The Question of Identity in Hanif Kureishi's Nineties Fiction

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Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Diplomski sveučilišni studij Engleskog jezika i književnosti; smjer: nastavnički (dvopredmetni)

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Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

Ja, **Mara narančić,** ovime izjavljujem da je moj **diplomski** rad pod naslovom **The Question of Identity in Hanif Kureishi's Nineties Fiction** rezultat mojega vlastitog rada, da se temelji na mojim istraživanjima te da se oslanja na izvore i radove navedene u bilješkama i popisu literature. Ni jedan dio mojega rada nije napisan na nedopušten način, odnosno nije prepisan iz necitiranih radova i ne krši bilo čija autorska prava.

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Sadržaj mojega rada u potpunosti odgovara sadržaju obranjenoga i nakon obrane uređenoga rada.

Zadar, 2022.

Contents

1. Introduction

The collapse of the British Empire after the World War II and the expansion of the Commonwealth lead to the influx of immigrants which introduced many new nationalities together with their cultures, languages, and heritages into British society. The result of this phenomenon was a multi-ethnic society which contributed to changes in culture and arts. Writers of different nationalities have greatly contributed to the development of the so called "migrant tales", as Salman Rushdie refers to this field of English literature (50). Most of these writers are concerned with themes of identity and its hybridity, Otherness, and displacement in the global British society (Christopher 50). As a consequence of Britain's imperialist politics and the mass immigration, the homogeneous society of Great Britain changed, as Hanif Kureishi argues, from "a predominantly white society into a racially mixed one, thus forming a new notion of what Britain was" (*Collected Essays* 111). In his essay "Newness in the World", Kureishi explains why he wrote *The Black Album* and why he chose to write about Muslim fundamentalists. He claims that this was his answer to Rushdie's fatwa as well as to the increasingly diverse British society and the global developments that have taken place since the 1980s in both politics and popular culture. In his work, Kureishi attempts to critique both British society and the Asian community for their responses to the problems presented by a multicultural society.

Furthermore, Graham MacPhee argues that the violent and exploitative imperial past of the post-war Britain is reflected in the post-war British literature and postcolonial studies. As MacPhee continues, the process of decolonization is "uneven and incomplete" and its impact remains unrecognized and displaced into variety of "tropes and affective constructions" (2) that are present throughout the larger culture. As a result, MacPhee proposes that postcolonial

studies embrace all the post-war British literature, rather than only works by the authors from the British colonies and their descendants, while keeping imperial legacy in mind (3). Moreover, Paul Gilroy argues that the multicultural society of Great Britain (and other Western countries) has failed because the negative consequences such as destruction of welfare state, privatization, political resentment, xenophobia and racism are linked to imperial and colonial history (*After Empire* 2). Finally, as MacPhee asserts, the writing of migrants and their descendants is essential in establishing the foundation for today's multi-cultural literary culture (8).

As it will be presented in this diploma paper, the remains of imperial history have had a great impact on the contemporary British writers such as Hanif Kureishi who is concerned with many aforementioned themes and issues throughout his entire work. Kureishi's early opus and novels such as *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album* offer new ways of defining Britishness in the context of a postcolonial, multicultural society while addressing the issue of ethnic identity. Also, when we move away from ethnic identity and representation in these novels, there remain issues of class, sexuality, gender, subculture, and belonging to a community. His later work from the nineties, mainly the novel *Intimacy* and the short story collections *Love in a Blue Time and Midnight All Day* focus on the identity of a contemporary British man on a more private scale – family, work, relationships. His protagonists are often individuals who try to balance between traditional immigrant communities and exigencies of modern life in contemporary Britain, but also those who are constantly dealing with loneliness and frustration of their everyday lives.

For many critics and academics Kureishi is in the first place a black writer, a translator between two cultures who challenges cultural expectations (Schötz, "What is a Man?" 250). However, as Bettina Schötz notes, many analyses of his work have yet to see him beyond the "lens of postcolonial theory" (250) and recognize him, first and foremost, as a British writer of

a new, contemporary British society. As this paper will attempt to show, Kureishi's skill to understand the complexities of identity makes him an essential author of both postcolonial and contemporary British writing. This diploma paper sets out to analyse Kureishi's nineties oeuvre as it best demonstrates his transition and shift of focus from postcolonial themes to more general struggles and frustrations of life in contemporary society. In the centre of the analysis presented in this diploma paper are Kureishi's three novels and two short story collections written in the 1990s: *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), *The Black Album* (1995), *Intimacy* (1998), *Love in a Blue Time* (1997), *Midnight All Day* (1999). The focus of the analysis will be on identity and its fluidity – mainly the ethnic identity of early novels *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *The Black Album;* and the fragile identity of a contemporary man who deals with change and flexibility of old social and cultural conventions which are dominant themes in *Intimacy* and short story collections. The selected texts will be read and analysed mostly in the context of postcolonial studies and Zygmunt Bauman's theory of liquid modernity.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Postcolonial theory – identity marked by difference

There are numerous sources of identity in the contemporary world, some of them being ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, sexuality, and community. In the construction of identity these different sources may conflict and lead to a fragmented identity. As Woodward points out, identity gives us "location in the world and presents the link between us and the society in which we live" (1) and is therefore inevitable and invaluable. However, identities are often marked by difference and constructed in terms of opposition. The difference is "underpinned by exclusion" (9). In forming identity, one always positions oneself in relation to the other, i.e. in relation to what they are *not*. As Jacques Derrida argues, in binary opposition, one side is

always dominant and carries the power (qtd. in Woodward 35). Binary opposition is a means of constructing and fixing meaning and thus securing relations of power. Furthermore, difference can be constructed both negatively and positively. Negative difference implies exclusion and marginalization of the Other reflected in form of racism, oppression or stereotyping. On the other hand, positive difference is viewed as celebration of diversity and as an enriching quality (35).

Edward Said, one of the most significant postcolonial theorists, introduced the terms "Orientalism" and "Other", both of which are essential to understand Kureishi's writing. In his book *Orientalism*, Said examines the representations of the Middle Eastern societies and cultures by Western academics. According to him, Orientalism

> can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient — dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (3)

Said argues that Orientalism is a system constructed by the West in order to control and manage the East, or the Orient, through a hegemony of power relations. This is done by using tropes, images, and representations from literature, art, visual media, film, and travel writing (Burney 23). Moreover, representation and knowledge imply material and political power. It is clear from this constructed discourse that the East is always perceived as inferior to the West. The East is also constructed in binary opposition to the West as “Other”. The Other is always perceived as “voiceless, sensual, female, despotic, irrational and backward” in contrast to “masculine, democratic, rational, moral, dynamic and progressive” West (Moore-Gilbert 39). Using this essentialist and stereotypical view of the East, the West, again, establishes itself as superior, not only academically and culturally but politically as well. Said emphasizes the relationship between knowledge and power on one hand and the consequences Orientalism has

on economic and political superiority of the West (40) on the other hand. The novels selected for analysis in this diploma paper are an example of how otherness is perceived in British society. As we will see, *The Buddha of Suburbia* serves as an illustration of how fetishization, discrimination, and power dynamics have effect on hybrid identity and assimilation into host culture. I will also look at how Eurocentric viewpoints impact the development of the group identity of the second-generation immigrants using the example of a religious extremist group in *The Black Album*.

Another important theme in postcolonial discourse is that of a diaspora and how the first and second generations of immigrants deal with duality of their identities. As Paul Gilroy argues, identity is both inherited from a shared history and constructed individually in the present ("Diaspora and the Detours of Identity" 304). When it comes to migrants, once they move to another culture they are forced and encouraged to adapt to the host culture. In this process they try to combine two different cultures, two different identities. This process is referred to by Homi Bhabha as "cultural hybridity" ("Location of Culture" 4) and it is one of major themes in postcolonial literature. Bhabha defines hybridity as a type of a liminal or in-between space, or what he refers to as "the third space", where the "cutting edge of translation and negotiation" between colonizer and the colonized (38) occurs. With this notion, Bhabha argues against the essentialist view of identity. According to him, identity is prone to change and cannot be fixed, which is proven by the fact that the blending of two cultures results in a new hybrid, third space. Hybrid identity and translation between cultures dominate Kureishi's early fiction. He depicts struggles of both first- and second-generation immigrants, showing how they attempt to adapt to a new culture or navigate the multicultural British society in which they grew up yet are not accepted.

In his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", Stuart Hall describes two possible definitions of cultural identity in the context of postcolonialism. The first one relies on

essentialist view of identity that is based on shared culture and common history and ancestry – a "collective "one true self"" (258). This identity is considered to be stable and fixed. The second definition sees identity as flexible and prone to change, and based in difference which constitutes ""what we really are" or rather— since history has intervened— "we have become"" (259-260). Hall points out that our identities are not rooted in the past but that we "position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (260) which are influenced by the constantly changing history, culture and power relations. When analysing the representation and cultural identities in the works of Hanif Kureishi, it is clear that he positions his writing in accordance with Hall's second definition. He offers different perspectives of life in mainly middle-class England – whether it is the immigrant community situated in the suburbs as in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, or middle-class men going through life crises in the environment of urban London as is the case in *Intimacy* and the majority of his short stories. In the context of postcolonial and postmodern literature, his characters are flexible, fragmented and hybrid when it comes to their identities. As we will see later in my analysis, Kureishi is not merely a "cultural translator", rather he attempts to redefine what it means to be British in contemporary Britain.

2.2. Zygmunt Bauman's liquid modernity

In his book, *Liquid Modernity*, Zygmunt Bauman calls for a new definition of postmodernity and suggests "liquid modernity" as a continuation of modernity. For Bauman, this term is more appropriate since the global technological, cultural and social changes from the 1960s onward are continuation of the period of modernity, whereas the "post" in postmodernity suggests it is over. Similar to modernity, the main characteristics of liquid modernity are fragmentation, disintegration, change and flexibility of old social and cultural

conventions and relations. However, the focus of liquid modernity is on the individual and so is the burden of dealing with change of old, and the creation of new social patterns.

> Ours is, as a result, an individualized, privatized version of modernity, with the burden of pattern-weaving and the responsibility for failure falling primarily on the individual's shoulders. It is the patterns of dependency and interaction whose turn to be liquefied has now come. (Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* 7-8)

What is more, traditional bonds such as family and community, and socioeconomic markers such as class "which one could select as stable orientation points and by which one could subsequently let oneself be guided" are no longer as stable and are "in increasingly short supply" (7). In order to form the identity, an individual can no longer rely on these traditional networks of support, so he creates new ones that are more fluid and flexible. The individual searches for identity by choosing between countless possibilities and by breaking all previously fixed bonds and categories of identity. As we will see, Kureishi's protagonists pick and choose their identities and keep reinventing themselves. It is reflected in their relationships, life choices, change in values, religious and political beliefs, and life styles. However, these changes are followed by feelings of anxiety and uncertainty.

Bauman's question is whether it is possible to completely break all social ties that are crucial for the creation of identity without regard for social conventions. How can an individual find a proper place within these conventions, or choose one of the options offered, without being expelled from society? Can an individual find security in an identity if it is unfixed and therefore unstable and elusive? He is also concerned with fears and consequences of such decisions (*Identity* 29). Bauman maintains that there are too many patterns of behaviour and rules of social groups. They overlap and contradict each other (*Liquid Modernity* 7). In addition, these social categories, patterns and groups have become liquified, meaning it is impossible to fix them due to numerous political and social changes in the contemporary Western society.

The responsibility of both creating and breaking social patterns falls on the individual. That is, they “have descended from the 'macro' to the 'micro' level of social cohabitation” (7).

When writing about love relationships, Bauman compares them to the consumption of goods on the market. He introduces the distinction between “desire” and “love” (*Liquid Love* 9). While desire is the wish to quickly consume and discard, love is the wish to commit to another person and take responsibility. He links constant identity experimentation and fleeting meaningless relationships to cheap commodities - if quality is lacking, we strive for quantity. If we cannot commit to one identity and one person, we experiment with as many different identities and as many superficial and short-term relationships as we can. Moreover, love defined by a concrete, lasting relationship no longer exists because there is no need for it – reproduction and upbringing of offspring is possible even without the obligation of a relationship. Therefore, the standard of love relationships is lowered, and thus short relationships and one-night-stands are sought after (*Liquid Love* 5). Why is this attitude toward relationships detrimental to the issue of identity? According to Bauman, the very essence of identity, i.e. defining oneself, is dependent on one's connections and relationships with other people, as well as on the assumption that these connections will remain permanent and stable, which in liquid modernity is impossible (*Identity* 58).

Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that one needs to find a way to deal with the instability of relationships and the constant “being on the move”. This is where the problem of liquid modernity crystalizes. As Bauman explains, "Being on the move, once a privilege and an achievement, is then no longer a matter of choice: it now becomes 'a must'" (*Identity* 31). The speed and ease of change, and release of obligations do not reduce risks but only distribute them differently, which then causes anxiety. Today's “man with no bonds” (*Liquid Love* 9), as Bauman refers to the modern individual, seeks security and fulfilment in relationships. However, once he realizes that this is impossible, i.e. that it will not be available immediately

and that the relationship will necessitate a sacrifice of his own freedom, he is willing to replace them. Thus, in liquid modern times, the only enduring feature of identity is its ambivalence and fluidity. As I will try to demonstrate, Hanif Kureishi's novel *Intimacy* and short story collections *Love in a Blue Time and Midnight All Day* address these universal issues that modern people face in their search for identity. They change and question their life decisions, as well as the obligations and fears that these decisions entail. They find themselves repeating the same patterns and falling into the same social roles. They are also unable to adapt to political and social changes.

3. Hanif Kureishi as a (post)ethnic writer

In his essay "New Ethnicities", Stuart Hall writes about a shift in black cultural politics. He identifies two crucial moments in Britain in the post-war era marked with high immigration and the politics of anti-racism. The first views the term "black" as an umbrella term for "common experience of racism and marginalization in Britain" while the second sees it as "organizing category of a new politics of resistance" (246) which is experienced by communities and groups of various ethnicities, including Caribbean, African, and Asian. The representation of black ethnicities has always been limited, othered and marginalized: "blacks have typically been the objects, but rarely the subjects, of the practices of representation" (247). This has started to change in the post-war era, first in music and then in literature and film because black artists and cultural workers have become the subjects of representation which was now more positive rather than stereotypical and fetishized. They were now leading protagonists with all their complex identities and personalities.

Another crucial issue addressed by Hall in the new politics of representation is the issue of ethnicity and Britishness. In art, ethnicity is no longer the marginalized Other; rather, it takes

new forms and redefines what it means to be British. Hall asserts that ethnicity, defined as "culturally constructed sense of Englishness and a particularly closed, exclusive and regressive form of English national identity, is one of the core characteristics of British racism today" (251). Nonetheless, as the representation policy shifts, the meaning of ethnicity is appropriated and challenged, and it is no longer framed as "multiethnicity" or "multiculturalism," which frequently have negative connotations. The new ethnicity politics is founded on difference and diversity, but unlike traditional Englishness, it is not concerned with marginalization and othering. The ethnicity recognizes the role of context and history, language, and culture in the "construction of subjectivity and identity" and thus allows for the production of representation within these codes "which have a history, a position within the discursive formations of a particular space and time" (252). Black writers, as Hall refers to this group of writers, can now represent their communities as hybrid, questioning not only race but also class, gender, and sexuality. Kureishi and his film *My Beautiful Laundrette* are singled out by Hall as examples of this type of complex representation, and of the importance of criticism in representation: "its refusal to represent the black experience in Britain as monolithic, self-contained, sexually stabilised, and always "right on"—in a word, always and only "positive,"" (255). As we will see, the same could be applied to Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*. In these fictions he represents a new kind of British youth and ethnic characters who are not simplistically portrayed as villains or victims of racial inequality, but are instead complex, with both positive and negative characteristics.

This is what Kobena Mercer refers to as "the burden of representation" (65) - the black artists' responsibility to always represent their community in a homogeneous, positive light, and to write with an "audience" in mind, whether it is their own community or the general public. Hall also highlights how, as a result of this cultural shift, the burden of representation has become twofold: black artists and cultural workers must now represent themselves as well as

make that representation realistic, as opposed to the fetishized characterization of previous Eurocentric representation based on racism, which "constructs the black subject: noble savage and violent avenger" (“New Ethnicities” 250). Again, this is accomplished by allowing the black artists to tell their own stories and by taking into consideration universal issues such as class, gender, and sexuality, which are frequently overlooked when discussing the black subject.

Furthermore, speaking of Kureishi solely in terms of ethnic writing would be limiting. Mark Stein divides Kureishi's writing into two categories: “posed-ethnic” and “post-ethnic” (qtd. in Upstone 38). The term “posed-ethnic” refers to his early works, specifically *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*. Stein contends that these works are “self-consciously postcolonial” (38) in the sense that they depict ethnicity almost ironically throughthe protagonists' mimicry and commodified versions of ethnic identities. On the other hand, ethnic identity and related issues are no longer central to Kureishi's writing in his "post-ethnic" works. Here the emphasis is on masculinity and the struggles of mostly white, middle-aged men. Their identities are not based on their ethnicity, but are “considered a deliberate construction which the individual is forced to work at daily without the prospect of ever arriving at a final, fixed result” (Schötz, “The Exploration of Community” 220-221). This is consistent with Bauman's view of a person's self-constructed fluid and elusive identity. Furthermore, as Schötz points out, the absence of ethnic markers in characters causes readers to question the concept of ethnicity and its significance and relevance in characterization. Kureishi appears to free himself from the burden of representation in order to focus more on universal issues. As he puts it, “if contemporary writing that emerges from oppressed groups ignores the larger society's central concerns and major conflicts, it will automatically designate itself as minor, as a sub-genre” (qtd. in Upstone 40). As Sara Upstone points out, Kureishi has many times distanced himself from the category of ethnic writers who are “caught between cultures, alienated, or confused” (39). Instead of constantly translating between cultures, Kureishi advocates for redefining

Britishness and discovering “a new way of being British after all this time” (39). Likewise, as Upstone emphasizes, Kureishi's protagonists reject all categories, not just ethnic ones. They refuse to be labelled in any way, from their sexuality and relationships to their work and interests. The novel *Intimacy*, as well as the collections *Love in a Blue Time* and *Midnight All Day*, will be used to examine Kureishi's post-ethnic writing. Schötz identifies these short story collections as the transition point between Kureishi's two main themes and his way of distancing himself from the label of ethnic writer.

4. Identity in the postcolonial context

As previously stated, contemporary British society is ethnically and culturally diverse as a result of globalization and its colonial history. One of the most important implications arising from this description of British society should be that there are various ways to be British. Kureishi tries to depict these different aspects of British-Asian identity. His protagonists in *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album* face the issues of the binary nature of their identities as immigrants and citizens of contemporary Britain, and the fact that their racial difference will always be visible. Furthermore, their identity issues extend beyond racial identity: they want to try on different social roles and experience different lifestyles outside of their ethnicity, class, and current social positions.

The Buddha of Suburbia follows Karim Amir, a British teenager of Indian descent, as he grows up in a British society that does not accept him. We also follow his father Haroon, an Indian immigrant who has built a comfortable life in England but feels confined in all the social roles he has to fulfil. Similarly, *The Black Album* centres on Shahid, a British-Pakistani college student in search of independence and identity, He is confronted with two opposing worlds represented, on the one hand, by his professor and love interest, and, on the other, a young

Muslim fundamentalist group. This section of the paper will also examine differences in identities between the first and second generations of Asian immigrants.

Nahem Yousaf argues that in Kureishi's work "the politics of representation is inextricably linked to the issue of citizenship, of membership of a British community, and by extension a 'multi-cultural' Europe" (15). In modern Britain, there are three levels of "membership" in the Asian community (15): "Necessary membership" includes refugees that were forced to leave their countries due to war. This "underclass" (*Identity* 40), according to Bauman, has been denied any kind of identity and physical or social presence in society. The second group that "negotiates" its membership is the first-generation immigrants, such as Haroon and his cousin Anwar in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, who seek a better life in the promised land constructed by imperial discourse. The third group, represented by Karim and Jamila from *The Buddha of Suburbia* and Shahid from *The Black Album*, "challenges" its membership. This group grew up in contemporary, culturally diverse Britain and must deal not only with their ethnic identities, but also with their identities as young people who are coming of age.

Haroon, the father and "buddha" of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, represents the first generation of Asian immigrants struggling to integrate into British society. At the same time, he represents the modern, middle-aged man who wants to change his mundane, suburban, married life. Haroon and his cousin Anwar are forced to integrate into British society and culture, which means abandoning many of their customs, behaviours, and practices. Haroon and Anwar, once respected upper-class Indians, have to overcome cultural shock upon their arrival in England and adjust to being seen not only as poor and working class, but also as racial Other. England, contrary to their expectations, is cold and impoverished:

> He'd never seen the English in poverty, as roadsweepers, dustmen, shopkeepers and barmen. (…) And when Dad tried to discuss Byron in local pubs no one warned him

> that not every Englishman could read or that they didn't necessarily want tutoring by an Indian on the poetry of a pervert and a madman (24-25).

Haroon and Anwar quickly adapt to and enjoy this new Western way of life. They blend into British culture while actively suppressing their own. They begin to dress and act like the British by changing their accents and attending pubs and nightclubs. Homi Bhabha refers to such performative behaviour as "mimicry" and it is motivated by a desire to avoid racial visibility (85). It entails imitating the culture of the colonizer through mannerisms, language, clothing, ideology, and a variety of other practices. The concept of mimicry is the desire of the Other to access the power of the colonizer. However, mimicry is always built on ambiguity because the Other can never completely replicate the colonizer's codes as he is always marked "as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (86). Mockery and subversiveness, albeit unintentional, are important elements that follow mimicry. Haroon unintentionally becomes a parody of an Englishman through the way he dresses and behaves: "as soon as Dad's monthly allowance arrived from India, Dad visited Bond Street to buy bow-ties, bottle-green waistcoats and tartan socks" (*The Buddha of Suburbia* 25).

Haroon is able to negotiate his membership in British society by appropriating not only British, but Asian culture as well. Another way he mimics and performs an identity is visible in his role of the Buddha. He falls in love with Eva, a white woman who is interested in New Age spirituality in the form of exotic, strange cultures and religions. Haroon redefines his identity yet again through mimicry. He impersonates a Buddhist teacher and eventually becomes the titular character, the Buddha of Suburbia. In order to meet the Orientalist expectations of the white British suburban middle-class, Haroon commodifies and simplifies Indian Buddhist culture in the form of an exotic version of a Buddhist guru. He changes his clothes and his accent once more, this time to sound more Indian. Haroon, who was raised as a Muslim, learns everything he knows about Buddhism from books he buys in the local

bookstores and tailors it to his newfound community. Unable to fit into a category yet again, Haroon reinvents himself with a new hybrid identity and is finally accepted by white British society despite being obviously racially different. However, regardless of how hard they try to blend into the British culture, migrants are always distinguished by their racial and cultural differences. This distinction, as well as mimicry, are always visible and thus always an obstacle to complete assimilation. As Bhabha emphasizes, mimicry is the "difference between being English and being Anglicized" (89). As a result, the mimicry of the postcolonial Other identifies structural political and cultural issues in the colonial discourse (89).

Unlike their parents, who had to negotiate their Otherness, the second generation challenges it by subverting both their immigrant and British communities' expectations. In *The Buddha of Suburbia,* Kureishi tells two stories - one about the father and one about the son, and thus offers two different perspectives on what it means to be ethnically different in contemporary Britain. As Yousaf points out, Haroon and his son Karim have very different views of themselves. Haroon sees himself as Indian: "I have lived in the West for most of my life, and I will die here, yet I remain to all intents and purposes an Indian man. I will never be anything but an Indian" (263). Karim describes himself as: "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)" (1). The second generation has grown up in a society where they have been "positioned as Other" and subjected to "negative identity" (Yousaf 17).

Even though they have been raised in British society and there is no need to mimic the white Britons, they are still, in words of Homi Bhabha, "almost the same*, but not quite"* (86). As Karim puts it: "The thing was, we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it" (*The Buddha of Suburbia* 53). Although manifested differently, there is an element of mimicry in this younger generation's performance

of identity. Charlie, a white Englishman and one of Karim's love interests, also loves changing his looks, tastes and identities. When he goes to New York, he speaks with a posh English accent, which he avoids doing at home in England. Charlie, like Haroon, presents and sells a commodified version of himself that is tailored to the American audience and their perception of British people. Karim also takes on a commodified version of his Asian identity when he agrees to play a part of an Indian in a play in New York. As one of the only two non-white people in the theatre group, he agrees to play a black person. He decides to stick with what he knows and impersonates Jamila's husband, Changez. His performance was later described as comical and hilarious. Haroon and Karim, once again, serve the audience with an exaggerated version of the exotic Other, subverting and trivializing the Orientalist, Eurocentric view of Asian and British-Asian cultures.

Furthermore, Karim and Shahid represent typical *Bildungsroman* heroes who seek their place in the world by defying authority, experimenting with sexuality, fleeing the predictable and familiar life for excitement and independence in the big city, or joining various social groups. They also bear the burden of representing a new type of *Bildungsroman* hero distinguished by his mixed ethnicity. As typical teenagers, Karim and Shahid challenge their place in British society in many ways. Firstly, they are neither English nor Asian, which causes problems in terms of confrontation, stereotyping, and what Yousaf refers to as "negative identity" (17) - they are victims of racism in various ways. Secondly, they follow the most recent trends in popular culture and constantly change their appearance, aspirations, and ideologies to reflect the different trends dictated by the youth culture of the 1970s and 1980s Britain. For example, influenced by the popular culture of the 1980s, Shahid identifies himself with the musician Prince, who inspired the title of the book: "He's half black and half white, half man, half woman, half size, feminine but macho too" (*The Black Album* 25). They experiment with different identities and replace or discard them when they no longer serve their

purpose. In *Liquid Modernity*, Bauman emphasises the fragility of identity and the constant need to fix it and to slow down the change. Thus, he argues, fashion is one of the tools for achieving this and for trying on different identities. Fashion provides "ways of exploring limits without commitment to action, and without suffering the consequences" (83).

As Yousaf argues, Karim and his cousin Jamila, consider identity politics to be "relative and [are] an extension of the political and ideological times and tides within British society" (15). Jamila embodies the new British society of the post-war era. She defies traditional Asian culture by refusing to participate in an arranged marriage. She also encapsulates the 1970s counterculture and youth culture, as she reads feminist literature and draws inspiration from the black American social and political movements. "Miss Cutmore had also told her about equality, fraternity and the other one, I forget what it is, so in her purse Jammie always carried a photograph of Angela Davis, and she wore black clothes and had a truculent attitude to schoolteachers" (53). However, in the case of Karim, Jamila, and Shahid, ethnicity plays an additional role in their coming of age. As Hall argues in his essay "The Young Englanders", the new generation of young immigrants saw their white British peers as "significant Others" (45) of whose group they tried to become part. Anyhow, the young immigrants are "highly conscious of themselves as a group— a group which is constantly being watched and tested" (47). Via fashion, music, and foreign political ideas, these characters try to fit in with their peers and on-going trends, but constantly find themselves as outsiders. As Karim says: "Yeah, sometimes we were French, Jammie and I, and other times we went black American. The thing was, we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it" (53).

In *The Black Album* Kureishi manages to portray two versions of British Asian youth who struggle with their ethnic identities and belonging in British society. Shahid, a young university student, is torn between his Asian and British identities, between 1980s London's

modern lifestyle and traditional Muslim culture. This duality of his identity, as well as the resulting confusions, are mirrored in Shahid's two mentors: Deedee, his cultural studies professor and lover who introduces him to philosophy, new political movements, popular culture, and sexuality; and Riaz, the leader of a fundamentalist group of Muslim students who try to keep Islamic tradition alive and offer Shahid the safety of belonging to a community. Riaz and his followers are also second-generation immigrants, but have decided to turn to Muslim fundamentalism. As Yousaf suggests, Kureishi attempts to illustrate another example of Asian culture, again focused on and represented by individuals and not by a homogeneous group. However, when these individuals feel threatened they try to find support in a group identity: “only if the individuals who may be said to constitute ethnically recognisable groups are threatened and besieged do they consider that mass identity formation may serve a political and survivalist purpose” (17).

Kureishi's own hybrid identity allows him to position himself between the British and Asian worlds once more. He portrays Riaz and his group as he saw them in real life, as a reflection of British-Asian youth in his community and Muslim African-Americans he saw on television and read about. These second-generation immigrants feel threatened by the racism they encounter daily, so they seek community and resistance in fundamentalist Islam. As always with Kureishi’s characters, nothing is simple and straightforward. He portrays Riaz's group as both virtuous vigilantes who defend Asian families and as radicals who support separatism and see white people, women, and homosexuals as inferior and immoral. In his essay "The Rainbow Sign," Kureishi discusses his experiences with racism in 1960s England, as well as the emerging social movements and figures in the United States, such as The Black Panthers, Muhammad Ali, and Malcom X, who inspired but also perplexed him:

> That the men I wanted to admire had liberated themselves only to take to unreason, to the abdication of intelligence, was shocking to me. And the separatism, the total loathing

> of the white man as innately corrupt, the "All whites are devils" view, was equally unacceptable. I had to live in England, in the suburbs of London, with whites. My mother was white. I wasn't ready for separate development. I'd had too much of that already (19)

Kureishi's dilemma is clearly reflected in his main protagonist Shahid. When Shahid meets Riaz he feels welcomed. He finds comfort in the familiarity of his new Asian community as he faces the new challenges of university and living on his own. Although Shahid admires Riaz, he is sceptical of some of Riaz's radical beliefs. He understands their disdain for British society which treats them poorly, because he has experienced it himself. He also understands their traditional perspectives because he grew up in a traditional Muslim Asian community. However, he has difficulty understanding their extremist views, such as separatism, hostility toward anything American, i.e. anything too liberal, including music and popular culture, and finally their condemnation of free speech, which culminates in the burning of Salman Rushdie's book. Finally, by the end of the novel, Shahid decides to leave this group and form his values and beliefs on his own. He comes to the following conclusion: "How could anyone confine themselves to one system or creed? Why should they feel they had to? There was no fixed self; surely our several selves melted and mutated daily? There had to be innumerable ways of being in the world" (*The Black Album* 274). Again, Kureishi emphasises the fluidity of identity in contrast to the constrains of a group that follows strict and fixed rules.

Furthermore, on the issue of religion and tradition, Kureishi sides with James Baldwin who claims that the black American's turn to Islam and Africa is "turning away from the reality of America and "inventing" the past" ("The Rainbow Sign" 14). Kureishi portrays these characters as the ones mimicking Muslim culture and performing its orientalist version which they have learned primarily from Western society:

> Just as the West has generated fantasies and misapprehensions of the East for its own purposes, the East – this time stationed in the West – will do the same, ensuring not only a comprehensive misunderstanding between the two sides, but a complete disjunction which occludes complexity ("Newness in the World" 114).

Riaz and his group are "the East stationed in the West". They have been raised in Western culture by the first-generation immigrants who have embraced this new way of life. Many do not speak Urdu and were not taught about religion as children. They learn about Islamic tradition from books and interpret it in their own way, thereby "inventing the past." When they feel threatened or Othered, they turn to Islam, and, like Haroon, create their own version of the East based on the second-hand experience.

5. The individual in search of happiness in liquid modernity

As previously discussed, the post-war period of "liquid modernity" is characterized by the flexibility of old social and cultural conventions and by the changes occurring inside them. The individuals who attempt to redefine their identities and social roles are frequently frustrated, anxious, and uncertain. This section of the diploma paper will analyse Kureishi's fiction written in the late nineties – his novel *Intimacy* and short story collections *Midnight All Day* and *Love in a Blue Time* - with a focus on the individual and his inner struggles. Unlike the characters in his earlier works, whose identities are formed through a group or a community, Kureishi's later protagonists look for themselves outside of these categories. Their stories are more universal and introspective, dealing with emotions, relationships, intellectual work, and the fulfilment of various social roles. His characters are mostly middle-aged men in their forties and fifties, creative intellectuals working in theatre or film industry, dissatisfied with their

domestic lives and looking for a change. They leave their wives and families for younger women in order to break free from social constraints while their political views and beliefs are no longer stable, and they struggle with work and creativity. As Chalupský points out, the most noticeable difference in Kureishi's newer work is visible in the tone of narratives, which shifts from humorous and witty comedy to a more pessimistic, introspective, and critical observation of middle-aged men's traumas (63). The primary criticism is directed at the institution of marriage, as well as the concept of happiness and freedom from societal expectations placed on men. Another theme that runs through these works is the crisis of masculinity and how it transforms in the post-feminist era to accommodate changes in gender relations.

Family and leaving family life are some of central concerns for Kureishi's protagonists. Bauman argues that having children is an "obligation that goes against the grain of liquid modern life politics and which most people at most times zealously avoid in the other manifestations of their lives" (*Liquid Love* 43). It is an obligation that places someone else at the centre of a person's life, disrupting the person's own comfort, ambition, and autonomy. All of this occurs without a clear time frame or end in sight. It is a lifelong commitment. Kureishi's story "Midnight All Day" articulates the insecurities that having a child brings to a relationship and the individual. Ian co-owns a small film company with his friend. He abandons his wife and their daughter, stops working, and travels to Paris with his pregnant girlfriend to reflect on their relationship and their future together. Ian examines every aspect of his life, one of them being middle-aged: "The early fifties in men was a period of frivolity, self-expansion and self-indulgence" (168) but the problem is "they've lost their intellectual daring" (169).

Furthermore, he questions his relationships and family life, as well as his role of a husband and father. He recalls wondering how much he and his wife knew and loved each other after their daughter was born. Their child became a symbol and a "reminder of their incompatibility, of a difference they were unable to bridge" (166). Ian is now questioning his

relationship with Marina in the same way. They have not been together for a long time, they do not know each other well enough, and she is pregnant - for him, this is a new, but also final, chance to prove himself as a good partner and father. If he fails to meet these expectations, he has failed as a man, and therefore suffers from anxiety and insecurity: "If he was unable to do this work, then not only had he broken up his family for nothing, but he was left with nothing - nothing but himself" (165). In the end, he chooses to stay with Marina to rediscover his identity and purpose, even if it means returning to the life he tried to change. He is unable to truly free himself from the constraints that family life imposes on him: “He wanted to lose himself in the mundane, in unimportant things. Perhaps those things were graspable now. Once he had them, he could think of others, and be useful.” (179).

This brings us to one of the main concepts Bauman deals with in *Liquid Modernity* – the issue of emancipation. He wonders what it means to be truly liberated from society and whether "liberation is a blessing or a curse" (18). He claims that liberation stems from “feeling free from constraint, free to act on one’s wishes, means reaching a balance between the wishes, the imagination and the ability to act” (17). This balance can be achieved by either limiting one's wishes within the confines of society ("objective freedom") or strengthening one's ability to act and change one's current situation ("subjective freedom") (17). It could be argued that Ian achieves this balance - he acts on his desires, but reality does not always match his imagination, so he must compromise and limit his expectations within the constraints of society. He leaves his unhappy marriage (his wishes), but ends up in the same role as a partner and father (mundane confines of society).

As stated previously, Bauman claims that fulfilling of desires is always followed by the fear of failure and expulsion from society. Stable yet imposed behavioural patterns are restraining, but they can also provide psychological security. These doubts and uncertainties about freedom from conventional relationships and their consequences haunt Kureishi's main

protagonist in *Intimacy*. Jay, a middle-aged writer is thinking about leaving his partner, with whom he has two children, for a younger woman. He is a typical representative of Kureishi's protagonists and an example of what Bauman calls "liquid modern 'Man with no Bonds'" (*Identity* 62). Over the course of a 24-hour period, Jay contemplates his life, career, affairs, and relationships with his partner and family. Although he is bored and unsatisfied with his life and his marriage, he still has doubts and fears about leaving and about all the uncertainties that the new life might bring: "Tonight my predominant emotion is fear of the future. At least, one might say, it is better to fear things than be bored by them, and life without love is a long boredom" (*Intimacy* 11). One of the main issues is not only that this change is drastic and difficult, but there is also the fear that it will make no difference and that old patterns and routines will eventually return.

Another concept that Bauman points out is that besides the fear of failure there is a possibility of dissatisfaction once freedom is achieved. Following one's desires requires bold, life-changing decisions, and fulfilling those desires comes with the risk of disappointment: "Fulfilment is always in the future, and achievements lose their attraction and satisfying potential at the moment of their attainment, if not before" (*Liquid Modernity* 28). These fears are most prominently expressed in the short story "Nightlight". It is narrated from the point of view of a man who, as the readers soon discover, abandoned his wife and children a few years ago and now lives in an unfurnished basement where he meets a young woman once a week. They do not ever talk, they just have sex. He ponders over his life decisions – he feels as if he was on his way to fulfil all the social expectations: "For most of his life, particularly at school, he's been successful, or en route to somewhere called Success" (138). Now that he has decided to change his life, he feels insecure and misses the safety and predictability of a conventional family life:

> He has a small flat, an old car and a shabby feeling. These are minor loses. He misses steady quotidian progress, the sense that his well-being, if not happiness, is increasing, and that each day leads to a recognisable future. He has never anticipated this extent of random desolation (139).

As the story progresses, his thoughts and feelings shift from being desperate and unhappy to admitting that his behaviour toward his wife and other women can be harmful. He also admits to having insecurities and that his decisions and motivations for leaving are selfish, but not solely his fault. Finally, he arrives at a conclusion, albeit a contradictory one: he wants the security of ordinary family life, but also the excitement of affairs with strangers.

Furthermore, sometimes the outcomes of broken bonds and relationships are positive. Chalupský points out that unlike *Love in a Blue Time* and *Intimacy,* the collection *Midnight All Day* has overall more positive view of the issues plaguing Kureishi's heroes. His protagonists appear to have matured and are ready to take on new challenges and responsibilities after making life-altering decisions and compromises (63). After all, none of them made these decisions lightly or without carefully considering all of the possible outcomes and all of the people involved in the relationship. Some stories, such as "Four Blue Chairs" are more optimistic and hopeful. In this story, John and Dina are a couple who started their relationship as an affair. They are now both divorced and live together. On the surface, they appear to be a typical couple who follows cultural norms. However, they are insecure and are trying to justify their relationship that started as an affair. They want to show they live a normal, conventional life by inviting a friend over for dinner, buying furniture together and avoiding any conflict or disagreement. Their dragging of chairs across town can be interpreted as a metaphor for the need for validation and justification: "But he seems himself, in their eyes, as a foolish little man, with the things he has wanted and hoped for futile and empty, reduced to the ridiculous shoving of this box along the street in the sun" (60). The couple from this story is also equal

when it comes to power relations. “They imagine that if they start disagreeing they will never stop, and that there will be war” (56). They are careful not to cross these boundaries as they made these mistakes in their previous relationships. They always try to come to an agreement and it is clear they share the same amount of power which is illustrated in them furnishing their apartment with shared furniture and decorations: “the picture of the cat was not passed, but she won’t remove it at the moment, in order to test him” (55).

For Schötz, the crisis of masculinity and its transformation are some of the strongest and the most common themes in Kureishi’s work. At first glance, the majority of his male protagonists leave their partners and families for younger women and short-term relationships in order to satisfy their sexual desires. Nonetheless, as Schötz suggests, what they seek is freedom from conventional gender roles (232). They wonder “what men, and fathers, could become, having been released, as women were two decades earlier, from some of their conventional expectations” (*Midnight All Day* 68). From Haroon to Jay, Kureishi’s male protagonists not only feel entrapped in their mundane everyday lives, but they also feel as if they have failed to fulfil the societal expectations and their roles as fathers and husbands. As argued earlier, construction of an individual identity is a continuous and never-ending task. Gender and gender roles are some of many tools in this construction and, according to Schötz, the failure and the fear of failure lead to anxiety and identity crisis (221).

The crisis of masculinity features prominently in “D’accord, Baby”. It follows Billy, who wishes to sleep with the daughter of a man who had an affair with Billy’s wife Nicola. As Schötz suggests, this story illustrates how masculinity is threatened by equality and reversal of power relations that came with the changing of gender relations in the post-war period (227). Nicola personifies this change – she is financially independent, enjoys her work and is more successful than Billy. The reversal of power relations is even more pronounced when Nicola has an affair. Billy directs his frustrations at the man and attempts to seduce his daughter

Celestine. However, Celestine is the one taking charge in their relationship – she seduces him and makes him do everything she wants. She eventually admits that she rarely even sees her father which makes Billy's revenge pointless. As Schötz points out, what Billy's relationship with both Celestine and Nicola proves is that "the gender order has changed irrevocably and men are forced to adapt their notions of masculinity to the requirements of gender equality" (229).

Moreover, Schötz argues that other protagonists try to transform their masculinity, or rather adapt to these requirements. She takes Ian from "Midnigh All Day" as an example of this transformation (232). His marriage with Jane failed because they were equally powerful in their relationship but did not know how to deal with this: "He did not want to use her words; she did not want his opinions inside her" (166). Schötz suggests that Ian has to quickly adapt to power equality because, as it seems, Marina is strong as well. She has always been independent and is ready to raise the child on her own if necessary. Ian's decision to stay with Marina and try to fix his old mistakes shows he is ready to transform his masculinity. Finally, as "Four Blue Chairs" shows, a relationship of equal power is possible, and perhaps the only way to make a relationship work in the post-feminist era. However, Schötz also criticizes Kureishi's work suggesting that female characters serve only to show the change in gender relations and help understand male characters' mid-life crises (249).

As explained earlier, in *Liquid Love*, Bauman makes a distinction between desire and love. He defines desire as the wish to consume which is consistent with the capitalistic values of the contemporary society and view of relationships as commodities, which results in a false perception of happiness. Love, on the other hand, is the wish to care for another person and take responsibility. It focuses on quality rather than on quantity. However, it also presents the fear of losing the self in another person. As a result, the promise of a long-term commitment is unattainable. The awareness that there are different options leads to uncertainty that something

has been left unexplored. As Chalupský states in his analysis of Bauman's theory: happiness is "a state to be maintained and cultivated rather than (…) a changing station on a never-ending journey" (70). He singles out Jay as an example of such a "perpetually-deprived postmodern happiness-seeker" (70) and indicates that he is constantly seeking pleasure which he obtains at the expense of not only his own happiness but also the happiness of others. Jay is highly egoistical, emotionally liable, and unable to commit and compromise.

The search for happiness through love and desire is a recurring theme in Kureishi's work. Haroon, Karim, and Shahid all seek happiness through intimacy and romantic bonds with others. Haroon finds his happiness outside of marriage, and Karim is involved in a variety of short-term relationships. Even Jamila, who is opposed to traditional marriage, finds happiness in an unconventional, polyamorous relationship. Additionally, the protagonists in *Intimacy* and short stories provide a more complex and varied, introspective view of romantic connections. They range from meaningless flings to long-term relationships. Even after the bonds are broken, they leave an imprint on the people involved. As the narrator in "That was Then" articulates it: "The wrong person is, of course, right for something – to punish, bully or humiliate us, let us down, leave us for dead, or, worst of all, give us the impression that they are not inappropriate, but almost right, thus hanging us in love's limbo." (64). "Love's limbo" is exactly where the majority of Kureishi's heroes find themselves – in between the old relationships that still linger, either as broken marriages bound with mutual children, old affairs or never realized relationships, or new relationships that are not always certain. Whatever the case is, these individuals search for happiness and their own selves in bonds with other people, but can never escape social norms and values that are the biggest obstacle in their pursuit.

As we have seen, Bauman argues that there are too many contradictory social norms and patterns in our modern society. He emphasizes that they have descended to an individual level, with the individual being responsible for developing and adhering to them. When

discussing connections and influence between an individual and the society, Bauman relies on Norbert Elias and his study *Society of Individuals* which says that there is a "reciprocal conception" between society and the individual: "society shaping the individuality of its members, and individuals forming society out of their life actions while pursuing strategies plausible and feasible within the socially woven web of their dependencies" (*Liquid Modernity* 30). This connection requires a constant change of individuals and their roles in society. This is reflected in Kureishi's fictions where nuclear families are falling apart and new kinds of families are formed, relationships do not follow traditional social norms and can be polyamorous or one-night-stands. Individuals constantly reject and create social roles, and construct their identities by either subverting cultural and social expectations or creating new ones within the old ones.

6. Conclusion

This diploma paper has attempted to explore various issues related to identity in Hanif Kureishi's fictions written in the nineties. In the "liquid modern" world, as Zygmunt Bauman refers to the post-war era, the focus is on the individual who is free to choose from a variety of options when forming his identity. Nowadays many people break all familiar bonds and social norms in favour of creating new ones. However, this freedom of choice often causes insecurity and anxiety. This is why individuals constantly change their values, ideologies, life-styles, and relationships. Identities are numerous, consumed fast and discarded even faster. In Kureishi's fiction, characters pick and dispose of different identities, bonds break and both communities and individuals are forced to change.

Taking into consideration Kureishi's own cultural background and major themes in his fiction, his work can be divided into "posed-ethnic" and "post-ethnic". The former refers to his early novels *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album* in which he explores the fluidity of identity of his (non-British) protagonists. As a British-Asian writer he is no longer expected to carry the "burden of representation", or in other words, he no longer has to represent his community as homogeneous and always positive. His biracial protagonists are allowed to be flawed and complex. The "post-ethnic" works, such as the novel *Intimacy* and short story collections *Love in a Blue Time and Midnight All Day,* explore identity as part of changing and challenged contemporary masculinity.

In this diploma paper, I have firstly attempted to analyse the question of identity in Kureishi's fiction in the postcolonial context by exploring the differences between the first and the second generation of Asian immigrants. On the one hand, there is Haroon, the father from *The Buddha of Suburbia*, and on the other are representatives of the second generation – Karim and Jamila (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) and Shahid and Riaz (*The Black Album).* Haroon is the first-generation immigrant who tries to assimilate into British society. He does so by mimicking the colonizer's culture through mannerisms, language, clothes, ideology, and various other practices. However, being still visibly the Other, he decides to embrace this Otherness and pretend to be the exotic guru. He appropriates the Buddhist culture that is foreign to him, and offers it to his new audience in a simplified and commodified form. What is more, Haroon also represents the contemporary, middle-aged man who desires to change his dull, suburban, married life – the themes explored in Kureishi's later works.

Karim, Jamila, and Shahid are representatives of the second-generation immigrants who grew up in multicultural Britain and had to find their place between these two cultures. They are typical *Bildungsroman* heroes, searching for their place in the world while resisting authority and seeking adventure and independence. What is more, they carry the burden of

representing the new kind of *Bildungsroman* hero/ine marked by their hybrid ethnic identity. They try on different identities and roles and look for inspiration in trends dictated by popular culture and foreign politics. Riaz is also a second-generation immigrant, but he decides to form his identity through his fundamentalist Muslim group. Faced with racism and unable to find his place in British society, he chooses a more traditional route of identifying with a group or community. As I have tried to argue, in the liquid modern world this kind of identification can only lead to more conflict. Although community provides safety, a radical group with strong conventional norms is not an option in today's world of alternatives and flexibility. As stated previously, in Bauman's view, change and flexibility of old social and cultural conventions characterize liquid modernity. Individuals who attempt to alter their identities and social roles are faced with frustration and anxiety.

The second part of the paper examines Kureishi's late 1990s fiction - novel *Intimacy* and short story collections *Midnight All Day* and *Love in a Blue Time.* In the centre of these works is the individual dealing with frustrations, relationships, intellectual work, and fulfilment of different social roles. Unlike his early fiction, these "post-ethnic" works no longer focus on ethnic identity but rather on more universal struggles of middle-aged, middle-class, mostly white men who are creative intellectuals working in a theatre or a film. Kureishi seems to criticize the institution of marriage, as well as various consequences of 'gaining freedom' after divorce. In these works, Kureishi often deals with masculinity, its crises, and how it alters in the post-feminist era. Bauman argues that in the liquid modern world full of choices and possibilities, desires and needs of an individual change over time and no longer align with their partner's and their current lives. As he explains, getting into a relationship with someone means committing, and that means closing the door to other possibilities. In order to keep these options open, relationships need to be fluid and unfixed. For the same reason, Kureishi's characters end their relationships and start new ones. When they become more serious, the same old issues

arise forcing the characters to question themselves, and they wonder whether they will fall into old patterns of behaviour. Kureishi's stories offer different answers to these questions: some protagonists end up single and un/happy, others end up in relationships in which they either repeat the same mistakes, or adapt to new conditions.

Finally, after having analysed his work, it can be argued that Hanif Kureishi is well aware of the fluidity of identity, and does not see it as a flaw, but rather as a strength that makes his fiction realistic, engaging and relatable. Bauman claims there are too many contradictory social norms and patterns in today's society. He argues that they have descended to an individual level, with each person responsible for developing and adhering to them. This makes the search for personal fulfilment even more difficult. As I have tried to show in Kureishi's fiction, identity is fluid and elusive. Concepts of family, community or partnership in his works are all fragmented and prone to change. Sometimes that means that his protagonists break free from social norms entirely, while other times they adhere to these norms and try to adapt to the exigencies of contemporary society.

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8. Summary

The Question of Identity in Hanif Kureishi's Nineties Fiction

This diploma paper sets out to analyse Hanif Kureishi's nineties fiction and how it articulates issues of hybrid and fluid identity in contemporary British society. The paper focuses on Kureishi's three novels and two short story collections written in the 1990s: *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), *The Black Album* (1995), *Intimacy* (1998), *Love in a Blue Time* (1997), *Midnight All Day* (1999). The paper explores *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album* in terms of hybrid identity and analyses their protagonists, first and second generation of British-Asian immigrants, who are constantly othered. Kureishi's later works articulate more universal struggles of mostly white, middle-aged, middle class men who tend to avoid marital and family constraints, and the paper focuses on his protagonists in the context of Zygmunt Bauman's theory of 'liquid modernity'.

Key words: Kureishi, postcolonial, Other, hybridity, fluidity, identity, Bauman

9. Sažetak

Pitanje identiteta u djelima Hanifa Kureishija u devedesetima

Ovaj diplomski rad analizira djela Hanifa Kureishija iz devedesetih i načine na koje odabrani tekstovi artikuliraju pitanja hibridnog i fluidnog identiteta u suvremenom britanskom društvu. Rad se fokusira na Kureishijeva tri romana i dvije zbirke pripovijetki napisanih 1990-ih: *Buddha iz predgrađa* (1990.), *Crni album* (1995.), *Intima* (1998.), *Love in a Blue Time* (1997.), *Ponoć cijeli dan* (1999). Rad ispituje *Buddhu iz predgrađa* i *Crni album* u kontekstu hibridnog identiteta i analizira njihove protagoniste, prvu i drugu generaciju azijskih imigranata, koji su neprestano tretirani kao Drugi. Kureishijevi kasniji radovi artikuliraju univerzalnije borbe većinom bijelih, sredovječnih muškaraca iz srednje klase koji teže

izbjegavanju bračnih i obiteljskih obveza, a rad se fokusira na protagoniste koristeći teorije 'tekuće modernosti' Zygmunta Baumana.

Ključne riječi: Kureishi, postkolonijalizam, Drugi, hibridnost, fluidnost, identitet, Bauman