THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY IN HANIF KUREISHI'S THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA, THE BLACK ALBUM AND ZADIE SMITH'S WHITE TEETH

MESUT ÖZTÜRK

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MESUT ÖZTÜRK

SUPERVISOR

PROF. DR. MEDİHA GÖBENLİ

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PLAGIARISM

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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MESUT ÖZTÜRK

ÖZET

Hanif Kureishi ve Zadie Smith, romanlarında sabitleştirilmiş kimlik tanımlarını sorunlaştırır ve onun durağan olmayan doğasına vurgu yaparak tanımları yapı söküm çerçevesinde ele alırlar. Bu bağlamda, bu tezin amacı, Hanif Kureishi ve Zadie Smith'in ırk, kimlik ve etnik köken meseleleriyle ilgili önceden sabitleştirilmiş kavramları nasıl bir kaygan zemine koyduklarını ve savaş sonrası Londra metropolünün hayli hibridleşmiş kültür ve toplumunu göz önünde tutarak geleneksel çift zıtlıkları Homi K. Bhabha'nın hibridlik, ikircilik ve üçün alan üzerindeki teorik fikirlerine atıf yaparak nasıl eleştirdiğini göstermektir. Kureishi ve Smith romanlarında değişmeye açık dinamik hybrid kimlikler yaratır. Başka bir deyişle, karakterler kimlik hakkındaki özcü fikirleri sorgular ve onun yerine sürekli olarak değişen formlar sunar. İki romanın analizi göz önünde tutulduğunda, Kureishi ve Smith'in kimliği globalleşmiş dünyada kendini sürekli olarak yenileyecek akışkan ve durağan olmayan bir kavram olarak algıladığı söylenebilir.

Anahtar Kelimler: kimlik, ikircilik, melezlik, üçüncü alan, akışkanlık.

ABSTRACT

Hanif Kureishi and Zadie Smith problematize the fixed definitions of identity and deconstruct them by emphasizing the unstable nature of identity. In this context, the aim of this thesis is to explore how Hanif Kureishi and Zadie Smith place the seemingly fixed concepts of race, identity, and ethnicity on slippery ground and criticize traditional binaries of the highly hybridized culture and society of the post-war London metropolis by making references to Homi K. Bhabha's theoretical ideas on hybridity, ambivalence, and the third space. In their novels, Kureishi and Smith create characters who have dynamic hybrid identities that are always open to change. In other words, characters challenge essentialist notions about identity and present continually changing forms instead. By analyzing the three novels, we see that Kureishi and Smith consider identity fluid and unstable in the globalized world.

Key words: identity, ambivalence, hybridity, third space, fluidity

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INTRODUCTION

In a world where people are increasingly mobile due to easy transportation, technological opportunities, and the flow of information, including the end of colonialism, the emergence of diasporas, the creation of refugee communities, and the increasing globalization of work and trade, many people find themselves experiencing more than one culture firsthand. This leads to the mixing of cultures and the formation of new concepts regarding race, ethnicity, identity, and nationalism. Moreover, it also causes the re-definition of these categories because of the ongoing changes that take place in multicultural societies. Great Britain is also among those countries that have experienced this transformation with respect to its national identity in a turbulent manner due to its colonial history. In addition to this, the issue of identity has become much more complicated with the flow of people carrying a multitude of forms of identity from the former colonies, mainly after the Second World War. The idea of Englishness became a serious matter of debate with the arrival of people from the former colonies.

Multiculturalism and hybrid identities have become central themes in contemporary literature in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world. The objective of this thesis is to conduct an analysis of the portrayal of mimicry, hybridity, and third space in the literary works of Hanif Kureishi, specifically *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) and *The Black Album* (1995), as well as Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000). This study aims to investigate how the novels mentioned above tackle concerns pertaining to race, ethnicity, and identity within the framework of British society by utilizing postcolonial theory as a critical lens.

According to Homi K. Bhabha's definition, mimicry pertains to the replication of the colonizer's cultural practices by the colonized with the aim of obtaining acknowledgement and inclusion. Hybridity pertains to the amalgamation of diverse cultural components in order to generate novel forms of identity. Bhabha introduced the notion of the third space, which refers to a space of cultural negotiation where novel identities and perspectives are generated. The chosen literary works authored by

Kureishi and Smith offer significant perspectives on the aforementioned concepts and present a fertile terrain for scholarly examination and discourse.

Kureishi's inaugural literary work, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, delves into the existence of Karim Amir, a juvenile British-Pakistani male endeavoring to ascertain his identity in a progressively diverse London. The author Kureishi explores the themes of mimicry and hybridity through the experiences of the character Karim. Karim faces challenges in reconciling his identity due to conflicting cultural expectations.

The Black Album centers on the experiences of Shahid Hasan, a British-Pakistani undergraduate who grapples with conflicting ideologies of Islamic fundamentalism and Western liberalism. Kureishi employs the character of Shahid as a means to scrutinize the intricacies of hybrid identity and the obstacles encountered by immigrants and their offspring in present-day Britain.

Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* intricately depicts the lives of families spanning multiple generations and ethnicities in London following the conclusion of World War II. Smith's literary work examines the concepts of mimicry and hybridity and establishes an intermediary zone that facilitates the investigation of diverse viewpoints and encounters in a culturally diverse community.

Within this framework, British-Pakistani author Hanif Kureishi’s two widely known novels, *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*, and British-Jamaican Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* can undoubtedly be considered as mirrors of British society that reflect the deconstruction of already fixed notions like race, identity, and ethnicity, especially in the post-colonial city of London, where people from all over the world, especially from the former colonies, come together and contribute to this fluid and rapidly changing transformation process.

This thesis aims to show how Hanif Kureishi and Zadie Smith deconstruct the seemingly fixed concepts of race, identity, and ethnicity by highlighting the fact that they rest on slippery ground. It also aims to show how they undermine traditional binaries in order to shed light on the continuous change that takes place in the highly hybridized culture and society of the post-war London metropolitan area. To provide evidence that Kureishi and Smith are challenging unicultural conceptions of British identity and that they are influencing the hybridized culture of modern Britain, I will

shed light on his criticism of traditional race-based notions of identity by employing Homi K. Bhabha's theories on in-betweenness, third space, hybridity, and ambivalence. In addition, I will use the ideas of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy on the subject of identity, race, and ethnicity to illustrate how Hanif Kureishi undermines essentialist conceptions of national identity and replaces them with hybridized identities that are more suited to the reality of the modern world. These hybrid identities are more compatible with the realities of the modern world. In this regard, this thesis will consist of three chapters.

In Chapter One, I will analyze Hanif Kureishi's debut novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*. I will attempt to show how the British-Pakistani author deconstructs the clear-cut definitions of identity and emphasizes the fluidity of the term through the life experiences of his characters in the novel. I will also examine Kureishi's discourse regarding the hybridity of identity by referring to the works of cultural critic Homi K. Bhabha. In addition to this, I will juxtapose the main characters of *The Buddha of Suburbia* in light of the historical context, with a particular focus on whether they are first- or second-generation immigrants. The portrayal of first-generation immigrants' fight for existence in society will definitely demonstrate how identities are constructed and deconstructed throughout the novel.

Chapter Two will provide a close reading of Hanif Kureishi's second novel, *The Black Album*. In this chapter, the ideas of pure ethnicity and stable identity are problematized by analyzing the experiences of the novel's main character, Shahid Hassan. I will dwell on Hanif Kureishi's emphasis on the slippery and changing nature of identity. Moreover, to shed some light on the issue of identity, I will scrutinize specific examples from the novel in which Hanif Kureishi criticizes the essentialist definitions of identity which put people into fixed categories and confine them to imaginary borders.

Chapter Three will focus on the identity formation of the first generation of immigrants. It will demonstrate the slippery nature of identity through the characters' life experiences, respectively, Harron, Anwar, and Shahid's father. The chapter will discuss how these first-generation immigrants continuously constructed and deconstructed their identities throughout the novels to find a place in society. Also,

their contribution to the re-definition of Englishness will be highlighted with specific examples obtained from the novels.

Chapter Four will delve into how Zadie Smith employs the concepts of mimicry, hybridity, and third space to explore the diverse characters, including Archie Jones, Samad Iqbal, and their families, in her novel *White Teeth*. This chapter will highlight the ways in which Smith explores the complexity of identity formation in a multicultural society, with particular emphasis on the themes of cultural displacement, belonging, and generational conflict.

In the conclusion part, the problems related to the identity formation of first- and second-generation immigrants will be discussed in relation to the theories of Homi K. Bhabha. This part will provide an insight into how the characters endeavored to build their identities through time. The characters' ever-changing and continually-transforming identities due to their inevitable hybrid natures will also be shown and discussed. Lastly, the essentialist notions regarding the identity construction of the characters will be addressed, and possible solutions to overcome the problems related to the issue will be presented.

1. THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY IN HANIF KUREISHI'S *THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA*

Karim Amir, the central character and narrator of this renowned literary piece, was significantly influenced by his upbringing and place of birth in England. Karim's Pakistani heritage exposes him to racism in his daily life; however, he exhibits a strong identification with English culture. The protagonist's portrayal in the novel's opening pages effectively communicates his inner turmoil arising from his dual cultural heritage of Pakistan and England. The protagonist's aspiration to present an innovative viewpoint on the traditional understanding of English identity in the present-day worldwide milieu is apparent. Kureishi portrays the self-representation of the novel's archetype of the Englishman and the societal perception of him in the following manner:

> My name is Karim Amir, and I am and Englishman born and bred, almost. 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. Perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored. Or perhaps it was being brought up in the suburbs that did it (Kureishi, 1990, p. 3).

Kureishi's introduction of Karim to the reader allows the reader to discern that the protagonist is aware of his "in-between" status in England. Kureishi provides justification for this perspective by illustrating how Karim envisions himself as a novel type of individual and by portraying how he is perceived within the larger societal context. The main character in the novel possesses a keen understanding of his unique identity as a biological and cultural hybrid resulting from his paternal Pakistani and maternal English lineage. Consequently, he regards himself as a member of the contemporary generation of English individuals. According to Nick Bently (2008), Karim's self-representation can be characterized as that of a hybrid figure, drawing from two distinct ethnic backgrounds. This self-perception is what leads Karim to view himself as a "new breed" (p. 162). This occurrence is observable in numerous instances across his cognitive and physiological maturation.

Given the centrality of the concept of hybridity in the novel, it is imperative to undertake an examination of the term's historical evolution and various definitions. In preceding eras, the concept of "hybridity" was employed with unequivocal racial and biological connotations. However, the term started to gain new meanings that were different from its former use. Contrary to racial and biological assumptions about hybridity, which were supported by colonial discourse, contemporary discussions have given primacy to identity politics and cultural issues. The phenomenon of hybridity, which refers to the amalgamation of cultures, languages, and identities, has garnered significant attention in cultural studies since the final two decades of the 20th century. This term has acquired a favorable connotation, as opposed to its colonial implications, as per Acheraou (2011, p. 88). Regarding identity and culture, Homi K. Bhabha is of the opinion that not only identities but also cultures are hybrid. He believes that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space that he refers to as the "Third Space of Enunciation" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 37). As per Wisker's (2007) assertion, cultural identity arises from a space that is both contradictory and ambivalent. Bhabha's perspective on this matter is that the assertion of hierarchical "purity" of cultures is untenable (p. 190). Holding this view, Bhabha does not agree with the idea of pure culture or identity. Conversely, the author underscores the hybrid quality of said terms, positing that cultures are consistently engaged in intercultural exchange, resulting in cultural amalgamation, or rather, cultural hybridity. Bhabha posits that the notion of pure identities and cultures is a myth that was employed by imperial powers to legitimize colonialism. The present information suggests that Kureishi's concepts align with Bhabha's perspectives on culture and identity as evidenced by the characters' experiences in the novel. Kureishi's portrayal of in-between characters serves to illustrate the unfeasibility of the notion of a homogeneous culture, and instead highlights the inevitability of a constantly evolving hybridity.

The perpetual nature of identity construction is evident in Kureishi's characters, who employ unconventional means to achieve social visibility. Mimicry is considered to be among the various phenomena under examination. Mimicry, a significant notion often associated with Homi K. Bhabha, refers to the act of the colonized imitating the dominant culture in an exaggerated manner. The statement may be interpreted as a reaction to prevalent preconceptions regarding individuals

who have been colonized. Furthermore, it can be interpreted as a mechanism that subverts colonial discourse through humor and undermines the hegemony of colonial power (Loomba, 1998, p. 178). The phenomenon of mimicry has the potential to cause unease and pose a perceived danger to the colonizing party, as it results in a replication that is not easily discernible from the original, thereby blurring the lines between the colonized and the colonizer. The novel portrays the adoption of English cultural practices by Karim, Haroon, and Anwar as a means of asserting their presence and influence in society. The persistent hybridity of these characters poses a challenge in terms of their classification, as they defy conventional notions pertaining to their identity.

Karim's lack of exposure to Pakistan and upbringing in England has resulted in his greater familiarity with British culture and lifestyle. The process was further facilitated by the paternal influence of Haroon, who instilled in him the cultural values and customs of the English. Thus, Karim actively engages in English customs and frequently participates in typical English activities. As an illustration, we see that Karim expresses a fondness for indulging in tea consumption, engaging in cycling activities, frequenting public houses, participating in games, and attending races. He derives great pleasure from engaging in leisurely pursuits with his Uncle Ted, who possesses knowledge of various conventional pastimes that Karim's father lacks awareness of.

> We ate corned-beef sandwiches and drank tea from our thermos flask. He gave me sporting tips and took me to the Catford dog track and Epsom Downs. He talked to me about pigeon racing. Ever since I was tiny I'd loved Ted because he knew the things other boys' fathers knew about, and Dad to my frustration did not: fishing and air rifles, aeroplanes, and how to eat winkles (Kureishi, 1990, p. 33).

It is evident that Karim holds a great admiration for Uncle Ted, as he serves as a surrogate English father figure and introduces Karim to the nuances of English culture. Conversely, Karim experiences a sense of discomfort in his relationship with his father due to his father's unfamiliarity with English culture and daily practices, in contrast to other fathers. Consequently, he initiates a process of drawing parallels between his paternal figure and his Uncle Ted. The author employs ironic language

when depicting his father's routine of consuming Indian cuisine in England, as evidenced by the following statement: "The daily excursion undertaken by my father, who would procure keema, roti, and pea curry, all of which were enveloped in oily paper" Kureishi, 1990, p. 33). According to Barbara Wohlsein's (2008) book, *Englishmen Born and Bred*, Karim's familiarity with sandwiches surpasses that of pea curry. (p. 50) This clearly indicates that Karim's ties with Indian culture are not strong. His upbringing in the English manner has resulted in a greater affinity towards English culture, lifestyle, and traditions as compared to those of India. Consequently, he endeavors to position himself within and align himself with English culture, as he desires acceptance from his peers and identifies a stronger affinity towards said culture.

Karim exhibits a greater degree of British cultural assimilation in various aspects when compared to the initial wave of immigrants. The aforementioned behavior of Karim becomes apparent upon analysis of his conduct towards his father, Haroon, who possesses a lineage of aristocratic origins in India, his uncle, Anwar, who migrates to England to pursue engineering studies, and Jeeta, Anwar's daughter, as they endeavor to assimilate into British society and its cultural norms. Karim experiences significant distress when Haroon encounters challenges navigating the streets of London. In addition, Karim ironically criticizes Jeeta for not speaking the English language properly and for not knowing about British politics. In one of the conversations, Karim asks Aunt Jeeta, "Who's prime minister?" Kureishi, 1990, p. 54). In this way, Karim makes fun of his father, his aunt, and other first-generation immigrants who struggle to behave more like the English in order to be accepted into English society. Nevertheless, Karim perceives this procedure as peculiar, given that he belongs to a novel category in England.

It is crucial to acknowledge that Karim assumes the function of a cultural mediator between Indian and English cultures, a role that is characteristic of individuals with hybrid identities. As per Bentley's (2008) assertion, Karim holds a liminal position in relation to the dominant English culture. This is attributed to his dual identity as both an insider and an outsider, which significantly influences his experiences due to his cultural in-betweenness (p. 162). According to Hoogvelt (1997), the celebration and privileging of hybridity in the novel is due to its perceived superiority in cultural intelligence, which is attributed to its advantageous position of being in-between (p. 158). The term "hybridity," which was previously associated

with negative connotations due to its colonial connections, has potentially acquired more favorable implications. The aforementioned interpretation of hybridity, which is characterized by a more optimistic outlook, can be linked to the persona of Karim Amir. In the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Karim Amir occupies a hybrid position and functions as a mediator between cultures.

Regarding the matter of acceptance, it appears that neither English nor Pakistani individuals are willing to fully recognize Karim as a member of their respective cultures. Hence, the problematic nature of his acceptance within both cultures situates him in an in-between position. From one perspective, his Pakistani familial and social circles do not recognize him as a genuine Indian due to his upbringing and residence in England, as well as his adoption of English cultural norms. Due to this rationale, Changez himself refers to Karim as "a little English, with a yellowish face like the devil" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 184). Conversely, he is not considered a true Englishman due to his dissimilar skin of color in comparison to his peers and his continued association with the Indian subcontinent. Stated differently, Karim's racial identity is perceived as incompatible with both Indian and English cultural norms, as he is deemed too white for the former and too black for the latter (Wohlsein, 2008, p. 51). Individuals residing in transitional or in-between spaces were perceived as challenging to manage due to the belief that identity constituted a solitary and unchanging construct.

Given that the novel is semi-autobiographical in nature, it serves as a reflection of Kureishi's personal struggles with identity that bear striking similarities to those experienced by Karim. In his autobiographical work, *My Beautiful Laundrette and The Rainbow Sign*, Hanif Kureishi (1986) discusses the predicament of belonging that he encountered during his initial trip to Pakistan. Kureishi's Pakistani relatives informed him that "We are Pakistanis, but you, you will always be a Paki," (p. 17), highlighting the complexity of identity and the challenges of fitting in, indicating that they did not consider him a real Pakistani. Paradoxically, he is not perceived as English by them; rather, he is labeled as a "Paki," a term utilized to denigrate individuals who have migrated from Pakistan or other Southeast Asian nations. Moreover, the English people do not perceive him as a component of English society. He is consistently perceived as an outsider who lacks the ability to embody the identity of a genuine Englishman. Kureishi (1986) talks about an incident where he made a statement about his nationality, stating that he was an Englishman, which

was met with laughter from the audience, despite the presence of subtle irony in his remark (p. 17). As posited, he is not readily classified as either English or Pakistani. Rather, he represents a novel category, embodying a hybrid identity that is the result of the fusion of two distinct cultures. Bhabha highlights that hybrids possess the capacity to generate novel perspectives, internal structures, and ways of comprehending the world, despite any existing limitations (2006, p. 34).

Karim is subjected to his mother's exclusionary perspective towards his Indian heritage as well. Although Margaret is married to an Indian man, she cannot accept Karim's cultural heritage. She exhibits a reluctance to confront the fact that Karim's dual cultural identity stems from his in-between status. During the post-play discussion of Karim's performance, his mother expresses a clear stance regarding her son's identity, as evidenced by her utterances.

> "Wasn't I good, eh, Mum"
> "You weren't in-loin cloth as usual, she said. At least they let you wear your own clothes. But you're not an Indian. You've never been to India. You'd get diarrhea the minute you stepped of that plane, I know you would."
> "Why don't you say it a bit louder, I said. Aren't I part Indian?"
> "What about me?" Mum said. "Who gave birth to you? You're an Englishman I'm glad to say."
> "I don't care," I said. "I am an actor. It is a job."
> "Don't say that," she said. "Be what you are" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 232).

It appears that Karim's mother holds essentialist beliefs regarding identity. She is unable to come to terms with the fact that Karim's cultural background is a blend of Indian and English influences. This is due to her belief that the former is inferior and inappropriate. Analogous responses are observable in the conduct of Uncle Ted. He exhibits a lack of acceptance towards Karim's father, as evidenced by their failure to address him by his given Indian name. In the novel, Kureishi states that Ted and Jean refrained from addressing their father by his Indian name, Haroon Amir. They consistently referred to him as "Harry" and utilized this name when discussing him with others (Kureishi, 1990, p. 33). Both Margaret and Uncle Ted exhibit a tendency to overlook Karim's Indian heritage and strive to assimilate him into English culture by omitting any elements that may foster a sense of pride in his Indian

identity. However, it appears that Karim no longer places importance on this matter. When her mother insists that he is an Englishman, Karim says, "I don't care. I am an actor. It's a job" (Kureishi, 1990, p.232). It is imperative to acknowledge that the mere fact of his participation in the play does not necessarily indicate his acceptance of the Indian aspect of his identity.

According to Edward Said's (1993) work, *Culture and Imperialism*, it can be argued that no culture exists in isolation, as all cultures are interrelated and none can be considered as singular or pure. Instead, cultures are characterized by their hybridity, heterogeneity, and differentiation, and cannot be viewed as monolithic entities (p.15). Said, similar to numerous cultural critics, espouses the notion that the present-day populace is characterized by a conflation of diverse cultural influences, rendering the proposition of unadulterated cultures and identities devoid of significance. The notion presented herein is consistent with Homi K. Bhabha's perspective, which involves the rejection of all-encompassing explanatory frameworks pertaining to cultural hybridity. David Huddart (2006) explicated that Bhabha places significant emphasis on the hybridity of cultures and their continuous evolution (p. 4). He is of the opinion that they are consistently in touch with one another, which makes the blending of cultures unavoidable.

When it comes to the question of who they are, the individuals that surround Karim all hold essentialist beliefs. They are all working toward the common goal of erecting barriers that will contain him inside a certain region and make it difficult for him to escape. On the one hand, there are some who, like Margaret, Ted, and Jean, work very hard to persuade Karim that he is not connected in any way with India. On the other hand, there are other individuals, such as the theater director Shadwell, who do not regard him to be an Englishman but rather an Indian who is capable of playing Indian characters in Shadwell's plays. Therefore, Ranasinha (2002) draws attention to the fact that even in the play in which Karim participates, we see a constructed identity that attempts to define him racially (p.70). Therefore, Kureishi wants to emphasize how difficult it is to get rid of constructed definitions, particularly definitions that take race as their basis. However, as Torika Bolatagici (2004) explains in her article, the "third space is a site of translations and negotiation" (p.78). It challenges obsolete, limiting cultural meanings as well as well-established conventions and encourages the development of alternative definitions. In other

words, Bhabha's third space makes it feasible for new definitions and interpretations of cultural identity to evolve throughout time.

Karim has several challenges throughout the story in which he must fight to find his place in the socially created identities that other people in his life attempt to impose on him. Karim's mother, Margaret, tries to bring him up as an Englishman and to prevent any kind of identification with Pakistan. However, people such as Shadwell, as was mentioned earlier, want to see him as a complete Indian who has nothing to do with being English since they do not want to accept the reality that the concept of Englishness has changed dramatically. In other words, the distinction between "we" and "others" remains quite clear throughout the book. In his work autobiographical work, *The Rainbow Sign*, Hanif Kureishi (1986) brings up this crucial issue by stating that it is imperative to emphasize that the responsibility of making these adjustments lies with the British. The contemporary notion of Britishness has undergone a transformation, and it is imperative for individuals of British descent, particularly those of white ethnicity, to acknowledge and adapt to this evolution. He believes the matter has become more intricate, encompassing novel components. Therefore, it is imperative to adopt a novel perspective towards Britain and its decision-making predicaments, as well as to redefine the British identity in light of the current circumstances. Considerable contemplation, discourse, and introspection are requisite to comprehend the imperative of this concept, the constituents of this novel British identity, and the challenges involved in its realization (p.38).

Hanif Kureishi contends, therefore, that the identity of the British people has to be extensively renegotiated. However, it is essential to note that not only white English people but also immigrants and the descendants of immigrants have prejudices regarding issues of race and identity. Kureishi does his best to inform people of all origins about the inevitable shift in England's identity crisis. According to Amin Maalouf (2000), "identity isn't given once and for all; it is built up and changes throughout a person's lifetime" (p. 20). Ranasinha (2002) also shows the relevance of this topic by pointing out that Hanif Kureishi "subverts notions of identity and culture as immutable, authentic, and fixed in conceptions of origins" (p. 63). This is similar to the claims made by Maalouf, who also stresses the importance

of this subject. In a similar vein, Susie Thomas (2005) notes that "it is not just the myth of tolerant England that is blown apart in the novel but the myth of a homogenous Englishness." Instead, the novel portrays Englishness as fluid and inconsistent, shifting not only through time but also in relation to social class and gender as well as geographical location (p. 64).

It is necessary to take note of how Karim makes use of the fact that he comes from a diverse cultural background in order to thrive in a culture in which essentialist conceptions of identity predominate. Kureishi critiques the scenario by highlighting the concept that it would be inappropriate to show Karim Amir either as a complete Englishman or as an Indian. He says this to emphasize the point that portraying Karim Amir as either would be inaccurate. It has been pointed out that Karim fulfills the duty of a "cultural translator," which is what enables him to function normally in this culture. This is in contrast to the stereotyped notions that aim to confine and contain him (Ranasinha, 2002, p. 31). As the story progresses, it is made very evident that Karim takes advantage of his "in-between" position an increasing amount. This circumstance is plainly observable when Karim is allowed to Shadwell's theater for what is ostensibly his "eastern authenticity." Even though Karim has said on different occasions that he has the sense that he belongs to England and that he feels more like an Englishman, we can see that he also relies on his Pakistani heritage in order to make it through life.

It is obvious in the novel that different identities are not only celebrated but performed in the real sense as well. Karim Amir performs his ethnic identity by accepting the role of Mowgli in Jeremy Shadwell’s theater, even though he does not see any strong connections with the type of character he is asked to play. When Karim realizes that embracing his Indian side can make him successful, he starts performing it, even though he does not like doing it from time to time. Still, it is worth noting that Karim’s generation considers identity as a relational concept. Anthony Ilone (2003) also notes in his article that "Karim’s generation see identity as a relational and mutable concept. Different identities are easily assimilable, easily performed" (p.101). It is therefore possible to say that switching between identities and performing them has become something of a habit for them because they do not feel themselves fully attached to them (Onmus, 2012, p. 19).

It is also worth mentioning how Kureishi uses the setting in the novel to show the disgust of immigrants towards the racism that can be seen, especially in the

suburbs. Barry Langford (1997) remarks that Kureishi follows "a long tradition depicting suburban life as unfreedom and dissimulation, a picture easily duplicated across innumerable treatments of suburbia" (p.64). Similarly, Childs (2000) states that in South Asian writing, immigrants consider "suburbia [...] as a place to be escaped" (p.98). For Karim, suburbia is a place where conformity, dullness, racism, and boredom exist. Therefore, he makes up his mind to leave the suburbs at the beginning of the novel. He says, "It would be years before I could get away to the city, London, where life would be bottomless in its temptations" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 8). It is clear that Karim sees London as an opportunity to discover the life he wants to live and to experience freedom.

According to Anthony Ilona (2003), London in *The Buddha of Suburbia* "is celebrated as a location of cultural diversity without the stifling tensions seen in the suburbs" (p. 101). In this regard, while Kureishi portrays the suburbs from Karim's perspective as a site to be escaped, a place that will always confine him to stereotypical definitions in terms of identity and culture, he presents London as a place that will solve all of Karim's problems, a place in which difference could be celebrated. That is why Ranasinha (2002) claims that Kureishi's "protagonists'" escape from the suburbs to the metropolis is key to their self-development. Kureishi, like Rushdie, extols the multiculturalism of a hybridised post-colonial London. For Karim, then, "identity in London becomes a dynamic, flexible, and interactive concept" (Ilona, 2003, p. 101). In London, Karim, rather than dealing with racism all day, feels he can live life to its full potential since, for Karim, the city "seemed like a house with five thousand rooms, all different" (Ilona, 2003, p. 126).

The Buddha of Suburbia can be classified as a "Bildungsroman," as it chronicles the comprehensive growth of Karim Amir, encompassing his moral and psychological development. It is worth mentioning that this novel exemplifies this literary genre (Schoene,1998, p.118). In addition, according to Susie Thomas (2005), *The Buddha of the Suburbia* represents a noteworthy instance of the English picaresque genre in contemporary times, comparable in significance to Charles Dickens' "*Great Expectations*" (1860-61) (p. 62). According to Nick Bentley (2008), Karim's journey through different social spheres in Kureishi's novel enables the author to provide commentary on cultural politics pertaining to class, race, sexuality, and gender, much like Pip's journey in Dickens's novel (p.161). The selection of "Bildungsroman" as a literary genre assumes significant importance in the context of

the discourse on identity. The matter is further emphasized by Bart Moore-Gilbert (2001) who asserts that Kureishi's selection of the “Bildungsroman” as a literary genre is of particular significance, given that it persistently portrays identity as a process that is developmental, unstable, and subject to change, rather than a fixed and stable outcome (p.127). Thus, this portrayal enables us to perceive the dynamic nature of identity.

In the introductory passages of the novel, Hanif Kureishi portrays Karim Amir as a character possessing a certain degree of naivety, who exhibits a partial awareness of his Pakistani heritage. Therefore, Karim describes himself as "a funny kind of Englishman" (Kureishi, 1990, p.3). As the novel progresses, Karim Amir gains a deeper understanding of his mixed-race identity through his lived experiences. His heightened awareness of his cultural hybridity is facilitated by his exposure to English and Indian cultures in varying contexts. It is imperative to bear in mind that Kureishi presents Karim's identity as being in a state of flux, rather than stable and unchanging, as demonstrated by Hashmi's analysis (1993, p. 28). The aforementioned statement aligns with the perspective of Homi K. Bhabha, who posits that the concept of identity is characterized by an ongoing and dynamic progression. Karim assumes various roles by virtue of his cultural translator position. Consequently, his preference is for tea as well as kebabs. He exhibits a strong admiration and affection for Western music, while also deriving pleasure from receiving feedback regarding their unique and distinctive style being perceived as exotic and original (Kureishi, 1990, p.9). The instances mentioned earlier serve as a clear demonstration of how Karim embodies the traits of both cultures in unison.

The novel has prominently featured the concept of elucidating Karim Amir's identity through essentialist ideologies. Karim's hybridity has been largely disregarded by his acquaintances, companions, and the community in which he resides. While certain individuals endeavor to portray him as "White," others strive to depict him as "Black." Karim perceives himself as having a sense of belonging to both cultures as he matures and encounters diverse situations. According to Lee Yu-cheng (1996), Karim undergoes a transformation and gains a realization of his hybrid identity. Karim finds himself in a state of existence that is neither here nor there, caught between two worlds. Ultimately, Karim emerges with a newfound understanding and sensitivity towards his identity (p. 2). Karim's perpetual journey warrants consideration due to his heightened level of self-awareness. Karim's

characterization of himself as "restless" serves to illustrate the precariousness of his circumstances, suggesting that his quest for self-discovery may be an ongoing and elusive pursuit.

Numerous scholars have conducted a thorough analysis of the portrayal of identity in "*The Buddha of Suburbia*" as a form of performance. Ruvani Ranasinha (2002) observes that Kureishi's novel delves into the complexities of identity in a multicultural Britain that is rife with racial tensions. According to Ranasinha, Kureishi challenges the idea that identity and culture are unchanging, genuine, and firmly rooted in ideas of ancestry (p.62-63). Moore-Gilbert (2001) also provides an identical corroborating justification. He highlights Kureishi's opposition to definitive categorizations of identity by underscoring how Kureishi's characters expose the fluid, interdependent, and manufactured qualities of identity, thereby drawing attention to its precarious and heterogeneous facets (p.202). Hence, it is unsurprising to observe that Karim aspired to become the first Indian center forward to participate in England's football team (Kureishi, 1990, p. 43). He possesses the advantage of possessing an insider-outsider perspective, thereby facilitating the depiction of both perspectives from a neutral standpoint.

The Buddha of Suburbia exemplifies a “Bildungsroman” narrative, tracing the protagonist's journey from childhood to adulthood. As such, Karim's comprehension of the intricate process of identity formation is a gradual one. Thanks to the experiences he has had in the novel, Karim Amir undergoes a process of self-discovery. And he comes to conclusion that his identity is multifaceted and in a state of flux. Initially identifying as English, Karim gradually becomes cognizant of the complex interplay of cultural influences that have shaped his sense of self. Kaleta (1998) highlights Kureishi's deconstruction of established identity definitions through the protagonist, conveying a call for transformation. Hanif Kureishi posits that the doctrine of nationalism is inconsistent with the contemporary multicultural landscape of England, as evidenced in his English narrative. Kaleta believes that Kureishi insists on the acceptance of the inherent inconsistencies present in a diverse society within the confines of England. The present-day English society presents a paradoxical situation where multiple communities overlap. The author, from his Anglo-Asian viewpoint, asserts that the process of individuals redefining their identities necessitates a similar transformation at the national level, as depicted in his narratives (p.3).

Kaleta (1998) claims that in a multicultural country like England, it is impossible to maintain a homogenous society since the reinvention of identities is one of the most significant requirements of a pluralistic society in which various elements come together and continue to live. This idea is clearly portrayed in Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Karim especially realizes his hybridity when he is exposed to the racist exclamations made by Helen's father, who says to Karim that he "does not want you blackies coming to the house" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 40). The fact that Karim Amir does not consider himself either an outsider or black leads him to make a naive statement about the situation. Karim innocently and blankly asks, "Have there been many?" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 49). Karim becomes aware of the fact that people around him frequently describe him with negative connotations and he is not welcomed.

Shadwell's assertions concerning Karim's intricate circumstances significantly unsettle his being within a societal framework that is dominated by exclusionary political ideologies. Upon learning that Karim has never visited the sub-continent, Shadwell experiences a sense of astonishment, as his preconceived notions evoke an image of an exotic Indian male. "I'm sure everyone looks at you and thinks, an Indian boy; how exotic; how interesting; what stories about aunties and elephants he'll now tell us. Also, you're from Orpington," responds Shadwell (Kureishi, 1990, p. 141). Following the expression of various stereotypical perspectives, Shadwell prompts Karim to acknowledge the truth that he embodies a blend of both British and Indian cultures, rendering him a hybrid rather than exclusively British or Indian. Shadwell adds, "Your destiny, which is to be a half caste in England." That must be complicated for you to accept—belonging nowhere, wanted nowhere. Racism" (Kureishi, 1990, 141). This uncomfortable dialogue facilitates Karim's comprehension of his hybrid identity with greater ease. Karim's comprehension of his societal perception evolves as he encounters diverse life experiences, leading him to utilize his hybridity as a means of survival.

The significance of Kureishi's portrayal of the identity formation process lies in its depiction as a continuous, fluid, and dynamic phenomenon, which aligns with Bhabha's perspective. Karim Amir exhibits a mutable identity, as he assumes different personas on varying occasions. According to Ranasinha (2002), the concept of identity is viewed as a performance in the case of Karim (p.72). Karim comprehends that the sole approach to circumvent exclusionary assertions is to establish identities

that differentiate him from others. Therefore, Karim states that in order to obtain the supplementary benefit of an Indian heritage, it would be necessary to fabricate it (Kureishi, 1990, 213). Nevertheless, it should be noted that there is no indication that he will return to his supposed Pakistani heritage. He observes that occupying an intermediate position, commonly referred to as the third space, would enhance his chances of thriving in society. Ruvani Ranasinha (2002) notes that Hanif Kureishi has produced characters that "live the potentials and experience, the pitfalls of mixing and mêtissage, emphasizing the precarious, ambivalent nature of all cultural translations" (p.222). The concept of separate, exclusive, and racially defined communities is satirized in his writing. Ranasinha elucidates the manner in which Kureishi's characters engage in a process of continual experimentation with diverse identities. Kureishi presents characters whose identities are malleable, dynamic, and continuously evolving. As Seema Jena (2009) writes, "Karim finds himself in a world of paradox. He realizes that he does not fit in, has few choices, yet wants to lead an independent life without being trapped by the system. He therefore rejects what he thinks of as the normal world and acquires strength by resisting to conform" (p. 6). In an interview with Bradley Buchanan (2007), Hanif Kureishi eloquently conveyed his perspectives on the process of identity construction by emphasizing the unstable and fluid nature of it with the following sentences;

> There are not any formed identities, any finally formed identities. There is not a day when you are there, when you are made. It keeps on going, you keep engaging with your past in new ways all the time, over and over. Think of the way you think about your parents; I used to think there would be a day when I would have figured out my parents and could stop thinking about them, but it goes on and on. So I do not believe that there is a final resting place in terms of identity; it is continuous process. I mean here I am, a man nearly fifty, and I am thinking about how in the next twenty years I am going to die, and who I am going to identify with as an older man. I am going to read and think and look at other old guys, and find an identity out of all these bits and pieces (p.123).

Karim Amir's diverse heritage has enabled him to transform the discourse surrounding identity within British society in a distinctive manner. This is something that can be deduced from the evidence that is now available. Schoene (1998)

elucidates the matter by stating that Karim does not limit himself to choosing between two opposing options for ethnic self-authentication, nor does he feel obligated to do so. Rather, Karim explores a third source of identity that is located in the gaps between distinct, self-contained cultural reservations (p.117). According to Jamel Oubechou's (1997) article, Karim has come to the realization that achieving a definitive understanding of one's identity is unattainable, as identity is a multifaceted, intricate, and blended concept (p.101-109). This particular scenario underscores the critical necessity to reevaluate and redefine the concepts of Englishness and English identity yet again. The current makeup of England as a varied amalgamation of distinct cultures and identities requires the removal of stereotypical statements regarding this issue. Kureishi's literary work expounds upon the notion that certain individuals, exemplified by Karim, are driven to seek out a new and distinct way of being (Kureishi, 1990, p. 32).

2. *THE BLACK ALBUM*: A WORLD BETWEEN LIBERALISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM CROSSING THE BORDERS WITH THE UNCHAINED HERO: SHAHID HASSAN

The Black Album by Hanif Kureishi offers a nuanced and candid examination of themes such as identity, cultural imitation, uncertainty, and the concept of a 'third space' in a society that is culturally diverse. The novel presents a bold and intricate narrative that portrays the challenges faced by its central character, Shahid Hassan, a youthful British Pakistani individual who is grappling with the complexities of personal and cultural identity in the London of the late 20th century. Within the realm of dichotomies, Homi Bhabha's concept of the third space presents itself as a complex notion that embodies hybridity and serves as a site for the production and challenge of cultural significations.

The Black Album serves as a reflective tool that portrays the struggles encountered by individuals who find themselves caught between diverse cultural associations. Shahid's identity is a site of contestation between affiliations stemming from eastern and western cultures, which engage in competition, conflict, coexistence, and even intermingling, thereby generating a rich discourse on the notion of 'third space'. The area in question is not simply a neutral space, but rather a location that holds significant potential and ambiguity. It serves as a source of cultural negotiation, hybridization, and creativity.

Kureishi's representation of mimicry, as demonstrated through Shahid's imitation of both British and Pakistani cultural conventions, functions as a thought-provoking evaluation of post-colonial identities. His endeavor embodies the psychological duality that frequently arises in the quest for individual genuineness within a society that persistently enforces its cultural standards and anticipations. Concurrently, the aforementioned statement emphasizes the significant potential of mimicry in effecting change, as it disrupts the well-defined dichotomy between the colonizer and colonized, the indigenous and foreign, and the eastern and western cultures.

The novel additionally elicits a feeling of ambivalence, characterized by a binary emotional state that oscillates between attraction and repulsion towards distinct cultural frameworks. The central theme of the narrative is the ambivalence that is exemplified through Shahid's experiences. This ambivalence is a manifestation of the confusion, dislocation, and uncertainty that are inherent to the human condition when confronted with multiple cultural realities.

The Black Album provides a perceptive analysis of identity politics and cultural assimilation, achieved through an engaging narrative and vivid characterization. Kureishi's exploration of the third space, mimicry, and ambivalence offers insight into the intricate dynamics of multi-cultural societies. Through this examination, Kureishi prompts readers to engage in critical reflection, reevaluation, and reimagining of their perceptions of cultural identities.

According to Buchanan's (2007) assertion, *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album* feature a central character who encounters diverse experiences while navigating a multicultural setting, ultimately contributing to the development and construction of their identity (p.41). *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album* differ in their thematic focus, with the former centering on the middle class and the culture industry, while the latter explores the experiences of "more marginalized groups such as radical university professors, Muslim students, former prostitutes, and drug dealers" (p.41). Schoene (1998) discusses the differentiation between *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*, contending that the former represents Hanif Kureishi's belief in the "individualistic escape from the confinement of identity," while the latter underscores the "reality of cultural dislocation" (p. 124-125).

As Kao-chen Liao (2012) puts it, "critics read this novel in terms of Kureishi's problematization of any homogenised identity and his stress on the prevalence of capitalism" (p.58). In other words, this novel can be seen as another piece of work that brings the issue of identity into question. Bart Moore-Gilbert (2001) reveals that Kureishi is "critical of a variety of metropolitan anti-racisms" as well as of the forms of "cultural nationalism... organised around a singular, racialized conception of national identity" (p.137). It should also be noted that the novel is also concerned with the fatwa that was imposed on Bombay-born writer Salman Rushdie by Ayatollah

Khomeini for his controversial novel, *The Satanic Verses*. Kureishi's riveting novel could be considered a reflection of the turbulent transformations of post-war Britain. Hanif Kureishi also shares a similar view in his conversation with Amitava Kumar. He notes that "every ten years there had been a revolution in the sixties, it was LSD and psychedelic music, in the seventies it was punk and speed and heroin, and in the eighties it was dance music and Ecstasy. So *The Black Album* kind of came out of all that" (Kumar, 2001, p. 126).

According to Thomas (2005), the main character of *The Black Album*, Shahid, is actively seeking to establish his sense of self (p.101). Kureishi, in his literary piece titled "Collected Essays," characterizes Shahid as an Asian youth from Kent who is somewhat adrift and lacks confidence (Kureishi, 2011, p. 116). Kureishi depicts the protagonist as an individual who experiences inner conflict as a result of the divergent lifestyles of the Western world, characterized by unpredictability, and Islam. The protagonist becomes cognizant of this circumstance, particularly subsequent to his encounter with the devout persona Riaz. Kureishi offers a critique of the Thatcherite notion of nation and nationhood that is exclusionary towards immigrants by portraying his characters as individuals who encounter difficulties in embracing the diverse aspects of life, rather than conforming to rigid, essentialist classifications. Kureishi endeavors to destabilize the notions of nation and nationhood, rendering them amenable to reevaluations. Kureishi endeavors to provide novel interpretations of the concepts of nation, nationhood, and identity-related matters by contesting the conventional definitions, with the objective of acknowledging the contemporary global landscape. According to Yousaf (2002), this matter has been addressed. For Yousaf, Kureishi's intention is to generate intricate and conflicting hybridized individuals whose cultural identities are closely intertwined with class-based politics. He believes that Kureishi's intention is not to portray Asian communities or peoples as a monolithic entity, but rather to acknowledge that in situations where individuals who belong to ethnically identifiable groups are under threat or besieged, the formation of a collective identity may serve a political or survivalist purpose (p.44).

Throughout the novel, Shahid's hybrid identity is evident in his tastes, interests, and aspirations, which reflect a synthesis of both cultures. For example, he is drawn to western literature, music, and art, while also maintaining an affinity for his Pakistani heritage. This hybridity is captured in the following quotation: "Shahid

liked two kinds of music: Indian and Western. His favorite record was a rare import called '*The Black Album*' which contained one side of Indian classical music and another of Prince" (Kureishi, 1995, p. 7). The metaphor of "*The Black Album*" itself can be seen as a symbol of hybridity, embodying the blending of cultures and the in-between space that Shahid occupies.

Homi Bhabha's concept of third space refers to the liminal space that emerges when two cultures interact and create a new, hybrid identity. In the novel, *The Black Album*, this third space is exemplified through Shahid's struggle to find a sense of belonging and acceptance within the British Pakistani community and the broader British society. Shahid's experience of being "neither here nor there" is highlighted throughout the novel, as he navigates between his traditional Pakistani family and the westernized world around him. The third space is also evident in the multicultural environment of the college where Shahid studies, which is populated by students from diverse backgrounds who share similar experiences of cultural displacement and dislocation: “We're all hybrids here,' said Shahid. 'Half of us don't know who we are or where we belong'" (Kureishi, 1995, p. 83).

According to Kureishi, it is imperative to approach the contemporary world from diverse perspectives, given the transformation of times and the emergence of a novel concept of England. Kaleta (1998) expresses an identical viewpoint that corroborates Kureishi's perspective. Kalete says that "it is undeniable that the green isle that is forever Shakespeare’s England now also belongs to Hanif Kureishi" (p.2). As per Kaleta's (1998) analysis, Kureishi's narratives shed light on a unique and novel national identity (p.4). Kureishi's literary works hold significant value in comprehending contemporary England, particularly in the context of social change brought about by immigration to the country over the years.

Shahid Hassan, the protagonist of *The Black Album*, was born and raised in England, like Karim Amir in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Shahid's father, a middle-class Pakistani, makes a living as a travel agent. Throughout the novel, it is shown that Shahid’s family tries their best to find a place to exist in British society by adopting the values and traditions of the former colonial power. They even act and behave as if

discrimination is not a reality in their society. In addition to this, they never ask Shahid to follow Pakistani values strictly. He is, to some extent, let free to find his own way in England, and his family lets Shahid experience the multiplicity of life in England. The fact that Shahid is in touch with both Pakistani and English cultures puts him in a liminal place that allows him to consider events from different perspectives. This situation also makes him a hybrid, an in-between character that substantially contributes to the re-definition of concepts like nation, nationhood, and identity.

After the passing of his father, Shahid Hassan embarks on a journey to the bustling city of London and successfully enrolls at Kent University. At this juncture, Shahid encounters Riaz, the prominent figurehead of a Muslim faction, whose influence prompts a significant shift in Shahid's religious self-perception. Riaz exhibits a strong sense of inquisitiveness as he seeks to ascertain Shahid's religious stance. Specifically, Riaz is interested in determining whether Shahid's family adheres to Islamic principles or not. He asks candidly, "Did they lose themselves when they came here?" (p. 7). Shahid is experiencing a state of surprise in response to the posed question, as he has not previously contemplated the matter. Nevertheless, Shahid acknowledges that this inquiry elucidates the rationale behind his attendance at college, which is to create a separation from his family and to contemplate their existence and the motives for their migration to England. (Kureishi, 1995, p.7). Shahid answers Riaz's question and says, "You could be right. Maybe that is what has happened. My family's work has always been to transport others around the world. They never go anywhere themselves, apart from Karachi once a year. They cannot do anything but work" (Kureishi, 1995, p. 7). The inquiry posed by Riaz elicits a sense of surprise in Shahid, yet it concurrently facilitates his recognition of the alternate perspective, thereby emphasizing his composite cultural identity. It has been observed that Hanif Kureishi portrays his characters as hybrids, whose process of identity formation is constantly in a state of flux. According to Kaleta (1988), Kureishi shares the perspective that communities experience changes and that the internal divisions within them are characterized by a dynamic nature. The author utilizes a dynamic and fluid storytelling technique that is distinguished by frequent divisions and alterations in the narrative (p. 4).

Hanif Kureishi's novel, The Black Album, prompts his characters to delve into the multifaceted aspects of their identities (Kaleta, 1998, p. 5). Given the current demographic makeup of England, which comprises individuals from diverse backgrounds, particularly those from Commonwealth nations, the author endeavors to examine novel approaches to embracing British identity within this highly multicultural global context. The author's objective is to alter the prevailing and exclusive representations of Britain by taking into account the significant post-war immigration. He is actively defining and molding the current hybridized culture of Britain (Ranasinha, 2002, p.1). Kureishi's contribution to the discourse on national identity in this particular context is noteworthy. During the interview with Kaleta, he stated that;

> I think English literature has changed enormously in the last ten years, because of writers from my background – myself, Salman Rushdie, Ben Okri, Timothy Mo You know, there are many, many of us, all with these strange names and some kind of colonial background. But we are part of English literature […] writing about England and all that that implies. Whatever I've written about, it's all been about England in some way, even if the characters are Asian or they're from Pakistan or whatever. I've always written about England, usually London. And that's very English. Also the comic tradition, I think, is probably English, the mixture of seriousness and humor. Most of the pop music and the interest in pop music's a very English thing. Everything I write is soaked in Englishness, I suppose (Kaleta, 1988, p. 3).

In the preface to *Extravagant Strangers: A Literature of Belonging*, Caryl Philips (1997) asserts, very similar to Kureishi, that individuals who are considered outsiders have played a significant role in shaping and influencing English literature for a minimum of two centuries. In a similar vein, Hanif Kureishi conveys the notion that the United Kingdom has undergone significant transformations, as evidenced by the aforementioned quote. Consequently, the author presents a critique of nationalism and asserts that the prevailing doctrine of nationalism is incongruous with the contemporary, diverse society of England (Kaleta, 1998, p.3). One could contend that a rapidly evolving hybridized culture has deconstructed the white and homogenous

conception of British society. According to Kaleta (1998), Kureishi observes that present-day English society presents a paradox of intersecting communities. Kureishi further proposes that as identities continue to evolve, nations should adapt accordingly (p. 3).

It is worth mentioning that, similar to the character of Karim Amir depicted in The Buddha of Suburbia, Shahid Hassan is also undergoing a process of constructing his own sense of identity. Throughout this process, Karim undergoes a series of life events that facilitate the cultivation of their hybrid identity. The relocation to London is a pivotal factor in facilitating this metamorphosis. Within this particular context, Shahid exhibits a willingness to explore the diverse facets of existence and his own sense of self. The opening pages of The Black Album reveal that Shahid Hassan's lack of familiarity with the Asian cultural community in his vicinity stems from his limited engagement with the local community. Due to this rationale, he perceives it as peculiar when individuals classify him as Asian. Shahid expresses a desire for quality Indian cuisine, yet is uncertain of the optimal dining destination. Then Riaz responds and says; "Naturally you miss such food. You are my fellow countryman." Nevertheless, it is evident that Shahid holds an opposite point of view from Riaz on this matter. He expresses a degree of disagreement by stating, "Well... not quite" (Kureishi, 1995, p. 2). It is evident that Riaz's endeavors to associate Shahid with Indian culture are ineffectual as Shahid does not necessarily identify himself as a constituent of that culture.

There are multiple reasons for Shahid's reluctance to associate himself with Asian culture. Shahid was perceived as an outsider due to his skin color and his parental cultural heritage. Similar to Karim Amir, he encountered instances of racism, although it appears that he has made an effort to disregard this reality. Hence, while having conversations with Riaz and Chad, Shahid admits his desire to adopt a racist attitude much like to several others (Kureishi, 1995, p. 10). He asserts that his psyche was infiltrated by violent and discriminatory thoughts targeting individuals of African descent (Kureishi, 1995, p. 11). Shahid's depiction of his discriminatory aspirations exposes his yearning for assimilation into a racially divided British community. He expresses his aspirations of mistreating individuals from Pakistan, Nigeria, China, Ireland, or any other foreign nationality. He tells Riaz that he harbored negative thoughts towards them in a discreet manner whenever they were in his presence. He even goes on to say that he had the desire to administer a physical reprimand to them.

The prospect of engaging in sexual activity with Asian females elicited a feeling of disgust within him (Kureishi, 1995, p. 11). Shahid's aspirations reflect his desire to establish an alternative persona that could facilitate his integration into British society. He is experiencing restlessness and distress due to repeated instances of discriminatory behavior, and is actively seeking to distance themselves from their racial identity. Shadid was born and brought up in England and desires for this particular piece of information to be acknowledged. Shahid's negative perception of Asian culture stems from his belief that his own Asian heritage places him at a disadvantage.

> Even they came on to me, I couldn't bear it. I thought you know, wink at an Asian girl and she'll want to marry you up. I wouldn't touch brown flesh, except with a branding iron. I hated all foreign bastards'... 'I argued... why can't I be a racist like everyone else? Why do I have to miss out 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 (Kureishi, 1995, p.11).

The protagonist of *The Black Album*, Shahid, is presented with a dilemma as he navigates between the expectations of the Muslim community, which advocates for adherence to Islamic customs and resistance against racial discrimination, and the advances of Deedee Osgood, a university instructor who introduces him to philosophical concepts and sexual experiences amidst the bustling urban environment of London. The matter has been commented on by Ruvani Ranasinha (2002) in the following way:

> Characteristically, London in the late eighties is powerfully evoked in all its amorphous squalor and limitless possibilities. Shahid is eager to learn, and to experience the pleasures of his new city and to 'slough' off his former life and self. Shahid is confronted with different choices from those of his precursors. The novel explores the conflict between fundamentalisms and a form of liberal individualism that is bound up with sensual gratification. The choice is personified somewhat schematically between Shahid's Asian neighbour, Riaz, a mature student and stern leader of the young Muslims at

> Shahid's derelict North London College, and his white, liberal ex-hippie tutor Deedee Osgood who offers him sex, raves, ecstasy and post-modern uncertainties (p. 84).

Shahid's ability to navigate different realms is facilitated by his diverse range of experiences. He possesses knowledge not only of British culture and values, but also of their Asian heritage, which has been acquired through visits to Karachi. Hence, it is feasible and uncomplicated for Shahid to acknowledge both proposals as they are not unfamiliar to him. It is important to acknowledge that Shahid does not limit himself to a singular perspective and remains open to further exploration in the development of his personal identity. According to Thomas (2005), he lacks any certainties or ultimate destination (p. 101).

The author Hanif Kureishi portrays Shahid Hassan as an individual who experiences a conflict between the diverse ideologies of liberalism and Islamic fundamentalism. Consequently, he encounters diverse facets of the concept of belonging and is unable to align himself entirely with a singular perspective. On the contrary, Shahid desires to gain exposure to all facets of this particular procedure without completely assuming a singular perspective. According to Ruvani Ranasinha, Shahid exhibits reluctance towards joining the Muslim student group due to his distaste towards living under the influence of extremist Islam. Kureishi depicts Shahid as a youthful individual who is initially drawn towards Muslim students at the college due to his sense of isolation and apprehension in the city of London. Additionally, he desires to acquaint himself with "his people" in order to cultivate a sense of affiliation.

> Now, though, Shahid was afraid his ignorance would place him in no man's land. These days everyone was insisting on their identity, coming out as a man, woman, gay, black, Jew- brandishing whichever features they could claim, as if without a tag they wouldn't be human. Shahid, too, wanted to belong to his people. But first he had to know them, their past and what they hoped for. Fortunately, Hat had been of great help. Several times he had interrupted his studies to visit Shahid's room with books; sitting beside him, he had, for hours, explained parts of Islamic history, alongside with the essential beliefs (Kureishi, 1995, p. 92).

Shahid finds the concept of social belonging appealing as it offers potential protection against racism and a refuge to safeguard his existence. Hence, the decision to become a member of the Muslim student organization appears highly rational to him. "He couldn't leave his friends; they had something to fight for; they were his people; he had pledged himself to them" (Kureishi, 1995, p. 124). Subsequently, however, it becomes evident that Shahid dissents from the notion of absolute conformity. Ruvani Ranasinha (2002) writes, "Shahid finds belonging or commitment on a personal level equally difficult" (p.86). To put it simply, he exhibits a tendency to consistently seek liberation from his boundaries.

By embracing Islamic principles and customs in order to forge a new identity, the fundamentalist group led by Riaz works toward the goal of emancipating themselves from the limitations imposed on them by the discriminating politics of Thatcherism. It is very clear that Riaz and the other members of his gang are attempting to build their identity as well. In order to demonstrate their existence within the setting of postcolonial Britain, disadvantaged groups were forced to use alternate techniques as a result of the exclusionary political policies implemented by the government of Margaret Thatcher.

It is significant to remember that second generation immigrants, such as Shahid, Riaz, and Chad, approach exclusionist and racist political issues very differently than their first generation counterparts. While first-generation immigrants consider racism inevitable, second-generation immigrants seem to find it unacceptable. They prefer to face this serious problem and fight against it rather than accept it unquestioningly. This issue becomes clear when we examine a dialogue that takes place between Shahid, when he is fifteen years old, and his mother. The adolescent Shahid writes an autobiographical story named "Paki Wog Fuck off Home," in which he attempts to portray the racism and verbal abuse he is subjected to. However, when his mother accidentally finds the story, she behaves as if racism does not exist in the society in which they live: "Not one person is interested! Who should want to read this? People do not want this hate in their lives" (Kureishi, 1995, p. 72). According to the dialogue above, first-generation immigrants either deny or tolerate racism. However, second generation immigrants often have very different reactions to it. In fact, it could be argued that while first-generation immigrants' main concerns are more economic, second-generation immigrants are interested in citizenship and

associated rights. Paul Gilroy (1981) comments on the different choices of these two generations as follows:

> the image of the respectable and hard-working first generation of black immigrants locked in struggle with their children, whose ‘identity crises’ and precarious position ‘between two cultures’ impel them into deviant behaviour. Rejecting the parental culture whilst reproducing its pathological characteristics, these young people, whether of Asian or Afro-Caribbean origin,are presented as divorced from their parents’ concerns (p.213).

Yasmin Hussain provides a comprehensive account of the reasons behind the emergence of a distinct mode of existence and the adoption of Muslim identity among second-generation immigrants. Hussain (2005) states that second-generation immigrants exhibit political values that prioritize equality, possess elevated expectations regarding education and the labor market. (p.27). Given this particular circumstance, the author highlights that individuals of second-generation immigrant background contributed to the development of new identity constructs by means of establishing religious affiliations. Consequently, the author asserts that the religious affiliations of the individuals in question take precedence over their ethnic affiliations, leading them to identify primarily as Muslims rather than as Pakistanis or Bangladeshis (Hussain, 2005, 27).

The observation made by Yasmin Hussain pertaining to second-generation immigrants is illustrated in the fundamentalist group, particularly in the individuals of Riaz and Chad. Similar to Shahid, they have encountered instances of racism and perceive themselves as being regarded as inferior members of British society due to their immigrant origins. Consequently, the people comprising Riaz's group endeavor to safeguard themselves against instances of racism by means of their Islamic identities. Therefore, Ranasinha (2002) highlights that Kureishi initiates the portrayal of Muslim students' militancy as a tangible reaction to social aggression rather than an anomaly (p.86).

Riaz's perceived status as an outsider and other factors have motivated him to explore alternative modes of existence. Despite spending his formative years in Pakistan, he has resided in England since the age of fourteen. Consequently, he could be perceived as a hybrid due to his adeptness in both cultures. Nonetheless, Riaz

experiences a sense of incomplete belongingness to England. During one of his dialogues with Shahid, he articulated this sentiment in the subsequent manner:

> This matter of belonging, brother. I wish I understood it. Do you, for instance, like living in England?' Riaz blinked and looked around; it was as if he'd never considered the question before. 'This will never be my home' he said. 'I will never entirely understand it. And you? (Kureishi, 1995, p.175).

Riaz's adoption of an Islamic identity appears to be a response to his perceived exclusion from the wider societal context in which he resides. In her article, Ruvani Ranasinha (2002) addresses the matter by stating that the Black Album implies that the inclination towards fundamentalism is not solely a reaction to being marginalized, but is also driven by the aspiration to acquire a more distinct sense of self (p.87).

During a discussion with Colin MacCabe, Hanif Kureishi made a remark regarding the adherence of young Muslims to Islam. He stated that when speaking with young Muslim males in public, they exhibit a clear desire for respect. According to Islamic teachings, adherence to its principles can lead to the attainment of self-respect and respect from others without any hindrance (1999, p. 13). MacCabe. The above quote makes it possible to draw the conclusion that Islam provided them with a feeling of belonging and made it possible for them to find a new place in English society. The impact of Islam on identity formation and fostering a sense of belonging is particularly evident in Chad. Upon learning about Chad's identity transformation from Deedee, Shahid experiences a sense of astonishment.

> He was adopted by a white couple. The mother was racist, talked about Pakis all the time and how they had to fit in.' Deedee handed him the bottle of wine. 'Feeling more like a drink?' 'These days I'm trying to keep a clear head. To respect limits. 'Chad would hear church bells. He'd see English country cottages and ordinary English people who were secure, who effortlessly belonged. You know, the whole Orwellian idea of England. You read his essays?' 'Not properly.' 'Anyway, the sense of exclusion practically drove him mad. He wanted to bomb them (Kureishi, 1995, p.106-107).

Therefore, whereas the white English individuals seemed to assimilate seamlessly, Chad experienced a sense of alienation from the community due to his status as an immigrant. Deedee's self-perception is characterized by a sense of isolation, a lack of belonging, and a feeling of being unwanted, as he articulates with clarity. The narrator asserts that:

> When he got to be a teenager he saw he had no roots, no connections with Pakistan, couldn't even speak the language. So he went to Urdu classes. But when he tried asking for the salt in Southall everyone fell about at his accent. In England white people looked at him as if he were going to steal their car or their handbag, particularly as he dressed like a ragamuffin. But in Pakistan they looked at him even more strangely. Why should he be able to fit into a Third World theocracy? (Kureishi, 1995, p.107).

Deedee's statement regarding Trevor Bus's soul being lost in translation highlights the profound nature of his identity crisis. "Someone said he even tried the Labor Party, to try to find a place. But it was too racist and his anger was too much" (Kureishi, 1995, p. 107). The challenges faced by Chad in constructing a sense of self in a societal context that lacks accommodation and acceptance for migrants are easily discernible. The aforementioned challenges could potentially elucidate Chad's unwavering adherence to Islamic doctrines, as they have furnished him with a sense of self. As per Bart Moore Gilbert's (2001) analysis, the rationale behind Chad's extremist behavior can be elucidated as follows:

> Brought up in the country by white foster-parents who are determined to extirpate every trace of his roots, Chad's turn to 'fundamentalism' is presented as an understandable, if overstated, attempt to recover legitimate parts of his cultural identity. From their first meeting, Shahid is struck by the residual hurt from his early life in Chad's eyes, which also generates the 'mad kindness' the latter initially displays to his new friend. If Chad is a soul 'lost in translation', the most ironic lesson of trajectory is that it is precisely the intolerance of the host society towards its 'Others' which generates the physical and ideological resistance that the dominant ethnicity most abhors or fears (p.136).

Because the Thatcherite understanding of Britishness excluded him from English society, Chad says he is "homeless" and he has "no country" (Kureishi, 1995, p. 108). He even goes further and claims, "I don't know what it is to feel like a normal citizen" (Kureishi, 1995, p. 108). Because Thatcherite politics made him feel as if he did not belong in England, he turned completely to Islam. He feels secure and proud of his Islamic identity.

> They are existing at the lowest level! And we think we want to integrate here! But we must not assimilate, that way we lose our souls. We are proud and we are obedient. What is wrong with that? It's not we who must change, but the world!' Chad was looking at Shahid. 'It's hell-fire for believers, you know that (Kureishi, 1995, p.81).

The idea of second-generation immigrants finding a sense of identity through Islamic fundamentalism results in followers such as Chad exhibiting unwavering support for its principles. The indifference for the existence of immigrants and their treatment as inferior by Thatcherite politics may have contributed to the adoption of Islam by Asian immigrants as it provided a perception of equity and peace. Kureishi gives the following account of how the environment was inside the mosque:

> Here race and class barriers had been suspended. There were businessmen in expensive suits, others in London Underground and Post Office uniforms; bowed old men in salwar kamiz fiddled with beads. Chic lads with ponytails, working in computers, exchanged business cards with young men in suits. Forty Ethiopians sat to the side of one room, addressed by one of their number in robes. Among the praying men on the vast carpet ran little boys in their best suits and girls in white dresses, with bows in their hair. Some visitors sprawled on mattresses against the wall and slept; they had kettles, water bottles and their possessions in plastic bags around them. Others sat against pillars for hours with their legs crossed, talking. Some people lay flat on their backs, asleep in the center of the room, an arm across their eyes. There were dozens of languages. Strangers spoke to one another. The atmosphere was uncompetitive, peaceful, meditative (Kureishi, 1995, p.132).

In conclusion, upon analyzing Kureishi's portrayal of the mosque, it becomes evident that all social barriers are eliminated within its walls, and individuals are treated equitably. According to Kureishi, the elimination of class and race differentiations within these sacred locations engenders a sense of solidarity and inclusion among Muslim migrants. As a result of feeling insecure or excluded from society, immigrants have a tendency to adopt and prioritize their religious identity. In brief, it transforms into a dependable entity for them.

It is significant to note that Shahid's attachment to Riaz and his Muslim group of students does not mean that he chooses to be religious. In fact, he is still in search of an identity. In this regard, he keeps trying out the pluralities that multicultural London offers him. He eventually realises that he cannot confine himself to Islamic fundamentalism and feels freer in the uncertainties of London. As Kureishi writes, "Shahid understands that he has to withdraw from this group in order to establish himself on his own terms at last" (Kureishi, 1995, p. 118). Even though this was not easy since the group was now a crucial part of his life, he prefers not to follow them strictly, because the group somehow restricts him.

His actions plainly demonstrate Shahid Hassan's reluctance to practice Islam. When he prays to Allah, Shahid is not sufficiently focused and attentive. According to narrator;

> While praying, Shahid had little notion of what to think, of what the cerebral concomitant to the actions should be. So, on his knees, he celebrated to himself the substantiality of the world, the fact of existence, the inexplicable phenomenon of life, art, humour and love itself- in murmured language, itself another sacred miracle. He accompanied this awe and wonder with suitable music, the 'Ode to Joy' from Beethoven's Ninth, for instance, which he hummed inaudibly (Kureishi, 1995, p.92).

Thus, it can be asserted that Shahid no longer feels a connection to the Islamic student group because he does not wish to limit himself to predetermined boundaries. It is evident that he wishes to investigate the freedom that London offers. So long as he attempts to join the Islamic community, "he cannot fit in" (Jaggi, 1995, p. 6–7). Ranasinha (2002) contends that "Shahid's rejection of Islam is presented as a triumph

of nationality and common sense over fanatical anti-intellectualism" (p. 225). This viewpoint is supported by Kureishi's description of the Islamist student group: "How narrow they were, how unintelligent, how [...] embarrassing it all was; how limited and encased his mind, how full of spite and acidity!"(Kureishi, 1995, p,118).

It is evident that Shahid's increasing involvement in Riaz's Islamic group has led to his realization of his incompatibility with Islamic fundamentalism.

> Shahid frequently fell into anxiety about his lack of faith. Observing the mosque, in which all he saw were solid, material things, and looking along the line of brothers' faces upon which spirituality was taking place, he felt a failure. But he was afraid that enquiry would expose him to some sort of suspicion (Kureishi, 1995, p. 96).

Kureishi appears to hold the view that religion and liberalism are not compatible, as evidenced by his persistent questioning of religion and expression of disapproval towards it. It is noteworthy that Kureishi's criticism extends beyond Islam to encompass Christianity as well. In his interview with Colin MacCabe (1999), the interviewee critiques the unchanging and stationary characteristics of religion by asserting that:

> I mean, a religion isn't only something that you just swallow whole. It is a pick and choose thing too. I mean, there are bits of it you emphasize, bits of it you still use, bits of it that you're not interested in, that are redundant, and so on. And I think all Muslims have to come to terms with that, because an old religion in the modern world is a strange thing. And that religion has to evolve too (MacCabe, 1999, p. 51).

Given Hanif Kureishi's tendency to challenge established social norms, it is not surprising that he created a character who experiences a sense of unease with the rigid dogma and restrictive doctrines of religious organizations. According to Maria Degabriele (1999), a significant conflict arises from the contradiction between fundamentalism and postmodernism, resulting in an identity crisis. The author posits that the novel appears to endorse the concept of fluid identities (p.3). Bronwyn T. Williams also (1999) observes that Kureishi's *The Black Album* endeavors to blend the language of the prevailing culture, with the aim of restructuring the notion of all cultural identities as being fluid and diverse (p. 2). According to Williams' (1999) analysis, Shahid experiences a sense of conflict as he navigates the diverse cultures he

encounters. Ultimately, he rejects the notion of a rigid, unchanging identity and instead seeks a more fluid and dynamic approach to self-formation (p.2). Williams further comments on this issue by stating that;

> Yet, Shahid 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 inhabit. He cannot give himself to either the pure faith required by Riaz or the pure skepticism required by Deedee. 'The problem was, when 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'. When he accompanies Deedee to fashionable coffee houses, he can't help realizing that he is the only dark face. When he goes to Tower Hamlets with Chad to try to help Pakistani and Indian families under threat of violence, he is rejected by both those residents and by the White working class English families with whom he tries to reason. Near the novel's end, Shahid tries to find the agency of faith in the post-modern moment (p. 4).

In the novel, we encounter very similar statements from the protagonist that aligns with the observations made by Williams. Shahid openly talks about how he embraces the pluralistic way of life by saying that;

> How could anyone confine themselves to one system or creed? Why should they feel they had to? There was no fixed self; surely our several selves melted and mutated daily? There had to be innumerable ways of being in the world. He would spread himself out, in his work and in love, following his curiosity (Kureishi, 1995, p. 274).

In his interview with Bradley Buchanan, Kureishi highlights the notion that the issue of identity lacks a definitive resolution or ultimate conclusion. This situation elucidates Shahid's endeavor to explore numerous possibilities of self-expression during the process of his identity development.

Throughout his quest in London, Shahid Hassan "wanted a new start with new people in a new place" (1995, Kureishi, p. 16). In his opinion, "there had to be ways in which he could belong" (p. 16). He seeks an exploration of the diverse opportunities and choices presented by the urban center of London. He arrives at the deduction that they are unable to conform to rigid classifications and recognizes their affiliation with the multifariousness of existence, in which rigid demarcations do not exist. In contrast to the Thatcherite political ideology that employs essentialist concepts to rigidly categorize individuals, Kureishi advocates for a post-modern perspective that views identity as a fluid, evolving, and continuous construct that resists finalization. Shahid Hassan arrives at a similar conclusion in the literary work entitled *The Black Album*. The author expounds upon their perspective regarding identity, highlighting its multifaceted nature, hybrid composition, and dynamic character, as evidenced by the subsequent statements:

> He believed everything; he believed nothing. His own self increasingly confounded him. One day he could passionately feel one thing, the next day the opposite. Other times provisional states would alternate from hour to hour; sometimes all crashed into chaos. He would wake up with this feeling; who would he turn out to be on this day? How many warring selves were there within him? Which was his real, natural self? Was there such a thing? How would he know it when he saw it? Would it have a guarantee attached to it? (Kureishi, 1995, p.147).

The quotation above shows us the continual change in his identity stemming from his already hybrid nature. Therefore, as Peter Hitchcock (2001) emphasizes, Kureishi considers identity "performative" and subject to "active negotiation" (p.757). Therefore, it can be claimed that Kureishi’s works do not offer a "straight-forward clash of fixed identities but a complex interplay of many cultural movements" (Buchanan, 2007, p.14).

The multidimensional exploration of Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album* provides an insightful understanding of identity, third space, mimicry, and ambivalence. Within the context of this novel, identity is not singular, static, or a product of mere inheritance; rather, it is fluid, multifaceted, and predominantly shaped by the environment. Shahid's journey towards self-discovery exemplifies the struggles associated with a fractured identity. Caught between his British upbringing and

Pakistani heritage, he personifies the ideological tussle that many immigrants or second-generation individuals grapple with. His struggle for identity unfolds within a third space, a liminal, in-between realm where identities are negotiated, often amidst dissonance and contradiction.

The third space, as conceptualized by Homi Bhabha, is the cultural terrain where the negotiations of identity take place. It is a space rife with both opportunity and struggle, allowing for the exploration of new identities but also provoking confrontation and internal conflict. In Shahid's case, the third space is his London environment, a mélange of conflicting ideologies, values, and expectations, where he tries to strike a balance between his Pakistani roots and the British culture he grew up in.

Mimicry is another theme present in *The Black Album*, as Shahid and other characters attempt to adopt the behaviors, language, and values of the dominant culture. For instance, Shahid's brother Chili is an example of mimicry, as he has adopted a "Cockney-Pakistani accent", and embraced the lifestyle of the London underworld. Chili's mimicry serves as a survival strategy, allowing him to navigate the hostile environment he finds himself in. Shahid's mimicry is subtler, as he attempts to fit into the predominantly white college environment by downplaying his cultural background. Kureishi writes, "Shahid felt as if he were undercover, spying on the English, learning their ways so he could become one of them" (Kureishi, 1995, p. 82). This quote illustrates Shahid's effort to assimilate into the dominant culture, highlighting the pressures faced by second-generation immigrants to conform to societal expectations.

Kureishi's portrayal of mimicry in *The Black Album* is intricately linked with the concept of identity. It manifests in Shahid's attempts to mimic the ideologies of the fundamentalist group, but ultimately it reveals his ambivalence towards these radical beliefs. Mimicry serves as a mechanism for Shahid to engage with the elements of identity and grapple with his sense of self, but it also underscores the peril of losing oneself in the process. Mimicry thus naturally leads to ambivalence, creating an emotional duality within Shahid. It accentuates his struggle with his dual identity, as he grapples with both assimilation into and isolation from British culture. His

inconsistent alliance with the fundamentalist group and his controversial relationship with Deedee illustrate this push-pull dynamic that governs his actions.

This thesis, therefore, affirms that *The Black Album* is not merely a socio-political commentary on radicalism, but rather a profound exploration of identity crisis, cultural hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence. It underscores Kureishi's adeptness at showcasing the lived reality of diasporic communities while simultaneously questioning the problematic nature of binary thinking prevalent in discussions about cultural and racial identity. The novel is a microcosm of the larger sociopolitical landscape, mirroring the complexities and challenges of navigating cultural hybridity in contemporary societies. Kureishi brilliantly exploits Shahid's journey as a reflection of the ambivalent quest for identity in a multicultural society, a journey that is fraught with contradictions, ambivalence, and constant renegotiation.

Notwithstanding, this thesis has conducted a thorough analysis of the noteworthy themes that are present in *The Black Album*. Nevertheless, it is imperative to recognize that Kureishi's literary work is a complex and intricate fabric of subtle connotations and communications. Additional investigation could explore additional topics such as postcolonialism, religious fundamentalism, and the influence of popular culture, thereby providing additional insight into the complex world that Kureishi has adeptly constructed.

In conclusion, Kureishi's *The Black Album* presents an engaging discourse on identity, third space, mimicry, and ambivalence, themes that bear significant implications for the contemporary discourse on multiculturalism and globalization. This exploration has allowed for a deeper understanding of the complexities of diasporic identity, thus adding to the larger dialogue on multicultural identity and the struggles inherent in navigating third spaces.

3. DECONSTRUCTION OF ENGLISHNESS BY THE FIRST-GENERATION IMMIGRANTS IN *THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA* AND *THE BLACK ALBUM*

The portrayal of the initial wave of immigrants' endeavor to attain societal standing in the two literary works necessitates a contextual elucidation from a historical perspective. The appearance of immigrants in England gave rise to discontent among the native population. With the onset of increased immigration, there was a discernible rise in the level of conflict between the immigrant demographic and the indigenous populace. As a result, the immigrants mentioned above faced a multitude of difficulties stemming from their limited integration into English society, largely attributable to social and economic considerations (Baucom, 1999, p. 7).

The notion of a completely pure English identity, which was passionately endorsed by Margaret Thatcher, is dismantled through the narratives of initial-generation migrants Haroon, Anwar, and Shahid's father, who carve out their own spheres to navigate their existence within a community where racial bias and a well-defined conception of national identity are deeply entrenched. They endeavor not only to adopt an English identity, but also to assume various other identities in order to navigate a society that habitually withholds social acceptance from immigrants. Through his portrayal of the initial wave of immigrants, Hanif Kureishi effectively challenges the conventional notion of Englishness and offers a critique of the socially constructed representations of national identity.

The first wave of immigrants, lacking familiarity with British culture and society, endeavored to emulate the stereotypical English way of life as a means of securing financial stability in the United Kingdom (Schone, 1998, p. 116). The immigrants faced significant challenges, including difficulties in adapting to their new environment and experiencing discrimination based on their skin color. Residing in a foreign nation induces a decreased sense of emotional connection to one's country of birth. Conversely, exclusionary policies that neglect the presence of immigrants within the evolving British society hinder their assimilation. Consequently, individuals experience a sense of conflict and confinement as they navigate their path in a British society that is progressively multicultural. Consequently, it is imperative

for individuals to establish an intermediary realm whereby they integrate fragments of their native culture with that of British culture, thereby engendering a state of hybridity. It is important to make reference to Homi K. Bhabha's perspectives on identity and culture in this context. Bhabha posits that the establishment of a third space for the co-existence of identity leads to a re-conceptualization of the term, rendering it flexible and opening novel interpretations. Because of the dynamic character of identity, it is constantly accessible to different interpretations due to the fact that it is not predetermined.

Kureishi's questioning the concept of Britishness in Haroon's mindset is a notable instance of irony. Haroon's perception of the English as a superior being was heavily influenced by colonial ideology (Kureishi, 1990, p.258). Nonetheless, Haroon's encounter with authentic English individuals and culture did not align with his initial expectations (Sezer, 2010, p. 23). His disillusionment is articulated in the following manner:

> Dad was amazed and heartened by the sight of the British in England, though. He'd never seen the English in poverty, as road sweepers, dustmen, shopkeepers and barmen. He'd never seen an Englishman stuffing bread into his mouth with his fingers, and no one had told him the English did not wash regularly because the water was so cold- if they had water at all. And when Dad tried to discuss Byron in local pubs no one warned him that not every Englishman could read or they did not necessarily want tutoring by an Indian on the poetry of a pervert and a madman (Kureishi, 1990, p.24-25).

Haroon's comprehension leads him to recognize that Britishness, akin to numerous other concepts, is precarious and lacks a definitive set of parameters. Haroon's perception of his inferiority to English individuals in nearly all aspects of life stems from his personal experience during the colonial era in India. Nevertheless, with the accumulation of experience resulting from his interactions with individuals in England, he comes to the realization that English individuals exhibit diversity in various aspects. Furthermore, he holds the perception that his family possesses superiority over English individuals in numerous aspects. The significant influence of

Haroon's familial ties is noteworthy, as Margaret asserts their superiority over the Churchill family (Kureishi, 1990, p. 24).

Despite Haroon's perception of his superiority over English individuals in several aspects, he remains interested in adopting English customs to navigate and thrive in their community. Therefore, he creates his liminal space and tries to preserve his position by mimicking the Englishman.

> Das was sitting on the white counterpane of his bed, cleaning his ten pairs, with patience and care, every Sunday morning. Then he brushed his suits, chose his shirts for the week-one day pink, the next blue, the next lilac and so on-selected his cufflinks, and arranged his ties, of which there were at least a hundred (Kureishi,1990, p.47).

Kureishi's portrayal of Haroon's ordinary Sunday gives us the impression that Haroon prefers to live like an Englishman. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that he does not completely abandon his Indian customs. His eating habits in particular make us think that he still feels like he belongs to Indian culture (Moore-Gilbert, 2001, p. 132). In addition to this, it seems that Haroon enjoys it a lot when he encounters an atmosphere in his house that makes him feel like he is in India. Haroon "loves it when people come and go the house full of talk and activity, as it would be in Bombay" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 47). This situation strongly highlights the fact that the idea of a pure culture is a myth, an impossibility in an already mixed society.

Haroon exhibits a keen awareness of his Indian heritage as a distinct component of his personal identity, while concurrently acknowledging his integration into English society. Despite not being recognized by English people as part of England, he effectively embodies elements of both cultures, thereby establishing a liminal stance. Hanif Kureishi critically examines the notion of cultural purity in a multicultural society such as England, and posits that individuals like Haroon occupy an intermediary position, synthesizing and amalgamating diverse cultural influences. In the novel, Hanif Kureishi offers explicit criticism of the concepts of nationhood, belonging, and the pursuit of a pure identity. This critique is conveyed through the

character of Haroon, who challenges narrow definitions of nationhood and belonging (Moore-Gilbert, 2001, p. 131–32).

Haroon was compelled by the exclusionary political climate of the Thatcher era to explore alternative methods of achieving visibility and acceptance as an Englishman. At the outset of his journey to England, Haroon held the belief that assimilating into English culture would guarantee his social integration. Thus, Haroon arrives at the conclusion that suppressing his Indian identity would enable him to evade instances of racism and social exclusion. Karim provides commentary on this matter and reflects on the impact of his father's perspective on his own worldview in the following manner:

> But 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. Partly I blamed Dad for this. After all, like Anwar, for most of his life he'd never shown any interest in going back to India. He was always honest about this: he preferred England in every way (Kureishi, 1990, p. 212-213).

Within this particular context, Haroon proceeds to caution Karim against inviting his Indian acquaintances over to his residence, as he perceives them to be individuals who may potentially promote actions that are disruptive (Kureishi, 1990, p. 73). To clarify, he establishes a liminal position with the intention of receiving recognition and approval from the community.

Despite Haroon's attempts to assimilate into English society, he continues to face rejection and exclusion. Consequently, he opts to transform his persona into the Buddha of Suburbia, a composite identity that he anticipates will furnish him with a dwelling place. Consequently, he decides to adopt the persona of a "Muslim who commodifies himself for the purpose of catering to the desires of white suburbanites seeking spiritual enlightenment through the guidance of an Oriental-Hindu Buddhist guru" (Yousaf, 1996, p. 40). According to Wohlsein (2008), despite not adhering to the Buddhist faith in its true form, he chooses to capitalize on their unique appearance

and cater to the suburban population's fascination with Eastern philosophy (p.43). The act resulted in the emergence of a novel region and a distinct sense of self (Wohlsein, 2008, p. 45). Kureishi's portrayal of Haroon's adoption of a fabricated Buddhist persona serves to underscore the notion that identity is a complex and multifaceted construct that defies simplistic categorization. According to Berthold Schoene's (1998) explanation, the transition from one stereotype to another occurs in the following manner:

> Kureishi deconstructs common conceptions concerning the authenticity of individual and group identities, demonstrating that no clear differentiating line can be drawn between being and acting. Nothing is more patent than the Buddha's own in authenticity. What Haroon's English followers celebrate as his innate spirituality and indigenous wisdom has in fact been gleaned from books on Buddhism, Sufism, Confucianism and Zen which he had bought at the Oriental bookshop in Cecil Court (p.116).

Kureishi employs a humorous and satirical approach to illustrate the ease with which identities can be constructed, thereby ridiculing unambiguous categorizations of identity and culture. Karim is astounded by his father's excessive imitation of Indian culture. Haroon was found to be producing a hissing sound while articulating the letter "s" and intentionally amplifying his Indian accent. He had dedicated a significant amount of time attempting to assimilate into English culture and reduce their visibility, but now they were exhibiting a marked increase in their distinctiveness. (Kureishi, 1990, p. 21). Upon recognizing that the alluring Eastern notion has garnered public interest and elevated his prominence, Haroon constructs a novel amalgamated persona to attain societal approval. Schoene (1998) explains this complex issue by saying that "Haroon starts off as the mimic Englishman and, when this fails, he becomes a mimic Indian" (p. 66). He assumes the persona of a Buddha, albeit in an ironic capacity, with the intention of appeasing white suburban demographics who may lack a nuanced understanding of the diverse ethnic and religious factions present within India.

Haroon Amir ultimately arrives at the determination that he "will never be anything but an Indian" (Kureishi, 1995, p. 263). Haroon's endeavor to acquire knowledge and understanding of Buddhist practices and beliefs, with the aim of

appearing more aligned with the religion, is comprehensible within the given context. It is noteworthy to consider that Kureishi vehemently critiques essentialist concepts and characterizations of identity by means of Haroon's emulation of a Buddhist. Kureishi's work involves a deconstruction of prevalent notions regarding the genuineness of individual and collective identities. This serves to illustrate that a distinct demarcation between one's inherent nature and one's outward behavior cannot be easily established. The lack of authenticity in the Buddha's teachings is a conspicuous aspect (Schone, 1998, p. 116).

Anwar, akin to his sibling Haroon, migrated to England with the objective of acquiring a degree of exceptional academic level. Nonetheless, his aspirations of pursuing a scholarly existence were abruptly curtailed upon his acquisition of funds through a betting establishment. Anwar's decision to establish a retail outlet named Paradise Stores, with the support of his wife Jeeta, had a profound impact on the trajectory of his life. Following the establishment of their shop, Anwar and his spouse's focus and attention became centered around it. "Paradise opened at eight in the morning and closed at ten at night. They did not even have Sundays off now" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 51). Due to this situation, he did not have the time to truly become familiar with the way of life in Britain. However, this situation does not entirely cut his ties with British culture. In fact, we see that Anwar really likes being a part of the Western lifestyle (Wolshein, 2008, p. 37). For instance, he "loved the prostitutes who hung around Hyde Park" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 25). Furthermore, it was observed that Anwar consumed pork pies, albeit discreetly, when Jeeta was not present (Kureishi, 1990, p. 64). Anwar, like Haroon, tries to follow and live like the English people so that he can survive in their society. Nonetheless, it should be noted that he has not entirely disregarded his Indian cultural background. Conversely, he is continually taking strides towards hybridity, resulting in an ongoing and perpetual process of identity formation.

Anwar, having resided predominantly in England alongside his wife, Jeeta, is contemplating the notion that their familial Indian identity has become invisible. The aforementioned epiphany dawns upon him by means of his daughter, Jamila, whose current way of life he discerns to be significantly influenced by Western culture. Consequently, Anwar opts to re-embrace his Indian identity by reinstating his indigenous cultural practices and principles. Karim observes that Anwar and Dad, as

they grew older and established themselves in their current location, began to exhibit a sense of internal reversion towards India or a resistance towards the English presence in their surroundings (Kureishi, 1990, p. 64).

Anwar endeavors to instill his indigenous cultural practices and principles in his daughter Jamila by coercing her into accepting an arranged marriage. Jamila refuses the offer due to her adoption of Western values and cultures, as well as her firm adherence to feminist principles that she learned through her experiences with Miss Cutmore. Anwar employs a revolutionary approach akin to that of Mahatma Gandhi in order to persuade his daughter to accept a marriage proposal and to regain his patriarchal authority. He posits that "If Gandhi could shove out the English from India by not eating, I can get my family to obey me by exactly the same" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 60).

Despite Anwar's persuasion for his daughter to wed Changez, his aspirations remain unfulfilled as both Jamila and Changez fail to conform to the conventional societal expectations of their respective gender roles. Initially, it can be observed that Changez does not adhere to the Islamic faith, contrary to Anwar's aspirations and presumptions. Furthermore, he is not bound by Indian cultural norms in various aspects. Changez is a man who seeks to immerse himself in British culture by shedding any perceived limitations, rather than indulging in the pleasures of Paradise Store. This scenario conveys the notion that the concept of constructing essentialist conceptions of nationhood and identity, as exemplified by Changez and Jamila, is ineffective even within the confines of the familial unit. Despite Jamila's compliance with the arranged marriage for her mother's sake, she thwarts Anwar's aspirations of grandchildren by denying Changez a sexual relationship with her.

The ultimate downfall of Anwar is due to the fact that he is unable to comprehend the natural progression that he and his family have experienced. At one point in the conversation, he began to accuse individuals from England of being unethical. On the other hand, he is also of the opinion that "Allah had abandoned him despite regular prayers and refusal to womanize" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 172). Because he cannot fathom the concept that ignoring the English side of his identity would not stabilize his status in society and would not provide him satisfaction, it is evident that Anwar is pretty split between the two cultures. It is fairly apparent that Anwar feels

quite torn between the two cultures. He gave it his best effort to persuade himself that he would not evolve during the course of his life in England but would instead remain same. Lee Yu-cheng (1996) offers some commentary on this topic and claims that:

> When he hides himself in the nutshell of his ethnic particularity, he begins to cut himself from his immediate social-cultural environment, so much so that he turns himself into something ludicrous and irrational. His unbending insistence on the pure and authentic, as my reading tries to convey, also brings him-and his family-total destruction (p. 14).

According to Nahem Yousaf's (2002) analysis, Anwar's invocation of Islam serves to establish a sense of immutable identity rooted in his country of origin, a notion that Kureishi critiques and ridicules (p.44). Anwar endeavored to contemporize his Indian heritage and reinstate a devout Muslim way of life. Regrettably, he was unable to comprehend that his daughter's hybrid nature is immutable and cannot be negated. Yasmin Alibhai Brown (2000) gives the following description of the inability of immigrant families to comprehend this change:

> Many Asian families are only just beginning to understand the dynamics of immigration. The assumption was that people could emigrate in order to improve their economic prospects without anything else changing at all. They found instead that family members began to be influenced by the society in which they were living (p. 140).

It appears that Anwar's inability to adapt to English society can be attributed to his reluctance to acknowledge the cultural identity shift that his family has experienced. According to Sauerberg (2001), it is not possible to describe and comprehend the contemporary world using the concepts of uniformity and a single culture (p. 5). The current situation has become increasingly intricate, dynamic, and challenging to fully grasp due to the multitude of factors at play.

It is noteworthy that Anwar has experienced a transformation as a result of his exposure to a distinctly divergent culture. The transformation in his demeanor has been observed through his diverse encounters in England, some of which clash with

his religious beliefs. At a certain juncture, he developed a sense of discontentment towards the notion of adopting English customs and conventions. Consequently, he endeavored to eliminate English traditions and principles by reinstating Islamic and Indian cultural values. Anwar's transition between two distinct cultures serves as an indication of their liminal stance, which is made apparent in a society where establishing a sense of belonging can prove to be challenging. Thus, it can be argued that the pursuit of identity persists throughout the entirety of his lifespan.

As a first-generation immigrant, Shahid's father endeavored to assimilate into English society in order to establish his own identity and receive equitable treatment akin to that of the native populace. Furthermore, he expresses a desire to impart British cultural norms and values to his offspring, including the acquisition of high-quality attire and instruction in the English way of living, with the aim of facilitating their integration into the broader community. Stated differently, his belief is that by emulating the English populace, they will be able to carve out a niche for themselves.

Finding a place to exist in an exclusionist society forces characters to seek alternative ways. Shahid's father thinks that in a nation where immigrants are not treated as citizens, only hard work can enable them to get to a certain position. For this reason, when he was asked about his belief, he responds, "Yes, I have a belief. It’s called working until my arse aches!" (Kureishi, 1995, p. 92). The dread of being derided by others and looked down upon by his own relatives has such a profound effect on Shahid's father that he goes insane when he discovers his son's passion for literature. Shahid's father desires for him to engage in respectable behavior in order to avoid the negative consequences of being an immigrant.

The first wave of immigrants encountered significant challenges adapting to the unfamiliar cultural milieu and securing social integration during their sojourn in England. This constituted a significant factor contributing to the manifold obstacles they encountered throughout their stay in England. The aforementioned procedure was already arduous; however, the individuals' comparatively robust connections to their respective countries of origin exacerbated the difficulty, resulting in a predicament where they found themselves in an “in-between” position. People who found themselves located at the intersection of many cultural settings, which resulted

in a constant state of flux, were faced with the task of forging a stable identity for themselves.

In conclusion, it is evident that the two works of Hanif Kureishi, *'The Black Album*' and *'The Buddha of Suburbia'*, brilliantly mirror the complex realm of identity construction, illustrating a chaotic intersectionality of race, religion, and culture in the context of first-generation immigrants. The characters in these novels occupy a 'third space', an arena that is neither their original homeland nor their adopted country but a liminal zone where identities are continuously shaped and reshaped. In both *'The Black Album*' and *'The Buddha of Suburbia'*, Kureishi brings into focus the immigrant's struggle to find a unique identity in the maelstrom of cultural confrontation and adaptation. The first immigrants are also caught in the juxtaposition between their inherited culture and the Western society in which they reside. The state of constant flux that this juxtaposition initiates leads to their development within a 'third space' of their own creation, allowing them to experiment with different identities.

The 'third space', according to cultural theorist Homi Bhabha, is a liminal zone that dismantles the seeming certainty of stereotypical categorization, destabilizing the established identities of the self and the other. Kureishi uses this space to dissect the mimetic approach that immigrants employ in a bid to assimilate into the host society. Haroon, Anwar, and Shadid's father mimic the Western society in their quest for belonging, but it results in a state of ambivalence, an oscillation between the familiar and the foreign.

Mimicry, as represented in the novels, becomes a form of mockery, illustrating the inability of immigrants to fully integrate or to reject entirely their cultural roots. Shahid's involvement with radical Islamist group and Karim's fascination with acting underline the intensity of their efforts to fit in, yet they are unable to shed their deep-rooted ties to their cultural origins. The continuous tension between the past and the present, the original and the adopted, renders their identities ambivalent, highlighting the paradoxical nature of mimicry.

The characters' ambivalence reflects the predicament of first-generation immigrants who find themselves in a constant balancing act between adopting the

host culture and preserving their ancestral heritage. The notion of home becomes fluid, an amalgam of the remembered and the immediate, producing a sense of displacement and non-belonging. This sense of alienation is counterbalanced by the 'third space', which is a potential site for the emergence of new hybrid identities, as illustrated by Kureishi's characters. This duality and the concomitant search for a sense of self and belonging is Kureishi's commentary on the experiences of first-generation immigrants. His nuanced exploration of identity, mimicry, and the 'third space' makes a powerful case for the reconsideration of the immigrant narrative and the stereotypical binary of 'us' and 'them'.

Both novels validate the concept of identity as being complex and multilayered, rather than fixed and binary. The protagonist's journey through the 'third space' is an exploration of this complexity. Despite the dilemmas and ambivalences, Kureishi emphasizes that it is in this disordered space that innovative identities can emerge, challenging the conventional notions of selfhood.

To conclude, Kureishi, through *'The Black Album'* and *'The Buddha of Suburbia'*, offers a profound insight into the existential chaos that the first-generation immigrants undergo. His portrayal of the 'third space', mimicry, and ambivalence underscores the intricacies involved in identity formation amidst cultural hybridity. These novels implore readers to comprehend the diversity of the immigrant experience and encourage a more nuanced understanding of identity as a fluid, complex, and evolving concept, beyond simplistic binaries and fixed perceptions.

4. HYBRIDITY, MIMICRY AND AMBIVALENCE IN ZADIE SMITH'S *WHITE TEETH*

Colonialism brought about a significant alteration of people's identities. Since then, many theorists have developed ideas to account for diversity in the post-colonial era. Homi Bhabha, who developed post-colonial theory, was one of these theorists. He argued that multiculturalism in the post-colonial period brought about concepts like otherness, hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, and fragmentation. In her book, *White Teeth*, renowned British writer Zadie Smith brings to light the ethnic differences during World War II and their effects on people. The book contains diverse ethnicities, religions, and cultures and centers on three families of different races. These families are the Iqbals, Joneses, and Chalfens. This chapter analyzes Zadie Smith's novel, *White Teeth*, by studying three major concepts in Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory. These concepts are hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence. Moreover, the chapter explains the difficulties experienced by the characters in attaining hybridity, employing the mimicry aspect to cope with the problems, and the resultant ambivalence as they try to choose the most suitable culture to adopt.

One very evident principle of postcolonial theory is hybridity. Close and frequent interaction among people of different origins brought about cultural diversity. During World War II, for example, conquerors brought people from the countries they ruled into the army to make it bigger. So, people from European countries were able to talk to people of other races while the war was going on. This is where different cultures were witnessed and continued with increased immigration to other countries, even after colonization. In the novel, *White Teeth*, Zadie uses the characters to bring out the hybridity aspect. The results of the hybrid could be positive or negative. The negative part is that it resulted in cultural trauma, as some people had to abandon their culture. On the other hand, the positive result produced a more robust, less rigid species (Khaleel, 2019, p. 1).

In her novel, *White Teeth*, Zadie Smith adeptly portrays the challenges of hybridity that emerged in the wake of post-colonialism. The novel centers on individuals who are first-generation immigrants residing in the north-west region of London, along with the children they raised (Dutta, 2013, p. 2). The experience of

hybridity can be challenging for first-generation individuals who have migrated to England, as they may have previously been accustomed to their native cultures. Individuals may encounter challenges when attempting to relinquish or dismiss their established beliefs in favor of a novel setting. The novel depicts various instances of this phenomenon. One such example is when Samad expresses his discontentment towards his acquaintance Jones for addressing him as "Sam," which could be perceived as a diminutive version of his given name. He responds by saying, "My name is Samad Miah Iqbal. Not Sam". Not Sam. Not Sammy. And not -God forbid— Samuel. It is Samad" (Smith, 2000, p. 112). This demonstrates the inflexibility of adjusting to different cultural contexts. The narrative depicts various dimensions of hybridity, including but not limited to religion, culture, race, and lifestyle. The acceptance of ethnic diversity ought to be encouraged and not employed as a tool for discriminatory practices within certain societies. The aforementioned assertion is discernible in the text, as Zadie articulates:

> This has been the century of strangers, brown, yellow and white. This has been the century of the great immigrant experiment. It is only this late in the day that you can walk into a playground and find Isaac Leung by the fish pond, Danny Rahman in the football cage, Quang O'Rourke bouncing a basketball, and Irie Jones humming a tune. Children with first and last names on a direct collision course (Smith, 2000, p. 326).

The concept of racial hybridity, which is characterized by the coexistence of diverse racial groups within a specific geographic region, arose as a result of immigration to England and subsequent intermarriage between people of various racial backgrounds and those of white European descent. Through the process of immigration, certain characters, such as the Iqbals and Charfels, have contributed to the emergence of diverse racial groups. Jones's daughter Irie is notable for her mixed-race ancestry, as her mother was Jamaican and her father was English (Fernandez, 2017, p. 146). This facet of her history has led to her association with other ethnic groups. The novel highlights the presence of racial discrimination against non-white individuals, as evidenced by Mrs. Roody, Irie's teacher, insinuating that individuals of black ethnicity can only exist in England as enslaved individuals. The speaker asserts that individuals of African descent are limited to the status of enslaved persons, thereby suggesting the necessity of a racial amalgamation that acknowledges and

celebrates one's ethnic heritage. Hortense, Clara’s mother, engages in racial disputes regarding her daughter's union with a white person. Additionally, she imparts to her granddaughter the importance of embracing her Jamaican heritage, as it is her rightful cultural identity. A more just and peaceful society can only be achieved through concerted efforts to foster understanding and acceptance between people of various races. Before seeking approval and acceptance from members of other cultures, people of all backgrounds must first fully accept and appreciate their own. The British people expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the surge in the population of individuals who are not of white ethnicity in London. This action is performed in the company of individuals named Irie, Clara, and the Iqbals, who are identified as non-white. These actions contribute to increased difficulty in fostering positive relationships between individuals of diverse racial backgrounds. Similar to the elusive future mouse that managed to escape from its captors, individuals belonging to ethnic minority groups now have an opportunity to strive for societal acceptance and liberation. It is possible to achieve this outcome without resorting to violent conflicts between different racial groups.

In the context of the war, Samad requests Jones to carry out an assassination of Dr. Sick, a physician who holds discriminatory views against non-white individuals, with the intention of welcoming himself to the white community. Despite efforts to combat racism, it remains a persistent issue. Upon discovering that the doctor is still alive and being protected by Jones, Samad comes to the realization that neither war nor death can serve as a solution to this problem. An additional facet of racism pertains to Samad's grandfather, who is recognized for initiating the initial shot during the Indian Rebellion Samad holds the belief that he possesses the potential to attain a level of greatness equivalent to that of his grandfather. Regrettably, the accomplishments of his grandfather remain unrecognized by the British. This illustrates a lack of interest among individuals of the white race in the achievements of individuals belonging to other races. If Samad's grandfather were white, he would have likely gained respect in the military. Despite possessing strong qualifications, he was employed as a waiter and faced financial difficulties.

Another crucial aspect is the diversity of the characters' religious beliefs. Conflicts arise among the characters due to differences in religion. For instance, the relationship between Ryan Topps and Clara ends once he decides to join Jehovah's

Witness, a religion Clara is not interested in. Clara's rebellion against her mother's religion causes her to get married to an Englishman. Samad Iqbal is a Muslim by religion and gets married to a fellow Muslim. He cannot practice his Islamic beliefs in London, as the environment leads him to do things such as drinking and having extramarital affairs, which are against Islam's rules. Magid wants to participate in a harvest festival, but his father, Samad, will not allow it since it is a Christian festival. A Muslim should not participate in Christian activities, which he terms "pagan practices." Samad tells his son, "I told you already. I do not want you to participate in that nonsense. It has nothing to do with us, Magid. Why are you always trying to be someone you are not?" (Smith, p. 126). He even goes to his son's school to suggest replacing Christian holidays with Muslim events, which is turned down. It is obvious that Smith's characters are looking for answers to fit in. However, they "find themselves caught in between various binaries: the religious and the secular (Millat), Eastern and Western values (Samed), the past and the present (Irie)" (Ali & Ibrahim, 2019, p. 331).

Millat and Magid decide to attend the festival despite the fact that their father strongly discouraged them from going. They see their father having an affair with their instructor in this location. As a result of witnessing the unethical actions of the person who persisted on clinging to his initial culture, they made the decision to entirely reject the culture of their father and instead adopt the English way of life. Millat has decided to become a member of the Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation, commonly referred to as KEVIN for abbreviation. Millat engages in actions that are in direct opposition to his religious views, despite the fact that the movement expects him to be a devout Muslim. He is abusing drugs in addition to engaging in unethical activities. It just so happens that the Chiefs are Jewish Catholics, but this is a religion that they do not practice since they are committed to their investigation of the mice of the future. It is clear that the people do not practice any form of religious hybridity since each individual adheres to their own set of ideas, and they are reluctant to abandon those views.

During the post-colonial era, the English populace integrated a multitude of cultures with varying origins. The union between Samad Iqbal and Alsana was arranged, indicating that their cultural norms mandated their matrimony rather than affording them the autonomy to independently choose their partner. Alsana had been

betrothed to Iqbal since her infancy. Conversely, Jones entered into matrimony with Clara despite the significant age difference between them, indicating that their romantic affiliation was a voluntary decision rather than an outcome of any form of compulsion. The literary work discloses that the initial cohort of individuals to inhabit the north-western region of London comprised Samad Iqbal, Archie Jones, Marcus Chalfens, Hortense Chalfens, and Joyce Chalfens. The second generation is constituted by the offspring of the individuals in question, specifically Clara, Joshua, Irie, Millat, Magid, and Ryan. The second generation does not selectively choose their role models. Due to the limited options available, children often observe and emulate the behaviors of their parents, both constructive and detrimental, in search of a role model. Iria replicates the attributes and qualities of Hortense's identity.

Millat displays similar behavior to that of Joyce, whereas Magid imitates Marcus to some extent, who are the custodians of the Everlasting and Triumphant Islamic Nation, frequently denoted as KEVIN. Joshua joins Fighting Animal Torture and Exploitation (FATE), a group committed to addressing issues related to animal abuse and exploitation. Marcus and Joyce exhibit a tendency to prioritize the care of Samad's and Jones's children over that of their own son, Joshua (Wille, 2011, p. 459). The caretakers of the twin brothers and Irie endeavored to inculcate in them the cultural norms and customs of Chalfenism. Joyce attempts to convince Millat to abandon his Islamic faith, while her partner, Marcus, is collaborating with Magid and Irie on scientific pursuits. The culmination of the interpersonal exchange between Millat and Irie results in the formation of a close bond. However, Millat's departure ensues as he aligns himself with the KEVIN movement. Subsequently, Irie develops a close bond with Millat's indistinguishable sibling, culminating in her conception. However, she is unable to determine the biological father of her offspring. This notion serves as evidence of a decline in ethical standards within a community that lacks a cohesive cultural framework. The initial cohort expresses reluctance towards the succeeding generation's assimilation of English culture due to apprehensions that such a course of action may result in the eradication of their customary lifestyle.

The succeeding generation seeks to acculturate into the dominant English culture in order to attain a sense of belonging and social integration. Clara demonstrates a notable degree of autonomy by refusing to conform to her mother's religious convictions, even when her significant other espouses them. Conversely, she

enters into matrimony with a gentleman who possesses a considerably greater number of years on this earth than she does, surpassing her age by a factor of two or more.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, England encountered a deficit of workforce, specifically for tasks that required substantial manual labor. The resolution entailed securing employment opportunities within colonized nations, wherein individuals with commendable qualifications were relegated to performing manual labor (McMann, 2012, p. 623). The wage that was provided was insufficient, leading to an inability to sustain their accustomed way of life. Consequently, immigrants were precluded from experiencing an equivalent level of affluence as their white counterparts, who frequently received a satisfactory remuneration for their labor. The realization of lifestyle hybridity was impeded by the significant discrepancy in remuneration.

The character of Samad, who serves as the central figure in Smith's *White Teeth*, is portrayed as a seasoned engineer who is currently employed in the capacity of a waiter. His income is insufficient to procure high-quality sustenance for his household. This is evident in the book, where his wife questions him, asking, "What is the point of moving here—nice house, yes, very nice, very nice—but where is the food?" (Smith, 2000, p. 62). Alsana, the spouse of the individual in question, is similarly obligated to engage in extended periods of work to supplement the modest income earned by her partner. A notable cultural disparity exists between the lifestyle of native English individuals and that of immigrants who have settled in the country. Despite being a native Englishman, Jones is currently experiencing financial difficulties due to an unreliable source of income, which is impeding his ability to meet his financial obligations. This idea may be ascribed to his interpersonal connections with individuals of diverse backgrounds. This passage elucidates the notion that individuals who strive for the actualization of hybridity are, to a certain degree, subject to marginalization. The protagonist's spouse ultimately arrives at the realization that her partner is a mundane individual who invests his aspirations in arbitrary occurrences and subscribes to the notion that alterations can transpire with the mere flip of a coin, prompting her to express dissatisfaction with him.

The concept of hybridity presents a paradoxical nature as it falls short of achieving complete integration and concordance among diverse societies. Despite

having English-speaking friends, Samad experiences discrimination and neglect due to his cultural background. Therefore, it was not easy for him to develop a sense of belonging to London (Jagi, 2016, p.107). Despite the outward appearance of a genuine friendship, the relationship between him and Archie Jones is ultimately illusory. His endeavors to establish his sense of self in an unfamiliar environment have yielded no favorable outcomes. The children eventually assimilated into English culture due to societal expectations and the associated pressure to conform. Furthermore, the prevailing environment does not provide him with the opportunity to practice his Islamic faith. Several characters exhibit unwavering loyalty to their beliefs and are intolerant of dissenting opinions. Hortense, Clara's mother, serves as a compelling exemplar of this assertion. The level of commitment displayed by her towards the principles of Jehovah's Witness is such that even her daughter encounters challenges when her actions are at odds with the aforementioned beliefs. The relationship between Clara and her mother experiences a decline subsequent to Clara's disclosure of her desire to enter into matrimony with an individual who is not only of a dissimilar ethnic background but also older than her. Consequently, Clara's maternal figure has ceased all forms of communication with her offspring. Subsequently, Hortense endeavors to persuade her granddaughter, who possesses Jamaican heritage, to embrace the Jamaican cultural practices in order to remain authentic to her ancestral origins. She exhibits a lack of adaptability in selecting options that would be most advantageous for her.

The establishment of a thriving hybrid culture may present difficulties owing to the deeply ingrained nature of the beliefs and practices of the first generation. Samad demonstrates a reluctance to modify his cultural customs to facilitate the integration of his offspring into the prevailing societal standards. He relocates one of them to Bangladesh. The attempt of an individual to preserve their cultural heritage by marrying a partner from the same lineage is ultimately ineffective due to their inability to fully adhere to the tenets of Islam. Her partner exhibits a similar level of inflexibility, expressing a desire for their male offspring to adhere consistently to the prescribed prayer practices of the Islamic faith. Marcus exhibits authoritarian tendencies by refusing to adhere to his Jewish ancestry and rejecting English traditions, thereby aligning himself with a specific ideological position. She formulates their own methodologies and regulations, with the expectation that they

will be perceived as rational by their peers and that they will subsequently adhere to them. Ultimately, his endeavors are rendered ineffective. The scientific inquiry regarding the upcoming mouse, conducted by the aforementioned individual, is currently inaccessible to the general public, as the mouse is released prior to the disclosure of the research findings. The aforementioned occurrence can function as an exemplification of the insufficiency of cultural amalgamation that arises due to a lack of consistency.

Jonah, who is married to Clara, serves as a concrete example of the advantages that can be obtained through hybridization. He is of English origin and demonstrates a notable absence of bias, actively seeking out opportunities to interact with individuals from diverse national and cultural backgrounds. The aforementioned observation suggests that his beliefs and behaviors are comparatively less inflexible than those of the other characters belonging to the first generation. The matrimonial union between Jonah and Clara has resulted in a mutually beneficial relationship. Despite the fact that his child does not possess a completely white complexion, he does not exhibit any form of rejection towards her on account of this attribute. Clara demonstrates certain traits that indicate her openness to the concept of hybridity. As her primary concern is the well-being of Irie, she harbors no objection to her daughter's acquisition of knowledge pertaining to the Charfels. Upon her daughter's discovery of information regarding the Charfels. Notwithstanding this, she desires to express gratitude to the Charfels for their aid in augmenting her daughter's scholastic accomplishment. It is plausible that a more advantageous result could have been achieved had the second generation been afforded the chance to select cultures that were conducive to hybridization as a component of the procedure. Conversely, the limitations imposed upon individuals by their predecessors may result in flawed decision-making, subsequently culminating in detrimental conduct, such as unethical behavior.

It is prevalent among people from different backgrounds that when people of different ethnic groups stay together for an extended period, they eventually copy each other's ways of life. The weaker or minority groups mimic the more powerful ones to become better and more acceptable. In most cases, mimicry is viewed as a negative aspect, but Bhabha points out that it is, in most cases, not intentional (Chakrabarti, 2012, p. 13). Mimicry can be considered empowerment, involving

copying more productive aspects such as justice. Singh (2009) explained that the colonized people adapted mimicry to resemble their colonizers. The colonized people imitated their colonizers' languages, dress, religion, and cultural practices. (p.1) Zadie Smith illustrated this aspect several times in her book in many ways. The characters in White Teeth are of different backgrounds but eventually adapt to one another's behavior. Homi Bhabha argued that mimicry is a state where the colonized strive to be appropriate or suitable to their colonizers, thus being forced to adopt their culture. In the book, Samad is forced to abandon his Islamic beliefs to feel accepted in the new society. As a result, he ends up adapting to lousy behaviour that is against his religion. Analyzing each main character to understand how mimicry has been illustrated in white teeth is essential.

One concept that has been mimicked in the novel is religion. Millat joins KEVIN, a Muslim movement, not because he is interested in it but because he wishes to feel a sense of belonging. He participates in Christian activities such as harvest festivals, yet he is a member of a Muslim group. He mimics both the Muslim and Christian religions and participates in activities against both faiths, such as immorality and drug abuse. In the book, Zadie Smith described him in these words: "Millat was neither one thing nor the other, this or that, Muslim or Christian, English or Bengali; he lived for the in-between, he lives up to his middle name, Zulfikár, the clashing of two swords" (Smith, 2000, p. 351).

Samad Iqbal, a Muslim from Bangladesh, sends one of his sons, Magid, back to Bangladesh to keep his original religious practices. He doesn't want to forget or reject all of his culture, so he tries to keep it alive by having one of his sons take on his roots. But he doesn't want all of his sons to become like the bad people he has seen in London. Samad's efforts are wasted because Magid doesn't make a real effort to adopt Islamic culture in the long run. He even decides to study English law, ignoring the laws of Allah, which his father would have wished him to learn. In other words, "Magid grows up in Bangladesh, but when he returns to Britain, he is more English than the English" (Xiaomoto, 2019, p. 66). Samad Iqbal’s efforts to make his son embrace his so-called original culture and its practices serve no purpose. On his side, Samad has not been able to practice his Islamic beliefs and culture due to the London setting. He ends up mimicking English culture in many ways and is found by his sons having an extramarital affair with their teacher (Meyer, 2017, p.73). Moreover, he

drinks alcohol, a practice absent from his Islamic beliefs but present in English culture. Masturbation is prohibited for Muslims, but Samad is caught in the act. He despises the culture in England but finds himself imitating it. During World War II, Samad joined the English army to fight for his people. He also learns the English language to communicate with English people. Jones, an Englishman, has been an excellent friend to Samad since their time at war. Despite being against the English, he still keeps their company. Samad is also said to be a qualified engineer but is employed as a waiter in London. Despite being paid too little, he does not complain and is comfortable with the pay.

Mimicry has also been seen in the dressing styles of the immigrants. People from Bangladesh usually did not dress the same way as those in England. However, most of them are Muslims, so their dressing style is as per Islam's rules. In the novel, style imitation is seen in both Iqbal and his wife. She accuses him of dressing like the whites, yet she is not dressed in Bangladeshi attire. Iqbal tells her, "The difference is what is in here,' not looking at her, thumping just below the left breast bone. You say you are thankful we are in England because you have swallowed it whole. I can tell you those boys would have a better life back home than ever--" (Smith, 2000, p. 199).

Iqbal had brought Alsana from Bangladesh, hoping to maintain the Muslim culture and ensure that the whites did not brainwash their children. However, she also imitates most of the things that the people of England do. So, Iqbal is disappointed in her, but he also does something contrary to his culture.

Mimicry is further seen in the behaviour of Clara. She was born to a Jamaican mother, Hortense, who is a staunch follower of Jehovah's Witnesses. Clara did not agree to follow her mother's religion and chose ways that guaranteed her freedom. She has a boyfriend, Ryan Topps, whom she separated from after joining the Jehovah's Witness religion. She later marries Jones, an Englishman who is more than twice her age. She ignores her culture and adopts that of England. Together with her husband, they have a daughter, Irie. The irony is that Clara wants her daughter to learn the Jamaican culture from her grandmother, yet she runs away from the same culture. She does not want her daughter to adopt the English culture, despite her father being an Englishman.

The mimicry theory is also evident in the pressure exerted on the second generation. On the one hand, the first-generation pressures them to maintain their original cultural beliefs. On the other hand, the norms of English society push them to adopt the English culture to make them feel more acceptable and appropriate in the community. A second-generation first character is Magid, one of Samad's sons. While in school, Magid's friends change his name to Mark Smith, as they find the name Magid funny. This means that the second generation's English environment forces them to adopt English culture. Thus, even if one is willing to maintain their culture, it becomes impossible due to its surroundings. He wishes to be different from his people, and he wishes he had been born into another family. In *White Teeth*, Smith writes:

> Magid really wanted to be in some other family. He wanted to own cats and not cockroaches, and he wanted his mother to make the music of the cello, not the sound of the sewing machine; he wanted to have a trellis of flowers growing up one side of the house instead of the ever-growing pile of other people's rubbish; he wanted a piano in the hallway in place of the broken door off cousin Kurshed's car (Smith, 2000, p.152).

Magid refuses to follow his father's Islamic law and decides to study English law while in school. His father is furious since, according to him, the only right direction is that of Allah. Irie is another second-generation character in the book that does not accept her identity and is constantly searching for an identity that will enable her to fit in society and be treated like the whites. Her desire to adopt a white identity is spiked by her father's friend, Marcus, who shows her how wrong her culture is. Together with his wife, Joyce, he takes care of her in a bid to let her adopt his checklist culture. She feels inferior and is ashamed of her color. Her teacher does not improve the situation at school, as she says that blacks can only qualify to be enslaved. She changes her hair to resemble white by putting on white-like weaves. This, too, does not go well, as other students in the school notice the difference. Finally, she resolves to follow her mother's advice and go stay with her grandmother. While there, her grandmother, Hortense, convinces her to do away with the weaves and get her hair back. She is taught Jamaican culture and asked to stop being a slave to English culture, which she adheres to, but only for a short time.

Joshua, Marcus' son, also copies other behaviors that are not of Jewish origin. He joins his friends in drug abuse at school, which leads to punishment, where he and his friends are required to leave Marcus's home. While his friends learn from his parents, he joins a movement concerned with protecting animals against torture. This movement contradicts his father's research, where he holds a mouse for his research while imitating other people; Joshua ends up being against his father's scientific study. Joshua's mimicry can be considered intentional; he could have joined the FATE movement to bring down his parents' research for paying attention to his friends while sidelining him. Ryan Topps is another character who mimics a belief that he did not hold earlier. He was Clara's boyfriend in high school and did not believe in religion. Through Clara, he meets her mother, a staunch Jehovah's Witness follower. He imitates her faith and later joins her in it. Since Clara does not share his faith in Jehovah's Witnesses, their relationship is doomed to fail. She would much rather party, smoke, and drink. In the end, the couple breaks up because of their vast philosophical disagreements. Ryan continues to get religious teachings from Hortense, and he becomes her aide. He remains in this belief for so long that she still finds him when Clara's daughter stays with her grandmother. Ryan's mimicry can be unintentional since his initial interest was Clara and he did not adopt a different belief.

In his theory, Bhabha uses ambivalence to show the status of post-colonial people in a multicultural society. He further stated that the colonized people were in a contradictory state as they were torn between their original beliefs and their colonizers. On the one hand, there was a fear of ridicule and victimization when one failed to follow the English culture. However, there was a fear of losing the original culture due to adopting the white ways of life. On the other hand, Zadie Smith has illustrated the prevalence of ambivalence in her book, White Teeth, through characters like Samad Iqbal, Clara, Irie, Marcus, and Archie Jones.

Irie, Jones' daughter, was born in England to a mixture of English and Jamaican parents. However, she is not wholly accepted as white since her skin color is different. She finds herself ambivalent, unsure whether to adopt English or Jamaican cultural beliefs. Eventually, she chooses to become like the English and attempts to change her appearance. This, however, does not result in what she expected, as she ends up being ridiculed and is eventually traumatized. Later, she lives with her grandmother, Hortense, who convinces her to quit copying English practices and

instead create harmony with her Jamaican culture. Irie is caught between two cultures and is confused about which she should choose. She tries to be white but fails since her color is still different, and it is known that one of her parents is not from England. Her ambivalence is further demonstrated by the diverse origins of her parents. She is unsure whether to adopt her mother's Jamaican culture or her father's English culture. At one time, she worked with her father's friends, the Chalfens, who have a different culture called Chalfenists. The state of confusion later leads her to make a relationship mistake when she becomes romantically involved with the twin brothers, Magid and Millat. She becomes pregnant and cannot tell who the father of her child is.

The ambivalence can also be seen in Samad, who has adopted many aspects of English culture while retaining some of the customs and traditions that are unique to Bangladesh. As a result, Samad now has a dual identity. As a direct consequence of this, he winds up perplexed and exasperated, as is made clear in the novel when he asks his close friend Jones, "What am I good for, Jones? What would be left behind if I were to pull the gun on this situation? An Indian, a traitorous English Indian, with a limp wrist like a faggot and no medals that they can mail home with me" (Smith, 2000, p. 113).

Samad puts his children under a lot of stress in order to get them to follow the Islamic culture, and he even sends his son Magid to Bangladesh in order to keep his culture alive there. The fact that he does not adhere to the standards that he instills in his boys is the source of this conundrum. He is unable to exercise his Islamic values in an English environment, and as a result, he models poor behavior even in front of his children, which causes them to question the veracity of his culture. The problems that he opposes are the same problems that he has to deal with. He comes to realize that his acts were wrong and decides to end his connection with the tutor as a result. He blames the English people for his woes, stating that they are corrupt persons who have corrupted the immigrants. He portrays the English people as corrupt individuals who have contaminated the immigrants. In addition, he does not want to lose his Englishman buddy Jones, but despite the fact that Jones has betrayed him by not killing Doctor Pierre, he continues to retain their connection. Samad is unable to comprehend the fact that his son is only nominally interested in Islam because he is being coerced to practice it by the conditions in which he finds himself when Millat joins the KEVIN movement. Samad is in such a state of disorientation that he views

his tragedies as a form of retribution. He expresses his views on the issue by stating that;

> It is not guilt. It is fear. I am fifty-seven, Shiva. When you get to my age, you become ... concerned about your faith, you don't want to leave things too late. I have been corrupted by England, I see that now my children, my wife, they too have been corrupted. I think maybe I have made the wrong friends. Maybe I have been frivolous. Maybe I have thought intellect more important than faith. And now it seems this final temptation has been put in front of me. To punish me, you understand. Shiva, you know about women. Help me. How can this feeling be possible? I have known of the woman's existence for no more than a few months, I have spoken to her only once (Smith, 2000, p. 120).

Another character who finds himself ambivalent is Archie Jones. When his wife of thirty years abandons him, he contemplates ending his life but is saved by a stranger. He is of English origin, but he has friends of different races, Samad and Marcus. His longtime friend, Samad Iqbal, is a Muslim from Bangladesh. Clara's wife is also of a different origin, as she comes from Jamaica. Jones is forced to practise a culture that does not hurt his friends. He wants to go as per his culture. He betrays his friend, Samad, to protect his fellow Englishman, even to the point of taking a bullet for him. He also seems to have failed to advise his daughter, Irie, on the culture she should adopt. Irie struggles to find her identity, and her father does not give her any clear guidance as he is torn between pleasing his people and his friends. Jones is unaware of his origin and does not try to determine who his people are. After his wife left him, nothing more was said about him before he met Clara. This portrays him as someone who is unconcerned about his origins. His lack of concern is most affected by his daughter, who struggles to establish her identity.

Marcus is identified as having Jewish ancestry. Nevertheless, it appears that his beliefs do not align with those of others. He follows neither the Jewish culture nor the English one. Instead, he chooses to develop his own beliefs, Chalfenist. However, he faces one challenge: only he and his wife, Joyce, practice the culture. They, therefore, begin to influence other people to join their culture. They try to convince Millat and Irie to join them when the duo is asked to study at his house as a

punishment for using marijuana in school. Joyce is so interested in Millat, and she tries to convince him to quit his bad habits of smoking, drinking, and immorality. She is not friendly to Irie, who is instead interested in Marcus. However, they fail in their mission. Irie chooses to go to Africa, but her mother does not allow her and instead asks Irie to go to her grandmother to learn the Jamaican culture. She leaves for her grandmother's place, where she finds Ryan Topps, now her grandmother's aide. Millat prefers to join the Islamic military, named KEVIN. Magid, too, decides to be an atheist and proceeds to study science while in Bangladesh, where his father sent him. Joshua, Marcus' only son, is left out as his parents pursue their culture, and he leaves to join FATE, where he fights for animal rights. Marcus and his wife are eventually left on their own. Magid later joins them after he comes back to London. He is fascinated by Marcus' study of the future mouse and offers to help him until the project is launched.

As can be seen in *White Teeth*, ambivalence has been the root of many of the issues that have arisen inside families. Samad's state of desperation and perplexity contribute to the deterioration of his marriage to his wife as a result of the strain it places on both of them. He does not contact his wife before he dispatches Magid to Bangladesh; instead, he makes the decision on his own. His wife, Ansel, makes the decision to get her own back on him by choosing not to speak with him during the time that her first kid is away from home. This keeps him in a state of uncertainty. When Magid ultimately returns to London, he does not do so as a devout Muslim but rather as an agnostic and a scientist. This is a more devastating blow to Samad than he had anticipated. Because of this, Samad cannot be considered successful in their efforts to preserve Bangladeshi culture. Even though Magid had been living in Bangladesh for eight years, he returned to England as an atheist. This demonstrates that once a person makes the decision to adhere to a certain culture, not even a shift in their surrounding environment can cause them to abandon that decision. After that, Magid visits Marcus in his laboratory to assist him with his research on the Future Mouse. Together, they labor assiduously on the project and get it ready for launch. During the launch, Millat makes an effort to shoot the directors of the future mouse, but Jones manages to take the bullet that was intended for doctor Perret. When they reached that spot, the mouse managed to get away. The situation becomes even more confusing when Magid and Millat are accused of attempting to murder someone. The

fact that Jones was unable to differentiate between the twins that he shot might be seen as a metaphor for the oneness that is brought about through hybridization, to the point where it is impossible to determine the race of people (Turkson, 2009, p. 68).

The second generation is also affected by the confusion experienced in a bid to adopt or reject cultures. The children, Millat, Joshua, and Irie, get involved in the abuse of drugs as they are confused about their real identities. They receive a punishment in which they are forced to live with Joshua's parents. While there, they face more ambivalence as the Chalfens have different beliefs, which they attempt to instill in the children. Once more, the children rebel and leave to pursue other interests. Millat joins KEVIN, an Islamic movement. However, he does not adhere to the fundamentalist's beliefs as he gets into drug abuse and immorality, contrary to his expectations. All this is because he did not genuinely choose to belong to KEVIN but only forced himself into it to fit society. On the other hand, Irie decides to go to Africa, a move that her mother rejects and instead sends her to her Jamaican grandmother. While there, Irie listens to her grandmother's advice on adopting Jamaican culture. Knowing about Jamaican, English, and Chalfenist cultures and beliefs, Irie decides to be an atheist to escape the ambivalence she was forced into (Xiaotao, 2019, p. 77).

The novel *White Teeth* shows that people are not devoted to attaining hybridity in culture. The few attempts seen were not genuine as the subjects had personal interests, such as the need to be accepted in the new environment. The cultural unity that should result from hybridity is not achieved since people still experience racial, cultural, and religious discrimination. The colonized people who migrated to England had difficulties adapting to the new culture and could not express themselves successfully. However, the second generation, born in England to immigrant parents, can quickly adapt to other cultures as they were not initially used to a particular belief. The rigidity of the first generation is not seen in the second generation, which is thus better positioned to make hybridity a reality.

The struggle for hybridity leads to mimicry, where immigrants imitate what their colonizers do. The result is ambivalence, where the immigrants are torn between adopting the new culture and maintaining their original one. Eventually, the immigrants end up with cultural trauma. The future mouse is symbolically used to represent the contemporary society that has adopted hybridity and welcomes changes

without clinging to beliefs that could only create a dilemma. The mouse escaped, but it could not run away from the fate that awaited it since carcinogens had already been injected.

Similarly, hybridity could not be done away with, as it is the only way unity could be realized in society. Zadie Smith has clearly shown that achieving a common identity in a community with various ethnic groups is difficult. Still, it is the only way towards unity in beliefs and culture and is worth adopting for peace to prevail. Hope in hybridity is shown when Joshua marries Irie and adopts her daughter, whose father could be Magid or Millat. Another successful hybrid is seen in the marriage between Clara, a Jamaican, and Jones Archie, an Englishman. Hybridity is not an easy solution to the prevalent racism that is proposed. However, as it is signified in the future mouse, people can easily find a way to acquire their independence.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, an analysis has been conducted on Hanif Kureishi's literary works, namely *The Black Album* and *The Buddha of Suburbia*, along with Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*. The primary focus of this thesis has been on the exploration of the concepts of identity, third space, imitation, and ambivalence as portrayed in these literary works. The literary works, owing to their complex storylines and multifaceted characters, offer nuanced perspectives on the various facets of identity formation and its navigation within the confines of the third space. Specifically, these observations are relevant to the encounters of migrant and dispersed communities within England.

The investigation of the concept of 'identity' is approached through various perspectives. The characters are consistently grappling with the instability and unpredictability inherent in a diasporic way of life, and they accomplish this by mediating between their native culture and the culture of the British society in which they presently reside. The literature delves into the notion of identity not as a fixed entity, but rather as a dynamic construct that undergoes perpetual change and development. The trait in question is exemplified by various characters in literature, including Karim Amir from *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Shahid Hasan from *The Black Album*, and Irie Jones from *White Teeth*. The identities of individuals are not solely determined by their origins and life experiences, but rather are shaped by their ongoing adjustments and changes in reaction to the changing circumstances of their environment.

The concept of a 'third place' holds significant importance within these narratives and serves a pivotal function. The aforementioned texts offer a plethora of illustrations that embody Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the third space, which he defines as a domain where mixed identities can emerge. The transitional space facilitates the amalgamation, integration, and bargaining of diverse identities, culminating in the formation of a novel identity that is not entirely affiliated with either the country of origin or the adopted country, but rather represents a unique blend of both.

Kureishi adeptly portrays the effects of occupying the "third space" on the protagonists in both *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*. The younger cohorts are commonly perceived as adapting and innovating in reaction to the

intricacy and difficulties of this "third space." Smith portrays London as a manifestation of the third space in *White Teeth*, wherein a multicultural metropolis accommodates diverse identities that coexist, intermingle, and at times, engage in conflict.

The concept of 'mimicry' is implicitly communicated throughout the various narratives. The characters in question often assimilate into the dominant society's attitudes and practices in order to enhance their self-preservation and likelihood of survival, with the misguided aspiration of attaining a sense of inclusion or validation. However, this replication is distinguished by a fundamental uncertainty. The act of mimicking serves to underscore the commonalities and distinctions between individuals, while also emphasizing their aspiration for social integration. The characters exist within a paradoxical circumstance wherein they are constantly contending with the multiple identities that constitute their being. Individuals achieve this by engaging in a process of negotiating their self-concept within the parameters of societal expectations and their own individual aspirations.

In Kureishi's *The Black Album*, the character Shahid initially succumbs to the fundamentalist group's ideology, but ultimately chooses to renounce this emulation as he comprehends its alienating consequences. The protagonist of The Buddha of Suburbia, Karim, grapples with a similar paradox. His emulation of the British aristocracy's way of life serves as a manifestation of his yearning for acceptance and assimilation. Throughout *White Teeth*, Irie's aspiration to establish a cohesive identity in spite of her mixed heritage is evidenced by her emulation of English social norms.

The narrative is further convoluted by the ambivalent demeanor displayed by the characters with respect to their personal identities. His ambivalence is manifested through their contradictory emotions of attraction and repulsion towards certain elements of their inherited culture and the dominant culture in Britain. The phenomenon of ambivalence is prominently observable among the youth demographic, who, despite their efforts to assimilate into the dominant culture, exhibit a profound inclination to preserve their distinctive cultural identities. The phenomenon of ambivalence is conspicuous among the younger generations.

The aforementioned literary works, namely *White Teeth*, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, and *The Black Album*, effectively illustrate the presence of ambiguity in the

characters' search for their respective identities. Irie's quest to uncover her roots, Karim's struggle to reconcile his British-Indian identity, and Shahid's wavering between secular and religious identities are all examples of this ambiguity. The protagonists' endeavors to establish a cohesive identity appear to be futile as they seem to be perpetually entangled in the conflicting cultural spheres, leading to a persistent state of uncertainty.

The primary objective of this thesis has been to elucidate the intricate process of identity formation in the context of third space, mimicry, and ambivalence by analyzing the aforementioned literary works. Through their literary works, Kureishi and Smith have critically explored the contours of diasporic existence and the attendant tensions, showcasing the multifarious nature of individuals who deftly navigate the labyrinthine pathways of their identities. Despite the frequent occurrence of precarious situations in the lives of the characters, it is through these circumstances that they gain a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of their personalities. The characters' trajectory is not oriented towards pursuing a fixed and immutable sense of self. Rather, it constitutes an ongoing and iterative endeavor of acquiring, discarding, and reacquiring knowledge, underscoring the malleable, evolving, and seemingly contradictory nature of identities that emerge from diasporic experiences. Upon scrutinizing these narratives, the complexities of the immigrant encounter, encompassing the obstacles and accomplishments linked to exploring one's identity amidst cultural diversity, are further elucidated. The aforementioned literary works depict a multifaceted portrayal of identity within the present-day global landscape, characterized by its malleability, uncertainty, and adaptability. The vision, as mentioned above, is realized by adhering to the themes of hybridity, third space, mimicry, and ambivalence.

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