”¹³². What happens on the bus is “the closeness of the two societies, and the distance”¹³³ at the same time. All the people, in spite of a small distance among them, build an invisible border to stay separated from “the problem”. They have no intention of helping the woman as if secretly sharing the opinion of the attacker.

Similar dilemmas are experienced by Kiki, the black character of *On Beauty* by Zadie Smith. Kiki, married to a white academic lives in America, but a great majority of her husband’s friends and colleagues are white people. The woman discovers that her husband, Howard was unfaithful to her. Furious and unhappy, she feels offended not by the sole fact of infidelity but rather by the fact that the other woman was white. Kiki realizes that she is lonely and surrounded by “whiteness”:

[a]lone in this...this sea of white. I barely know any black folk any more, Howie. My whole life is white. I don’t see any black folk unless they be cleaning under my feet in the fucking café in your fucking college (...). I staked my whole life on you¹³⁴.

¹²⁹ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 134.

¹³⁰ Hanif Kureishi, “We’re not Jews”, in *Love in a Blue Time*, op. cit., p. 43.

¹³¹ Ibid, pp. 44-45.

¹³² Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 163.

¹³³ Hanif Kureishi, “The Rainbow Sign”, in *Dreaming and Scheming*, op. cit., p. 45.

¹³⁴ Zadie Smith, *On Beauty*, op. cit., p. 206.

Both Kiki and Yvonne “sold” their souls and bodies to ethnically different men. The women pay a high price for their choice of partners. Yvonne rejected by her friends and family, Kiki by her “folks”, and finally by her disloyal husband.

The postcolonial poet, Moniza Alvi describes a wedding of an English woman with a Pakistani man. In fact, it is more of an unsuccessful “union of East and West”:

My mother’s father refused
To attend my parents’ marriage.
But it’s hard not to see him
At the wedding breakfast,
More hauntingly present
For his absence – a pale ghost¹³⁵.

In fact, the wedding ceremony is full of similar “ghosts”, those who disregard emotions and love of the newly married couple. Political and racial prejudice seems to dominate.

The poem can be juxtaposed to Elleke Boehmer’s view that “contact between the races, in particular sexual contact, invariably brings trouble in its wake”¹³⁶, mostly because it is understood as a sort of race betrayal. Such negative emotions are obviously rooted in the concept of empire but, as Kureishi writes” [r]acism was real to me; the Empire was not”¹³⁷ and historical and political reasons for it are far beyond the comprehension of younger generations.

Danny, a young black man (*Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*) notices that there is “a kind of domestic colonialism to deal with”¹³⁸ in London. Observing the riots in the city, Danny feels that his freedom and safety are endangered, and Rafi’s argument that fighting back became “the necessity of the age”¹³⁹ is not reassuring at all. The man understands that physical features (his blackness/otherness) are “linked in a direct, casual way to psychological or intellectual characteristics”¹⁴⁰. He is different, and therefore inferior. Alice, Rafi’s white friend despises the rioters:

¹³⁵ Moniza Alvi, „Ghosts”, in *How the Stone Found Its Voice*, op. cit., p. 24.

¹³⁶ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

¹³⁷ Hanif Kureishi, *The Word and the Bomb*, op. cit., p. 3.

¹³⁸ Hanif Kureishi, *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*, op. cit., p. 122.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Bill Ashcroft (et al.), *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts*, op. cit., p. 199.

I hate their ignorant anger and lack of respect for this great land. Being British has to mean an identification with other, similar people. If we're to survive, words like "unity" and "civilization" must be understood¹⁴¹.

She is unjustly doubtful about the coloured people's level of being civilized. Alice is the embodiment of English society which is racist in its deep structure. As early as in 1952 Fanon drew attention of the readers to the fact that even black (in its all variations) and white division carried much symbolism which was later transformed into prejudices and assumptions. Whiteness symbolized purity, wisdom, justice, whereas blackness was mostly associated with sin, evil and ugliness. It should come as no surprise that Alice's idea of a man of colour reminds that of a colonizer. "I am the slave not of the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance"¹⁴², wrote Fanon. Similarly, the categorization of the people of colour in Kureishi's work was conducted on the basis of their skin colour rather than intellect.

Alice's opinion resembles that of one of the protagonists of Malkani's *Londonstani*. Mr Ashwood, the white teacher, accuses his Pakistani students of rejecting metropolitan culture: "you boys do have some kind of worrying anti-integration, anti-assimilation ethic going on (...)"¹⁴³. Mr Ashwood does not hesitate to ask the controversial and perilous question: "if you don't want to integrate, why did you come here?"¹⁴⁴. Obviously, the question evokes aggression and anger, as the boys refuse to identify with their parents: "We didn't fuckin come here, innit (...) we was fuckin born here"¹⁴⁵, answers Ravi, one of the students.

Similarly, the white Jas (*Londonstani*) becomes frequently, often subconsciously and reluctantly, a sage who gives a piece of advice and accepts the dominant position of a colonizer. Jas prefers to see himself as Morpheus from *The Matrix*. He discusses the issue of arranged marriages with his Asian friend, Arun prompting him to resist his parents. Giving his opinion against the value of tradition Jas claims to have "the tiny

¹⁴¹ Hanif Kureishi, *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*, op. cit., p. 163.

¹⁴² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, op. cit., p.116.

¹⁴³ Gautam Malkami, *Londonstani*, op. cit., p. 126.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 127.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

porthole” in his skull through which he is “uploading the program, the knowledge, the truth into [his] mind”¹⁴⁶. Unfortunately, instead of freeing Arun’s mind, he evokes such an intense feeling of cultural split that his friend commits suicide.

Bart Moore-Gilbert remarks that London is still the place where “the old colonial order somehow continues, the injustice and oppression and discrimination”¹⁴⁷. It is not, therefore, groundless to quote Fanon’s ideas once again. In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon put forward a hypothesis that lack of racial balance in mixed societies was partially caused by the inborn complex of colonial dependency. Surprising as it may seem, “there exists something that makes the white man the awaited master”¹⁴⁸, claimed Fanon. It is, to some extent, confirmed by Malkani’s protagonist, who observing an Asian woman in London thinks that offence is part of her existence in Britain:

she’s addicted to being offended. All her friends seem to have this same addiction (...). If holdin a grudge was an Olympic sport they’d all have even more gold to decorate their wrinkly bodies with. They’d play it in teams (...)¹⁴⁹.

Fanon in his study, and later Malkani in his novel seemed to corroborate that fact that postcolonial literature could be treated in this aspect as “emergency literature”¹⁵⁰, the term introduced by Sukhdev Sandhu. The aim of such literature is to draw attention of the readers to unhappy, regrettable and unfortunate position of minorities bringing the message: look how unhappy we are. Karim’s brother, Allie (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) represents the generation of young, active Asians who refuse to be victimized:

(...) I hate people who go on all the time about being black, and how persecuted they were at school, and how someone spat at them once. You know: self-pity. (...) They should shut up and get on with their lives.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, pp. 238-239.

¹⁴⁷ Bart Moore-Gilbert, an interview with Hanif Kureishi, in “Kunapipi. Journal of Post-Colonial Writing”, Vol. XXI, no. 2, 1999, p. 9.

¹⁴⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, op. cit., p. 99.

¹⁴⁹ Gautam Malkami, *Londonstani*, op. cit., p. 74.

¹⁵⁰ Sukhdev Sandhu, “Pop Goes the Centre: Hanif Kureishi’s London”, in Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 85.

At least the blacks have a history of slavery. The Indians were kicked out of Uganda. There was reason for bitterness. But no one put people like you and me in camps, and no one will. We can't be lumped in with them, thank God. (pp. 267-268).

Allie rejects racism, but it is probably due to his young age that he believes in possibility of escape. His vitality and energy allow him to follow his dreams without the feeling of inferiority.

Hanif Kureishi himself tends to be more mature in his perception of the encounter of ethnically different nations. In *The Rainbow Sign* he refuses to get adjusted to the English sort of “assimilating” as it obviously means accepting the world view of the white. Kureishi describes how he gradually became hostile and impetuous:

I became cold and distant. I began to feel I was very violent. But I didn't know how to be violent. If I had known, if that had come naturally to me, or if there'd been others I could follow, I would have made my constant fantasies of revenge into realities, I would have got into trouble, willingly hurt people, or set fire to things¹⁵¹.

Kureishi's words are often confirmed in his novels and essays as his protagonists react aggressively to hostile and racially prejudiced society. No doubt violence gives raise to even more violence. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that rarely are the biracial protagonists villains, they rather become ones as a result of their encounter with painful reality.

There is much evidence of violence in Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani* evoked by the feeling of domestic entrapment. Threatening as they may seem, the long and detailed descriptions of fights and conflicts between racial groups give raise to literature of fact. The Pakistani boys disagree with the term “coloured”:

We don't get red when we been shamed an we don't go blue when we dead (...). We don't even go purple when we been bruised, jus a darker brown. An still goras got da front to call *us* coloured¹⁵².

Obviously the antagonism between all racial groups is cultivated. Not only are the discrepancies between the Asians and the white depicted, but also between the Pakistanis and the Muslims. One of the Pakistani mothers in *Londonstani* loathes the idea of her son, Ravi going out with a BMW, “by which she meant black, Muslim or

¹⁵¹ Hanif Kureishi, “The Rainbow Sign”, in *Dreaming and Scheming*, op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁵² Gautam Malkani, *Londonstani*, op. cit., p. 3.

white”¹⁵³. There is also much hatred and aggression evoked by the couples representing various faiths, although the characters are generally far from traditional approach towards religion. The conflict itself seems to be more significant than its reasons.

Summing up, it may strike the reader of postcolonial literature, and Kureishi’s writing is no exception, that aggression and hostility provoke revenge and destruction. Malkani writes about “Miss Violence, an invisible woman who spreads her virus by jerking off everyone who watches violence”¹⁵⁴. It is a truly contagious and influential feeling and a human being tends to be exceptionally sensitive to it. All sorts of burning injustice and abusive behaviour evoke a natural instinct for survival – self-defence and revenge. The chain of hatred and animosities is created and the tension is converted into a dangerous idea of oppression and terrible acts of violence. “The only way out is to condemn all violence”¹⁵⁵, writes Kureishi after the bombs exploded in London in summer 2005. The author, just like his protagonists, demands tolerance and acceptance, and literature becomes the voice of postcolonial generation of hybrids.

2.4. POSTCOLONIAL DISORDERS: INFERIORITY COMPLEX, DEPRESSION AND MADNESS

A significant impact exerted on generations of postcolonials concerns psychological side and affects the behaviour of a typical postcolonial hero. Undoubtedly the mental state of immigrants and their children is the factor which becomes a prerequisite for their successful/unsuccessful existence in Britain. The impossibility of finding “the sense of non-sense”¹⁵⁶ and, in Fanon’s view, a typical and characteristic “neurotic structure of an individual”¹⁵⁷ lead us to almost a clinical study of a postcolonial subject in metropolitan reality. There are numerous neurosis, disorders and various sorts of depression experienced by those with blurred ethnicity. The centuries of

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 335.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 108.

¹⁵⁵ Hanif Kureishi, “The Arduous Conversation Will Continue”, in *The Word and the Bomb*, op. cit., p. 92.

¹⁵⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 81.

humiliation, positional ambiguity and incomprehension crippled the psyche and self-consciousness of ex-colonials even though they often did not live personally in colonial times. If, after David Goldberg and Peter Huxley one calls the state they are affected by “long-term vulnerability”¹⁵⁸ it becomes clear that there are numerous and various disorders attributed to ethnically mixed and disempowered groups of people. Mental destabilization, low self-esteem, disorientation or social alienation are just a few examples of neuroses accompanying postcolonial Londoners.

One wonders whether typical of Kureishi’s postcolonial subjects’ feelings ranging from sadness and lowness of spirits or in Freud’s language “black emotion”¹⁵⁹ to mild or classic depression, nervous breakdowns and even suicide spring from the same source, namely colonial experience. Finally, is postcolonial depression the result of madness or vice versa: is madness evoked by postcolonial depression? Roy Porter in *The Faber Book of Madness* claims that depression and suicidal tendencies have much in common:

Depression can be a burden almost impossible to bear, jeopardizing our personal sense of worth and standing in the community. It’s often on the slippery slope to suicide¹⁶⁰.

Human distress and suicides committed as a result of racial persecution is, in John Read’s view, an issue “many psychiatrists and researches prefer not to deal with”¹⁶¹. Kureishi, however, draws the readers’ attention to the fact of racial discrimination and mental disorders evoked by such a treatment.

Not surprisingly Kureishi’s protagonists are frequently prone to melancholy and extreme sadness leading to psychiatric disorders. Obviously alienation, isolation and intolerance they experience become the reason for the dejection of postcolonials. It is however important to remember that Kureishi observes and describes the tendencies to the lowness of spirits in white members of society as well. One might infer that depression is infectious and the postcolonial epoch is accompanied by toxic misery and

¹⁵⁸ David Goldberg, Peter Huxley, *Common Mental Disorders*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 89.

¹⁵⁹ Jeremy Holmes, *Depression*, Cambridge: Icon Books, 2002, p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ Roy Porter, *The Faber Book of Madness*, London: Faber and Faber, 1991, p. 61.

¹⁶¹ John Read, Loren R. Mosher, Richard P. Bentall, *Models of Madness*, Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004, p. 169.

disorder. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that immigrants representing ethnic minorities are, in Read's view, "significantly more likely to be diagnosed 'schizophrenic' than members of the dominant culture"¹⁶².

Kureishi's characters find it difficult to defeat the inferiority complex which is the "unwanted gift" offered to posterity by the first generation of immigrants. The sense of personal inferiority becomes the source of numerous disorders. Karim (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) claims that his upbringing did not leave any space for self-awareness, courage and freedom. His frustrated and unsuccessful mother never missed an opportunity to emphasise the sacrifice she had made "marrying a coloured" (p.44) and becoming a mother. In fact, she abandoned all possible choices and opportunities to become a satisfied and successful woman. As Karim observes, the only area of her absolute authority was the selection of a TV channel. If somebody tried to watch anything else, "she'd throw such a fit of anger, self-pity and frustration that no one dared interfere with her" (p. 20). Her emotionality and fear deprive her of all kinds of affection and pleasure: she hates all men "because men were torturers" (p. 20), they "turned on the gas at Auschwitz" (p. 20) and "bombed Vietnam]" (p. 20). Kureishi himself believes that "(...) our relation to pleasure in the end is our relation to our own sexuality, and our bodies"¹⁶³. Margaret's permanent unhappiness and disillusionment therefore are infused into her two sons and her husband pushing them to a disadvantaged position of low self-estimation. They all seem not to comprehend and accept their own sexuality/personality hence they all have disturbed relations with their partners. Although Karim, unconscious of the impact, claims at the beginning of his maturation process that in his family "nervous breakdowns were as exotic as New Orleans" (p.11), soon he will change the opinion experiencing painful reality himself.

Shahid (*The Black Album*) feels "invisible" as the place he chose to live in "somehow [...] wasn't the 'real' London" (p.5). Even worse, his family "can't do

¹⁶² Ibid, p. 168.

¹⁶³ Bradley Buchanan, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 116.

anything but work”, his brother “has a looser attitude” (p.7) and the boy himself feels ignored and persecuted:

I began to feel (...) in that part of the country, more of a freak than I did normally. I had been kicked around and chased a lot, you know. It made me terrifyingly sensitive. I kept thinking there was something I lacked. (pp. 9-10).

Shahid’s alienation and the permanent state of a desperate search for answers and explanations of his disadvantaged positioning lead him to the condition of emotional burning and oversensitiveness. Shahid’s uncle, Asif seemed to comprehend the situation better as he claimed that two generations was not enough to overcome prejudice, phobias and hostility:

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. We have to watch ourselves, otherwise we will wake up one day to find we have made a calamitous marriage (p. 54).

John Read claims clearly the tendencies to depression and schizophrenias are the result of inferior positioning of a subject as:

being poor, a member of an ‘ethnic minority’ or a colonized people, being female in a patriarchal society, or lesbian or gay in a homophobic society, can have psychological consequences¹⁶⁴.

It explains, to some extent the hopeless situation of immigrants who, in Kaleta’s view, “dream of assimilation, and (...) demand acceptance”¹⁶⁵. Depressive as it may seem, “assimilation and identity grow more problematic”¹⁶⁶ as they place the postcolonials in a disadvantaged reality. On the other hand, Shahid and Karim seem to personalize typical artists as the first one has the ambition to become a writer and a poet whereas the latter is an actor. According to Roy Porter, it is possible to apply Aristotle’s idea that “melancholy was the temperament of the artists or poet”¹⁶⁷. Thus Kureishi’s typical hero tends to be “difficult”, “restless, touchy, a loner” but also “a creative genius”¹⁶⁸. One may conclude that the postcolonial protagonists who additionally happen to be artists are prone to carry the burden of representation but also respond very emotionally to external conditions. On the other hand, it also confirms Jessica Marshall’s statement

¹⁶⁴ John Read, Loren R. Mosher, Richard P. Bentall, *Models of Madness*, op. cit., p. 161.

¹⁶⁵ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 15.

¹⁶⁷ Roy Porter, *The Faber Book of Madness*, op. cit., p. 61.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*

who in her article on depression claims that “creativity is connected to dark moods”¹⁶⁹ and sadness becomes in such cases “a form of communication”¹⁷⁰ though leading frequently to misinterpretations of the protagonists’ intentions.

The feeling of inferiority and complexes place Parvez’s family (*My Son the Fanatic*) in awkward positions. During the engagement party of his son and a white girl, a daughter of a chief inspector, Parvez prevents his wife from going to a toilet: “Not again”, he says, “They’ll think we’re Bengalis” (p. 283). Parvez, unaware, ignores the fact that the English cannot even say the difference between the Pakistanis and the Bengalis. He also misses the fact that his son is embarrassed and repelled by his behaviour. Farid, on the other hand, seems to forget that for his father joining the family of the chief inspector would be a huge progress and social advancement. In Parvez’s view, financial success has much in common with social progress. Unfortunately, Read notices that it does not guarantee the achievement of a desired status:

Even those with enough to eat and somewhere to live are more likely to experience powerlessness, isolation, lack of self-respect, physical ill-health, and so on¹⁷¹.

Another reason for deep sadness of the characters frequently mentioned by Kureishi is problematic love, unhappy marriages, infidelity or disability to locate the feelings successfully. The most apparent manifestation of such problems are numerous divorces and unintentional but obvious death of love present in almost all Kureishi’s works. It is a sign of the century but for postcolonials it also means breaking with tradition and entering the world with limited rules. The young protagonist of *The Buddha of Suburbia* observes his parents’ prolonged fighting and the most significant conclusion he draws is his critical attitude towards the wedlock. “I’ll never be getting married” (p. 18), announces Karim to his mother when he discovers his father’s infidelity. He seems to acquire, what Bradley Buchanan calls “the Freud-inflected pessimism about love and sex”¹⁷², but it is not difficult to dislike the couple as Kureishi presented it in a gloomy light:

¹⁶⁹ Jessica Marshall, “Woes Be Gone” in *New Scientist*, January 17, 2009, p. 37.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid

¹⁷¹ John Read, Loren R. Mosher, Richard P. Bentall, *Models of Madness*, op. cit., p. 168.

¹⁷² Bradley Buchanan, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 39.

Kureishi characterizes the marriage of Mum and the narrator's father in a (...) nonchalant way. Dad usually flops in a chair to watch TV while waiting for his wife to serve him dinner. Mum "doesn't like to be touched". Yet what most characterizes the parents is the recognition by Mum that her husband "was still unaware " of her aversion to being touched. [...] dad is insensitive to his wife; Mum is shy and unable to assert herself¹⁷³.

It is not only that they do not share any pleasures or emotions, but what is more depressing, they do not feel like making the slightest effort to break the frozen relation between them.

Before Dad met Eva Karim was sure that he "hadn't used his own gentle charisma to sleep with anyone but Mum, while married" (p. 7). Shameless, brazen and wicked, Eva destroyed the narrator's family. Suddenly Dad discovers that Margaret "upsets [him]", and "she doesn't join in things" (p. 7), whereas Eva is "someone [he] can talk to" (p. 65) and they are both fond of "experiencing things [he has] never felt before, very strong, potent, overwhelming things" (p. 66). Karim's world is shaken when he finally asks Dad about the future and Margaret: "Will you leave us and go away with her?" (p. 66), "You mean you never loved Mum?" (p. 66). The answer makes Karim dejected and unhappy: "There are certain looks on certain faces I don't want to see again, and this was one of them" (p. 66). Karim, in Kaleta's opinion, "is surrounded on all sides by hypocrisy: sexual, political, artistic, and, more particular to Kureishi's story, racial"¹⁷⁴.

Similarly, Shahid (*The Black Album*) observes how temporal and weak love disappears from Deedee's life. She describes her disintegrating marriage hardly remembering the reasons for falling in love with Brownlow:

One time you are passionately in love and then another time, not that long after, you can't believe how you could feel so much. (...) Now I can't even understand how I felt that way. (...) One would hope, as well, that intimacy would leave more of a mark, that more of it would remain. But it doesn't. You just end up thinking, who is this person? (pp. 49-50).

Unaware of it, Deedee burdened young Shahid with the fin de siècle lack of eternal love and deprived him of naivety and faith in a long lasting relationship and romantic affection. Deedee herself reads numerous self-help books "trying to figure out why [she wasn't] happier and why [her] expectations hadn't been fulfilled" (p. 135). She also

¹⁷³ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 66

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 77.

admits that “Brownlow’s wretched face still depresses [her] most nights” (p. 159). Obviously such an attitude spreads, therefore Shahid must “find a pen and list the reasons for living” (p. 63). More of it, he needs to rearrange the whole idea of loving and living in order to understand his relation with Deedee:

In such circumstances what permanence or deep knowing could there be? He and Deedee had plunged into a compelling familiarity. They’d gone out a few times, confessed and shared the most uninhibited passions people could participate in. Surely, though, their love making was merely an exchange of skills and performances? He did this; she did that. How much did they know about one another? They had been tourists in one another’s lives (p. 240).

Shahid seems to be overwhelmed by problems unsuitable for his age. Similarly Karim’s naivety and lack of experience do not allow him to comprehend his father’s behaviour. Dad in *The Buddha of Suburbia* not only betrays his wife but is not strong and brave enough to inform her about it, even though his son is already aware of the fact. He refuses to tell Margaret about his new affection for several reasons, none of them convincing enough for Karim:

Because I’m so frightened. Because she will suffer so much. Because I can’t bear to look at her eyes as I say the words. Because you will all suffer so much and I would rather suffer myself than have anything happen to you (p. 67).

Haroon’s words depressed his son as he faces his father’s disappointing weakness, disability to choose and make decisions. What is more destructive, his father’s honesty and infallibility are questioned for the first time in his life. Haroon’s strong emotions destroyed his family and his sons’ view on life. If one accepts Michel Foucault’s idea that “the danger of madness is related to the danger of the passions”¹⁷⁵, the reason for Haroon’s acting is clear: he became mad, insane for the woman. Trying to overcome his depression and the feeling of lack of direction in life he decided to abandon his family and follow Eva. It only confirms Foucault’s thinking that “madness is not linked to the world or its subterranean forms, but rather to man, to his weakness, dreams and illusions”¹⁷⁶.

¹⁷⁵ Michel Foucault, *A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, London: Tavistock Publications, 1971 (1967), p. 85.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 26.

Although Kureishi claims that “(...) none of my Asian characters are victims”¹⁷⁷ there is always the colonial context for their existence and experience. Whether it is love, sex or business the protagonists cannot escape the stereotypes and prejudice which place them as a second class citizens, and finally lead them to depression, and then frequently to its stronger form - madness. Similarly Jeremy Holmes in his work entitled *Depression* claims that depression is a “close cousin” of death¹⁷⁸.

In Foucault’s view, it is possible to discuss four basic kinds of madness in view of their reasons. They all find application in Kureishi’s works. The first one is *madness by romantic identification*¹⁷⁹, which might be understood as misinterpretation or rather overinterpretation of a chosen or encountered subject/object’s features. Foucault gives the example of Cervantes’ *Don Quichotte* who interpreted the world and Dulcinea to his own advantage, which eventually led him to a deep melancholy, depression and insanity.

Similarly, Kureishi’s protagonists initially interpret surrounding them reality in an affirmative way. “I believe in England”, says Nasser (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) and as a successful businessman he romantically associates the country with “clean clothes” (p. 22), Labour Party and affluence. Nasser’s brother seems to be more experienced and aware of the fact that the Pakistanis “are nothing in England without money” (p. 61). Prejudice against him and his English wife Mary led to her death as “he hated himself and his job” and he “took it out on her” (p. 53). Finally she “couldn’t bear it” (p. 53) and committed suicide.

A romantic identification and belief in the equality became also a cause of suicide in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Karim’s English girlfriend, Eleanor, although young, beautiful and upper class suffers from depression. It is mostly the result of her boyfriend’s suicide. Gene was a West Indian actor, never appreciated because of his skin colour:

¹⁷⁷ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 26.

¹⁷⁸ Jeremy Holmes, *Depression*, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁷⁹ Michel Foucault, *A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, op. cit., p. 28.

He was very talented and sensitive, thin and kind and raunchy, with this beautiful face. (...) But he never got the work he deserved. He emptied bed-pans in hospital programmes. He played criminals and taxi-drivers. He never played in Chekhov or Ibsen or Shakespeare, and he deserved to. He was better than a lot of people. So he was very angry about a lot of things. The police were always picking him up and giving him a going over. Taxis drove straight past him. People said there were no free tables in empty restaurants. He lived in a bad world in nice old England. One day he didn't get into one of the bigger theatre companies, he couldn't take any more. He just freaked out. He took an overdose (p. 201).

Vulnerable Eleanor who found his body never fully recovered from the traumatic experience as in Holmes' view, "there is a strong relationship between loss and the development of depression"¹⁸⁰. The English, in Karim's view, "never let him [Gene] forget they thought him a nigger, a slave, a lower being" (p. 227). In order to describe Eleanor's mental problems Kureishi writes about "the [black] dog". Similarly Jeremy Holmes calls "regularly recurring depression the 'black dog'"¹⁸¹, and Jessica Marshall uses the phrase "life-sapping black dog of clinical depression"¹⁸². In Roy Porter's view, the phrase was introduced by Samuel Johnson, who described in this way his own state "which frequently overwhelmed him"¹⁸³. When Karim visits Eleanor she appears to be in a very bad condition and she seems to be cut off from reality. The inexperienced protagonist is surprised, even frightened by what he sees:

I took in Eleanor's room, not recognizing it at first. There were clothes everywhere. The ironing-board was in the middle of the room and Eleanor, naked, was ironing a pile of clothes. As she pressed down hard with the iron, as if trying to force it through the board, she wept, and her tears fell on the clothes. (...) I went to her. Her dry lips moved, but she didn't want to talk. She went on moving the iron across the same patch of shirt. When she lifted the face of the iron I felt she wanted to place it on herself, on the back of her hand or arm. **She was half mad** (p. 186)¹⁸⁴.

Eleanor's sadness is accompanied by fear, therefore Karim stays until she falls asleep. As Katarzyna Nowak noticed, "[w]hat is painful or scandalous gets silenced, but it eventually surfaces, thus crossing the borders between the real and the ethereal"¹⁸⁵. Eleanor's ability to exist successfully in hypocritical world depends on her skill to separate the real from the unreal. When she manages to manoeuvre between the two entities she is able to keep the balance. The moment she realizes the cruelty and

¹⁸⁰ Jeremy Holmes, *Depression*, op. cit., p. 21.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 6.

¹⁸² Jessica Marshall, "Woes Be Gone" in *New Scientist*, January 17, 2009, p. 36.

¹⁸³ Roy Porter, *The Faber Book of Madness*, op. cit., p. 62.

¹⁸⁴ Emphasis mine.

¹⁸⁵ Katarzyna Nowak, *Melancholic Travelers*, op. cit., p. 99.

maliciousness of her social class her confidence is shaken and she feels lost and betrayed.

The discussion of madness by identification is followed by the theory of *the madness of vain presumption*¹⁸⁶. This kind of disorder is provoked by wrong or exaggerated identification of a subject's self. As Foucault writes, "the madman" identifies not with an assumed model but with himself. Unfortunately, the "delusive attachment (...) enables him to grant himself all the qualities, all the virtues or powers he lacks"¹⁸⁷. It obviously provides him with disillusionment and dissatisfaction, which evokes in psychologically weaker and more vulnerable individuals abnormal sadness. The discussed dejection in Marshall's view, has "a nasty habit of turning into depression"¹⁸⁸.

Let us discuss two postcolonial women who initially seem to be strong, self-confident and proud of their Asian identity. Jamila (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) and Zulma (*The Black Album*) are both intelligent, strongly willed and persuasive women who, by the end of the story, appear to be defeated and discouraged. The first one is "forceful and enthusiastic" (p. 51), always "leaning forward, arguing, persuading" (p.51). Her resoluteness and self-assertion are in Karim's view confirmed by "a dark moustache" (p.51) which only adds to her balance and mental stability. As a teenager she was educated by Miss Cutmore, a librarian who used to be a missionary in Africa and a great fan of Baudelaire, Colette and Radiguet. Obviously Jamila was impressed by their works and Miss Cutmore's teaching both of which made an impact on her life:

Just being for years beside someone who liked writers, coffee and subversive ideas, and told her she was brilliant had changed her for good (p. 53).

Having entered the "secret garden" of feminism and modernism, Jamila was never able to accept the surrounding her reality. When she or her parents were abused she became militant, occasionally aggressive. In spite of the fact that Miss Cutmore "told her about equality, fraternity and the other one" (p. 53), Jamila "started to hate [her] for forgetting

¹⁸⁶ Michel Foucault, *A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid

¹⁸⁸ Jessica Marshall, "Woes Be Gone" in *New Scientist*, January 17, 2009, p. 36.

that she was an Indian” (p.53). More of it, the girl suspected that the librarian intentionally “wanted to eradicate everything that was foreign in her” (p.53) and even “colonized her” (p. 53).

Zulma (*The Black Album*) for a change is an energetic and wealthy Pakistani woman. She came from “a prominent, land-owning Karachi family” (p. 85). She considers herself a Londoner with Asian roots:

In Karachi she zipped around the camel-carts and pot-holes in an imported red Fiat Uno, a Hermes scarf knotted around her head. In London she went to her friends’ houses and pursued the shopping, gossiping and general trouble-making-in-other-families she enjoyed so much. She was light-skinned, beautiful, Zulma, but never beautiful enough (p. 85).

In contradiction to John Read’s opinion that “financial disadvantage and unemployment” are “linking ethnicity to schizophrenia”¹⁸⁹, Zulma’s family estate provides her with respect of the Asian people. It does not, however, limit Zulma’s social isolation and racist treatment. Except for her glamorous appearance Zulma’s intellectual attributes became the object of jealousy of other people, not only women. She became a skilled businesswoman, a talented pilot and a favourite daughter-in-law of Shahid’s father. She was aware of the fact that her husband Chili “was supposed to know more than she did, and he didn’t” (p. 86). Interestingly, her self assertion is not shaken by her husband’s unfaithfulness and numerous love affairs but rather by insecurity and limited social acceptance:

She might imagine she was an intelligent, upper-class woman, but to them she’d always be a Paki and liable to be patronized. She appreciated the truth of this, but it was a colonial residue – the new money knew no colour (p. 87).

Michel Foucault claims that such an exaggerated appreciation of one’s personal features does not bring freedom as the subject is valued only in the world he created not in reality: “[p]oor, he is rich; ugly, he admires himself; with chain still on his feet, he takes himself for God”¹⁹⁰. In order to comprehend the reason for such an extreme discrepancy between the self-being of the protagonists and the perception and understanding of their

¹⁸⁹ John Read, Loren R. Mosher, Richard P. Bentall, *Models of Madness*, op. cit., p. 174.

¹⁹⁰ Michel Foucault, *A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, op. cit., p. 29.

state and position in postcolonial reality it is important to accept the fact that “it is in the heart of every man, the imaginary relation he maintains with himself”¹⁹¹.

Therefore Jamila and Zulma’s encounter with racial discrimination, inequality and prejudice seems to be a natural consequence of their deeply domesticated humanity. As a result of their sensitive nature, depression and frustration seem to be inevitable: the postcolonial subjects’ existence in metropolis depends on their “vain presumption” and “delusive attachment” to positive imagination and creation of “unreal” reality¹⁹².

Another disorder suggested by Michel Foucault and experienced by the postcolonials is *the madness of just punishment*, which “chastises, along with the disorders of the mind, those of the heart”¹⁹³. Kureishi’s characters suffer from this sort of madness although it is important to emphasize that what is “just” for them is not always “just” for the others. Bilquis, Nasser’s wife in *My Beautiful Laundrette* “goes mad” when she discovers her husband’s infidelity. The reader learns that in the rage and fury Bilquis resorts to traditional methods of punishment and inflicts them on Nasser’s lover, Rachel:

Bilquis is mixing various ingredients in a big bowl – vegetables, bits of bird, leaves, some dog urine, the squeezed eyeball of a newt, half a goldfish. (...) At the same time she is dictating a letter to Tania, which Tania takes down on a blue airletter (p. 70).

We discover that illiterate Bilquis plans to return to India and leave her husband in London – a very unusual decision for a domesticated Asian woman who seemed to be fully dependent on her husband. Obviously she is half mad of jealousy and the sense of humiliation and disillusionment surpasses the traditional behaviour. She abuses her husband in Urdu calling him “a big fat black man who should get out of her sight for ever” (p. 70) and she finally “throws the remainder of the potion over Nasser” (p. 70). Soon the reader discovers that Rachel’s stomach is “blotched, marked” (p. 83) and it is “her [Bilquis’s] work” (p. 83). The punishment is imposed and the reader shares Bilquis’s feeling of justification of madness and despair.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, p. 30.

¹⁹² Ibid, p. 29.

¹⁹³ Ibid, p. 30.

In Foucault's opinion, "the punishment (...) multiplies by nature (...) as it unveils the truth"¹⁹⁴. Nasser's revealed infidelity becomes clear not only for his wife and children but also for, unaware so far, Johnny. Rachel feels physical pain on her body and psychological haunting and hatred around her: "It's not possible to enjoy being so hated" (p.83). Nasser lost his wife, lover and daughter. Evil is punished but the price is too high and in Foucault's view, "the crime hidden from all eyes dawns like day in the night of this strange punishment"¹⁹⁵. An interesting analysis was provided by Jeremy Holmes who claims that in a situation of infidelity/loss of a partner the depressed and hurt sufferer becomes angry or furious as he/she endeavours to inflict a penalty in this way to the guilty one who abandoned him/her:

Depressive anger and rage can be seen as an attempt to punish the world, and oneself, for having allowed this connection to break, as well as an envious attack on those who are not so afflicted¹⁹⁶.

Bilquis's suffering might be therefore understood as an act of desperate and passionate jealousy, fury and finally madness, and maybe even "an attempt to re-establish connectedness"¹⁹⁷ with Nasser.

Chad, the protagonist of *The Black Album* inflicts punishment, well-deserved in his opinion, when he attacks a shop selling Rushdie's book. Shahid learns about it from a newspaper and knows that the boy was badly injured. On the one hand, Shahid claims that Chad is the one who became insane with hatred and religious contamination of Islamic creeds. On the other, he shares some of Chad's doubts and disillusionment: "We're the third class citizens, even lower than the working class. Racist violence is getting worse!" (p. 209). In this case the madness of punishment is undeniable. Nevertheless, the issue of its "justice" is debatable: what is fair for Chad and Riaz seems to be a wild act of terror and untamable violence for Shahid and Deedee. By the act of terror Chad's madness is revealed to those who, so far, were unaware of his participation in Riaz's organization.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid

¹⁹⁵ Ibid

¹⁹⁶ Jeremy Holmes, *Depression*, op.cit., p. 9.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid

The last sort of madness suggested by Michel Foucault is *madness of desperate passion*. He mentions love disappointed and deceived but it is also possible to discuss in this context destructive love evoked by exaggerated passion. Kureishi describes numerous and various kinds of love, none of them typical or traditional. Pyke and his wife Marlene (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) are by no means an average couple. The extremity of their relation shocks Karim as for them “sex was both recreational and informative” (p. 190). When Matthew offers Karim his wife as a gift, “a token of appreciation” (p. 192) as he calls it, the boy is not flattered but rather devastated by Pyke’s lack of inhibition and directness. Both Marlene and Matthew search desperately for new experiences:

(...) Pyke and Marlene seemed to me to be more like intrepid journalists than swimmers in the sensual. Their desire to snuggle up to real life Betrayed a basic separation from it. And their obsession with how the world worked just seemed another form of self-obsession (p. 191).

Their passion for experiments and exaggerated sexuality destroyed Eleanor and Karim’s relation and influenced the boy’s future as he decided to leave the theatre and go to America. Karim finds the Pykes a weird couple and, instead of accepting their “gift” gratefully, he notices “the wrinkles around [Marlene’s] eyes” as she was definitely “the oldest person [he’d] kissed”(p. 201), her “thin and brown body” (p. 201) which seemed to be “lightly toasted” (p. 201). Their lust and passion for extremity and sexual control over a partner or partners discourage Karim from following his dream – becoming an actor in a theatre.

Kureishi’s protagonists are prone to desperate, even risky emotions. The extramarital relations of Parvez (*My Son the Fanatic*), Nasser (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) and Haroon (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) cause much trouble as all men, except for obvious immorality break another taboo: they choose Englishwomen as their lovers. Their love affairs hurt many people: predominantly their wives, but also their children and the ones who became unfaithful. Holmes’ statement that “depression is the risk one takes in falling in love” explains to some extent the source of their madness. They seem to be unable to escape and protect themselves from the powerful feeling and its

consequences. Interestingly, in all cases the children are the ones who learn first about their fathers' infidelity. Kureishi once again burdens his teenage protagonists with serious and complex situations. Concurrently, he allows the reader to observe a slow process of destruction of families and he strips the teenagers of naivety and belief in morality.

All sorts of madness catalogued by Foucault have a common point of reference, namely we analyse them through the lens of postcoloniality. The experiences of Kureishi's teenage characters confirm the idea that the rates of depression, schizophrenia and lowness of spirits are "higher in 'second-generation' descendants of immigrants than in those who migrated"¹⁹⁸. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the first generation of immigrants has a specific problem in dealing with too much stresses of moving, poverty and racism experienced in Britain. Those who migrated from India and Pakistan are particularly prone to various mental disorders and complexes evoked by subject position they occupy. They are frequently exposed to faulty perceptions, abuses and, as Read discusses, they are genetically predisposed to inferiority¹⁹⁹.

Anwar (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) becomes a victim of his tradition when, trying to make Jamila marry Changez, he refuses to eat, and consequently becomes half mad and dies. The elements of sever long-standing melancholy or even madness in his behaviour might be understood as "psychological reaction to unpleasant life events"²⁰⁰, namely Jamila's refusal to follow the tradition of arranged marriages:

Uncle Anwar didn't sleep at all now. At night he sat at 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 for 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. Anwar's hunger-strike hadn't endeared him to his family, and now no one attended to him or enquired into the state of his cracking heart (p. 208).

His madness makes him alienated not only as an immigrant in the country but also as a tradition limited and backward old Pakistani. Anwar's reaction to prejudice and racial attacks leads him to the limits of mental persistence as he is "roaming the streets every

¹⁹⁸ John Read, Loren R. Mosher, Richard P. Bentall, *Models of Madness*, op. cit., p. 170.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 171.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 172.

day with his stick, shouting at the white boys, ‘Beat me white boy, if you want to!’” (p. 171). Anwar’s behaviour is not far from John Read’s theory that “racism can help drive you crazy”²⁰¹. When Karim visits his uncle he is devastated by his appearance as Anwar suffers from diminished appetite, weight loss and disturbed sleep:

I found Uncle Anwar upstairs in his pyjamas. He seemed to have shrunk in the past few months: his legs and body were emaciated, while his head remained the same size, perched on him like a globe on a walking stick (p. 171).

Anwar appears to be defeated both by his ethnic belonging, displacement and poverty but also by his tradition related attitude and obstinacy. According to Roy Porter, deep melancholy reflects many problems and miseries of a subject:

Depression has provided a language for interpreting and responding to life’s problems: to isolation, or the intolerable pressures of business; to nonentity, or fame; to poverty, or the embarrassment of riches; to illness, or intimations of mortality²⁰².

It is therefore possible that Anwar was looking for a solution to overwhelming him problems in his escape into insanity. It only confirms Jessica Marshall’s explanation of “evoked” low spiritedness as “by acting sad, we tell other community members that we need support”²⁰³. Anwar’s funeral became a significant event in Karim’s life. He discovered his self and understood that the Indians taking place in the ceremony “were [his] people, and that [he] had spent [his] life denying the fact” (p. 212). In this way Karim confirms Holmes’ opinion that a deep sense of sadness often becomes “a move towards maturity”²⁰⁴.

Summing up, depression in Kureishi’s works might be understood as a state which makes the distance between a protagonist and his/her demanded position longer or shorter, depending on intensity of the emotion. Certainly John Read’s theory seems to be true and the fact that “an interaction of racism and poverty (...) causes the high rates of schizophrenia in ethnic minorities”²⁰⁵ has been proved scientifically. There are, however, positive aspects of a depressive state because in Marshall’s view it is “a self-

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 174.

²⁰² Roy Porter, *The Faber Book of Madness*, op. cit., p. 62.

²⁰³ Jessica Marshall, “Woes Be Gone” in *New Scientist*, January 17, 2009, p. 37.

²⁰⁴ Jeremy Holmes, *Depression*, op. cit., p. 27.

²⁰⁵ John Read, Loren R. Mosher, Richard P. Bentall, *Models of Madness*, op. cit., p. 174.

protection strategy” and it “helps us learn from our mistakes”²⁰⁶. It might also serve “an evolutionary purpose” because “if we lose it, we lose out”²⁰⁷. The propensity of Kureishi’s postcolonial subjects to feel sad either evolves gradually and the reader becomes its witness, or the reader already finds the protagonists in deep disorder of mind and feelings. Occasionally the character is already dead as a result of a suicide or psychological disability to deal with adversities. In many cases depression becomes just a stage in characters’ life before they make a mature decision to introduce significant changes to their acting and reshape their expectations. If one accepts the fact that sorrows and misery are inherent in human condition, the aphorism “where there’s depression there’s hope”²⁰⁸ becomes a factor of a postcolonial subject’s existence.

²⁰⁶ Jessica Marshall, “Woes Be Gone” in *New Scientist*, January 17, 2009, p. 36.

²⁰⁷ Ibid

²⁰⁸ Jeremy Holmes, *Depression*, op. cit., p. 28.

CHAPTER III

*Fuck you, Charles Dickens,
nothing's changed¹*

POSTCOLONIAL MEN AND WOMEN

A postcolonial situation and position of Kureishi's characters in society is conditioned by numerous factors. Whether "the postcolonials" see themselves as successful or not in their country of destination depends predominantly on their place in the recipient culture. Accordingly, their present position in England will be discussed in the view of their social and economic achievements, but their progressiveness and the relations between the two generations of immigrants will also be of a great value. The discussion of the position attributed to Asian women will make references and use certain ideas of gender and feminist studies. The last part will deal with weaknesses and psychological deficiencies found in the generation of "lost men", the features either directly brought from India or inherited from Asian fathers, and preventing both generations from limitless dreams.

3.1. DIVINE FATHERS, SINFUL SONS

Hardly any of Kureishi's protagonists can avoid or ignore the influence of their parents, especially fathers, on their personality and life. The teenagers are shaped by their fathers' teachings and rules inculcated in their minds, and it is extremely difficult for them to escape comparisons between them which are made either by themselves or by other people. The Daedalus and Icarus type of relationship is obvious, but the further the protagonists go, the more complicated and destructive it becomes. Omar, Shahid and

¹ Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, op. cit., p. 63.

Karim are created and modelled by their fathers, but it would be untrue to say that Kureishi's fathers are masters and tutors for their sons. The sons have been given wings, life and hopes by their fathers' arrival to the country of opportunities. Nevertheless, the children endeavour to escape their parents' influence as early as possible. In spite of their frequent, sometimes inefficient repudiation of the inconvenient relationship, they are not able to find release and independence they require. Their fathers are still present in their lives or, if they are already dead, in their thoughts. In order to understand their own identity and to cut off from their parents, the boys need to state their own sense of self. The vocalization and recognition of the relations, and the statement of identities are just the beginning of a complex way of growing up for Kureishi's characters. The teenagers are at the starting point of the painful process of breaking "the umbilical cord".

Karim Amir treats his father "like an Indian just off the boat" (p. 7), and is frequently ashamed when Haroon gets lost in the street. Kureishi's personal attitude to fathers in general is emphasized when he uses a capital letter describing "Dad" in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, or "Papa" in *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *The Black Album*. Hanif Kureishi, himself a father of three boys, equipped his protagonists with his own complex struggle of respect and impatience while mentioning his/their father(s). It is not only about generational differences but mainly cultural and social discrepancies which appeared between two generations of men.

"Haroon is everything Karim rejects about growing up"², suggests Kenneth C. Kaleta. He adds: "Karim is anxious to free himself from his father as part of his process of growing up: The son escapes his father's domination and asserts his independence"³. However, Kaleta's resolute opinion is not fully reflected in Kureishi's work. Karim, aware of his unity with Haroon does not make an escape from him but rather looks patiently for his own way of living. If Haroon is his son's metaphorical creator – Daedalus, Karim – Icarus does not want to abandon him in case he gets "too

² Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 69.

³ *Ibid*, p. 198.

close to the sun.” Haroon confirms the sense of unity between the Amirs by saying that they are growing up together. Yet, father’s helplessness, inconsistency and his dishonourable behaviour towards Margaret prevent Karim from recognizing him as an ideal pattern to follow: “(...) I’d given him the “God” moniker, but with reservations. He wasn’t yet fully entitled to the name”(p. 22). Karim becomes an observer, a disciple sensitive to small lies and dishonesty, critical but loving. Seemingly, Haroon became his son’s God, his buddha, but many times he had to prove his divinity.

Omar’s Papa (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) is “as thin as a medieval Christ”, “an unkempt alcoholic”(p. 6) with long hair and unshaven, he resembles godlike figure. He attempts to influence his son’s life and be the creator of his profitable and successful future. Father and son have completely different ideas of Omo’s career. They disagree in this case and father is not supportive as far as Omo’s laundrette business is concerned. He realizes that Omar is seduced by the delusive vision of a wealthy lifestyle offered by Nasser. Yet, Hussein, alert and protective, is not able to give up the work of his life – his son. He invested all his unfulfilled dreams and ambitions in Omar and he intends to organize and dominate his son’s professional and private life. Bedridden by his alcoholism, Papa administers Omo’s everyday activities by telephoning his brother and asking Johnny, his son’s friend and lover, to persuade Omo to go to college. Papa acts like a god or a guardian angel and his maneuvers aim at influencing Omar’s decisions. He sees a chance of improvement and development in education. “The third way”⁴, in Moore-Gilbert’s understanding, is the chance and opportunity offered to Omo and other ethnically mixed youngsters by English educational system. An escape from reality, racialism and the feeling of being inferior could be eliminated, or at least weakened by achieving a higher intellectual and educational status. “He must have knowledge. We all must, now”(p. 67), insists Papa and he is determined to achieve his goal.

Shahid’s father (*The Black Album*) is still alive in his both sons’ dreams and memories. He was a loving but also strict and demanding father who used to spend

⁴ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., pp. 53, 64.

much of his time “lying on his bed in the centre of the room, wearing a shimmering maroon dressing-gown (under which he always wore blue silk pyjamas)”(p. 51), and he was giving his opinion about new girlfriends brought home by Chili and Shahid. His divinity was manifested in his attitude towards his boys. Chili “was influenced (...) by the practical and aggressive Papa, who originated the idea that Shahid’s studiousness was not only unproductive but an affliction for the family”(p. 41). Godlike Papa chose the way of life for his sons and planned their future in detail, refusing any kind of disagreement. Papa’s reversed understanding of “the third way” concept became a problem for his younger son who had to prove many times that his intellect is more important than Chili’s entrepreneurship and cunning. Shahid’s attitude towards education is contrary to Omo’s idea but both sons cherish with respect the memory of their Papas. Although Omo’s father is alive he is excluded from active participation in his son’s life by his alcoholism.

To discuss Kureishi’s fathers it is important to investigate the notion of the Name-of-the-Father developed by Jacques Lacan, and later applied by Julia Kristeva. There are three fathers, according to Lacan: the Symbolic Father, the Imaginary Father and the Real Father. Kureishi’s fathers are close to the Symbolic Father who is a position rather than a human being. Lacan’s paternal model of the Symbolic Father signifies the Law and order: “[s]ince the Name-of-the-Father has never been successfully repressed, it is rejected, and with it (...) the whole Symbolic order”⁵, writes Lacan. The process of rejection is close to Kureishi’s male protagonists: the sons unable to comprehend and accept their fathers, reject them and refuse to accept their paternal order. Kelly Oliver after Kristeva claims that sons are “permanently at war with father, not in order to take his place, nor even to endure it” but rather to “signify what is untenable in the symbolic, nominal, paternal function”⁶. That would suggest that sons

⁵ Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self*, op. cit., p. 270.

⁶ Kelly Oliver, *The Portable Kristeva*, Columbia University Press: New York, 1997, p. 106.

discover imperfection in their fathers and, therefore, as Lacan interprets it, “repudiation of the Name of the Father”⁷ takes place.

In Kureishi’s short story entitled *Hullabaloo in the Tree* the reader finds a portrait of a father, who recalls and mentions the author’s own Papa. It is in fact a very warm and sentimental description as the protagonist is now a father himself and sees everything from the point of view of this experience. The father’s family consists of twin boys, and a third younger son. Papa’s personality is depicted as supernatural and influential. Although Kureishi presents him in everyday situations, the reader feels deep respect and warm feelings towards this already dead man:

The father remembered his own father, Papa, in the street outside their house in the evening, after tea, when they’d first bought a car. Like a lot of men then, particularly those who fancied themselves as intellectuals, Papa was proud of his practical uselessness. Nevertheless, Papa could, at least, open the bonnet of his car, secure it and stare into it, looking mystified⁸.

The protagonist analyses his own fatherhood with reference to his childhood memories and compares his own and Papa’s behaviour in father-son situations. Lacan’s theory seems easily applicable here as the father from Kureishi’s short story makes an effort to comprehend his Papa, and he tries

to identify himself with his own sex and (...) accede to the position of a father, through (...) the “symbolic debt”. He has the organ; the function must come from the Other (...): the Symbolic father⁹.

Once again Lacan’s “paternal” introduces significant meaning to postcolonial writing. The “symbolic debt” is not only an obligation to be fulfilled but mainly it appears to be an impossible burden to carry. The sons aware of the fact that they are incapable of occupying the position of their fathers, become subject to frustration and envy.

Interestingly, the divinity of Asian fathers, or at least the respect the sons have for them is the result of tradition and culture in which the boys were brought up. In spite of the fact that Omar’s Papa in *My Beautiful Laundrette* is an alcoholic who is not

⁷ Ibid, p. 234.

⁸ Hanif Kureishi, “Hullabaloo in the Tree”, www.hanifkureishi.com, accessed on February 3, 2006.

⁹ Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self*, op. cit., p. 271.

strong enough to deal with reality, his son keeps coming back home, takes care of him, feeds him and cuts his toenails. Karim (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) and Shahid (*The Black Album*) do not share their fathers' ambitions and dreams but both Papas are extremely important for their sons' development; they help to shape psychological and emotional side of their personalities, and their sensibility.

Salman Rushdie mentions in *Imaginary Homelands* his own way of looking for identity in relation to his father. During one of his visits to Bombay he was tempted to visit his father's house from the past, and he opened a directory looking for his father's name in it. To his surprise, "(...) there it was; his name, our old address, the unchanged telephone number (...)"¹⁰. This unusual turning to childhood memories of parental presence can be perceived as catharsis, emotional purification, familiar also to Kureishi's characters. Its aim is to facilitate the disturbed and complex process of maturation.

A similar escape to parental arms and childhood memories can be traced in Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans*. Christopher Banks, an English detective returns to Shanghai where he was brought up to find traces of the circumstances of his parents' disappearance in the past. Influenced by a tragic history, the protagonist makes an effort, and just like Rushdie visits his parents' house trying to evoke pictures and experiences which later on shaped him as a man and a detective.

Such a realistic return to Shanghai is to reassure Christopher's disturbed soul and mind. Similarly, the main character of *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali – Nazneen, thinks many times about her Bangladeshi village and her poor but honest parents. Married to Chanu, she tries to find hope and energy to continue her life in busy and bustling London. She sealed her father's divinity when, at the age of eighteen she accepted without any complaints the man her father had chosen for her. When asked if she wants to see her prospective husband's photograph, she refuses and answers: "Abba, it is good that you have chosen my husband. I hope I can be a good wife, like Amma"¹¹. Her

¹⁰ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 9.

¹¹ Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*, op. cit., p. 16.

compliance and submissiveness have been tested many times. Her father's opinion and choice, accepted by her without any doubts and hesitation were not to be negated. Nazneen believes in Abba's infallibility and omniscience, and her obedience towards her husband for many lost years will be justified by her blind confidence in god and her father's choice, equation in her mind between both of them.

In spite of the fathers' divinity and determination, there are numerous barriers dividing the two generations of Asian emigrants. Religious creed - appreciated mostly by fathers, rejected by sons is a deeply controversial and complex issue. Kureishi depicts a surprisingly reversed situation – the sons become strong believers, the fathers do not approve of it.

Shahid's (*The Black Album*) unresolved inner conflict is not accepted by his father, when still alive, then by his brother, his brother's wife Zulma and Deedee Osgood. Shahid's father, devoted to consumerism, believed in money and successful, profitable business, and though himself a godlike figure, he avoided any devotion to religion. His protests and opposition to Shahid's conversion to Islam and literature is the result of his whole concept of life and his mimic attachment to western values. There is not much ideological and logical explanation of his aversion to religion but it can be traced "between the lines" in Kureishi's novel. Chili, Shahid's brother, realizes that their father would not accept his elder son's religious devotion:

I'd love to take a picture of you praying on your knees and send it to him in heaven. He'd probably say, what's my boy doing down there, looking for some money he's dropped?
(p. 165).

Both brothers feel strong attachment to their father's views and opinions. Obviously he still "controls" their lives, and his "conservative ideas" are a behaviour code to follow and stick to.

"Islam was a particularly firm way of saying "no" to all sorts of things"¹², argued Kureishi in *The Road Exactly: Introduction to "My Son the Fanatic"*. Shahid's futile trials to find his identity among radical Muslims became the source of his conflict

¹² Hanif Kureishi, "The Road Exactly", in *Dreaming and Scheming*, op. cit., p. 215.

both with his family members and his girlfriend. If “[f]undamentalism provides security”¹³ that was something Shahid was mostly disappointed by. However, his way to such a conclusion was a long and complicated one.

Farid (*My Son the Fanatic*) finds it impossible to “put keema with strawberries”¹⁴. What he strives for in spiritual life is “belief, purity, belonging to the past” instead of “muddle”¹⁵. He easily refuses the pleasures of youth and he breaks, to his father’s horror, an engagement with his English girlfriend. There are numerous conflicts and misunderstandings between Farid and Parvez, for whom a privilege is to be invited by a white person to his/her house. Parvez’s relation with a white prostitute, Bettina is a shocking discovery for his son. Farid’s religious involvement aggravates already strained relationship between father and son. Such “fanaticism” is perceived by Parvez as a step back to his Pakistani village. Religion abandoned by him is rediscovered by his son, it becomes an obstacle, a grain of disagreement which grows to a huge and destructive conflict. Farid searches for his personal promised land – peace and security, of which he is robbed every day by racialsists. Religious contemplation is denied to his father who “would fall dead asleep”¹⁶ every time his religion teacher started to analyze or read the Koran.

Unfortunately, in the fervour of conflict Farid seems oblivious to the fact that his father loves him more than anything else:

Farid, I have loved your company, as a baby, and as a boy. I would get out of bed only to look at your face. For you it was just growing up. For me the best of life itself¹⁷.

Such a complex but highly emotional bond between two men is a typical “love and hate” relationship in Kureishi’s works. They cannot separate but life together is impossible and uncomfortable. The conflict of western consumerism and Muslim fundamentalism is unresolved since these are two completely different worlds.

¹³ Ibid, p. 220.

¹⁴ Hanif Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic” in *Collected Screenplays*, op. cit., p. 313.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 313.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 324.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 341.

Karim's (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) bond with his father is another distorted relationship in Kureishi's novels. This time Haroon resorts to religion or rather mysticism, and it is an escape to the world of his happy childhood and secure memories. Karim stays with his father and watches carefully his progress, but Dad's "internal advancement" becomes a painful experience for both of them as Haroon became "the Indian mystic, a spiritual leader without a concern for practicality"¹⁸. During one of his yoga performances he warns people of the dangerous impact of the meditation:

The things that are going to happen to you this evening are going to do you a lot of good. They may even change you a little, or make you want to change, in order to reach your full potential as human beings. (...) You must not resist. (p. 13)

In fact, Dad's devotion to emotional side of personality changed not only his but also Karim's life. It comes as no surprise that there is the connection and continuity between father and son. Haroon "treats Karim as an extension of himself"¹⁹. It is difficult for Karim to understand why Dad takes his defeats so personally, until he realizes that "he saw (them) as having one life between (them)" (p. 110), and Karim is his second half.

Except for ideological and religious cross-generational misunderstandings, there are other literal and metaphorical discrepancies. The protagonists representing the second generation often do not understand their fathers literally, that is: they do not speak Urdu or Punjabi. Seemingly, an unimportant issue, it becomes the beginning of a wider and more serious incomprehension. It is interesting to observe that fathers resort to their language code when they either do not want to be understood by their children or when they feel relaxed and "at home" with their relatives. Hanif Kureishi recalls his childhood meetings with his uncles. He remembers that his father and his brothers conducted their conversation in three languages: English, Urdu and Urdu-English. The conversation appeared to be more valuable than just young Kureishi expected:

¹⁸ Peter Childs, *Contemporary Novelists*, Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2005, p. 154.

¹⁹ Vega Ritter M., „La Crise d'indentite dans *The Buddha of Suburbia*“, in Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 84.

[it] was not an exchange of information, but a masculine pleasure, an exercise in imagination and knowledge even. The men sat down to do it, for hours, and it was thrilling. (...) I can recall one of my uncles saying to me, "Why can't you entertain us like this?"²⁰.

Both Papa and Nasser (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) lapse into their vernacular while discussing Karim's future. They have their small secrets and the common linguistic plane allows them to understand each other. Omar pays attention to the language switch every time his father resorts to his mother tongue and he finds it quite discouraging since it creates a barrier between the two men. It is not only the lack of confidence, as he understands it, but it also deepens his feeling of being in-between – he does not belong fully to Asian culture as he is not able to use the language, but he is not an Englishman either. "Speak my language, dammit" (p. 12), shouts Nasser when Rachel whispers some words in French. But what is his language, is the question that bothers Omar all the time. Whether it is English, as Nasser suggests, or Urdu is constantly a matter of inner conflict of the protagonists.

Karim's (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) feeling of inferiority is deepened by disappointment and unfulfilled expectations of other people who find it extraordinary that he does not speak Urdu or Punjabi. Although his father does not speak to him in this language, Karim realizes that it is one of a few factors which unite Haroon and uncle Anwar, and at the same time, it is alien to his generation. "We have to protect our culture" (p. 181) rebuked Karim Tracey, a black girl from his theatre group. He has the impression that he neglects his past, tradition and he is ignorant of his father's vernacular which widened the generation gap between them. Peter Barry, among four basic areas of discussion in postcolonial studies mentions "an uneasy attitude to the colonial language"²¹, which partially explains the white's disappointment and contempt for those who had neglected their fathers' language.

Although Karim, Shahid and Omar generally do not experience the unrest of spirit, they feel discomfort while thinking or being asked about their fluency in Urdu or Punjabi. In the light of the above situations and problems faced by the young characters,

²⁰ Hanif Kureishi, *My Ear at His Heart*, op. cit., p. 30.

²¹ Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory*, Manchester University Press: Manchester, (1995) 2002, p. 194-195.

it is surprising but also meaningful that none of them intends to learn Urdu or immerse in Asian culture for serious reasons.

The problems with understanding the language seem to be of little importance when compared with divergent dreams and aspirations of both groups of Asians. Fathers' dream worlds are "stepping stones to the real, integrated world of London"²² that is going to be conquered by next generation(s). The 1950s generation decided to settle in England to pursue the dream. Hanif Kureishi writes about his father's generation which "came to Britain full of hope and expectation". It was supposed to be an adventure but it was "worth it"²³. The dream was a priceless treasure and there were many Asians who strived for it.

Ania Loomba's reflections that "father is subject to colonial authority, hence the law of the father becomes the law of the white man"²⁴ could serve as a description of the situation of the father in *The Black Album*, too. Shahid's Papa had a dream concerned with making a fortune and living more than a decent life. He became "westernised" and accepted the worse and changed version of England, just like Parvez in *My Son the Fanatic*. It is something that the second generation does not approve of, not only Kureishi's protagonists, but also other modern novelists. "(...)England that I loved is gone. (...) It's the way people look at each other on the train; just general (...) madness, aspirational arseholes, money everywhere"²⁵, said Zadie Smith in one of the interviews and her words are in keeping with Haroon's reflections on the fact that "the old Indians come to like this England less and less"(p. 74). No wonder that the dreams of the second generation are born out of disillusionment of the fathers because "the dream-England is no more than a dream"²⁶. Shahid sacrifices his father's dream for his own aspirations – studying literature, gaining independence, stating his, so far fluid and unstable identity. It is significant, however, that in spite of the fact that neither Chili nor

²² Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 219.

²³ Hanif Kureishi, *Dreaming and Scheming*, op. cit., p. 219.

²⁴ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 145.

²⁵ Gerard Seenan, *Shortlisted Zadie Smith vents spleen over 'aspirational' England*, Guardian, www.guardian.co.uk, (September 9, 2005), accessed on November 12, 2006.

²⁶ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 18.

Shahid pursue Papa's idea of happiness, they both mention him in conversations and feel his presence.

Kaleta describes the second generation as "contemporary immigrant dreamers"²⁷ but he also emphasizes the divergences between them. In Kaleta's opinion the new dreamers "have to deal with questions from many sides about free speech, customs, religion, and consumerism"²⁸, and what is more, they are obliged to adjust their dreams to modern England and its white part of society. Kureishi, on the other hand, considers his protagonists and people like Zadie Smith, new immigrants who "have not crossed over the rainbow into contemporary materialism"²⁹. Searching for the Elsewhere, young Asians make an attempt to fit in the society. Being impartial, Kureishi shows both the rough and the smooth sides of Asian existence in England. He does not hide the fact that there are numerous immigrants fascinated by consumerism and materialism. Omar's dream of the Elsewhere equates with prosperous business and luxurious cars. Karim's hope is to become an acknowledged and famous actor. Shahid, for a contrast, frequently dreams of becoming invisible, so that the white would not stare at him and Deedee in a pub. His fascination with literature and pop music are more valuable and worth pursuing for him than his Papa's dreams.

Fathers and sons' relationships are dynamic throughout the novel. They are full of emotions, diametrical and painful changes. However, according to Moore-Gilbert, it is misleading "to assume that different generations or genders within Asian Britain necessarily have common interests"³⁰, and Kureishi's characters confirm it. It is visible in the attitude of both generations towards India or Pakistan. Shahid's mother was disturbed and excited because the play they both had seen "reminded her of life in Pakistani families" (p. 74). Haroon and Anwar "as they aged (...) appeared to be returning internally to India" (p. 64) but in fact, neither of them missed India strongly enough to buy a plane ticket and visit it. Both Shahid and Karim are indifferent about

²⁷ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 202.

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 202-203.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 206.

³⁰ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 201.

their fathers' land, but Karim's awareness becomes stronger and more intense by the end of the novel. His maturity process means understanding of his own identity and self-acceptance, at least to some extent. Karim's experiences mirror those of Kureishi who had "a little identity crisis"³¹ during his visit to India.

It may be true, as Katarzyna Nowak claims, that the "identity crisis" is evoked by various attitudes, and most of all, by divergent experiences and memories of two generations of men:

The first generation migrants have a relation with memory, which is based on the patriarchal law. They create the past – the feeling of loss signifies the deletion and silencing of certain elements. Those factors remain inexplicable to their children who naturally do not feel the bond with their parents' past³².

The divided identity of the second generation of Asians is expressed by Moniza Alvi in one of her poems:

The thin line running from my navel downwards
Meant, I thought, that I was half-and-half,
Like the coffee my mother drank in restaurants.
That was sophisticated –
But to be half-and-half oneself?³³

Alvi seems to emphasise her own surprise at being a hybrid as if she could not transgress the boundaries of her imagination. There are things and phenomena which do not appear controversial when they are composed of two. But a human being who is a mixture of identities seems to be unacceptable.

The dilemma concerning the place of belonging follows all the "semi-Asians" throughout the stories. Omar is unconcerned about India. He sees his chance in England, and Nasser is the epitome of an affluent Asian – Great Gatsby of London. Although both Papa and Nasser feel emotionally attached to "home", they recall it only when something bad or overwhelming happens to them, and they do not really know how to deal with the situation. Otherwise, they seem well settled in the country of their choice.

³¹ Hanif Kureishi, *Dreaming and Scheming*, op. cit., p. 33.

³² Katarzyna Nowak, *Melancholic Travelers*, op. cit., p. 79.

³³ Moniza Alvi, "Half-and- Half" in *How the Stone Found Its Voice*, op. cit., p. 22.

Fathers and sons face two kinds of “othering” in Kureishi’s works. The first one is experienced by the children – in spite of being born in England they are placed in the position of the “Other”. Lois Tyson opposes metropolitan to the “Other”. Thinking in historical categories, metropolitan is “the embodiment of what a human being should be, the proper “self””³⁴, whereas the “Other” is different, worse and inferior. Sadly, not everything is changed in Kureishi’s England and therefore the disillusionment of both generations seems to be justified. Tyson’s statements concerning the whole culture of the “Other” which was “ignored” and “swept aside” by metropolitan and dominant culture are still actual, and the bombings in London in summer 2005 are the proof of the “us” and “them” division.

Fathers, on the other hand “learned their Otherness in Britain”³⁵. It is extremely difficult to decide the experiences of which generation are more painful and traumatic. The protagonists of the second generation were born free in soul and only growing up in racial environment made them aware of some limitations and “othering”. The fathers came to England as free people full of hope but soon they had to adjust their imaginary England to reality.

It is worth emphasizing that subjectivity and “Otherness” were neither fathers’ nor sons’ inherent feature. It was imposed on them and, just like Salman Rushdie, both generations “make no apology about being angry”³⁶. It is possible to observe two approaches towards the “Others”; some of them are perceived as “demonic other”³⁷, i.e. they are the savages, the wild and unpredictable. Such individuals are “the menace” to white society and, consequently Hairy Back, Helen’s father (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) tries to protect his daughter from “wogs”, “niggers” and “coons”(p. 40) referring to Enoch Powell and his ideas. Another approach allows the “savage” to show his/her charm and beauty “born of a closeness to nature – the exotic other”³⁸. Karim’s father is

³⁴ Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, op. cit., p. 366.

³⁵ Nahem Yousaf, „Hanif Kureishi’s *The Buddha of Suburbia*”, op. cit., p. 46.

³⁶ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, op. cit., p. 5.

³⁷ Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, op. cit., p. 366.

³⁸ Ibid.

subject to this kind of “othering” when he becomes attractive for Eva and her friends because he is so oriental and original. It cannot be denied that Deedee’s fascination with Shahid is based on similar assumptions.

Summing up, it seems obvious that the bounds between fathers and sons are strong and, although they occasionally drift away in different directions, sooner or later their routes cross. Karim, after a long and complicated journey in search of his identity comes back to London, and his father is among the first ones to be visited. Shahid, in spite of the fact that he realizes how unhelpful and critical his Papa was when still alive, cherishes his memory and keeps repeating to himself: “Papa would like it” or “Papa would be disappointed”. Respect and attention paid to the absent, but in fact always present father depict and emphasize Shahid and Chili’s attachment to Papa. Omar accepts but does not approve of his father’s weaknesses and conservatism. What is important, however, is the fact that the son permanently takes care of Papa and defends him in all possible situations. It seems that a father who “through his Name, brings about separation, judgement, and identity, constitutes a necessity, a more or less pious wish”³⁹, claims Kelly Oliver in *The Portable Kristeva*. The sons, although rebellious and independent, tend to resort occasionally to their fathers in order to settle their identities and to find confirmation for their choices and dilemmas. Obviously, it is possible to look for the reasons of respect in traditional Asian upbringing. On the other hand, it is worth the admiration that in British realities and postcolonial context Kureishi’s protagonists are still obedient and regard paternal words as a guideline in their lives.

3.2. WOMEN – ABSENT AND MARGINALIZED

John McLeod claims that “postcolonialism and feminism are sometimes seen to share tense relations with each other”⁴⁰. It cannot be denied that both realms overlap and to exclude one of them would limit the range of discussion. On the other hand, it is

³⁹ Kelly Oliver, *The Portable Kristeva*, op. cit., p. 157.

⁴⁰ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 173.

visible that Hanif Kureishi neglects female characters, and if they are present in his novels, they either tend to be helpless and oppressed, or strong, repulsive, destructive and dominating. Some theorists, like Kenneth C. Kaleta, look for the roots of misogyny in Kureishi's private life. His mother commented publicly on Kureishi's usage of people he had met in his life, for instance his uncles and aunts, his ex-wife or ex-girlfriends and even the mother herself. The author did not try to avoid responsibility, although he has never acknowledged that his "mothers" are based on his own:

My mother was important in my life too. But she is important to me privately. I don't feel that I particularly want to write about her, for others to read about her⁴¹.

Whether the reader is convinced by Kureishi's statement or not, it is easily noticeable that women are less significant, if not inferior characters in his writing. Melanie McGrath observes that "women (...) are reduced to "the wife-to-be" or else set up as monstrous, sex-starved harpies"⁴². Taking into consideration McLeod's opinion, one is tempted to admit that also in this case Kureishi's writing is deeply postcolonial.

The significance of the feminine symbols is emphasized by Ania Loomba who reminds the reader that "the nation-state or its guiding principles are often imagined literally *as* a woman"⁴³. She gives the examples of Britannia or Mother India – both important and influential in shaping Kureishi's identity. Mother India, an ex-colony becomes the equivalent of a female body – the conquered land, suppressed, defeated and abused. In Kureishi's novels the weak and submissive women symbolize the colony, whereas strong and proud Britannia is represented by independent and free characters of influential feminists.

John McLeod concedes that negative images of passive females make the impression that literature "ignores the contributions made by millions of women to countless independence struggles"⁴⁴ taking place either in history or today, in modern

⁴¹ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 189.

⁴² Melanie McGrath, "This is London", www.thisislondon.co.uk, accessed on February 2, 2006.

⁴³ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 215.

⁴⁴ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 115.

Britain, France or other countries with multicultural societies. The issues of feminism cannot be then ignored or neglected in the analysis.

Bart Moore-Gilbert claims that “gender is another important fissure within Asian Britain”⁴⁵, and the discussion of it is neglected and forgotten both by politicians and representatives of Asian society. Kureishi’s female characters were, and still are frequently analyzed from the point of view of their stereotypical weaknesses or marginalization in his works. The most obvious stereotyping introduced by Kureishi is the division into strong and weak women. As a result, female characters appear to be less complex, and at the same time, less interesting than male protagonists.

Many women portrayed by Hanif Kureishi are used and abused by men. Haroon leaves Margaret, who “epitomizes an utterly defeated sense of suburban Englishness”⁴⁶. She evokes negative feelings both of her own son and the reader:

Mum was a plump and an unphysical woman with a pale round face and kind brown eyes. I imagined that she considered her body to be an inconvenient object surrounding her, as if she were stranded on an unexplored desert island. (p. 4)

Such an unfavourable introduction is deepened by Margaret’s helplessness and her inclination to tearfulness and self-pity. There is no indication of her fighting for Haroon when she discovers that he is unfaithful to her. Nevertheless, Vega-Ritter’s opinion that Karim identifies Margaret with “moral rigidity”, “an absence of grace and naturalness” and “social conformity”, all of which make her “a symbol of a despised identity”⁴⁷ is far too exaggerated. Karim’s sentimentality and the sense of observation do not allow him to forget about respect for his hurt and defeated mother. He is pleased, in contrast to Haroon, when he discovers that Margaret dates his “father’s replacement”, “a pale man”, “an Englishman” (p. 270). Karim feels a pang of remorse when his mother accuses him of abandoning her: “Well, dear, fathers and sons come to resemble each other, don’t they? (...) You both left me, didn’t you?”(p. 105). However, his

⁴⁵ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 21.

⁴⁶ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 65.

⁴⁷ Vega-Ritter M., “La Crise d’identité dans *The Buddha of Suburbia*”, 1997 in Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 81.

selfishness and the will to conquer the world are stronger, and finally Karim chooses his own way.

Margaret's behaviour towards her both sons might be compared to what Julia Kristeva, and after her Kelly Oliver call "maternal desire"⁴⁸. Margaret desperately wants to participate in her sons' life. Therefore, she enslaved them with her love, she makes them responsible for her failures not only in her relation with her husband, but also in her emotional life: "I'm all on my own. No one loves me. (...) no one helps me. No one does anything to help me" (p. 105). The reversed roles of a mother and a child overwhelm Karim as he is the elder of the brothers and feels obliged to protect his mother.

There is an absent woman in *My Beautiful Laundrette* who influenced the whole life of Omar and his father. Mary, Hussein's dead wife is mentioned many times by Omar, Nasser and her husband, who calls her "bloody Mary" while taking another sip of alcohol. It is obvious that the experience of her suicide was painful and far-reaching. Omar recalls the moment when she "jumped on to the railway line"(p. 24), and when he comes back home he often finds his father standing on the balcony from which Mary jumped and staring into the distance. Mary is still present in Hussein's pain and loneliness, in his weakness and hopes connected with Omar. She is also visible in Omar's trials to become wealthy, to achieve respect by money, to take revenge on Johnny when Omar accuses him indirectly of Mary's death:

What were [you] doing on marches through Lewisham? (...) [Papa] saw you marching (...)
And he took it out on her. And she couldn't bear it. Oh, such failure, such emptiness.
(pp. 52-53)

Mary is portrayed as a defeated white woman, unable to deal with racialism against the beloved one in her own country. Not brave enough to carry on, she decided to choose the way of avoidance – suicide. That is something that neither Omar nor his father can forgive her. Kureishi depicted their life a year after her death, as if it was a crime she had committed. They are two "abandoned" men, their house and lives are in

⁴⁸ Kelly Oliver, *The Portable Kristeva*, op. cit., p. 157.

a complete mess, Papa is as helpless as a child, Omar's maturity process is hastened by an abnormal situation. The reader has the impression that Hussein's alcoholism is attributed to her "unconcerned" death, and he is left in the vale of tears with his rebellious and disobedient son.

Both Mary and Margaret are depicted as depressed and defeated women who, without any fight, resigned of their most precious things in life – their husbands and children. There is no thorough psychological portrait of the female characters offered by the author, which might mistakenly lead to understanding of the women's behaviour as cowardice and disability to cope with life and unexpected situations.

One of the major aspects mentioned by Kureishi is "double colonization" of women. The term is applied to Asian women who live in London but their fate is no different from that of women living in India or Pakistan. The double colonization "refers to the fact that women are twice colonised – by *colonialist* realities and representations, and by *patriarchal* ones too"⁴⁹. Donna Haraway claims that "“women of colour” might be understood as a cyborg identity"⁵⁰. Although this definition seems to be exaggerated, it becomes obvious that Minoo, Parvez's wife in *My Son the Fanatic*, "has not benefited from her husband's westernization"⁵¹, and her identity is put to the test. Just like Margaret, she is deceived by her husband, who is not brave enough to leave her or tell her the truth about his love affair. Minoo misses India, she mentions very often her family, brothers and sisters who stayed there. She feels imprisoned not only in England but also in her own house. She accuses Parvez of placing her in such an inferior position and compares their ways of living:

If I'd been given your freedom...think what I would have done...(...)I would have studied.
I would have gone everywhere. And talked...talked⁵².

Minoo feels limited by her Asian identity, lack of fluency in English and alien English realities. Nevertheless, she notices that her husband imposed numerous limits

⁴⁹ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 175.

⁵⁰ Donna Haraway, in Raman Selden, Widdowson Peter, Brooker Peter, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, Prentice Hall: Essex, 1985, p. 237.

⁵¹ Ruvani Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 97.

⁵² Hanif Kureishi, *My Son the Fanatic*, op. cit., p. 299.

on her: having accepted the First World rules himself, Parvez keeps his wife under emotional and financial control. For Minoo the world in which she lives is still India as all she does in London is “washing filthy trousers”⁵³. It is not very different from every day chores performed by her sisters and cousins in Asia. Minoo is not able to accept the patriarchal system introduced by Parvez since she has already discovered free and independent English women and she realizes that there is no turning back to the world she used to live in before the arrival to the United Kingdom.

Nasser’s illiterate wife, Bilquis (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) is similarly trapped in a half way between Asian and British realities. Influenced by her husband’s patriarchal behaviour the woman has no dreams but only memories of India. Lois Tyson emphasizes the complexity of the problem claiming that “women are oppressed by patriarchy economically, politically, socially, and psychologically”⁵⁴. Bilquis is presented not as a supplement of her husband but rather as an addition: she appears and disappears, mostly checking whether Nasser and his male guests need anything. In an extremely discreet way Bilquis looks after the people who visit their house or come to the parties, she introduces people to each other and orders her daughters to serve the guests. It is impossible to avoid the impression that Bilquis behaves like a slave, “colonised” by men who rule the house and the world of high finance, the dominant topic of their conversations. Even when Bilquis discovers her husband’s wife infidelity, she is not given the voice by Kureishi. Although she gives vent to her feelings by shouting and abusing Nasser, she does it in Urdu, which again leaves her dumb and silent forever. The reader cannot understand her emotions and anger, and the woman is in a position of a colonized – misunderstood by the colonizer. It is Omar who informs the reader that “Bilquis is thinking of going back”(p. 70) to India.

Katarzyna Nowak in one of the chapters of *Melancholic Travelers* analyses the unappreciated role of a female protagonist in postcolonial literature. What is important,

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, op. cit., p. 90.

however, she pays attention to the strength and essential role prescribed to women not by the writers but rather by culture and heritage:

Women are strong, but do not hold any real power. They can only find alternative channels of exercising their power over their family, over their children and small things⁵⁵.

Bilquis and Minoos are the epitome of interesting but unjustly neglected characters and “it is men who become educated and who go out into the world”⁵⁶. Women stay active at home and blind to the outside world as “the phallus appears to be a promise of future grandeur”⁵⁷.

Tracey, a black girl from Karim’s theatre group (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) is another “doubly colonized” female character. Kureishi’s descriptions leave no doubts about her “colonized” soul. Tracey was “respectable in the best suburban way”, “dressed like a secretary”, she was “honest and kind” but “she was also bothered by things: she worried about what it meant to be a black woman.” She was “doing her best to disappear from the room without actually walking out”(p. 179). When Tracey finally summons up her courage and criticizes Karim for his presentation of Anwar’s hunger strike, it suddenly and surprisingly becomes a conflict of minorities between the two. Karim does not accept or understand Tracey’s critical remarks. He rejects her accusations, and once again a black woman becomes voiceless and transparent, she is what Edward Said called “silent shadow”⁵⁸. Peter Childs and Patrick Williams draw attention to the recurring concern that “at (...) intersection of “race” and gender in the post-colonial academy (...) women of colour have to negotiate not feminism but patriarchy”⁵⁹. They need to overcome the latter one in order to discuss their the first one.

Kureishi’s female characters cross the boundaries of standard behaviour; they are either submissive and docile, or strong, independent and over eroticized. The

⁵⁵ Katarzyna Nowak, *Melancholic Travelers*, op. cit., p. 51.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 53.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, op. cit., p. 208.

⁵⁹ Peter Childs, Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, op. cit., p. 201.

association of Oriental/Asian and female is quite strong and frequent. A woman is “a disturbing symbol of fecundity, peculiarly Oriental in her luxuriant and seemingly unbounded sexuality”⁶⁰, claims Said. He wonders why the Orient is still juxtaposed with “fecundity”, “sexual promise”, “threat”, untiring sensuality” and “unlimited desire”⁶¹. Kureishi’s portrait of female characters is thus close to Said’s theory. Similarly, Dorota Kołodziejczyk looks for the roots of female passivity in Oriental representation of a harem and the women whose existence “made the impression of passive waiting”, who “are not limited by time” and are constantly “between life, and maybe not death but rather nonentity”⁶².

Jamila from *The Buddha of Suburbia* is strong and independent, but also sexually liberated. She does not believe in marriages, not to mention arranged marriages. Her rebellion is political and sexual in nature, she gets involved in demonstrations challenging the idea of a helpless weak woman who becomes a victim in her own country. Jamila soon discovers that she “cannot explore intellectual and sexual independence while remaining within the family”⁶³. Thus her sexual experiments range from Karim, even after she had married Changez, to homosexual relations with Joanna while staying in a commune. The character’s sexual liberation seems to be repulsive for the reader, and her dishonest and dishonourable treatment of her husband make her seemingly a negative protagonist. However, it is worth noticing that Jamila is one of view female characters who might be classified as feminists brave enough to defend the women of colour in Britain.

Tania, Nasser’s rebellious daughter (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) becomes an object of desire for her father’s business partners and for Omar. Ostensibly an obedient daughter, Tania appears to be a volcano of energy and sexuality. She touches Omar in a seducing way, she whispers to him, and finally she bares her breast for him standing

⁶⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, op. cit., p. 187.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 188.

⁶² Dorota Kołodziejczyk, “Uwiedzeni orientem – europejskie fantazje o haremie”, *Czas kultury*, Poznań, 2003/1 (translation mine, A.S.).

⁶³ Ruvani Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 27.

behind the window. The act of uncovering of her breast is the manifestation of voiceless revolt. Being “dumb” Tania can only show part of her body as a symbol of her independence and self identity. Finally, she will abandon her patriarchal father who committed adultery, and she will make an escape from her house but the process of coming to such a decision is a complex and long one. Tania’s intelligence and observational skills are hidden by Kureishi behind her exuberant and exaggerated sexuality. Kureishi does not allow her to state her vantage point, even in the crucial moment of her meeting with Nasser’s lover, Rachel. The reader’s myopia is evoked by Tania’s limited, neglected and deficient picture, ultimately leading to decrepitude of the female character.

It must be explained and emphasized that not only Asian women are depicted by Kureishi as Oriental objects of desire but also the white ones. Deedee Osgood seduces Shahid partially for his skin colour and originality, but to some extent she treats him as a part of her academic experiment or research as she is involved in fighting for equality of minorities. An ex-prostitute, Deedee, leads Shahid astray, offers him drugs and interferes with his religious choices. Kureishi shows her *femme fatale* features, and by the end of the novel the reader finds it difficult to decide whether Deedee is a rapacious and despotic woman, or a villain in the story – a fighting and ruthless feminist. According to Kaleta, the only time we observe Deedee as “the stereotypically domestic female” is when “she offers to make Shahid a home-cooked meal”⁶⁴. Otherwise, she is busy helping exploited minority students, mainly girls and fighting for freedom of a written word – Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*. Deedee’s political activity provoked Bart Moore – Gilbert to suggest that the teacher herself became a brutal and violent defender of her own convictions and strong beliefs:

certain kinds of western feminism, it seems, may be no less absolutist – and no less unwilling to resort to force and censorship [...] than the fundamentalism⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kuresihi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 132.

⁶⁵ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 143.

Surprisingly, a female character is criticised for her rapid actions and her role of an intellectual leader stays unnoticed.

Rosie (*Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*) is another example of a white woman whose partner is of an Asian origin. Sammie, whose real name is Samir, is an accountant living in South London area. He is Rosie's husband but their relationship is a bit strange as their liberal marriage allows them to enjoy other sexual partners without inhibitions. Rosie appears to be tolerant and open-minded but her real interest in ethnic minority sexual partners is of deeper nature:

her interest in multiracial London and alternative forms of sexuality seems to be fuelled by the opportunities for new pleasurable experience they make possible⁶⁶,

That would suggest that, just like Deedee, Rosie is seduced by all that Samir's origin brings to her life. Once again the woman is portrayed as a harpy using her partner not only sexually but also mentally.

Eva Kay (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) goes through the process of transformation from a suburban disloyal wife to a liberated lover. She is introduced to the reader as a negative, cunning character seducing Haroon physically and Karim mentally. Both father and son are under her influence and Eva knows very well how to direct Haroon so that he would leave his wife and concentrate on his career of a buddha. She is surprisingly strong-minded and uncompromising character and she dominates the Amirs' life. Karim realizes that his family is destroyed by this woman, but he does not discover that Eva manipulates both him and his father. Karim's price was not very high: Eva helped to realize his biggest dream facilitating his process of becoming an actor. Haroon's doubts about leaving Margaret are easily dispelled by Eva, who offers him a comfortable vision of unconcerned and mystic life in London. When Karim meets Haroon by the end of the novel he notices that Dad looks defeated and unhappy. By contrast, Eva is "confident, proud and calm"(p. 262), but Haroon is a different man. Finally, he admits that what bothers him is not only the disillusionment with Eva but also with culture offered by white society, something that Haroon strived for so much:

⁶⁶ John McLeod, *Postcolonial London*, op. cit., p. 144.

there has been no deepening in culture, no accumulation of wisdom, no increase in the way of the spirit. There is a body and mind, you see. Definite. We know that. But there is a soul, too. (p. 264)

Dad realizes that Eva's ambitious dreams were not his, and he lost something inestimable – his family. When Eva announces the fact that they intend to get married it is obvious that she fulfils her deliberate plan. For Haroon the marriage becomes an escape route and helpless submission.

Both Deedee and Eva are the epitome of, what Moore-Gilbert calls “female colonial missionary”⁶⁷. Deede, in metaphorical meaning colonizes not only Shahid, but also her British Asian students who hide in her house from oppressive parents and limiting tradition. Additionally, the scene in which a black student stands on a chair in the classroom and the rest of the group, including Deedee clasp and laugh is “a parodic reinscription of a common trope in colonial discourse, the gaze of the colonizer (...)”⁶⁸. The relationship between Shahid and his teacher is a complex one. Deedee both uses and is used by “Oriental” Shahid. She colonizes his soul and mind, but she also feels that she behaves “like a fifteen-year-old, looking out of the window, thinking, will he come, what have I done, will he think me a fool?”(p. 120). Emotional colonization works both ways. It is, however disputable whether Moore-Gilbert is right claiming that Shahid is important for Deedee so that her “benevolence” could operate⁶⁹. She concentrates more on her personal and ideological needs, and she intends to meet Shahid “until it stops being fun”(p. 276).

Similarly, Eva Kay from *The Buddha of Suburbia* as a missionary strives for rescuing Haroon from his English and hopelessly realistic wife. Her mission thus is to open Haroon for new experiences and explore his full potential. According to Karim, Eva was “forward”, “brazen”, and “wicked”(p. 8), which made her fascinating enough to “colonize” his father. Domesticated Margaret seems to be the source of frustration and retardation for her husband. Eva, for a change, admires Haroon's exotic appearance, something Margaret does not notice anymore, and his Asian sensibility.

⁶⁷ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 141.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 141.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 143.

On the other hand, Haroon seems to miss the fact that Eva-colonizer is one breasted Amazon who invaded him and becomes a menace to his family life. Karim witnessed her and Haroon's sexual intercourse in the garden and immediately noticed the lacking breast: "Eva had only one breast. Where the other traditionally was, there was nothing, so far as I could see" (p. 15). Eva dominates Haroon's mind and thoughts and her behaviour is the epitome of metropolitan interference and influence. According to Susie Thomas, Eva is the Amazon who "shows her authority with vigorous gesture, the father groans with pleasure seated on an uncomfortable bench"⁷⁰. Eva's colonial habits and strong personality are revealed not only during her meeting with Haroon but also during her further life with her lover. Only her son, Charlie will emphasize his independence and leave his mother to start his own career.

Eva and Deedee "rule" Asian men, and the latter speaks in the name of Asian female students becoming their voice and representative. One is tempted to inquire after Gayatri Spivak: "Can the subaltern speak?". The subaltern analyzed in the context of colonial past and through the colonial discourse prism has no voice. If the subaltern is additionally female, she is even more neglected. Whether Deedee, with her superficial experiences and controversial views, has the right to speak on behalf of her Asian female students is an unresolved issue. McLeod claims that "white women have failed to see themselves as the potential oppressors of black and Asian women, even adopting benevolent positions towards them"⁷¹. The statement would deprive Deedee and Eva of representative functions in their relationships with Asian men and students. Nevertheless, in Kureishi's novels neither of them knows when to stop and let the subaltern speak, which again depicts them in negative light.

The Asian women are not only represented by white women but also by their husbands who usually ignore them and do not appreciate their intelligence. Nazneen (*Brick Lane*) is always silenced by Chanu, and when she dares to add something to his conversation with Dr Azad, her husband "filled the silence with his laugh. "My wife is

⁷⁰ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 83.

⁷¹ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 182.

just settling in here”⁷². Such a typical excuse is to explain his wife’s courage and, in his understanding, impertinence.

Ania Loomba suggests that the reason for claiming the right to represent “subaltern” women is evoked by “the supposed silence of Indian women”, and that the “civilizing mission (...) was rescuing native women from oppressive patriarchal domination”⁷³. The white women tend to overlook the fact that they lack personal experience of the oppression which they discuss so eagerly. In addition, they miss the fact that Indian women are not silent but rather inaudible in the chaos of political disputes.

On the other hand, it is impossible to ignore the fact that most of white female characters in Kureishi’s stories are subject to the activity of Asian or semi Asian men, which is the result of male Oedipal complex. It is visible that Deedee, Rachel, Helen and Eleanor are all fascinated by their partners’ dark skin, oriental look and culture. Kureishi depicted mutual exploitation; both sides do exploit and are used and abused in return. Women are victims but not sinless. Ania Loomba, following Franz Fanon’s reasoning offers a new interpretation of the Oedipal complex: “instead of the (...) scenario where the male child desires its mother, the fantasy of possession of white women by black men is offered”⁷⁴. To follow further Fanon’s interpretation, let us show how the colonised man analyses his encounter with white culture:

I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilisation and dignity and make them mine⁷⁵.

This fantasy was followed by Shahid when he visited Deedee for the first time in her house. Although he “felt apprehensive and bashful” (p. 47), he also “couldn’t help wondering where her husband was” (p. 48) and invited by Deedee to walk with her, “he was so impressed by her will and so off balance that he added “I’ll... I’ll go anywhere with you” (p. 50). Shahid finds in his white teacher a possibility for upward mobility.

⁷² Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*, op. cit., p. 32.

⁷³ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 171.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 146.

⁷⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, op. cit., p. 63.

She became one of his steps to self-discovery; Shahid juxtaposed his fondness for Deedee and for Islam, and tried to figure out the best solution. In Kureishi's novel, the white woman became Shahid's tool. She risked her academic career and self-respect, while immature Shahid had some doubts about their relationship:

He and Deedee had plunged into a compelling familiarity. They had gone out a few times, confessed, and shared the most uninhibited passions people could participate in. Surely, though their love making was merely an exchange of skills and performances? He did this; she did that. How much did they know about one another? They had been tourists in one another's lives. What prevented her taking other Asian or black lovers? Why shouldn't she? Perhaps she took a different lover each year, using men as Chili had used women, and dismissing them at exam time. (p. 240).

Although influenced by her charm, Shahid refuses to accept Deedee's choices and does not trust her stability. His ostensible affection is transformed into enmity and reveals the weakness of his faith. Similarly, the weakness of his religious faith stems from his disability to trust people and his inconsistency. Kureishi neglects expansion of Deedee's character showing Shahid's doubts not hers. She seems to be waiting passively for his decisions. When she is attacked by Riaz's group, it is Shahid, a romantic hero who comes to save her like as if she was not able to take an action, unaware of the situation and danger.

Karim (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) does not fall in love with Asian girls and it is not because his father does not appreciate this. He subconsciously chooses white lovers: Charlie, Helen and Eleanor. Each of them is a step forward, they allow the protagonist to understand his bisexuality and biracial heritage. Both Helen and Eleanor become a device to achieve a goal. Karim invests his Oedipal love in white partners to check his limits and possibilities. Seducing his lovers, Karim endeavours to prove to himself and social milieu that he is no different from other teenagers. Susie Thomas gives three possible reasons for Kureishi's male characters falling in love with white women exclusively. It could be "a way of gaining acceptance, a revenge against racism, and an attempt to transcend both"⁷⁶. It is clear that Karim's Oedipal complex turns into deliberate action which occasionally evades his control:

⁷⁶ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 80.

So there it was. Helen loved me futilely, and I loved Charlie futilely, and he loved Miss Patchouli, and no doubt she loved some other fucker futilely (p. 38).

It is astonishing that after so many years of friendship supported by sexual experiences with Jamila, Karim did not recognize her as his girlfriend. His feelings concentrated more deeply on white representatives of British society as he continued to discover London and its beauty. Karim's next lover, Eleanor is the fulfilment of his dreams:

Eleanor had already appeared in films, on TV and in the West End. I felt like a boy beside her, but there was something in her that needed me too, something weak rather than kind or passionate, as if I were a comfort during an illness, someone to touch, perhaps. As soon as I saw this weakness I closed in. I had never been seen with such a mature and beautiful woman before, and I encouraged her to go out with me so people would think we were a couple (pp. 172-173).

Karim's love for Eleanor ends the moment he realizes she is smarter than him and leads double life, devoting some part of herself to Pyke. Karim finds her unfaithfulness unacceptable and dishonourable. Lost in intricacy of his own feelings, Karim abandons Eleanor and is abandoned at the same time.

Nasser's fondness for Rachel in *My Beautiful Laundrette* is utterly egoistic and superficial. Although he means a lot to her ("The only thing that has ever waited for me is your father" (p. 58), says Rachel to Tania), Nasser never mentions any deeper feelings towards her or does not have any intention of getting divorced. Rachel is a perfect supplement to his fortune and his pompous and luxurious lifestyle.

Oedipus complex analysed from this angle is partially the result of male protagonists' helplessness and weakness, and partially the result of their selfishness. Shahid looks for confirmation in the eyes of his white teacher, but he also hopes to get help from Deedee to make the right choice, which in fact happens. While attending Islamic meetings, Shahid still has an option in Deedee's arms.

Jamila, Karim's sexual partner is not the right person to show with. Karim seems to miss the fact that she is probably his first and the only love, and she appreciates him and adores more than anybody else. He concentrates on Helen who becomes his revenge against Hairy Back. To date his daughter secretly and to drive his car "was a delicious

moment of revenge” (p. 78), but Karim’s motives are simple and prosaic whereas the real feeling is neglected and consequently lost forever.

Nasser’s obscure activity is the result of his unresolved lifestyle in Britain. The owner of a profitable business, he endeavours to retain the elements of Indian tradition. Patriarchy at home, but liberal and sexually free behaviour outside the house. Nasser continued to choose the option which fitted him best, whereas his wife, Bilquis was left with no choice at all. Rachel was the woman with whom Nasser decided to share his enjoyments and professional success. Bilquis, on the other hand, is expected to be a perfect housewife and stay silent.

Interestingly, Kureishi does not allow his “mothers” to have close relationship with their children. Mothers are always distant, frustrated and physically and sexually unattractive. In *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid* Samir’s mother does not appear but it is obvious that “even in her absence she continues to separate Sammy from his father”⁷⁷. His white mother, although not present in Samir’s life, left him the stigma of a biracial, ethnically mixed hybrid. Half-British Sammy is alien to his father as he was brought up in London and does not comprehend Rafi’s culture and reasoning any more.

Karim abandons his mother in the most difficult moment of her life and finds her substitute in Eva Kay. He shows no remorse and does not feel the burden of responsibility for Margaret’s loneliness and unhappiness. Nevertheless, it is difficult to agree with Kaleta that “for Margaret, her affair with a younger white lover has made her grown Anglo-Asian son part of a completed phase in her life”⁷⁸. She does not miss a chance to tell him how much she loves him and she is pleased to see him back from America. In fact, she is the only person who tells him: “Be what you are”(p. 232), and accepts his way of life and progress. Still, Margaret and her both sons are never close enough to discuss the most painful experiences and events of their life.

Nina, one of the female characters in *With Your Tongue Down My Throat* lives with her mother but longs for her father who came back to India. Her mother, Ma as she

⁷⁷ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 186.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 189.

calls her “is determined to be businesslike, not emotional”⁷⁹, and she is depicted as a strong but, in fact frustrated and vulnerable character. Nina hopes to improve her relationship with her absent father as mother’s role in her life is insignificant. Kureishi does not allow Ma to explain the reasons for such a behaviour: her unsuccessful life and being abandoned by Nina’s father who did not mention the fact that he had left a wife in India. Ma seems to be unrewarded and unappreciated. Unfortunately, Nina stays indifferent to her mother’s experiences.

Kureishi’s unfair treatment of women, especially mothers, is a frequent accusation. We learn almost nothing about psychological construction of female characters, and it is impossible to disagree with Ania Loomba that they simply “disappear from discussions about them”⁸⁰. What is more, Justine Ettler claims that most of Kureishi’s stories “explore relationships between men who’ve left their wives for their younger lovers. None is written from the women’s point of view”⁸¹.

It is also possible and worth taking into consideration that Kureishi might have been influenced by Asian culture and traditions which do not leave much space for women’s independence and activity. No wonder that his male protagonists, usually Asian or semi-Asian men treat women as submissive and weak creatures who should accept patriarchy at home.

To sum up, it might be interesting to quote Angela Carter who, as one of few praises female characters in Kureishi’s works: “He can’t find a bad word to say about women...which is lovely thing in this period of fashionable misogyny”⁸². Carter is right to some extent: Kureishi does not say a bad word about women as he either leaves it to his male protagonists or does not say anything at all.

⁷⁹ Kureishi H., „With Your Tongue Down My Throat”, in *Love in a Blue Time*, op. cit., p. 65.

⁸⁰ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 221.

⁸¹ Ettler Justine, “Free at Last From the Chains of Marriage. So Why the Long Face?”, Observer, www.guardian.co.uk, (November 21, 1999), accessed on May 15, 2002.

⁸² Carter A., in Nahem Yousaf, “Hanif Kureishi’s „*The Buddha of Suburbia*” “, op. cit., p. 64.

3.3. MASCULINITY AT RISK

Kureishi's life and writing were strongly influenced by his father's experiences in the new land and by the relations between the two men. He concedes: "dad was the boss in our house, where he had made his own empire"⁸³. Kureishi's book devoted to his father is entitled *My Ear at His Heart* and is further explained as "reading my father" story, so the author's emotional involvement with Papa cannot be missed. The book is said to be the settlement of accounts with his father who, in fact, is presented in a positive way.

Before *My Ear at His Heart* was published, Kureishi had depicted men and masculinity as undergoing erosion and destruction. All male protagonists of Asian origin are subject to moral and psychological fragility, to changes and situations which tear and pull their minds and bodies into different directions. Kureishi's protagonist is expected to be a "modern Everyman"⁸⁴ and face, what McLeod calls after Linton Kwesi Johnson, "di age af reality"⁸⁵.

It cannot be denied that contemporary masculinity undergoes significant crisis and, in such a crippled form it exists, whether we accept it or not, juxtaposed to patriarchy. Kureishi does not pretend that the problem disappears and maybe that is why, he is frequently said to betray men. As a writer, he looks at men from a different angle revealing their weaknesses and showing discouraging and ruthless features of their character. Kureishi himself explains resorting to men in general as a predominant theme in his novels and screenplays:

I guess I'm interested in men because I'm a bloke myself but also because I was very interested in the revolutions of my time: for gays, women, blacks and Asians⁸⁶.

Kureishi's male protagonists are surprisingly natural, or even average as far as their personalities are concerned. They are not "heroes" but they often look for their

⁸³ Hanif Kureishi, *My Ear at His Heart*, op. cit., p. 100.

⁸⁴ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 62.

⁸⁵ John McLeod, *Postcolonial London*, op. cit., p. 133.

⁸⁶ Nahem Yousaf, „Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*“, op. cit., p. 14.

place in the world, and trying to get there, they make mistakes, change routes and hurt people.

It would be misleading to claim that Asian male characters are more complicated and impotent than the white ones. It is a fact that Kureishi devotes more space and gives more often voice to Asian or semi-Asian men. Let us have a closer and more attentive look at male infirmity in Kureishi's works.

To begin the discussion it might be interesting to resort to Leela Gandhi who makes an interesting remark on colonial masculinity which "defined itself with reference to the alleged effeminacy of Indian men"⁸⁷. It would suggest that there is some inclination to weakness of character in Asian genes and "India (was) colonisable because it lacks real men"⁸⁸. The Asians described by Kureishi seem to confirm the statement.

Looking back in history it might be helpful to quote Edward Morgan Forster who in *A Passage to India* allowed Mrs Turton to vocalize her opinion about the Asians. The woman agrees in her opinions concerning Indian men with Gandhi's statement:

(...) Remember it afterwards, you men. You're weak, weak, weak. Why, they ought to crawl from here to the caves on their hands and knees whenever an Englishwoman's in sight, They oughtn't to be spoken to, they ought to be spat at, they ought to be ground into the dust, we've been far too kind with our Bridge Parties and the rest⁸⁹.

It strikes the reader that although Forster's book was published in 1924, views concerning the Asian men did not change much. Kureishi's male protagonists experience it painfully and frequently.

But it is not only the attitude of the white that the immigrants are disappointed with. The first generation Asians are disillusioned with England they discovered on their arrival to London. Their country had been colonised many years earlier, and metropolia's greatness and power were undisputable before 1950s. Soon it appeared that English people, values and the country itself are not the imaginary ones. Kureishi's

⁸⁷ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, op. cit., p. 99.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 100.

⁸⁹ Edward Morgan Forster, *A Passage to India*, Penguin Books: London, 1924 (2000), p. 220.

protagonists live mainly in South London which is the location of many squatters and hideous derelict places full of “junkies” and “dealers”, and young people on the dole.

The protagonist of *My Son the Fanatic*, Parvez complains that his generation came from one Third World to another country of this status. His son, much more critically notices that the English “say integrate, but they live in pornography and filth, and tell us how backward we are”⁹⁰. It becomes obvious that the second generation is more apprehensive and more cynical about the English. Often it is not sheer greed for success and financial profits, but the need to discover something deeper and more valuable that pushes them forward. Not only do they refuse to be treated as ethnic and cultural minority, but they also demand equal access to education and work.

Nasser in *My Beautiful Laundrette* describes England as a “rotten” country but still he is able to find his place in the society and the possibility of conducting his business. There are, however, numerous sensitive and ambitious Asians, who find it extremely difficult to hide their disapproval of what the United Kingdom offered to them. To their bitter disappointment, “there’s no simple, uniform Englishness with which anyone, let alone an immigrant could hope to assimilate”⁹¹. An unexpected problem appeared: if Englishness is not a clear and unified term, what should one assimilate with? The myth of tolerant and open England was taken over by realistic and devastating consequences of racial attacks and notorious humiliation. “Somehow this wasn’t the “real” London”(p. 5), thinks Shahid wandering its streets. His parents’ generation was similarly disappointed by the fact that the county of their voluntary choice somehow was not the “real” England.

Homi Bhabha calls the feeling accompanying Kureishi’s characters “unhomeliness” after Freud’s “unheimlich”⁹². Lois Tyson expands on the debate adding that “being “unhomed” is not the same as being homeless”⁹³. The term is rather concerned with psychological deficiency evoked by a huge disappointment with a new

⁹⁰ Hanif Kureishi, *My Son the Fanatic*, op. cit., p. 333.

⁹¹ Sandhu S., „Pop Goes the Centre” 1999, in Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 61.

⁹² Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, op. cit., p. 10-11.

⁹³ Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, op. cit., p. 368.

situation experienced by so many Asian immigrants. For Nasser, Anwar and Shahid's Papa, England is a "damn country which (they) hate and love"(p. 14). Even they, in spite of their often wealthy or even adventurous lifestyles, remember India and show their unhappiness with their status of an immigrant in Britain. Their maleness undergoes a test; not only do they have to learn to live in a new reality but they also need to state their identity and hand it down to their children, who on the other hand, are often a fruit of miscegenation.

It was not an easy undertaking for Haroon (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) who asked people in the street for "directions to places which were a hundred yards away"(p. 7), and it was almost a miracle that he managed to find his way home from work. His personal features: sensitivity, emotionality, inclination to day-dreaming, made it unrealisable to adapt himself to new environment and face new, unfriendly people and realities.

Haroon Amir and his friend, Anwar tend to dream about India they remember, mainly when they face problems impossible to deal with. Haroon's, and at the same time, Anwar's failure is the lack of full assimilation and adaptation in England. To some extent it explains disappointments, loneliness and bitterness of male characters who cannot measure their strength against incomprehensible culture, society and mentality.

According to Ruvani Ranasinha Asian men lack self reliance:

Kureishi's male protagonists tend to reflect the opposing factions that surround them: but at the core, there is a nullity; they remain spectral and specular figures with no strong sense of self⁹⁴.

As a result of their displacement, also emotional displacement, men are subject to "massive depression" and lethargy. A large number of them represented a much higher position in India or Pakistan, and they feel humiliated, although they often do not mention it, by being offered positions of clerks, mechanics or, if lucky, Civil Servants:

Dad and Anwar lived next door to each other in Bombay and were best friends from the age of five. Dad's father, the doctor, had built a lovely low wooden house on Juhu beach for himself, his wife and his twelve children. Dad and Anwar would sleep on the veranda and at dawn run down to the sea and swim. They went to school in a horse-drawn rickshaw. At

⁹⁴ Ruvani Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 18.

weekends they played cricket, and after school there was tennis on the family court. The servants would be ball-boys (p. 23).

The clash of cultures and people pushed the Asians to the bottom of social ladder. Men have to face “depression, isolation and anxiety which are the consequence of failed negotiations of the demand for new forms of masculinity”⁹⁵. The demands are made not only by males themselves, but also by their children, British society and women. Even those who seemingly appear to be assimilated and successful, suffer a reverse.

Shahid’s brother, Chili (*The Black Album*) used to be a smart boy wearing “cashmere coats, Paul Smith scarves”, he used to “open his jacket to virtual strangers, displaying the label, beautifully sewn pockets or lovely buttons” (p. 199). When Shahid found his brother, hiding from his persecutors, Chili was sitting “on a mattress leaning against a wall of crumbling plaster, wearing a smeared T-shirt and one blue and one brown sock.(...) His eyes squinted. He drank vodka from an unwashed mug” (p. 200). Shahid realizes that this is the place where his father’s dream shipwrecked. Chili’s weakness is a surprise to his younger brother but it also allows him to understand temporariness of human fate. Shahid realizes that Chili is not stronger than him, and decides not to be like his brother and follow his own way.

In order to find “self”, Kureishi’s men resort to, or rather escape into “laddishness”⁹⁶. Occasionally, they are presented as ungrateful husbands and lovers who abandon their hard working, exhausted and sensible wives for younger lovers and, as often as possible avoid consequences of having a family. Even Shahid is criticised by Chad who noticed his friend’s interest in Deedee Osgood (“(...) I see weakness in you” p. 129). Asian men have no responsibility or they avoid it. Nasser, Haroon and Chili prefer a relaxed and unconcerned lifestyle, and they are much more interested in their lovers than their wives. Partially, it is the result of their upbringing and tradition which appears to be inherent and makes it impossible, even for Chili who was born in England, to reject typical gender roles and patriarchal behaviour.

⁹⁵ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 157.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 155.

The father presented in a short story entitled *Hullabaloo in the Tree* dreams about his careless past. Although he is a father of three boys now in moments of weakness he dreams about an escape:

(...) he felt like walking forwards for a long time with his eyes closed, leaving everyone behind, in order, for a bit, to have no thoughts. For years, before his children were born, he seemed to have forfeited Sundays altogether. Now the poses, the attitude, the addictions and, worst of all, the sense of unlimited time, had been replaced by a kind of exhausting chaos and a struggle, in his mind, to work out what he should be doing, and who he had to be to satisfy others⁹⁷.

The protagonist's selfish and self-centred thoughts make one aware of the fact that being an adult man he is not mature enough to understand his fatherhood. He is not able to devote his free time to his sons without sentimental looking back to the times when his freedom was limitless.

Haroon's egocentric escape from reality and problems with Margaret, and his ardent devotion to yoga, confirm the fact that he is driven purely by "his dominating, but strangely innocent narcissism"⁹⁸. Haroon is "elegant and handsome, with delicate hands and manners (...)" (p. 4). He enjoys discussing his theories and methods of meditation. He is proud of his chest and he likes showing off and sunbathing in the garden so that his neighbours might see and admire him. Eva's approval and interest flatter his ambition and vanity.

Without doubt, maleness means mutability. Men adjust themselves to new situations and people like chameleons. Haroon easily becomes the buddha, although he knows little about techniques of meditation. His pose surprises even his son who, on hearing that Dad is going to help Eva's friends find "the Way, the Path", whispers: "Jesus fucking Christ", (...) remembering how Dad couldn't even find his way to Beckenham" (p. 13). Karim realizes that Haroon is an emotional cheat who cannot, or even should not cure anybody's soul, and if people follow him, it is mainly for his personal charm and persuasiveness. Karim concedes, "it was Dad's presence that

⁹⁷ Hanif Kureishi, "Hullabaloo in the Tree", www.hanifkureishi.com, accessed on February 3, 2006.

⁹⁸ Steven Connor, *The English Novel in History 1950-1995*, op. cit., p. 95.

extracted the noise from people's heads, rather than anything in particular he said" (p. 36). At the same time, Karim is taken aback by Dad's flexibility and adaptive skills.

Interestingly, men change their identity when women ask them to do so. When Deedee asks Shahid to dress like a woman, he is not strong enough to refuse her because "she'd been wanting him to wear make-up since she first saw him; she was certain he'd look good" (p. 117). Shahid was not convinced of the necessity to be turned into a woman but his will to get into his lover's favour was more significant than his pride. Bradley Buchanan finds in this scene "unpleasant overtones of Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, which describes the process of whereby Asian male bodies are seen as feminine, perverse and abjectly animalistic"⁹⁹. Similarly, Karim in *The Buddha of Suburbia* pretends someone else when he talks to Eleanor:

It was as if I felt my past wasn't important enough, wasn't as substantial as hers, so I'd thrown it away. I never talked about Mum and Dad, or the suburbs, though I did talk about Charlie. (p. 178).

Karim, Haroon and Shahid's "selves" disappear when they date women, especially white women. All men become their lovers' fantasy, personification of their "colonial" dreams about the dominance over "the colonised" men. Male characters forget about their conventional role of a leader and let women led them astray.

Kenneth C. Kaleta calls women's desire to dominate over their lovers "penis envy", and he claims that "Shahid feels not the embarrassment of playing the female role, but, rather, the power of being female"¹⁰⁰. It suggests that maleness is defective and crippled since Shahid, to his own surprise, discovers that femininity is more comfortable and acceptable.

A dress code is significant in Kureishi's stories. It serves the protagonists to change their "ego", to feel someone else. Shahid's transformation into a woman is one example. His wearing of the "national" dress, a salwar kamiz is another trial to state his identity. At some point of his life, Shahid attempted to join the fundamentalists, and this act of dressing up is a symbolic way of doing it. Although Shahid felt awkward in it,

⁹⁹ Bradley Buchanan, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 63.

¹⁰⁰ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, op. cit., p. 131.

crossing the dress code meant liberation from social categorization. For one moment, he was not a Paki but a Muslim.

Karim and his brother Ali pay attention to what they wear. Karim concedes that it takes him “several months to get ready” and, before he went to Eva’s party he “changed (his) entire outfit three times” (p. 6). Allie, on the other hand changes “his clothes three times a day” and “it’s girlish” (p. 103), in his aunt’s opinion. Both brothers dress so carefully because they desperately endeavour to be accepted by the white part of society. They play with their identity, Karim additionally being an actor, and their mutability mirrors their state of mind.

Moniza Alvi describes a similar situation from her father’s life:

My father’s forties’ suit, bought when he first came to England pin-striped with broad lapels, comfortingly chocolate, but crisp.

He and his Pakistani friends and their we-have-arrived-suits¹⁰¹.

The dress becomes a symbol of ostentation and naivety at the same time. The man distinguishes himself flagrantly from the society by his clothes. He hopes to be smart and fashionable but his neighbour criticises him: “*He’s handsome as a doctor*”¹⁰².

The issue of a dress code is familiar to Omar from *My Beautiful Laundrette* who also endeavours to state his identity and personality by radical changes in his appearance. When Johnny and Omar go to Nasser’s party, the latter “is standing beside (Johnny), smartly dressed and carrying a briefcase” (p. 71). He tries to make impression on his uncle and to be equal to his business partners. For him a more luxurious dress means a higher level of social hierarchy. He intends to join the world of the wealthy ones and, in his view, the clothes he wears might be helpful.

The chameleon like nature so characteristic for male representatives of Kureishi’s works is the indication of their weakness, inconsistency and infirmity of purpose in life. The men change their clothes hoping that the dress will become their new body but they discover that they do not feel comfortable in it, it is not natural and

¹⁰¹ Moniza Alvi, “The Suits”, in *How the Stone Found Its Voice*, op. cit., p. 23.

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 23.

personal, it is somebody else's skin. Although men try to juxtapose two disparate cultures, English and Asian, "this feels too "mad" or becomes a "clash", and thus "one way of coping would be to reject one entirely, perhaps by forgetting it. Another way is to be at war with it internally, trying to evacuate it, but never succeeding"¹⁰³. Kureishi's characters are in such a conflict, somewhere between forgetting and fighting a personal war with internal voices. Farid, the protagonist of *My Son the Fanatic* is the epitome of the clash described above. Unable to state his place in the world, Farid rejects his western "self", but the Asian "self" which he strives to achieve is alien to him.

Ania Loomba suggests after the South African psychoanalyst, Wulf Sachs, that postcolonial men are subject to "Hamletism," i.e. "a universal phenomenon symbolising indecision and hesitancy when action is required"¹⁰⁴. Most of the Asian or semi Asian male protagonists are "ill" with weakness and impotence. They are unable to act and make reasonable decisions, they are easily influenced either by women or by elements of white culture. Obviously, it is the result of their "in-between" position which places them between two cultures and makes them choose. It is evident that such a choice is painful and impossible since they straddle two cultures and traditions.

It is also possible to attribute males' infirmity to their immaturity and a complex process of inner growth. Kureishi's novels and plays are classified as *Bildungsroman*, a genre presenting identity as "a developmental, unstable and shifting *process*, rather than a given and stable *product*"¹⁰⁵. This is exactly the process to which men are subject and they just begin to learn and comprehend their roles in a rapidly changing society.

The male protagonists' endeavours to define themselves at any cost "epitomize not a failure to assimilate, but England's failure to change its very narrow definitions of national identity"¹⁰⁶. Justine Ettler writes even about "a lost generation of men" who

¹⁰³ Hanif Kureishi, "My Uncle the Muslim Atheist", *The Guardian*, www.guardian.co.uk, April 5, 2002, accessed on January 8, 2006.

¹⁰⁴ Sachs W., „Black Hamlet”, Little, Brown and Company: Boston, MA, 1947 in Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 141.

¹⁰⁵ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 127.

¹⁰⁶ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kuresihi*, op. cit., p. 66.

“came of age in an era that was radically transformed by feminism”¹⁰⁷. It is obvious that contemporary males have a difficult role to fulfil. It appears even more complex when they happen to be of mixed ethnicity. Kureishi observed them and described without hiding their weaknesses and limitations. And this honesty of description makes his male characters convincing and reliable. Hanif Kureishi draws the readers’ attention to the fact that “if Britain doesn’t yet have a vision of itself as a mixed place”¹⁰⁸, how could racially mixed men have it.

¹⁰⁷ Ettler Justine, “Free at Last from the Chains of Marriage. So Why the Long Face?”, *Observer*, www.guardian.co.uk, (November 21, 1999) accessed on May 15, 2002.

¹⁰⁸ Collins Glenn, “Screen Writer Turns to the Novel to Tell of Race and Class in London”, in *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com, (May 24, 1990), accessed on February 21, 2003.

CONCLUSIONS

I stress it is the British who have to make these adjustments. It is they who have to learn that being British isn't what it was. Now it is a more complex thing, involving new elements.

Hanif Kureishi

Kureishi's subjection to classification as a postcolonial writer is obviously not only a result of his racial belonging or rather not belonging, but it is mostly categorization of his literature. If one relies on John McLeod's basic definition of a postcolonial author who "migrated from countries with a history of colonialism" or, like in Kureishi's case, is "descended from migrant families"¹ his diasporic experience becomes undisputable. Without doubt, Kureishi's propensity to position himself between two cultures and two traditions predominantly described in *My Ear at His Heart* exerted an impact on his oeuvre.

Kureishi's early works are a reliable and flamboyant figuration of a biracial subject placed in postcolonial culture and reality. The theories employed to classify this literature are the foundation of what is currently termed as postcolonial trajectory. The author's preoccupation with blurred ethnicity and destabilized identity are endorsed with Edward Said's theories included and discussed in *Orientalism*. Kureishi, just like Said, claims that to combat and deny one's sexuality equals with the repudiation of identity. Kureishi demystifying both of them began his volatile peregrination to postcolonial nooks and corners. Similarly, the issues of an exclusion and avaricious treatment of metropolitan culture make Kureishi's evasion from postcoloniality futile. What is more, his ambivalent depiction of both cultures, the accepted and the rejected, without pointing to any of them and without proclaiming himself in favour of any, place

¹ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 32.

the author within the space subject to discussion of the “post” canon. The proposed destabilization and deconstruction of prevalent social and gender roles allow to anatomize the situation of a mixed subject in seemingly normative society.

Concomitantly, the themes of Kureishi’s interest mirrored in his works surpass his awareness of literary belonging. The discussion of his protagonists and their milieu in view of mimicry and hybridity does not leave space for doubts that Anglo Asian perspective serves to delineate the impact of colonial past on Kureishi’s oeuvre. The ever-present “in-betweenness” of the characters reflects the fact that this generation is (un)consciously rooted in the past, living consciously in the present and desperately striving to move forward in the future. Kureishi makes it clear that both mimicry and hybridity betoken malleability of biracial and devoid of homelands identities. He also emphasises the fact that the price of deep mental disorders and depression is so high that a typical postcolonial subject finds it impossible to regain the balance in life.

Kureishi’s preoccupations with gender studies and feminine studies still overlap philosophical issues of Freudian Oedipal motifs and complex sexuality. The author adjusted and applied the theories for the context of a postcolonial man/woman struggling in purity obsessed society to state his/her identity and the veiled self. The individuation of literary characters embedded in Kureishi’s personal experience adds to the reliability of his stories with concurrent conviction of impossibility of amalgamation of dissonant cultures and races. His dislocated characters find it difficult to identify with England’s history, especially its colonial past. At the same time, it is a challenging task to discover and adapt oneself to the available but frequently limited area.

The timing of Kureishi’s most significant novels and plays is not incidental or purposeless. 1970s and 1980s was the time of subverting prevalent normative structures of society and politics. What Kureishi does is not really the destruction of an imaginary but a bit phantasmagorical picture of England. He goes a bit further and overthrows the myth of post- imperial, coherent and homogenous Englishness, which, he proclaims, does not exist any longer. Instead, Kureishi, himself “the herald of hybridity”², offers an

² Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi*, op. cit., p. 64.

alternative form of multi-faced or in Bhabha's view, "polycultural" society with abundant cultures, histories and traditions. His protagonists suggest feasible models of their challenged and often denied existence in dominant society. They propose solutions to the demand for adaptation, which seemingly is cognate of assimilation, but still it leaves much space for the exposure of their origin and independent and liberated actions. It is, therefore, unavoidable to refer to the culture of "the other" with its historical and colonial past, social variations and consequences or the elements of tradition, language and religion.

In spite of rejecting "the burden of representation" Kureishi cannot stop the process of becoming a cultural translator. He employs his postcolonial experience to explain one culture to the other as if to resolve the problematic legacy of imperialism without the concomitant loss of contact with either of the communities or heritages. He stresses that it is not only racial or cultural dislocation that prevents the protagonists of Asian descent from complete assimilation but it is also a class negation which they encounter on a daily basis. Obviously, the latter is the consequence of the previous. The identity imputed to the working class status frequently equals with the features of a minority subject who stays sensitive to such a distinction. Although Kureishi is far from reinforcing the superiority of middle or upper classes he repudiates and condemns all the limitations imposed on his protagonists. Contrary to unfavourable conditions, they stay active and dare to reach for their chance in multicultural and class oriented society.

Kureishi's actions to combat negative stereotyping of Asian community are one of the consequences of creating postcolonial literature. It is not only about depicting the extent of marginalization and intolerance, but also about making the society aware of the forthcoming peril and ongoing decline. In case of Islam the author himself is full of postcolonial confusion and divergent ideas. Nevertheless, Kureishi's often criticised way of presenting immoderate religion from "Oriental" perspective and his critical remarks allow the reader to analyse it through postcolonial lens.

Postcolonial writing involves critique of purity and clear cut structures of society. Kureishi's writing serves the purpose of offering "new, liberating models of identity"³. His straddling of two cultures and traditions, his biracial experience and dual perception of the world, the impossibility of discovering and stating his homeland – all these factors shape and influence Kureishi's postcolonial works. The author, unable to avoid constant references to the western and the Asian worlds, successfully applies the elements representing both of them.

³ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, op. cit., p. 198.

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STRESZCZENIE

Niniejsza rozprawa doktorska jest pracą monograficzną poświęconą twórczości współczesnego brytyjskiego pisarza, Hanifa Kureishi. Autor ten wpisuje się w kanon pisarzy mniejszościowych pod względem rasowym, gdyż będąc synem Pakistańczyka i Angielki często uznawany jest za reprezentanta diaspory azjatyckiej w Wielkiej Brytanii. W początkowym etapie swojego pisarstwa Kureishi uplasował się także pośród znamienitych nazwisk twórców literatury postkolonialnej. Wbrew temu co sam o sobie mówi krytyka literacka, czytelnicy, jak i twórcy filmowi wciąż klasyfikują autora jako reprezentanta tego kanonu. Rozprawa ma na celu podkreślenie i udowodnienie, iż twórczość pisarska Hanifa Kureishi rzeczywiście umiejscawia go pomiędzy nazwiskami takiego formatu jak V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, czy ostatnio Zadie Smith, Kazuo Ishiguro i Gautam Malkami.

W swoich utworach pisarz wykorzystuje znajomość dwóch środowisk, kultur, tradycji i klas społecznych i opisuje problemy z jakimi borykają się reprezentanci azjatyckiej mniejszości narodowej, w szczególności Pakistańczycy i Hindusi. Ponadto Kureishi wskazuje na różnice w pozycji społecznej, aspiracjach i stopniu roszczenia praw obywatelskich pomiędzy dwoma pokoleniami diaspory: tymi, którzy przybyli do Wielkiej Brytanii w latach pięćdziesiątych dwudziestego wieku a pokoleniem ich dzieci, do których Kureishi sam przynależy. Świat bohaterów stworzony przez autora to świat, w którym zderzają się obyczaje zachodniej Europy i Azji. Jednocześnie jest to świat, w którym najważniejsze uczucia i doświadczenia są ponad podziałami: miłość, pożądanie, tradycja, historia, więzy rodzinne – to wszystko wciąż kształtuje bohatera Kureishiego, który pod tym względem nie różni się specjalnie od swojego angielskiego rówieśnika.

Bohater Kureishiego jest jednak bardzo złożony, wręcz skomplikowany. Reprezentuje on często dwie rasy, gdy jeden z rodziców to Anglik a drugi Azjata, bądź też wychowany jest na styku dwóch światów – oboje rodzice to Azjaci, którzy wybrali życie w Wielkiej Brytanii. W swoim umiejscowieniu „pomiędzy” kulturami a nawet dwoma światami, postkolonialny protagonista przyjmuje różnorakie pozy, przekracza określone bariery, „upodabnia się” za pomocą mimikry, porzuca swą tradycję by za chwilę do niej powrócić. W poszukiwaniu swojego miejsca w społeczeństwie ucieka on od swojej ewidentnej hybrydyczności na rzecz kwestionowanej, rozmytej i obcej tożsamości.

Poszczególne rozdziały dysertacji omawiają zagadnienia łamania tabu hetero- i homoseksualnej miłości, odnajdywania się w zdekonstruowanym, odwróconym *genderowym* świecie, namacalnego doświadczania podróży pomiędzy kulturami i odczuwania konsekwencji rozpadu imperium. Pisarz usiłuje na nowo zdefiniować Brytyjskość, tożsamość, płęć i pokolenie państwa wielonarodowościowego. Jego bohaterowie próbują uwolnić się od banalnej kategoryzacji i stereotypowego przypisywania ról w społeczeństwie. Błądzą, szukając i próbując określić swoje „ego”. Dokonują tego poprzez wszelkie eksperymenty z własną płcią, seksualnością, rasowością, religijnością i intelektem.

Rozprawa stopniowo wprowadza czytelnika w świat spuścizny azjatyckiej przywiezionej z Indii i Pakistanu do Londynu. Następuje moment zastanowienia u hybrydycznego protagonisty, który częstokroć odczuwa fascynację islamem, językiem i barwami Indii, a w konsekwencji jego stosunek do kultury zachodu staje się ambiwalentny i nieprzyjazny. W efekcie bohaterowie szukają ocalenia w „wiecznej tułaczce” potraktowanej tu w dwojaki sposób. Dosłownie, gdy usiłują uciec z przedmieść Londynu do jego centrum upatrując w tym ocalenia, wyzwolenia i okazji do realizacji własnych marzeń. Przenośnie, gdy uciekają w głąb własnej duszy i umysłu, często za pomocą islamu, narkotyków bądź uzależnienia od seksu.

W dalszej części dysertacji autorka podkreśla elementy, które łączą i które dzielą bohaterów z obiema kulturami. Moment zatrzymania „pomiędzy” jest niezwykle

wartościowy, ponieważ, jak twierdzi sam Hanif Kureishi, pozwala spojrzeć na to co z przodu i na to co z tyłu. Wybór jednak, wbrew pozorom, nie jest łatwiejszy, jeśli w ogóle możliwy. Próba asymilacji i dostosowania się człowieka postkolonialnego do wymogów zachodniego społeczeństwa doprowadza do spaczenia własnej osobowości. Staje się on hybrydą, dziwakiem i dwugłowym „potworem” niezrozumiałym dla żadnej ze stron. Taki „obcy” wywołuje strach i agresję, co doprowadza do przemocy i przejawów mocno rasistowskich oraz do prób kolejnego „skolonizowania” postkolonialnego podmiotu. Człowiek postkolonialny zostaje na zawsze „skażony” wielokulturowością, którą reprezentuje. Płaci za to wysoką cenę gdyż nie obce mu są depresja, załamanie, kryzys a nawet szaleństwo, które jest efektem nieumiejętności odnalezienia swojego miejsca w społeczeństwie.

Wreszcie przedstawiono pozycję postkolonialnego człowieka we współczesnym Londynie. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono relacji ojciec-syn, która jest zabarwiona stosunkiem Ikara i Dedala, ale także konfliktem międzypokoleniowym i brakiem przystosowania. Pozycja kobiety postkolonialnej pierwszego pokolenia zazwyczaj kumuluje się wokół domu, tradycji i patriarchy, któremu owa kobieta podlega. Relacje matek z synami są skomplikowane, dotknięte kompleksem Edypa i wielką nieobecnością bądź przerysowaną pasywnością bohaterki. Przedstawicielki obydwu generacji podlegają złudnemu wrażeniu wolności. Najczęściej nie zdają sobie sprawy, że zjawisko „podwójnej kolonizacji” i patriarchy przyćmiewa jakiegokolwiek akcje feministyczne. Białe bohaterki Kureishiego to z kolei *femme fatale*, świadome swoich atutów Amazonki kolonizujące podatnych mężczyzn i zadające ból ich żonom, matkom i córkom. Ostatnie zagadnienie poruszane w rozprawie to zmiany konwencjonalnej pozycji mężczyzny postkolonialnego. Męskość, która podlega dewiacji, wypaczeniu a przede wszystkim osłabieniu powiązana jest z Hamletyzmem, poczuciem „*unheimlich*”, wiecznie chłopcę naturą, wreszcie niezaprzeczalną zniewieściałością.