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Research Article

CARTOGRAPHIES OF BECOMING: HYBRIDITY, DETERRITORIALIZATION AND IDENTITY IN *THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA*

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Abstract

Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) subverts the traditional Bildungsroman by rejecting linear self-actualization in favor of an identity formation process marked by hybridity, deterritorialization, and perpetual becoming. Through the protagonist Karim's negotiation of racial, cultural, and sexual subjectivity within 1970s Britain, the novel illustrates the fragmented, fluid, and performative nature of postcolonial identity. Engaging with postmodern and postcolonial frameworks—such as Homi Bhabha's Third Space, Stuart Hall's positional identities, and Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic subjectivity—this study explores how the novel destabilizes essentialist categories of selfhood, favoring instead a dynamic interplay of cultural multiplicity, mimicry, and dislocation. By incorporating Mikhail Bakhtin's heteroglossia and Michel Foucault's critique of disciplinary power, the analysis highlights how Kureishi's narrative resists hegemonic inscriptions of identity, embracing instead a decentered, polyphonic mode of self-construction. Karim's journey, marked by irony, performativity, and non-linear development, underscores the postmodern deconstruction of subjectivity.

Keywords: Hybridity, deterritorialization, rhizomatic subjectivity, heteroglossia, identity.

OLUŞUN KARTOGRAFYALARI: *THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA*'DA MELEZLİK, YERSİZYURTSUZLAŞMA VE KİMLİK

Öz

Hanif Kureishi'nin *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) adlı romanı, melezlik, yersizyurtsuzlaşma ve sürekli oluşun damgasını vurduğu bir kimlik oluşum süreci bakımından doğrusal kendini gerçekleştirmeyi reddederek geleneksel Bildungsroman'ı altüst eder. Roman; başkahraman Karim'in 1970'lerin Britanya'sında ırksal, kültürel ve cinsel öznelliği müzakere etmesi aracılığıyla postkolonyal kimliğin parçalı, akışkan ve performatif doğasını göstermektedir. Homi Bhabha'nın Üçüncü Alan'ı, Stuart Hall'un konumsal kimlikleri ve Deleuze ve Guattari'nin rizomatik öznelliği gibi postmodern ve postkolonyal çerçevelerle etkileşime giren bu çalışma, romanın özcü benlik kategorilerini nasıl istikrarsızlaştırdığını, bunun yerine kültürel çokluk, taklit ve yerinden edilmenin dinamik bir etkileşimini nasıl desteklediğini incelemektedir. Mikhail Bakhtin'in "heteroglossia"sını ve Michel Foucault'nun disipliner iktidar eleştirisini birleştiren analiz, Kureishi'nin anlatısının hegemonik kimlik yazılarına nasıl direndiğini, bunun yerine merkezsiz, çok sesli bir benlik inşası tarzını nasıl benimsediğini

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vurgulamaktadır. Karim'in ironi, performatiflik ve doğrusal olmayan gelişimle vurgulanan yolculuğu, kimliğin sabit bir son nokta olmadığını tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Melezlik, yersizyurtsuzlaşma, rizomatik öznellik, heteroglossia, kimlik.

Introduction

The deconstruction of rigid identity paradigms has become a defining feature of postmodern and postcolonial discourse, particularly in the context of migration, multiculturalism, and transnational flux. Within this evolving landscape, traditional notions of identity as stable, essentialist, and rooted in fixed national or cultural allegiances have been critically dismantled in favor of conceptualizations that emphasize fluidity, hybridity, and continuous rearticulation. Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) exemplifies this shift, offering a literary exploration of identity formation that resists linearity and singular belonging. The novel disrupts the classical Bildungsroman's teleological trajectory—where the protagonist's journey culminates in integration into a coherent social order—by presenting identity as a fragmented, rhizomatic process, continuously shaped by dislocation, mimicry, and negotiation of cultural multiplicities. The protagonist, Karim, embodies this instability, existing within an interstitial space of racial, sexual, and cultural hybridity, illustrating the broader complexities of postcolonial subjectivity in a transnational world.

Engaging with a range of theoretical frameworks, this study situates *The Buddha of Suburbia* within the broader discourse of postcolonial and postmodern identity formation. Homi Bhabha's concept of the *Third Space* (1994) serves as a crucial lens through which to examine Karim's negotiation of cultural difference, as it highlights how identity emerges in the liminal space between dominant and marginalized discourses. Bhabha challenges essentialist binaries—such as colonizer / colonized or self / other—arguing that cultural identity is an ongoing process of articulation rather than a fixed essence. Similarly, Stuart Hall's theorization of identity as positional and relational (1992) reinforces the idea that identity is not an inherent quality but rather a construct shaped by historical, social, and cultural interactions. Hall's rejection of racial and ethnic essentialism, in favor of identity as a dynamic and contingent process, provides a foundation for understanding Karim's shifting selfhood.

Beyond postcolonial perspectives, the novel also aligns with postmodern critiques of identity formation. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of *rhizomatic subjectivity* (1987) is particularly instructive, as it challenges hierarchical, teleological models of selfhood in favor of a non-linear, interconnected assemblage of becoming. Unlike the classical Bildungsroman protagonist, who ultimately finds a stable place within the dominant social order, Karim's identity resists closure, reflecting Deleuze and Guattari's notion of deterritorialization—a process in which fixed identities are destabilized and reconstituted in new, non-hierarchical formations. The novel's fragmented, improvisational narrative structure mirrors this rhizomatic model, rejecting totalizing narratives in favor of multiplicity and constant flux.

Michel Foucault's analysis of power, discourse, and subject formation (1975) provides insight into the institutional mechanisms that regulate identity. Karim's experiences—whether in navigating racialized expectations, performing authenticity in various social and theatrical roles, or negotiating his sexual identity—reveal the extent to which subjectivity is shaped by disciplinary power. However, rather than passively internalizing these discourses, Karim

engages in acts of mimicry and subversion, exposing the instability of hegemonic identity categories. This performative aspect of identity aligns with Judith Butler's (1990) notion of gender performativity, extending the argument that identity is not an inherent truth but an iterative, socially constructed process.

The novel also engages with Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) theory of *heteroglossia*, which emphasizes the coexistence of multiple voices and perspectives within a single narrative. *The Buddha of Suburbia* resists a singular authoritative discourse, instead embracing a polyphonic structure that reflects the heterogeneous, multicultural reality of contemporary Britain. Karim's navigation of different cultural and linguistic registers—his ability to shift between British and South Asian cultural codes, to perform different versions of himself depending on context—illustrates the heteroglossic nature of identity. Furthermore, Bakhtin's concept of the *carnivalesque* (1984) is evident in the novel's use of humor, irony, and inversion of social hierarchies, which challenge rigid cultural binaries and expose the constructed nature of social norms.

By engaging with these theoretical perspectives, this study situates *The Buddha of Suburbia* within the evolving framework of the multicultural Bildungsroman—a genre that departs from the classical European model by foregrounding themes of migration, hybridity, and the multiplicity of cultural affiliations. While the traditional Bildungsroman charts the protagonist's assimilation into a stable ideological framework, the multicultural Bildungsroman, as exemplified in Kureishi's novel, operates through fragmentation and performativity. Karim's subjectivity remains unsettled, resisting closure or definitive resolution, which underscores the postmodern and postcolonial reconfiguration of selfhood.

The Buddha of Suburbia offers a radical reimagining of identity formation in an age of diasporic movement and transnational hybridity. The novel deconstructs essentialist notions of race, nation, and selfhood, presenting identity as an assemblage of competing discourses, performances, and semiotic excess. Karim's trajectory highlights the paradox of the postcolonial subject: simultaneously seeking stability while embracing fluidity, negotiating belonging while resisting fixed categories. By employing a heteroglossic, deterritorialized mode of narration, the novel not only critiques the constraints of hegemonic identity formations but also enacts a radical re-articulation of subjectivity as a perpetual process of becoming. Through its interplay of postmodern aesthetics and postcolonial critique, *The Buddha of Suburbia* challenges the epistemic boundaries of identity, offering a model of selfhood that is dynamic, relational, and fundamentally open-ended.

1. Theoretical Framework

Postmodernism operates as an epistemological stance resisting grand narratives and critiquing traditional representation. Emerging in the mid-twentieth century, postmodern thought dismantles anthropocentric meaning, emphasizing language's instability and reality's contingency. The "death of the subject" replaces coherent identity with a fragmented self. Theorists like Derrida, Barthes, Lacan, and Foucault argue language constructs reality, decentering human agency and significantly impacting the multicultural Bildungsroman's nonlinear identity formation.

Foucault's analyses of power and subjectivity in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* illustrate how institutions regulate bodies and identities through discourse,

surveillance, and normalization. His "docile bodies" concept shows how institutional practices discipline individuals into conformity. This informs contemporary identity studies in postmodern literature, where protagonists resist externally imposed identities. By the 1980s, postmodern critique expanded, challenging social structures and essentialist narratives, further emphasizing identity's fragmented and fluid nature.

Michel Foucault argues that sex and sexuality are not innate biological realities but socially constructed through discourse. The idea of "natural" sex is an ideological tool used to regulate bodies and enforce norms. Sexuality, like the body, serves as a site of power, reinforcing distinctions between "normal" and "deviant" behaviors to uphold social hierarchies. By revealing sexuality as a product of medical, legal, and cultural discourses rather than a pre-existing essence, Foucault challenges essentialist views and lays the foundation for queer theory and postmodern identity discourse: "sex is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures" (Foucault, 1978, p. 155). Foucault argues power is inescapable—it can be resisted but not dismantled. His ideas significantly influence feminist and queer theories, which challenge dominant ideologies. While some feminists critique his neglect of embodied female experiences, theorists like Judith Butler build on his views of gender and sexuality. Queer theory further rejects fixed identities, viewing sexuality as socially constructed.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that desire is productive, continually generating transformative structures. They introduce the "rhizome" as an alternative to hierarchical, fixed systems, emphasizing horizontal growth, multiplicity, and decentralization. Rhizomatic structures, exemplified in *A Thousand Plateaus*, foster constant evolution through fluid assemblages. Their own work rejects linearity and fixed hierarchies, embodying this rhizomatic approach:

> We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 4)

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of rhizomatic thinking challenges hierarchical models by emphasizing fluid, decentralized, and interconnected structures. Unlike rigid frameworks, rhizomes allow multiple, non-hierarchical connections, resisting fixed meanings and central authority. The first principle, connection and heterogeneity, posits that any point can connect to another, opposing binary structures like Chomsky's linguistic categories. Multiplicity highlights rhizomes' ever-expanding nature, illustrated by puppet strings where movement arises from interconnected forces rather than a single control point. A signifying rupture ensures that rhizomes regenerate when severed, like couch grass, resisting destruction and singular origins. Cartography and decalcomania describe rhizomes as open-ended maps with multiple entry points, unlike fixed structures in psychoanalysis and structural linguistics.

Through these principles, Deleuze and Guattari reject fixed identities, advocating instead for fluid, decentralized, and interconnected views of reality—essential for postmodern and multicultural literary analysis. They critique psychoanalysis for imposing hierarchical control over the unconscious, restricting its transformative potential (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987,

p. 17-18). Deleuze and Guattari argue that rhizomatic assemblages drive becoming, a continuous, open-ended transformation. They contrast dominant "majority" structures—privileging fixed identities—with "minorities," who disrupt norms through fluidity and resistance. Becoming means escaping fixed categories, embracing perpetual change and creativity: "Women... themselves must enter; this is a becoming-woman affecting all of humankind, men and women both" (1987, p. 106). Deleuze and Guattari stress that becoming is neither imitation nor progression toward a goal but a continuous transformation resisting fixed identities. They assert, "becoming produces nothing other than itself" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 238). Becoming-woman is central—not adopting a female identity, but initiating molecular disruptions of fixed subjectivity. As they explain, "all becomings begin with and pass through becoming-woman" (1987, p. 277). Minorities thus catalyze deterritorialization, resisting dominant norms. Applying this to literature, they champion minor literature, texts challenging dominant languages and structures. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, minor literature emerges from minorities creating disruptions within major languages (2003, p. 16). Deterritorialization thus drives rhizomatic becoming by unsettling fixed meanings and hierarchies.

Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) emphasizes plurality and difference through his concepts of heteroglossia, dialogism, and the carnivalesque, challenging rigid, structuralist understandings of language and literature. Bakhtin views language as inherently polyglot, shaped by dynamic centripetal and centrifugal forces in constant transformation. He contrasts hierarchical, monologic genres (like epics) with novels, which employ heteroglossia, irony, and parody, reflecting evolving realities. His concept of the carnivalesque, rooted in medieval carnival, subverts established power structures, celebrating temporary liberation, humor, and multiplicity. In *Rabelais and His World* (1984), Bakhtin introduces grotesque realism, emphasizing bodily excess and regeneration as resistance to hierarchical norms. Bakhtin's pluralistic framework is influential in analyzing multicultural literature and hybrid identities, aligning with postcolonial and migration studies. Originally a biological term, hybridity has become central in postcolonial studies addressing global cultural mixing. Homi Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture* (1994), challenges binary oppositions by arguing that cultural purity is a myth. Instead, hybridity involves ongoing negotiation and cultural translation within a liminal Third Space, beyond nationalism and essentialism, where new, fluid identities continuously emerge. Stuart Hall argues that identities are fluid, intersectional, and defined by difference and contingency rather than essentialist categories. His idea of positional struggle highlights individuals' active resistance to imposed racial, gendered, and sexual classifications, aligning closely with Gramsci's notion of strategic identity formation through ongoing negotiation.

Postmodernism further challenges fixed, stable identities, promoting multiplicity, hybridity, and continuous transformation. Within this framework, marginalized ethnic identities gain prominence, reshaping literary discourse by foregrounding previously excluded perspectives. The notion of becoming is central to both the postmodern perspective on identity and the Bildungsroman tradition, as both emphasize perpetual change and transformation over stability. In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Karim embodies the struggle, continually redefining his multicultural identity through spatial mobility and hybridity. His experiences reflect Laclau's dislocated identities, emphasizing identity as fragmented yet open to perpetual transformation. These concepts will guide the literary analysis in the subsequent part (Laclau, 1990, p. 41). The study will aslo employ Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of territory to analyze migration, cultural hybridity, and fluid identity in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Karim's ethnic, social,

gendered, and sexual negotiations exemplify continuous minoritarian transformation. Additionally, integrating Bakhtin's ideas of multiplicity and hybridity and Bhabha's notions of cultural hybridity and in-betweenness strengthens the postmodern analysis, highlighting the protagonist's navigation of identity and belonging within multicultural contexts.

2. The Hybridization and Subversion of Identity Constructs in *The Buddha of Suburbia*

With globalization and mass migration, concepts of cultural identity, ethnicity, and nationhood have been redefined, shifting from rigid categorizations to fluid frameworks embracing hybridity and transnationalism. This transformation has reshaped cosmopolitan centers like London, historically a symbol of Western hegemony, now depicted as a heterogeneous, polyphonic space. John Clement Ball describes this as the "reinvasion of the centre", where the world converges on London rather than London expanding outward (1996, p. 11). Postcolonial writers explore this shift, as seen in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990). Through satire and a postmodern *Bildungsroman* structure, the novel critiques fixed identity categories and highlights the performativity of cultural belonging. By following Karim's journey into acting, Kureishi underscores identity's fluidity within the diasporic and postcolonial condition.

Kureishi, born to an English mother and a Pakistani father, resists a singular British identity, identifying instead as a Londoner. This perspective parallels Karim, the protagonist of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, who deconstructs fixed notions of Britishness and ethnicity. The novel, rich in autobiographical elements, portrays London as a cosmopolitan, liminal space—neither fully British nor entirely global. As John Clement Ball describes, Kureishi's London is a "semi-detached signifier," simultaneously part of Britain yet distinct from it (Ball, 1996, p. 9). Interstitially defines the novel's themes and structure, with categories such as identity, race, gender, and geography remaining fluid. Karim's journey—from suburb to city—mirrors the *Bildungsroman* but subverts its conventional trajectory. Rather than assimilating, he strategically navigates shifting social, racial, and sexual boundaries for self-fashioning and success. His first-person narration reinforces his hybrid subjectivity and suburban roots, aligning the novel with postmodern and multicultural discourses: "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" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 3).

Karim's self-description underscores the complexities of racial hybridity and national belonging, positioning him as both an insider and outsider in British society. His suburban upbringing in Bromley is depicted as stagnant and monotonous, suppressing his longing for excitement. The suburbs, marked by lower-middle-class domesticity, reinforce rigid social structures, gender roles, and consumerist values. Karim's Indian-born civil servant father and melancholic, sales-assistant mother embody this restrictive environment. His mother's image—"wear an apron with flowers on it and wipe her hands repeatedly on a tea towel"—symbolizes domestic entrapment (Kureishi, 1990, p. 7). Kureishi's critique of suburban life aligns with writers like George Orwell and T. S. Eliot, who condemned its cultural conformity and sexual conservatism. Karim perceives his suburban environment as stifling and monotonous, fueling his desire to escape to London, where "life was bottomless in its temptations" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 8). For him, the city represents movement, diversity, and new experiences, including

alternative sexual expressions. Traditionally, literary discourse contrasts the city's dynamism with the suburb's conformity and stagnation. However, postmodern and multicultural writers challenge these binaries, illustrating suburban spaces as sites of complexity and transgression. The novel subverts this rigid dichotomy by highlighting suburban eccentricities, even if Karim initially fails to recognize them. His description of Victoria Road, with its diverse social and ethnic makeup, disrupts the conventional portrayal of the suburb as a homogenous space, revealing its latent hybridity: "Here lived Mr Whitman, the policeman, and his young wife Noleen; next door were a retired couple, Mr and Mrs Holub" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 74).

This depiction challenges the conventional notion of suburban uniformity by foregrounding its socio-economic and cultural diversity. Yet, Karim initially adheres to the traditional critique of suburban dullness, noting that his parents endure their unhappy marriage due to the suburb's entrenched ethos of stability: "in the suburbs people rarely dreamed of striking for happiness. It was all familiarity and endurance" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 8). The novel's first section, *In the Suburbs*, oscillates between conventional and subversive representations, complicating the binary between suburb and city. A pivotal moment occurs when Karim and his father, Haroon, attend Eva Kay's gathering, disrupting suburban stagnation. Haroon, an unremarkable Indian civil servant, transforms into a mystic spiritual leader, engaging in philosophical discussions and yoga demonstrations. His reinvention underscores the novel's central theme of identity as a performative construct. As Stuart Hall asserts, "identity is shaped through recognition and allegiance to social groups" (Hall, 1996, p. 16). Haroon strategically navigates between personas, achieving social validation within a new cultural milieu, a pattern mirrored in Karim's own self-reinvention.

Simultaneously, Karim undergoes a transformative experience in Charlie's attic, a liminal space detached from suburban rigidity. Traditionally a site of repression, the attic in *The Buddha of Suburbia* paradoxically becomes a realm of liberation, where social and sexual norms are suspended. Charlie's assertion—"In my domain time isn't a factor" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 14)—emphasizes this disruption of suburban temporality. Here, Karim's intimate encounter with Charlie marks a pivotal moment in his sexual exploration: "My flags flew, my trumpets blew!" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 17). This moment, aligning with Ernesto Laclau's concept of dislocation, signals the reconfiguration of identity beyond suburban constraints (1990, p. 14). Karim's exuberant description positions this encounter as a moment of self-discovery and sexual awakening. The playful, metaphorical language—invoking celebratory imagery of flags and trumpets—emphasizes the sense of liberation associated with the experience. By locating this pivotal moment in the attic, Kureishi reinforces the theme of spatial transgression; just as Haroon reconstructs his identity downstairs through performance, Karim similarly undergoes a process of transformation upstairs.

Karim's homosexual experience disrupts what Haddour describes as "heterosexual familialism," a core aspect of suburban ideology that upholds the nuclear family and conventional domestic life (2014, p. 79). Throughout the narrative, Kureishi engages with space as a site of fluid, multiple meanings, aligning with Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia. Foucault defines heterotopias as spaces that "interrupt the continuity of ordinary life by introducing alterity" (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008, p. 3-4). In *Of Other Spaces* (1986), Foucault traces the shift from medieval emplacement "rigid, hierarchical spatial order to modern spatial expansion, where places acquire new, transgressive meanings" (Foucault, 1986, p. 23). This

transformation is evident in the novel, where suburban spaces traditionally associated with stability become sites of identity redefinition. The attic, for instance, functions not just as a physical space but as a heterotopic realm where Karim experiences personal and sexual transformation, challenging suburban norms and expanding the possibilities of selfhood, because "these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias" (Foucault, 1986, p. 24).

Kureishi's depiction of space aligns with Foucauldian heterotopia, particularly through sites like Charlie's attic, Eva's house, and the toilet—each serving as a liminal zone for transformation and identity renegotiation. On the same night that Karim disrupts suburban familialism through his intimate encounter with Charlie, his father, Haroon, similarly transgresses social norms by engaging in an affair with Eva in her garden. As Brook observes, the garden is "a liminal space between public and private," making it a fitting setting for Haroon's defiance of suburban normativity (2005, p. 218). More broadly, Eva's house functions as a heterotopic space where conventional social codes are suspended, enabling the emergence of new identities and relationships. Within this setting, Karim experiences a pivotal moment of self-realization, reinforcing the novel's broader themes of identity fluidity, transgression, and the performative nature of selfhood: "I could see my life clearly for the first time: the future and what I wanted to do. I wanted to live always this intensely: mysticism, alcohol, sexual promise, clever people and drugs" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 15).

Kureishi reimagines confined spaces as heterotopias of transformation. Like Charlie's attic, the toilet—ordinarily mundane—becomes a site of epiphany, aligning with Foucault's notion of heterotopias as spaces that juxtapose "incompatible" meanings (Foucault, 1986, p. 25). Here, Karim envisions a future of reinvention beyond suburban conformity. The novel then shifts to Haroon's migration from Bombay to London, revealing his displacement and racial marginalization. Once privileged, he faces systemic racism and economic struggle, mirroring the Windrush generation's experience. Despite efforts to assimilate, he acknowledges Britain's racial hierarchies: "The whites will never promote us" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 27). Unable to fully belong, he reinvents himself as a spiritual guru for white suburban audiences, commodifying mysticism within an exoticized spectacle of "sandalwood Buddhas, brass ashtrays, and striped plaster elephants" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 30). This consumerist fascination with cultural alterity contrasts with persistent racial exclusion. The hypocrisy becomes clear when, after Haroon's veneration, Karim suffers a racist attack from Helen's father, who unleashes his dog on him. The dog's ejaculation on Karim serves as a grotesque metaphor for racial oppression: "exposing the contradictions of postcolonial Britain's racial dynamics" (Güven, 2024, p. 391).

As a postmodern *Bildungsroman*, the novel integrates suburban life, metropolitan London, queer relationships, and cultural hybridity to shape Karim's development. Aligning with postmodern theorists like Homi Bhabha, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Gilles Deleuze, the novel rejects rigid identity frameworks in favor of liminality and multiplicity. Bhabha's concept of hybridity as a *third space*—where cultural boundaries are disrupted and new meanings emerge—resonates with Karim's fluid identity: "The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable" (Rutherford, 1990, p. 211). Karim embodies this hybridity, his identity intersecting racial, cultural, and sexual dimensions. His dissatisfaction with suburban life and attraction to London's dynamism reflect a deeper need to inhabit a *third space*, where reinvention is possible. Unlike the traditional *Bildungsroman*,

which charts a linear path toward social integration, *The Buddha of Suburbia* presents identity as an ongoing negotiation. Karim's bisexuality further reinforces his resistance to fixed categories, articulated with humor and self-awareness in his refusal to conform to singular sexual or cultural identities: "I liked being handled by men, their fists pulling me; and I liked objects – the end of brushes, pens, fingers – up my arse" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 55).

Karim's developmental journey through intersecting themes of suburban life, metropolitan excess, queer relationships, and cultural hybridity and rejects fixed identity frameworks in favor of liminality and multiplicity. Bhabha's concept of the *third space*—where cultural hybridity disrupts fixed categories and creates new modes of representation—resonates with Karim's fluid selfhood: "The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable" (Rutherford, 1990, p. 211). Karim embodies this hybridity, rejecting rigid racial, cultural, and sexual categories. His bisexuality extends beyond sexuality to a broader rejection of suburban conservatism and metropolitan normativity, positioning him within Sara Ahmed's notion of *queer phenomenology*—a way of navigating the world that resists linearity and prescribed paths (Ahmed, 2006). Unlike the traditional *Bildungsroman*, where the protagonist seeks integration into a stable social order, Karim's journey highlights identity as an ongoing negotiation, defined by movement, transformation, and the refusal of singular attachments.

Beyond its sexual connotations, queerness functions as a postcolonial condition that challenges nationalistic, ethnic, and social categorizations. Ernesto Laclau (1990) conceptualizes *queered time and space* as forms of temporal and spatial dislocation that resist hegemonic institutions like family, reproduction, and domesticity. Nigianni and Storr define queer as "a solely reactive force of re-signification, mockery, and disrespect to the dominance of heterosexuality" (2009, p. 4), highlighting its subversive potential. This aligns with Michel Foucault's perception of sexuality as a socially constructed entity, shaped by cultural and institutional power structures rather than inherent biological truths. As Spargo notes, queer theory is "at odds with the normal, the norm—whether that is dominant heterosexuality or even gay / lesbian identity" (2000, p. 40). In this sense, the narrative positions Karim as a queer subject—not just sexually, but in his rejection of fixed racial and social identities. His fluid movement across suburban repression, metropolitan indulgence, and even American cultural spaces exemplifies Judith Halberstam's concept of *queer time and space*, which disrupts normative trajectories of past, present, and future (Halberstam, 2005, p. 4). Rather than seeking stability, Karim embraces an identity that is in flux, resisting the middle-class logic of heteronormative futurity.

Karim's queerness extends to his racial identity. As a biracial British-Indian, he disrupts colonial binaries such as white / black and British / non-British, complicating essentialist understandings of identity. His refusal to conform to imposed racial categories parallels his rejection of rigid sexual identities. Yet, his hybrid status does not exempt him from systemic racism. He recalls childhood violence "being physically assaulted, called racial slurs, and returning home covered in spit and wood shavings" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 62-63). This racial othering reflects Britain's neocolonial structures, which continue to marginalize South Asians despite their British birthright. While British society attempts to confine Karim within racialized boundaries, he resists by asserting a selfhood that is neither fully Indian nor entirely British but something in between. His journey does not seek assimilation into a rigid British identity;

rather, it embraces hybridity and queerness as fluid, performative constructs. This stands in contrast to his father's generation, as exemplified by Anwar, who clings to patriarchal customs to preserve cultural heritage. His coercion of Jamila into an arranged marriage reflects the anxieties of first-generation immigrants struggling to maintain tradition amid Westernization.

Jamila represents a radical departure from her father's patriarchal worldview. Born and raised in Britain, she is fiercely independent, feminist, and politically assertive, rejecting traditional constraints. Her admiration for Simone de Beauvoir signals her alignment with second-wave feminism, and Karim humorously notes her toughness, describing her as having "a PhD in physical retribution" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 53). She refuses to be a racialized victim, as demonstrated in her violent resistance to a racial slur: "Jammie sprinted through the traffic before throwing the bastard off his bike and tugging out some of his hair, like someone weeding an overgrown garden" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 53). This moment underscores her refusal to accept racial and gendered oppression passively. When Anwar seeks Haroon's approval for arranging Jamila's marriage, he assumes their shared cultural background will unite them ideologically. However, Karim observes a paradox: while Anwar clings to tradition, Haroon embraces Eastern mysticism as a performance for white suburbanites. This contrast reveals the complexities of diasporic identity, where cultural heritage is not a fixed essence but a site of negotiation and reinvention: "It was puzzling: neither of them expressed any desire actually to see their origins again" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 64). This passage underscores the complexity of immigrant identity, revealing how cultural nostalgia often manifests not through physical return but through ideological and behavioral shifts. Despite their long-standing integration into British society, both men enact a form of cultural resistance—Anwar through his adherence to patriarchal traditions and Haroon through his performance of Eastern mysticism for a white audience.

Jamila ultimately concedes to her father's demand for an arranged marriage, not out of submission but to prevent Anwar's hunger strike from becoming fatal. Changez, her intended husband, arrives in London in traditional attire, seemingly reinforcing patriarchal authority. However, Jamila subverts this structure from within, asserting financial independence and refusing to consummate the marriage. Rather than fulfilling the role of a submissive wife, she reshapes their relationship into one of companionship, spending time discussing Indian politics and playing cards. Her irreverence toward their marriage is clear when she casually addresses Changez: "Hey, Changez, husband or whatever you are, don't you know any more about that politician geezer that got thrown into jail?" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 98). Her friendship with Changez's lover, Shinko, further dismantles the marriage's patriarchal framework, positioning Jamila as a feminist figure challenging both Western and South Asian gender norms.

Meanwhile, Haroon's decision to leave Margaret for Eva represents another rejection of suburban values, particularly the sanctity of the nuclear family. His departure fractures the family unit, with Margaret moving to Chislehurst with Allie while Karim moves in with Haroon and Eva. This shift symbolizes a radical break from suburban domesticity, where stability and order define family life. However, as Morley (2000, p. 30) notes, suburban conformity is often feminized—men escape for adventure, while women remain "shackled" by domestic constraints. Margaret embodies this resigned housewife figure, while Haroon exercises his privilege to reinvent himself. Eva, however, disrupts this pattern. Unlike suburban women, whom Karim perceives as passive, she is assertive, ambitious, and socially mobile. He categorizes people as either *interesting* or *nice*, placing Eva in the former: "The interesting

people you wanted to be with – their minds were unusual, you saw things freshly with them and all was not deadness and repetition" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 93). In contrast, he views his mother as meek and unfulfilled, destined to be left behind: "Like Mum, they were good and meek and deserved more love. But it was the interesting ones, like Eva with her hard, taking edge, who ended up with everything" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 93). Despite his initial resentment toward Eva for his family's dissolution, he acknowledges her role in shaping his worldview. Through her, he gains exposure to the cultural and intellectual vibrancy of London: "Eva was unfolding the world for me. It was through her that I became interested in life" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 93).

While Haroon's departure signals an explicit rejection of suburban conformity, Eva represents an alternative model of female agency. In contrast to Margaret's restrictive suburban existence, Eva challenges traditional gender roles, positioning herself as a catalyst for Karim's coming-of-age. Though deeply affected by his parents' separation, Karim does not let it anchor him in despair. Instead, the loss of a stable home propels him toward the mobility he had always longed for: "Whenever someone – Mum, Dad, Ted – tried to locate me, I was always somewhere else, occasionally going to a lecture and then heading out to see Changez and Jamila" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 94). Karim becomes both literally and metaphorically a nomad, adapting fluidly to different spaces as he moves beyond the rigid boundaries of the suburban home and family, which represent stability and fixity. In Deleuzean terms, suburbia can be categorized as an *arborescent* structure, one that is hierarchical, rooted, and rigidly defined. However, Karim's experience aligns with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the *rhizome*, a mode of existence characterized by nonlinearity, multiplicity, and deterritorialization. As Deleuze and Guattari argue:

> the rhizome is made only of lines: lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21)

Karim's mobility represents a *line of flight*, a continuous transformation that resists fixed identity categories. His journey aligns with Deleuze and Guattari's *rhizomatic structures*, which oppose rigid, hierarchical identities. Unlike *arborescent structures* that enforce stability, rhizomatic existence is fluid and interconnected. This mirrors Bakhtin's distinction between *authoritative discourse*—static and normative—and *internally persuasive discourse*, which allows for reinvention. Karim rejects suburban, racial, and sexual constraints, embracing a hybrid, ever-evolving self that embodies postmodern multiplicity and resistance to fixed definitions:

> Authoritative discourse permits no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders, no gradual and flexible transitions, no spontaneously creative stylizing variants on it. It enters our verbal consciousness as a compact and indivisible mass; one must either affirm it or totally reject it. (Bakhtin, 1982, p. 343)

Unlike *authoritative discourse*, which is static and hierarchical, *internally persuasive discourse* is dynamic and open-ended, fostering reinterpretation and self-definition. Bakhtin argues that such discourse allows for "ever newer ways to mean" (Bakhtin, 1982, p. 346), facilitating individual consciousness and becoming. Karim embodies this struggle, rejecting the authoritative discourses of nationality, gender, suburbanism, and sexuality. His refusal to conform to suburban stability, racial homogeneity, and rigid categorizations marks his evolution

into a subject of constant redefinition. His deterritorialization extends beyond the suburbs and London, reinforcing his status as a migrant figure both literally and metaphorically. Iain Chambers, in *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (1994), conceptualizes the modern migrant as a metropolitan figure who reshapes urban spaces and cultural discourse: "The modern metropolitan figure are the active formulators of metropolitan aesthetics" (Chambers, 1994, p. 23). Migrancy, he argues, disrupts traditional notions of nation and selfhood, displacing fixed identities in favor of movement and metamorphosis: "We are no longer at the centre of the world" (Chambers, 1994, p. 24). Karim embodies this displacement, challenging binaries like center / periphery and British / non-British. His fluid navigation of these boundaries underscores his position as a migrant body—constantly in transition, resisting fixed notions of belonging.

While *The Buddha of Suburbia* follows the *Bildungsroman* trajectory—moving from suburb to city, expanding the protagonist's experiences—it simultaneously deconstructs the tradition. Franco Moretti, in *The Way of the World* (2000), argues that the *Bildungsroman* symbolizes modernity, with youth representing dynamism and instability: "Youth is modernity's essence, the sign of a world that seeks its meaning in the future rather than in the past" (Moretti, 2000, p. 5). Movement is thus central to the genre, persisting in postmodern variations. However, in the postmodern era, the *nomad* replaces the traditional *Bildungsroman* hero. Zygmunt Bauman describes nomadic identity as *momentary*, shifting, and adaptable: "Nomads do not bind time / space, they move through it; and so they move through identities" (Bauman, 1992, p. 694). Karim exemplifies this postmodern shift—his movement from South London to the metropolis and beyond reflects an identity in flux, shaped by displacement rather than resolution. His arrival in London marks a new phase in his journey, transitioning the novel into its second part, *In the City*, where his transformation accelerates.

> There were small hotels smelling of spunk and disinfectant, Australian travel agents, all- night shops run by dwarfish Bengalis, leather bars with fat moustached queens exchanging secret signals outside, and roaming strangers with no money and searching eyes. (Kureishi, 1990, p. 127)

His transition from the suburbs to London mirrors the earlier dislocation of his father's generation, highlighting that racial discrimination persists not only in suburban settings but also in supposedly cosmopolitan spaces that claim to embrace diversity. Karim's encounter with the theatre director, Shadwell, epitomizes this racial essentialism. Cast as Mowgli in *The Jungle Book* solely due to his Indian heritage, Karim is forced to conform to orientalist expectations—adopting an "authentic" accent and darkening his skin—reducing him to a racialized symbol rather than recognizing his individuality. Shadwell's comment—"That must be complicated for you to accept – belonging nowhere, wanted nowhere. Racism" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 141)—underscores the exclusionary ideology that marginalizes hybrid identities. Rather than outright rejecting this imposed role, Karim strategically negotiates his position, subtly asserting autonomy within the theatre. His pragmatic approach aligns with Hall's (1995) notion of *speaking from difference*—inhabiting multiple cultural spaces while challenging dominant narratives. However, his willingness to comply is met with disapproval from Jamila and Haroon, who see it as reinforcing stereotypes, while his white relatives celebrate it, highlighting contrasting views on racial representation.

The novel also situates Karim's experiences within youth subcultures and countercultural movements as spaces of resistance against societal norms. His stepbrother,

Charlie, fully embraces punk culture, adopting its anti-establishment ethos and nihilistic aesthetic to reject suburban conformity. As Sabin (1999) argues, punk embodies rebellion against authority and class hierarchies rather than adhering to a fixed ideology. In contrast, Karim's engagement with counterculture is introspective. While Charlie performs his defiance through music and fashion, Karim retreats into progressive and psychedelic rock, drawn to artists like King Crimson and Frank Zappa, whose avant-garde styles reject mainstream structures. His private rebellion reflects his dissatisfaction with suburban monotony and desire for an existence beyond its confines. The contrast between Charlie's overt participation in punk and Karim's more inward musical engagement highlights the varied ways individuals navigate identity formation and countercultural expression.

> I favoured the tuneless: King Crimson, Soft Machine, Captain Beefheart, Frank Zappa and Wild Man Fisher. […] During these nights, as all around me was silent – most of the neighbourhood went to bed at ten-thirty – I entered another world. (Kureishi, 1990, p. 62)

Karim's rejection of suburban rigidity in favor of *queer temporality* reflects his resistance to familial, institutional, and sexual norms. His journey aligns with the novel' s broader themes of fluidity, dislocation, and the performative nature of identity, mirroring the sociocultural shifts of 1970s Britain. As his acting career advances, Karim faces growing racial tensions. When director Matthew Pyke selects him for his theatre company, his white peers resent his success, exposing anxieties over increasing multicultural representation. Unlike Shadwell's troupe, Pyke's group is diverse, but Karim is pressured to play "someone black" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 170), forcing him to confront his racial positioning. Choosing to portray his uncle Anwar, he performs a monologue based on Anwar's hunger strike. However, Tracey, a Black actress, criticizes his performance as degrading, echoing Jamila's earlier disapproval of his Mowgli role. This moment highlights the recurring tension in Karim's journey—his pursuit of success often places him in positions where he is accused of reinforcing racial stereotypes, complicating his navigation of cultural expectations and personal agency: "I can't believe that anything like this could happen. You show us as unorganized aggressors. Why do you hate yourself and all black people so much, Karim?" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 180). Karim's refusal to censor reality in his performances reflects his belief in authenticity, yet the backlash over his portrayal of Anwar forces him to reconsider. Opting instead to impersonate Changez, he recognizes the character's theatrical potential but faces ethical dilemmas—Changez strongly opposes being represented, particularly by Karim. Initially promising to abandon the role, Karim wrestles with the temptation to pursue it, leading to a rare moment of self-reflection: "I began to recognize that this was one of the first times in my life I'd been aware of having a moral dilemma" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 186). This marks a critical stage in Karim's maturation, aligning with the *Bildungsroman* tradition, where personal growth involves moral and social awareness. However, unlike conventional protagonists, Karim subverts expectations—rather than prioritizing ethical refinement, he chooses professional ambition. He exaggerates Changez's mannerisms into comedic gestures, winning Pyke's approval while sidestepping previous criticisms of racial misrepresentation. Notably, Tracey, who previously condemned his racial performances, remains silent, signaling his increasing ability to navigate and manipulate representation politics. This evolving self-perception extends to his father, whom Karim now views with disillusionment: "I began to think that the admiration I'd had for him as a kid was baseless. What could he do? What qualities did he have?" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 194). This shift, a

classic *Bildungsroman* trope, marks Karim's assertion of independence as he reevaluates his once-idolized father.

Kureishi explores class through Karim's immersion in the bohemian metropolitan scene. His relationship with Eleanor, an upper-middle-class actress, grants him access to elite intellectual circles, sharpening his awareness of class disparities. His dismissive attitude toward Heater, whom he mockingly calls "the authentic voice of the proletariat" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 175), exposes his internalized class prejudices and ambivalence toward working-class identity. This growing alienation highlights how class structures shape Karim's self-perception and influence his navigation of social mobility. Despite his suburban, lower-middle-class background, he aspires to cultural sophistication, yet his discomfort in elite spaces reinforces his liminal status. His journey reflects the novel's broader critique of Britain's rigid class hierarchies, where upward mobility often comes at the cost of identity negotiation and self-doubt.

> When I did think of myself in comparison with those in Eleanor's crowd, I became aware that I knew nothing; I was empty, an intellectual void. I didn't even know who Cromwell was, for God's sake. I knew nothing about zoology, geology, astronomy, languages, mathematics, physics. (Kureishi, 1990, p. 177)

Karim, now an acute observer of class dynamics, gains further insight into elite privilege when Pyke invites him and Eleanor to his opulent home. The residence's aesthetic—dark-red and green walls, modern portraits, and iconic 1960s furniture—epitomizes bohemian sophistication intertwined with upper-class wealth (Kureishi, 1990, p. 198). This setting reinforces the novel's deconstruction of traditional familial unity, extending beyond the fractured suburban household to the sexually fluid and boundary-defying world of the artistic elite. This destabilization of conventional relationships culminates in Pyke's sexual manipulation of Karim. Initially objectified by Pyke's wife, Marlene, Karim is then subjected to an unsettling reversal of power when Pyke himself intervenes: "England's most interesting and radical theatre director was inserting his cock between my speaking lips. I could appreciate the privilege, but I didn't like it much: it seemed an imposition" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 203). Here, race, class, and sexuality intersect in a performance of dominance. Though Karim appears to have agency, Pyke and Marlene's privilege ensures the imbalance of power—his racial and class identity marking him as particularly susceptible to exploitation. Despite his immersion in metropolitan freedoms, he remains entangled in racialized and class-based subjugation.

Karim's most profound realization regarding identity and belonging follows Uncle Anwar's death, an event both tragic and absurd. Accidentally killed by Changez—who fatally strikes him with a dildo—Anwar's demise becomes a darkly comic moment. Karim's irreverent nickname, the "Dildo-Killer," exemplifies Kureishi's postmodernist blending of humor and tragedy, subverting traditional narratives of loss. This grotesque absurdity dismantles patriarchal authority while marking Karim's shifting perspective, as he continues to navigate his fractured sense of cultural and familial belonging:

> Uncle Anwar, who'd come from India to the Old Kent Road to lodge with a dentist, to jangle and gamble, to make his fortune and return home to build a house like my grandfather's on Juhu Beach, could never have guessed all those years ago that late in life he would be knocked unconscious by a sex-aid. (Kureishi, 1990, p. 211)

Karim's evolving consciousness, shaped by his metropolitan experiences and encounters with diverse individuals, leads to a deeper understanding of his Indian heritage. Observing the funeral rites of Uncle Anwar, he experiences a profound realization—his identity is intrinsically tied to his Indian roots, despite his previous tendency to commodify his ethnicity for performance. This moment marks a shift in Karim's self-perception. Rather than treating his heritage as an exotic persona for external validation, he recognizes its personal significance. This newfound awareness instills a sense of incompleteness, as he acknowledges that he has, in many ways, allowed white British society to appropriate and consume his ethnic identity. This realization reinforces *The Buddha of Suburbia's* critique of cultural commodification and the tensions of hybridity, as Karim grapples with reclaiming an identity he once viewed as performative: "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, 1990, p. 212).

This epiphany compels Karim to confront a critical decision: whether to conform to the rigidly defined categorization of Indian ethnicity or to persist in embracing a fluid and multifaceted identity through the subversion and commercial exploitation of his Indianness on stage. In this context, acting emerges as a productive medium for Karim, allowing him to navigate his intricate and evolving sense of self, to reconcile his dual Indian and British heritage, and to challenge the Western essentialist perception of the East. As Glabazňa argues:

> His on-stage excesses hold up a mirror to the downright stupidity of the colonial discourse. To act out Eurocentric stereotypes on stage, as Karim does, would, on Bhabha's reading, mean to undermine these stereotypes to the point where they simply fall apart. (2010, p. 71)

The subversive performativity exhibited by both Haroon and Karim, along with the novel's thematic focus on acting, aligns with Bakhtin's notion of the *carnivalesque*. Just as actors detach from their identities and hierarchical constraints while performing, Bakhtin's *carnival* represents a liminal space where social rankings and restrictions are temporarily suspended. Unlike official medieval festivities, which reinforced political order, *carnival* embodies freedom, transformation, and subversion. Performance becomes a means of challenging fixed identities—Haroon reinvents himself as a mystical guru, while Karim oscillates between roles, navigating racial and cultural expectations. Through these acts of self-fashioning, Kureishi employs *carnivalesque* disruption to critique rigid societal norms, highlighting the fluid, performative nature of identity. As Bakhtin explicates:

> The peculiar logic of the 'inside out' (*à l'envers*), of the 'turnabout,' of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings. A second life, a second world of folk culture is thus constructed; it is to a certain extent a parody of the extracarnival life, a 'world inside out'. (1984, p. 11)

Karim's participation in the *carnivalesque* realm of the stage allows him to engage with humor and fluidity while deconstructing racial and social norms. His performative acts serve as tools for subverting and ridiculing colonial stereotypes, effectively inverting the colonial gaze. However, his theatrical mockery does not equate to indifference toward racial discrimination. His outrage upon learning of Changez's brutal assault—marked by National Front initials carved into his body—reveals Karim's growing awareness of racial violence and postcolonial

politics. This moment catalyzes his decision to join a protest march with Jamila and her companions, symbolizing his increasing commitment to his ethnic identity. His reflections on Pyke's lessons further solidify this transformation, marking a shift from detached performance to active engagement with social and racial struggles: "Paradox of paradoxes: to be someone else successfully you must be yourself! This I learned!" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 220).

Karim's acceptance of his Indian heritage enhances his ability to construct alternate personas on stage, allowing him to manipulate and satirize racial stereotypes more effectively. This aligns with the *Bildungsroman* tradition, which, as Bakhtin describes, charts an individual's development through essential internal changes: "Man's path from childhood through youth and maturity to old age, showing all those essential internal changes in a person's nature and views that take place in him as he grows older" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 22). However, like many *Bildungsroman* protagonists, Karim's transformation is accompanied by psychological turmoil. He experiences emotional distress following his separation from Eleanor and his deepening awareness of racial injustice. His struggle to negotiate his hybrid identity reflects the tension between personal reinvention and the societal constraints imposed upon him, reinforcing the novel's exploration of selfhood as a continuous, often painful process. "We became part of England and yet proudly stood outside it. But to be truly free we had to free ourselves of all bitterness and resentment, too" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 227).

Karim's journey to the United States broadens his perception of identity, confronting him with another layer of racial and cultural essentialism. When an American remarks, "These English are animals. Their whole culture has fallen through the floor" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 245), Karim realizes that racial homogenization is not confined to Britain but operates on a global scale. This aligns with Stuart Hall's assertion that identity is "increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions" (Hall, 1996, p. 17). Karim's homecoming is not merely physical reintegration but a moment of wisdom and self-awareness. His reflections on his father's frailty underscore his own transformation, illustrating his growth beyond the restless, self-indulgent youth he once was. Through his travels and experiences, Karim achieves a deeper understanding of both his hybrid identity and the complexities of belonging in a multicultural, postcolonial world:

> When we wrestled on the floor he always pinned me down. Now he couldn't move without flinching. I'd become the powerful one; I couldn't fight him – and I wanted to fight him – without destroying him in one blow. It was a saddening disappointment. (Kureishi, 1990, p. 261)

Karim's narrative arc reaffirms the fluidity and hybridity of identity. His concluding remarks encapsulate the novel's thematic essence, reiterating the ambiguity and multiplicity inherent in cultural and personal identity: "I was surrounded by people I loved, and I felt happy and miserable at the same time" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 284). Kureishi thus dismantles binary oppositions, illustrating an interstitial space where identities are continuously redefined and renegotiated.

3. Conclusion

This study has thoroughly explored The Buddha of Suburbia as an exemplary text of the contemporary multicultural Bildungsroman, highlighting the protagonist's developmental journey toward a hybrid, nomadic, and fluid identity. Through detailed literary and theoretical analysis, it has illuminated how the novel deviates from the classical Bildungsroman tradition yet retains crucial thematic elements such as mobility, identity formation, psychological maturation, and cultural interaction. *The Buddha of Suburbia* chronicles Karim's complex journey as a biracial individual navigating racial, sexual, and cultural territories, allowing him to construct an ambivalent, rhizomatic identity. The novel effectively employs spatial metaphors and nomadic subjectivity to challenge and redefine social boundaries. Employing theoretical frameworks provided by scholars such as Deleuze and Guattari, Bhabha, and Bakhtin this study positions the novel within postmodern discourse that valorizes fluidity, plurality, and hybridity. It has convincingly argued that contemporary multicultural Bildungsroman not only portray character development through cultural plurality and spatial mobility but also actively critique and dismantle fixed, essentialist identity categories. Thus, *The Buddha of Suburbia* exemplifies the genre's evolution, demonstrating its adaptability and responsiveness to contemporary multicultural contexts. This study provides valuable insights and analytical methodologies that could effectively guide future literary explorations of multicultural narratives and postmodern identity formation.

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