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“Born and bred, almost”: A Study of Identity Crisis and Mimicry in *The Buddha of Suburbia*

ABSTRACT

Hanif Kureishi's 1990 debut novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, investigates, among other things, mimicry and the crisis of identity among the diasporic community living in multicultural postcolonial Britain. Set mainly in South London and partly in New York in the early 1970s, the novel portrays a young mixed-race man called Karim, who aspires to leave the boring suburban life in order to explore life in central London. As he tries assimilating into English culture, he realizes that his former colonial history and new-found identity clash, complicating his perception of identity formation. Thus, he develops a kind of mimicry, which further complicates his identity in the novel. Karim negotiates his identity as a reader between belonging and not belonging to the English culture. In another sense, he is stuck in a 'third space' proposed by Homi K. Bhabha, as Karim feels 'born and bred, almost' like an Englishman, but he is not entirely English. In short, Karim becomes the marginalized character in the novel as he represents the colonial 'Other' in the text. His relation to the surrounding, especially to the English people living in London, illustrates how the diasporic, colonized others and marginalized people are treated in a post-WWII multicultural Britain. Overall, this paper investigates identity crisis and mimicry in Hanif Kureishi's novel with some critical observation on Karim's identity. In order to do so, the author delves into establishing theoretical connections from postcolonial perspectives.

Key Word: Identity Crisis; Mimicry; Buddha of Suburbia; Hanif Kureishi; Postcolonialism; Assimilation; Multicultural Britain

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I. Introduction:

Hanif Kureishi's debut novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) won critical acclamations as a wonderful first novel. It also foretells how powerful Kureishi would become as a writer with his extraordinary narratives and his brave use of themes such as religious extremism and homosexuality. Kureishi has published nine novels from 1990 to 2019, all of which incorporate multiculturalism, diaspora, religious themes, displacement, and hybridity, among others. As a writer, Kureishi started to gain popularity through his early writing of plays and screenplays; for example, his first play, *Soaking the Heat* (1976), was staged at the Royal Court Theatre in 1979, but his fame accelerated after he started writing novels.

The Buddha of Suburbia is a coming-of-age novel that explores the struggle of the diasporic Indian community, especially the story of a mixed-race young kid named Karim who desperately wants to leave his suburban life in South London to belong to the centre of London. The reader learns that Karim's father, Haroon Amir, is an immigrant from India, and his mother, Margaret Amir, is an English woman. Set in the 1970s and having the theme of postcolonial immigration experience at the core, the novel might sound very predictable— a linear journey from the periphery to the centre. Divided into two parts— *In the Suburbs* and *the city*— the novel brings out the physical as well as the psychological journey of Karim. Kureishi's use of dark humour, unorthodox plot movement, and polyphonic voices in the text makes it harder for the reader as the narrative viewpoints get complicated. As Rachel Foss writes, "Kureishi's skilful deployment of a number of stylistic devices— including his use of humour, the juxtaposition of farcical plot elements with a naturalistic evocation of an historic setting, and the polyphonic layering of voices in the text – continually disrupts and complicates the narrative viewpoint, thereby representing the unstable, ever-shifting nature of truth, identity and the self, which is the overarching motif of the novel (An Introduction to *The Buddha of Suburbia*)". Metaphorically though, it serves the purpose of representing the unstable identity, the ever-shifting nature of truth and the inner struggle of each character in the novel. The first-person narrative in the novel not only reiterates that this novel is identical to Kureishi's own experiences of being brought up in the UK but also connects any other reader who has an immigrant experience in the UK. Critically speaking, this novel brings out the theme of multiculturalism, racism in the UK, and immigrant experiences in an increasingly diverse Britain. It also disturbs the linear idea of gender construction, (colonized) identity crisis, and racial superiority or inferiority.

Primarily, diaspora communities and their struggles lie at the centre of this novel. ‘Diaspora’ as a word dates back to ancient Greece; however, the word used to have religious connotations. In modern times, diaspora means a community that migrated to a new land voluntarily or forcefully. In postcolonial literary theory, the word ‘diaspora’ relates to the study of communities who migrated to newer lands, especially after the Second World War, and henceforth are considered dislocated, dispersed, and a sense of maintaining a connection with an ‘Imaginary Homeland’, as Salman Rushdie would have called it. Karim is a member of the Indian diaspora and faces all sorts of issues in the UK, ranging from bullying, racism, hatred, and other forms of violence. As a result, he has an identity crisis, and in order to fit into the British culture, he tries to imitate them as the colonized natives usually do. For example, the opening lines draw our attention to Karim’s identity crisis. Karim is the protagonist who represents the marginal class in the novel. In the first few lines, he repeatedly claims he is an ‘Englishman.’ The author writes, “My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new 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 (Kureishi, 1).” It seems that the identity crises and mimicry coexist throughout the narrative, not just in these sentences. Karim does not simply become English as his coloured skin forbids it.

On the other hand, Karim is not Indian enough, as he has not been there his entire life. Therefore, Karim’s identity is trapped between Englishness and the so-called colonial ‘other’. Therefore, he is everywhere and nowhere, in an indeterminate, ambivalent state. Gradually, he develops mimicry and later finds himself working in theatres while his father becomes a Buddha-preaching guru. Between their colonial history and heritage and the newly found reality in the UK, the characters are forced to negotiate their identity— a hybrid form of identity which is neither Indian nor English. In his book titled *The Location of Culture* (2004), Homi K. Bhabha called this in-between and indeterminate state a ‘third space’, meaning each person’s uniqueness. This paper focuses on studying the identity crisis among migrants and how they deal with it, with particular attention given to mimicry and assimilation.

II. Identity Crisis in *The Buddha of Suburbia*:

The concept of identity is complex and often defined or perceived according to the location of a subject (person). It is usually considered rigid, static, and solid, but other views on identity largely differ in opinion. According to the online *Oxford Learners Dictionary*, identity refers to the fact of “who or

what somebody or something is” (“Identity”). Usually, identity establishes someone’s relations to his/her surroundings, people, and the diverse world. It is through identity that people convey themselves historically, materially, culturally, politically, or even sexually. Identity is formed in many ways and with many elements. However, these do not fulfil our idea of identity in a postcolonial or postimperial literary theory. In postcolonial perspectives, “identity is commonly defined”, as John Stephens argues, “in terms of alterity (difference, otherness) in patterned contrasts between self and other (1)”. Joanna Sofaer argues that “materiality conveys meaning. It provides the means by which social relations are visualized, for it is through materiality that we articulate meaning, and thus it is the frame through which people communicate identities (1)”. Other than material identities, which are visible, cultural identities are also important, but they are formed in relation to someone’s native culture. Cultural identity is built or manifested in a complex manner, and it relates to a person with his/her primary culture, heritage, and tradition. In a postcolonial theoretical understanding, identity is viewed as something which is often layered, incomplete, and hybrid. It is forged in the negotiation process between the colonizers’ over-imposition and the colonized natives’ adherence to local culture. These arguments, however, need to answer the questions relating to the nature of identities. For example, what is the nature of our identities in a postcolonial and postmodern world? Is it transparent and static, or is it an end in itself? How does it make a solid identity, if there is any? In order to answer this question, we should turn back to Stuart Hall (1996), where he gives an insightful idea on identity formation and the nature of it: “Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation (Hall, 222)”. This idea of identity is further supported by John Stephens (2011) who said, subjectivity or identity is “a matter of process: individuals continually (re)shape themselves and are (re)shaped as a result of interactions with other people (1)”.

In this line of argument, we should understand that the concept of identity is rather ‘deferred’ or postponed, as Jacques Derrida (1980) would have called it. It does not allow someone to subscribe to an already existing identity or even stick to a previously formed identity. Hence, someone becomes something over the course of history. This so-called becoming leads the immigrants to an ambivalent, hybrid, fused identity in a new land. Thus, a diaspora group becomes a minority in their country of residence and an outsider from their original state. This phenomenon opens up an entirely

new idea of identity by placing them in a negotiation they must undertake to create their self-identity.

Karim desperately wants to leave suburban London, as life here is not what he expects. As Kureishi portrays, the suburb is dull and gloomy, and the people there are narrow-minded and depthless. They care for outer appearances than inner qualities. For example, in the suburbs, “education wasn’t considered a particular advantage and certainly couldn’t be seen as worthwhile in itself (Kureishi, 177)”. Karim describes the suburb as this:

At night, they roamed the streets, beating Asians and shoving shit and burning rags through their letter-boxes. Frequently, the mean, white, hating faces had public meetings and Union Jacks were paraded through the streets, protected by the police. There was no evidence that these people would go away – no evidence that their power would diminish rather than increase. (Kureishi, 56)

Being thoroughly disgusted and devastated by all these, Karim moves from one place to another in the novel to seek his life and identity. He realized that “we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it (Kureishi, 53)”. Therefore, for him, the suburb is a place of not belonging but rather of leaving. “The Suburbs were over: they were a leaving place (Kureishi, 117)”. He hated life in the suburbs as it offered him almost nothing—economic solvency, childhood fantasy, colour, or craze. He rather faced all sorts of unexpected things in life. In his narration, he shares his experience as thus: “I was sick [...] of being affectionately called Shitface and Curryface, and of coming home covered in spit and snot and chalk and woodshavings. We did a lot of woodwork at our school, and the other kids liked to lock me and my friends in the storeroom and have us chant, ‘Manchester United, Manchester United, we are the boot boys’ as they held chisels to our throats and cut off our shoelaces (Kureishi, 63)”. All these sorrowful experiences led him to believe that life in London would be better, or at least he imagined it to be better. Material identity does not define Karim fully in this section of his life. As everything fails him in the suburb, his life looks for other forms of identity, so much so that he is willing to leave where he was born. These concerns create a double dislocation in him—one from his ancestral history and culture and the other from his city of upbringing and birth. He is, thus, displaced and alienated from both types of cultural identity, as introduced by Stuart Hall (2020). Hall argued that “there are at least two different ways of thinking about ‘cultural identity’. The first position defines ‘cultural identity’ in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self’, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common [...] the second position recognizes that, as well as the many points of

similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute ‘what we really are’ [...] or what we have become’ (Hall, 225)”. Due to his journey into the unknown London, he technically heads towards accepting the unthinkable identity. His dislocation or displacement makes it more complex for him to grasp the fundamental nature of his identity. But he seems desperate even to try. For him, perhaps “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. Anyway, why search the inner room when it’s enough to say that I was looking for trouble, any kind of movement, action and sexual interest I could find, because things were so gloomy, so slow and heavy, in our family, I don’t know why (Kureishi, 3)”. Hence, at the core of his heart, he felt that only moving from that typical suburban life would offer him a new life and identity. Thus, he ends up in London, the so-called greatest town on earth, multicultural, full of colours and joy but “bottomless in its temptation (Kureishi, 8).”

In London, he is primarily happy because people and houses are different in a positive manner at first. To him, “London seemed like a house with five thousand rooms, all different; the kick was to work out how they connected, and eventually to walk through all of them (126)” and kids in London “looked fabulous; they dressed and walked and talked like little gods. We could have been from Bombay. We’d never catch up (Kureishi, 128)”. Besides, a long paragraph outlines Karim's fantasy about London. Let us share some of Karim’s ideas about the cultural capital London:

In bed before I went to sleep I fantasized about London and what I’d do there when the city belonged to me. There was a sound that London had [...] There were thousands of black people everywhere, so I wouldn’t feel exposed; there were bookshops with racks of magazines printed without capital letters or the bourgeois disturbance of full stops; there were shops selling all the records you could desire; there were parties where girls and boys you didn’t know took you upstairs and fucked you; there were all the drugs you could use. You see, I didn’t ask much of life; this was the extent of my longing (Kureishi, 136)”.

These apparent speculations gradually disappear as Karim experiences the psychological chaos in London. Not only does he come across different people and their lifestyles, but he explores the inner truth about London. People here are alienated and racist and maintain a duality of existence. On the outer surface, they seem harmonized, well-behaved and sound literate. However, for a suburbanite like him, London offers no belonging or a dominant identity which he can stick to eventually. Coming from the periphery of the city, or as a ‘subaltern’ like the way Gayatri Chakravarty

Spivak (2008) argues, he cannot find himself in London, and hence he cannot even represent himself in the mainstream British culture. Thus, his cultural identity, or the fact that he originally comes from India and is a brown man, restricts him largely. His situation echoes Homi K. Bhabha’s (1994) concept of ‘in-between’, reiterating that if a person belongs to two cultures simultaneously, he will become ambivalent and thus hybrid. He will be everywhere and nowhere, belonging here and there. In a word, he will be like a colonized native who is black in the skin but white on the inside, like what Franz Fanon portrayed in his *Black Skin, White Mask* (1967).

The novel not only deprives Karim of a place to belong but also leads him to find other means to find himself. In search of a place to live, belong and conform to his identity, he has to look at newer forms and ways. He is separated from his family, alienated from his true feelings and uncanny to his surroundings. As we explore throughout the novel, Kureishi even portrays Karim in a manner that does not have a usual sexual identity. Karim explains, “‘It was unusual, I knew, the way I wanted to sleep with boys as well as girls. I liked strong bodies and the backs of boys’ necks. [...] But I liked cunts and breasts, all of women’s softness, long smooth legs and the way women dressed. I felt it would be heart-breaking to have to choose one or the other (Kureishi, 55)”. The protagonist’s and other characters’ sexual orientation in the novel can be identified by their atypical sexuality and ambivalence. It feels like the author is deliberately using this to convey the fact that someone’s identity cannot be rigid, static and defined. It is what someone becomes throughout his journey in life. To our surprise, Karim lacks a typical sense of identity, so he can be represented as someone who echoes nearly everyone’s life in a multicultural society. So, when Karim is saying that he is feeling strange living among these people and he is missing a part of himself, it becomes every immigrant’s story. In Karim’s voice, “‘I did feel, looking at these strange creatures now—the Indians—that in some way these were 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 (Kureishi, 212)”. For Karim, locating the self is quite a struggle as he says, “‘I could think about the past and what I’d been through as I’d struggled to locate myself and learn what the heart is (Kureishi, 283)”. The performative role of Karim adds to his suffering at the end of the novel. His role as a ‘Mowgli’ was cast not due to his experience in acting but due to the fact that it makes the production more authentic. In a nutshell, we see an identity crisis throughout the novel. Eva wants Haroon to change his Indian identity and become a Briton; the British want the Indians to forget their villages, conform to British culture, and so on. It seems

Kureishi intentionally places the characters out of tune, out of belonging and their own traditional culture.

Overall, Karim has an unresolved identity crisis. Karim becomes what Franz Fanon explained in his *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), “the native tears himself away from the swamp that may suck him down and accepts everything, decides to take all for granted and confirms everything even though he may lose body and soul [...] This tearing away, painful and difficult though it may be, is however necessary. If it is not accomplished, there will be serious psycho-affective injuries, and the result will be individuals without an anchor, without a horizon, colorless, stateless, rootless—a race of angels (Fanon, 218).” He lives in the ‘third space’ as introduced by Homi. K. Bhabha— not in his own shared culture, nor the newly found culture of the colonizers, but in between. It is like living in a limbo that hurts more.

As this discussion reveals, the identity crisis in Karim primarily stems from the fact that he is culturally displaced, dislocated, and ambivalent. He is a marginalized subaltern who cannot get into the centre of the powerplay as there is a hegemonic power structure between the English and the colonized ‘Others’. Besides, his struggle to find a transparent identity ends in vain. Thus, his life conforms to the idea of a hybrid identity which is in the becoming, not an end in itself. His identity lies somewhere in future, but is it an original, authentic self-identity? That remains a question in the novel.

III. Mimicry in *The Buddha of Suburbia*:

Mimicry is often associated with plants and animals, which means “the act of copying the sounds or behaviour of a particular person or animal, often in order to make people laugh (Cambridge Online Dictionary, “Mimicry”).” However, in arts and literature, the imitative representation of the real world is called mimesis. In postcolonial theory, mimicry is the study of imitation, a copying mechanism of the colonizers by the colonized. According to Bill Ashcroft et al., mimicry is “the ambivalent relationship between colonizer and colonized”, where the colonized natives adopt the colonizers' "cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values... (2000)”. In a word, Professor Ashcroft argues that mimicry creates a ‘blurred copy’ of the colonizers among the colonized natives. Briefly, this was the intention of the colonizers to create generations of people with the ability to resemble the British in all manners possible but not to be British themselves. This intention is objective to show the power structure of British colonialism. Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay’s *Minute on Indian Education* address brought forth, among other things, the cruel truth about how the colonizers treated the colonized natives. He said, “we must at present do our best to form a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons Indian in

blood and colour, but English in tastes, opinions, in morals, and in intellect (Macaulay, 1835)”. The entire history of British colonialism has created such generations of ‘interpreters’ around the world. Thus, the connotations of ‘mimicry’ is not positive but rather harmful. It simply means that in trying to resemble the British, one must first leave one’s own cultural identity, heritage, and tradition. It becomes an ambivalent state for the colonized natives, which is at once a “resemblance and a menace” (Bhabha, 123). It also shows the dominance of the West over the East. It indicates the hegemonic power structure in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. For Homi K. Bhabha (2000), mimicry or colonial mimicry “is the desire for a reformed, recognizable ‘Other’ [colonized], as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite [the same]. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference (Bhabha, 123)”. As Bhabha further argues, we explore that locating the colonized subjects as having almost the same entity, but not quite the same, makes his presence ‘partial’, which is not complete and physical. Instead, the colonized native will have an “incomplete and virtual” presence (Bhabha, 127). Bhabha further argues that this incomplete or ‘partial presence’ is the basis of mimicry (129). But, on the one hand, mimicry defines the colonized native in relation to the dominant British culture and imposes that he becomes less powerful; on the other hand, it also creates an ambivalent situation for the colonizers. The colonizing mission shapes and reshapes the natives in a certain way; if it goes away due to mimicry, it proves that colonizing mission did not succeed. Thus, the colonizers look for a mirror of their learning, attitudes, and manners among the colonized. Thus, as Edward Said explains in his *Orientalism* (1978), “the two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other (5)”. In the novel, Hanif Kureishi’s use of mimicry creates humour, leading to readers’ laughter. However, the meaning of laughter becomes ambivalent as we can differentiate who is laughing at whom. In this argument, mimicry makes the power play more ubiquitous, but the humour makes it subtle yet unmistakable. This complex psychological, political, and somewhat cultural situation is very strikingly visible throughout the novel.

Kureishi presents the diasporic characters not entirely, reflecting on their native cultures and the cultures they now live. As for Karim, he has never been to India, and knows very little about it. He only knows the stories about it—how India is large, how the megacities like Delhi and its people are and so on. However, he cannot find any of these cultures in the UK, although he was born and bred here. He knows how the dominant culture in London would outmatch the cultures in Delhi. Thus, this cultural displacement or dislocation leads him and other characters to mimic the

more powerful British culture. Hence they are culturally distorted and individually alienated from their essence. This complex representation of the natives by Kureishi also brings in the problem of authority. The natives subconsciously imitate to reclaim their authority to represent themselves and find their way out of the newly found culture. The readers in the novel find that Haroon Amir, Karim's father, becomes a Buddha-like guru who teaches the local population how to meditate. However, he is not someone very religious or a Sufi. As Karim presents him at one point:

“Yes, God was talking to himself, but not intimately. He was speaking slowly, in a deeper voice than usual, as if he were addressing a crowd [...] He'd spent years trying to be more of an Englishman, to be less risibly conspicuous, and now he was putting it back in spade loads (Kureishi, 21)”.

This action of imitating a century-long culture of meditation gives him an initial identity, albeit a fake one, and belonging. However, in the long run, he cannot stick to it. Thus, for Haroon Amir, the means through which he intends to find himself becomes obsolete.

For Karim, mimicry is a more complex psychological issue involving trying to be like the British and not look weak on the outside. In the suburbs, Karim is depressed and disturbed by the kind of life that it offers him. So, he wanted to explore central London, the mainstream culture. He tried to avoid looking like the British people, as his father sees them: “The British in India were ridiculous, stiff, unconfident, rule-bound (Kureishi, 250)”. In order to avoid looking like a fool in front of the British, he imitates them so that he can belong there. This intention primarily stems from his “depression and self-hatred [...] the feeling of the world coming in to crush me (Kureishi, 249)”. Karim plays the role of ‘Mowgli’, which he is uncomfortable about, but what can be done? He was cast there not for experience but for authenticity.

However, Karim's reaction to the director becomes significant as it proves that he is politically and culturally conscious about the narrative and its consequences. However, this venture into mimicry by acting places him in a hybrid cultural and political identity situation. He has never been to India, and thus, he does not subscribe to Indian culture. On the other hand, he can only be an English man partially as his role prevents it. Thus, he is ‘partially represented’, as Homi Bhabha called it. His relation to Indian culture is not about first-hand experience; instead, it is about memory and perhaps nostalgia. Therefore, something needs to be more transparent and clear to him. He does not love Indian culture, nor does he hate it, unlike Anwar, who has first-hand experience of it but who finds it like “a rotten place.... filthy and hot and... a big pain-in-the-arse to get anything done (Kureishi, 64)”. On a different note, Karim also mimics Changez, which is somewhat unusual but makes him feel better about himself. His pervasive

self-centeredness and his perspectives change due to this. He realizes more about himself and the surrounding.

Throughout the novel, the readers realize that Hanif Kureishi uses mimicry to represent the complex nexus between the colonizers and the former colonized. This relationship is complex due to power, colonialism, dominance, mimicry, displacement and cultural distortion. For Karim and other characters, the only way to establish themselves as Englishmen is either finding their true identity or imitating the British people. Thus, their negotiation of identity and culture is distorted and hybrid. Karim’s psychological condition is better described by Bhabha quoting V.S Naipaul: “we pretended to be real, to be learning, to be preparing, ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New World, one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to the new. (127)”.

The mimicry, as represented in Kureishi’s *The Buddha of Suburbia*, leads the characters, especially Karim and his father Haroon, to more psychological complexities. This transformation reveals the cultural dominance and political power of the British people. The use of humour by Kureishi to portray mimicry often raises laughter and makes the powerplay obsolete. However, Kureishi intentionally uses mimicry to show the internal crisis of British culture in post-war Britain. This multicultural Britain probably conveys the message that everyone living in contemporary Britain, both the colonized natives and the British themselves, need to rethink their respective identities and culture. Otherwise, this hybrid situation becomes ambivalent.

IV. Conclusion:

It is maintained by many researchers now that “the colonial struggle for supremacy has not been resolved – and in fact cannot be resolved by means of traditional concepts of ethnic identity and cultural authenticity, but continues into postcolonial times after a rather cursory role reversal (Berthold Schoene, 111)”. *The Buddha of Suburbia* seems to bring out this idea through the representation of Karim and other characters. It manifests through their identity crisis and imitation of powerful manners and culture. In this sense, Hanif Kureishi’s debut novel is brave and unconventional compared to a typical English novel and the first few lines are unique and unexpected. Readers usually do not find many novels repeatedly introducing identity and belonging in the introductory lines. However, for Kureishi, it seems like an excellent way to start his debut novel. Perhaps his bold writing and use of political and psychological tones made the novel more complex yet fun to read. His humour often relieves the tension, except for a few cases.

As an Englishman himself, as he was born and bred in the UK, Kureishi inspired many subsequent and contemporary writers to include themes such as these— diaspora community, identity crisis, alienation from native culture, struggle to belong somewhere and so on. Unlike other Indian writers writing in English, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, or Jhumpa Lahiri, Kureishi does not belong to a diasporic community in the typical sense. Hence, he is not writing back to the empire that ruled India for nearly two hundred years; instead, he is writing from within himself. Hence, his representation of the native characters becomes significant. The representation of Karim not only becomes autobiographical for Kureishi himself but also connects immigrant experiences for many in the UK. As Anna Wille depicted, "...Karim as glamorous anti-hero and uneasy mimic man is at the perceptual center of the novel... (464)".

The Buddha of Suburbia becomes, to some extent, a universal picture for immigrants, especially the people of colour who have been displaced from their motherland and those who started living in the UK as a diasporic community. The representation of London as a city full of temptation, glowing lights, pop culture and punk informs the readers how significantly London has changed in the 1970s. Not only does it convey that London's outer appearances and its inhabitants have changed over the years, but it also shows how the inner mechanisms of London have changed dramatically. Through the eyes of Karim, we get to explore London, which hosts racism, hatred, alienation, sexual fantasy and hippies. We also find London a city of experimentation, a life full of colours and anonymity where anyone can hide. Overall, the identity crisis and mimicry are found throughout the novel, and these do not get blurred even if many things are happening in the backdrop. Kureishi suggests that the identity crisis is a matter for immigrants and the British people. Furthermore, everyone must find a new way to become British again, as things have changed throughout history.

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