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RESEARCH ARTICLE
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A Threshold Between Two Cultures: Hybrid Identity and the Search for Belonging in The Buddha of Suburbia

İki Kültür Arasında Bir Eşik: Varoşların Buda'sı Adlı Romanda Melez Kimlik ve Aidiyet Arayışı

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ABSTRACT

Colonialism is not only a form of political and economic domination, but also a historical process that leaves lasting marks on cultural and psychological levels. Although classic colonial structures dissolved after World War II, issues of identity, belonging, and representation have persisted in different forms in the post-colonial era. This has become particularly evident in postcolonial literature, which developed in the second half of the 20th century. Postcolonial texts reveal the fragmented and negotiable nature of the post-colonial subject through concepts by Homi K. Bhabha such as cultural hybridity, identity crisis, ambivalence, and mimicry. Hanif Kureishi's novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, is one of the important works at the centre of these discussions. Set in 1980s England, the novel combines both postmodern and postcolonial dynamics, reflecting cultural conflicts and the search for belonging through the experiences of Karim Amir, who possesses a hybrid identity. This study aims to analyse the transformative and sometimes destructive effects of cultural imperialism on individual identity by examining the novel within the framework of postcolonial theory. This analysis, conducted through the concepts of hybridity, ambivalence, mimicry, and identity crisis, aims to reveal how the novel makes visible the constantly reconstructed and performative structure of the post-colonial subject.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, Mimicry, Hyrbidity, Ambivalance, Third Space Theory.

ÖZET

Sömürgecilik sadece siyasi ve ekonomik bir tahakküm biçimi değil, aynı zamanda kültürel ve psikolojik düzeylerde kalıcı izler bırakan tarihsel bir süreçtir. Klasik sömürge yapıları II. Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra ortadan kalkmış olsa da kimlik, aidiyet ve temsil sorunları sömürgecilik sonrası dönemde farklı biçimlerde varlığını sürdürmüştür. Bu durum, özellikle 20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında gelişen sömürgecilik sonrası edebiyatta belirgin hale gelmiştir. Sömürgecilik sonrası metinler, Homi K. Bhabha'nın kültürel melezlik, kimlik krizi, ikirciklilik ve taklit gibi kavramları aracılığıyla sömürgecilik sonrası öznenin parçalı ve müzakere edilebilir doğasını ortaya koymaktadır. Hanif Kureishi'nin *Varoşların Budası* adlı romanı, bu tartışmaların merkezinde yer alan önemli eserlerden biridir. 1980'ler İngiltere'sinde geçen roman, melez bir kimliğe sahip olan Karim Amir'in deneyimleri aracılığıyla kültürel çatışmaları ve aidiyet arayışını yansıtarak hem postmodern hem de sömürgecilik sonrası dinamikleri bir araya getirmektedir. Bu çalışma, postkolonyal kuram çerçevesinde bahsi geçen romanı inceleyerek kültürel emperyalizmin bireysel kimlik üzerindeki dönüştürücü ve bazen yıkıcı etkilerini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Melezlik, ikirciklilik, taklit ve kimlik krizi kavramları üzerinden yürütülen bu analiz, romanın postkolonyal öznenin sürekli yeniden inşa edilen ve performatif yapısını nasıl görünür kıldığını ortaya çıkarmayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Postkolonyalizm, Taklitçilik, Melezlik, İkirciklik, Üçüncü Alan Teorisi.

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INTRODUCTION

When colonial powers withdrew and left the lands they had colonized, they did not only leave behind a political vacuum; they were also unaware that they had sown the seeds of profound and multifaceted ruptures in terms of identity, belonging, and subjectivity. Although colonialism appeared to have physically ended, it continued to leave devastating and traumatic marks on the mental world of colonized societies. These psychological and cultural effects are particularly evident in the identity crises that emerged after British colonialism.

In this regard, considered one of Hanif Kureishi's most important works, *The Buddha of Suburbia* offers a multi-layered narrative amenable to interpretation within the framework of various literary theories. For example, Homi K. Bhabha's "Third Space" approach, shaped around concepts such as hybridity, identity, ambivalence, and mimicry—all of which can be observed in postcolonial subject—allows for a re-evaluation of the novel within a

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postcolonial context. Through this theoretical perspective, the work can be read as a significant text that reveals how postcolonial identity is constructed within processes of cultural conflict and negotiation.

In Kureishi's work, the transformative and sometimes destructive effects of British colonialism on the individual are clearly observable. The protagonist of the novel can be read as the embodiment of a "new" colonial subject, the kind desired by the colonizers during their withdrawal; a model of identity shaped especially after the British withdrawal from India, one that is in contact with Western values but not entirely belonging to the centre. Kureishi, who comes from a family of Pakistani origin and was born in the United Kingdom, himself possesses an immigrant identity, having experienced the historical legacy of colonized lands in England, considered the heart of the colonial centre. This biographical background makes the search for identity in the novel even more meaningful.

Additionally, throughout his life, the writer Hanif Kureishi faced numerous challenges, including racism and exclusion, which are common occurrences for immigrants. He consciously or unconsciously reflected these experiences in his literary work. Indeed, a strong parallel can be drawn between the author's personal history and the thematic structure of his novels. His response to a question about attitudes towards race amidst the rising social mobility and cultural transformation of the 1960s and 1970s clearly reveals the traces left on his intellectual world by this historical period and his personal experiences:

> "Yeah, there was a lot of casual racism that we faced…People gobbing on you and smacking you about racism, and, and the racism, let's say, of exclusion, or the racism of superiority, that the Brits, certainly after the war, still had those Empire attitudes, and they thought they were the master race, and they looked down on Indians and thought you were inferior and uneducated and, basically, born to be their servants" (Kureishi, 2016).

His words provide significant background explaining the social context in which the novel was written. Kureishi's remark reveals the persistence of racist attitudes and imperial mentality in everyday life in Britain, despite the official end of colonialism. This historical atmosphere forms a fundamental basis for understanding the search for identity and tensions of belonging in *The Buddha of Suburbia*.

As for the historical context, *The Buddha of Suburbia* offers a multi-layered narrative that can also be read within the framework of postmodern trends. Understanding the novel's world and the characters' mental background requires a solid historical awareness of the cultural and political transformations experienced in 1960s, 70s, and 80s Britain. This period is defined not only by political dynamism but also by the rise of consumer culture, the mass impact of popular music, the diversification of fashion trends, and the increasing visibility of youth subcultures.

Consumerism, the Beatles craze, punk and rock music, suburban life, and various subcultural formations do not merely serve as decorative elements in the novel; rather, they become fundamental dynamics shaping the characters' identity construction processes and their perceptions of the world. In this context, the work reproduces the spirit of the era at both aesthetic and narrative levels. Indeed, Andy Beckett's assessment, summarizing the 1970s with striking adjectives, provides an explanatory framework for understanding the social atmosphere of that period:

> "The British 70s signify both drabness and gaudiness, excess and shortages, camp-ness and blokeishness, hippiedom and violence, tastelessness and stylishness, crudity and knowingness, a sense of possibility and a sense of entropy, hedonism and melancholy, austerity and decadence, seediness and a certain innocence…Kureishi's acclaimed 1990 novel and 1993 TV drama *The Buddha Of Suburbia* remembered the period's racism and shabbiness, but also its sexual freedom and radical possibilities" (Beckett, 2007).

Beckett's portrayal of 1970s Britain through contrasts reveals the contradictory and fragmented spirit of the era. The simultaneous existence of deprivation and excess, despair and freedom, corruption and innocence prevents this period from being a one-dimensional historical snapshot. Kureishi's fictional world reflects this dual structure; while making racism and social exclusion visible on the one hand, it highlights sexual freedom and areas of cultural experience on the other. Thus, the novel concretizes the contradictory atmosphere of the 1970s through the characters' search for identity.

In this context, the following section of the study aims to examine Kureishi's work, a modern classic, within the framework of fundamental concepts of postcolonial theory. Specifically, in line with Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space approach, the concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence, as well as themes of identity, individuality, and gender, will be discussed through the novel's characters, particularly focusing on the figure of Karim. Thus, the novel's ability to make visible the cultural negotiation processes and fragmented identity construction of the postcolonial subject will be analysed on a theoretical basis.

THIRD SPACE THEORY BY HOMI K. BHABHA

Firstly, the concept of "hybridity" can be superficially understood as a mixture of two different races or biological origins. However, when considered within the context of cultural and colonial studies, this concept has a much broader and more complex meaning. In postcolonial discourse, hybridity refers not only to an ethnic or biological combination, but also to the ability to position oneself between two different cultural universes, to decipher the codes of both cultures, and to transition between these cultural spaces.

In this context, the hybrid subject can be placed in a position of certain privilege thanks to their capacity to understand and interpret both cultures. Because this position offers the individual the opportunity to negotiate cultural differences, facilitate communication, and sometimes act as a mediator between two worlds (Hoogvelt, 1997). Therefore, hybridity is not only a category of identity; it also signifies cultural literacy and the ability to move across borders. Alternatively, regarding the concept of hybridity, Bakhtin puts:

> "Hybridity is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor" (Bakhtin, 1995).

Moreover, despite the fact that many think that hybridity is mostly related to "the colonized", it can also be associated with "the colonizer", too; in other words, there is a complementary and mutable relationship between two. Notably, according to Homi K. Bhabha this newly formed hybridity suggests, challenges the traditional power dynamics of colonization by presenting a view of cultural differences as being constantly evolving and influenced by both the colonizer and the colonized. This approach sees the two groups as occupying a space in-between one another, rather than being fixed in a hierarchy with one dominant and the other subservient (Bhabha, 1981).

As for the concept of "mimicry", it is subtly straightforward. As stated by Oxford Learner's Dictionary, the word "mimicry" means "the action of copying or the skill of being able to copy the voice, movements, etc. of others" (Oxford University Press, n.d.). Notwithstanding, in colonial and especially postcolonial context, it has more than that simple meaning; in particular, many think that this term has a derogatory connotation. In order to understand the concept in postcolonial context, we should perhaps see some quotations concerning mimicry – "mimic men." For instance, mimicry can often be explained by Frantz Fanon's famous book's title *Black Skin, White Masks*. The picture Fanon paints in his work shows that the colonial subject's attempt to "whiten" by adopting white culture never achieves a complete transformation and condemns the subject to a permanent identity split; this situation would later be given a theoretical framework by Bhabha's concept of "mimicry" (Fanon, 2008). Indeed, Bhabha would later frame this concept strikingly as follows:

> "Then colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (1984, p. 126).

In this context, creating a new colonial identity is expressed with T. B. Macaulay's notable words, too, when he states the following, "… a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Macaulay, 2018). In short, in postcolonial theory, mimicry arises from the process by which the colonized subject, within the context of the master-slave relationship, adopts the behavioural, linguistic, and cultural codes of the colonizer, who holds a superior and dominant position.

Another fundamental concept that must be addressed for a deep understanding of postcolonial readings is that of "ambivalence". Although this concept, originating in psychoanalysis, may seem abstract and difficult to understand at first glance, it plays a central role in explaining the contradictory feelings and positions of the colonial subject. By definition, it describes a feeling of both attraction and revulsion towards something. It's like a pull in two opposite directions, where you are both drawn to and repelled by the same thing (Young, 1995, p. 161). To better understand the concept of "ambivalence," it may be helpful to refer to the term's basic dictionary definition; according to Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as follows, "simultaneous and contradictory attitudes or feelings (such as attraction and repulsion) toward an object, person, or action" (n.d.). In other words, ambivalence gives rise to such feelings as equivocation, uncertainty, unsureness, and fluctuation when colonized subject finds themselves in a dilemma of thoughts and feelings towards colonized—be it a person or cultural aspect.

Finally, Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the Third Space defines a hybrid negotiating space where identity is reconstituted precisely at this tense point of encounter, transcending the binary opposition between colonizer and colonized. He defines this space as follows:

> "It is in the emergence of the interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. How are subjects formed 'inbetween', or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc.)?" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2).

With this statement, Bhabha emphasizes that identity is not the sum of pre-given categories, but a construct established and constantly renegotiated in the "in-betweenness" where differences intersect. He sees this emerging space as a new ground where meaning and representation are renegotiated in a constant flux.

After presenting the different dimensions of these concepts, it is possible to evaluate the theoretical framework in question through some characters in Kureishi's main novel. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the characters who embody the concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence within the Third Space theory, using *The Buddha of Suburbia* as a basis for analysis.

READING *THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA* THROUGH BHABHA'S THIRD SPACE THEORY

Hanif Kureishi's novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, can be considered one of the literary examples that embody Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space theory. The novel highlights binary oppositions and cultural tensions, particularly through characters like Karim Amir, his father Haroon, and Genghis; these characters represent different dimensions of concepts such as hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence.

For example, the novel's main character, Karim, comes from a family of half-Indian and half-English descent and is conceived as a hybrid individual born in England. The identity crisis he experiences throughout the novel points to a state of coexistence that can be directly linked to Bhabha's concept of the Third Space. Indeed, the expressions Karim utters in the very first pages of the novel clearly reveal traces of this identity tension:

> "My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don't care — Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London suburbs and going somewhere. Perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 3).

This passage reveals Karim's state of in-betweenness, established through his "almost" English identity. The emphasis on "almost" shows that he is neither entirely central nor entirely outside. This feeling of both belonging and not belonging reflects the unease created by his hybrid identity and the negotiating nature of the Third Space. Thus, the notions of hybridity and ambivalence with these undertones become easily traceable.

As for the mimicry, Karim is, as the colonized subject, envious of Charlie who is a native English and thus can be read as "the colonizer" in postcolonial discourse. To illustrate, Karim utters the following:

> "And Charlie? My love for him was unusual as love goes: it was not generous. I admired him more than anyone but I didn't wish him well. It was that I preferred him to me and wanted to be him. I coveted his talents, face, style. I wanted to wake up with them all transferred to me" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 15).

These expressions remarkably coincide with Fanon's desire for whiteness and mimicry, as articulated in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Karim not only imitates Charlie's behaviour and lifestyle but also desires to physically resemble him—that is, to become white.

However, Amir also experiences significant ambivalence regarding his religious and sexual identity; he lacks a definitive position on whether he is Christian, Muslim, or Buddhist, as well as whether he is gay, bisexual, or heterosexual:

> "It was unusual, I knew, the way I wanted to sleep with boys as well as girls. I liked strong bodies and the backs of boys' necks. I liked being handled by men, their fists pulling me; and I liked objects — the ends of brushes, pens, fingers — up my arse. But I liked cunts and breasts, all of women's softness, long smooth legs and the way women dressed. I felt it would be heart-breaking to have to choose one or the other, like having to decide between the Beatles and the Rolling Stones" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 55).

This scene is the most personal manifestation of ambivalence. Karim rejects the "either/or" logic, not only in terms of cultural identity but also in terms of sexual identity. For him, the issue is not a matter of choice, but a state of plurality. This is directly related to the Third Space: here, identity is not divided among fixed categories; rather, it exists in *in-betweenness*, in fluidity. Therefore, this passage shows that Karim's hybridity operates not only on an ethnic or cultural level, but also on a bodily and volitional level. His identity cannot be reduced to a single category; it is situated in a negotiating space where different possibilities coexist. And the analogy of "having to

decide between the Beatles and the Rolling Stones" ironically rejects the idea of reducing identity to one of two fixed options. In this regard, Amar Acheraïou remarks the following, "Defined as anti-binarist par excellence, the discourse of hybridity is in fact a two-fold rhetorical and discursive design: as it contests binarism, it also opens up a discursive space for binary and monolithic structures" (2011, p. 153). So, the discourse of hybridity is not as one-sided as is often thought, a mere "anti-binary" structure. Hybridity questions and resolves binary oppositions (such as East/West, self/other); however, it simultaneously risks reproducing the existence of these oppositions. That is, while attempting to dismantle binary oppositions, it also reconstructs them as grounds for discussion. In short, hybridity both shakes up binary oppositions and, paradoxically, operates within its boundaries. Therefore, it is not a completely liberating concept; it is a "two-fold discursive design" containing inherent contradictions.

This constant state of suspension and uncertainty points to a profound oscillation of identity in his personality. Consequently, Karim occupies a Third Space where his feelings and thoughts are not firmly grounded, and where cultural and identity negotiations continue. Indeed, Bhabha's conceptualizations of cultural difference, hybridity, and the Third Space reveal that identity is not a fixed essence but a performance constructed through negotiation within the context of cultural transitions. In this regard, Eleanor Bryne articulates this point as follows:

> "Cultural practices bore the marks of contingency, the necessary shifts of a minority population attempting to negotiate themselves through the cultures of dominant groups and colonial powers, bringing together and reworking disparate narratives in order to survive in the present cultural and political climate" (Byrne, 2009, p. 10).

Her remark emphasizes that the cultural practices of individuals in minority positions are not fixed and unchanging; rather, they are necessarily reshaped in the process of encountering the dominant culture. Identity, in this context, is not a ready-made essence, but a process of negotiation constructed by bringing together different narratives in order to survive within the existing political and cultural conditions. Karim's experience exemplifies this; in order to exist in British society, he reproduces cultural codes and constantly repositions his hybrid identity in the Third Space.

Furthermore, some other characters from the novel such as Haroon—father of Karem—and Changez, Indian immigrants who come to London seeking their fortune, are presented at first glance as simple and straightforward personalities, but they exhibit a far more complex structure in terms of mimicry and ambivalence. Haroon, in particular, reveals the ambivalent nature of his identity through his adoption of an Eastern religious practice—Buddhist Zen. On the one hand, he struggles to adapt to this new world that is alien to him upon his arrival in London; on the other hand, he reproduces elements of his origins within a different context. This situation points to a position of identity that simultaneously harbours both a desire for assimilation and a cultural distance. It is justified when his son Karim states the following about his father: "He was hissing his s's and exaggerating his Indian accent. He'd spent years *trying to be more of an Englishman*, to be less risibly conspicuous, and now he was putting it back in spadeloads. Why?" (Kureishi, p. 21). In this scene, Haroon's deliberate exaggeration of his Indian accent, which he has tried to suppress for years, demonstrates that identity is not a fixed essence but a construct performed according to context. Having previously attempted to become invisible by becoming Anglicized, Haroon now employs a different strategy by staging his "exotic" identity. Karim's astonishment at asking "Why?" reveals the ambivalence created by this transformation. Thus, the scene shows that mimicry is not a one-way assimilation; rather, it is an ambivalent and negotiated practice of identity that shifts direction according to circumstances.

In a similar vein, Haroon continues his yoga and Buddhist practices—footprints of his cultural identity—throughout the novel, refusing to abandon them despite the racist and demeaning remarks directed at him by the British. However, this points to a significant ambivalence in his identity; he oscillates between continuing and abandoning these practices. On the other hand, his economic poverty in London despite coming from a wealthy family in Bombay, and his inability to fully belong to either India or England, demonstrates his cultural and identity-based coexistence. This corresponds to an experience of "in-betweenness" that can be associated with Bhabha's concept of the Third Space. That is why, his son Karem's words in this matter are noteworthy, "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. How was this possible when bitterness and resentment were generated afresh every day?" It clearly reveals the tension between belonging and exclusion. This dual position of being part of England and standing outside of it aligns with Bhabha's concept of "in-betweenness." The desire for liberation is constantly hampered by the racism and resentment that are reproduced daily; this demonstrates the ambivalent and unstable nature of identity.

Besides, Changez, who comes to London through an arranged marriage with Jamila, is a remarkable example of the concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence, too. Initially finding himself in a foreign world, Changez hesitates about whether to integrate into this new cultural environment. However, as the novel progresses, his identity gradually transforms, and he takes steps towards adapting to the English way of life. His indecision in the face of his wife Jamila's refusal of sexual relations shows his oscillation between moral and cultural values; ultimately, his turning to an extramarital affair is the result of this ambivalent process. So, while he is traditionally devoted to his wife Jamila, he befriends a Japanese prostitute named Shinko and lives out his Western fantasies with her. In this regard he states the following, "I can love my wife in the usual way and I can love Shinko in the unusual way!" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 101). Changez's expression reflects his identity, divided between two different cultural and moral codes. The distinction between "usual" and "unusual" demonstrates his desire to both uphold traditional values and embrace a Western way of life. This is a personal reflection of ambivalence and the state of being in betweenness. In this respect, "hybridity discourse is essentially Janus-faced; at once it contests binarism and, thanks to its dialogism and elasticity, it enables rather than disables binary thinking and dominant systems of control" (Acheraïou, 2011, p. 153). In short, hybridity both shakes up binarism and, paradoxically, can function alongside dominant thought and control systems. Therefore, it is not entirely liberating, but an ambivalent conceptual tool.

Similarly, despite his bearing Indian and Muslim identity together, his rapid distancing from his own cultural background; his behaviours such as consuming alcohol, reading English novels, and visiting a prostitute, show that he is *mimicking* the English way of life. In this respect, Changez, as one of the "mimic men" figures in the novel, is a subject who internalizes the norms of the colonial centre but never fully belongs to it. His ambivalent attitude when criticizing his fellow citizens for not conforming to British standards is striking:

> "Look at that low-class person...The reason there is this bad racialism is because they are so dirty, so rough-looking, so bad-mannered. And they are wearing such strange clothes for the Englishman, turbans and all. To be accepted they must take up the English ways and forget their filthy villages! They must decide to be either here or there. Look how much here I am! And why doesn't that bugger over there look the Englishman in the eye! No wonder the Englishman will hit him!" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 210).

This passage clearly reveals the internalized nature of the colonial gaze. "Clean," "civilized," and "English" are established as the norm, while difference is coded as dirty, coarse, and inferior. The condition for acceptance is to erase cultural origins and belong entirely "here." Change's discourse demonstrates the coercive dimension of mimicry: the Other is forced to imitate the dominant culture to be accepted. Ambivalence is also evident here; the subject both aspires to Englishness and is never fully accepted. Therefore, the passage critiques a binary logic that confines identity to the necessity of being either "here" or "there," and implies that the Third Space is formed precisely outside this imposed duality. Ironically, later in the novel although the more Changez is adopting identity of the "Englishman", the more he is ridiculed by the English and Indians alike. Regarding this, it is significant to notice that Karem exploits Changez as a stereotypical Indian character in a play.

Finally, the character of Margaret is also noteworthy in the context of a postcolonial reading of the novel. Although Karim's mother is English, she lives within an Indian family structure and gradually begins to learn and adopt the Indian way of life. Despite being a native Englishwoman, her mimicry of the cultural practices around her demonstrates that identity is not a one-way process of assimilation, but rather that it is shaped through reciprocal interaction. For instance, when her husband, Haroon, comes home with a proposal visiting Eva, she claims that, "She treats me like dog's muck, Haroon. I'm not Indian enough for her. I'm only English" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 5). This expression illustrates an exclusionary mechanism that works against identity. Margaret is no longer a representative of the "centre"; on the contrary, she expresses her devaluation on the grounds that she is not sufficiently "Indian". The phrase "I'm not Indian enough" shows that belonging has become a performative and measurable category, rather than a fixed and natural one. In this context, the scene reveals that hybridity is not a one-way assimilation. The effort of cultural mimicry and adaptation does not always lead to complete acceptance. Margaret is English, but she is ostracized within the Indian family for not being "Indian enough." Thus, identity is situated beyond the centre/periphery divide, in a position that is constantly negotiated and never fully fixed. Notably, this situation embodies the logic of reciprocal transformation in the Third Space: not only the colonized subject but also the subject at the centre—the colonizer—can experience ambivalence and in-betweenness. Briefly, Margaret, by reversing her colonial subject position, transforms into a hybrid subject who, despite possessing a British identity, embraces Indian cultural elements within her newly formed identity.

All these instances and many others demonstrate that many characters in the novel embody Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence. When these concepts are considered within the framework of the Third

Space, it can be argued that *The Buddha of Suburbia* reveals that identity is not static but a negotiated and constantly reconstructed process.

CONCLUSION

To properly analyse postcolonial discourse and texts, understanding Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space theory is almost a necessary theoretical foundation. Within this framework, the concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence play a central role in understanding how postcolonial identities are constructed, negotiated, and exist in a conflictual structure. The postcolonial subject is neither entirely belonging to the colonial culture nor completely identified with the local culture; it constantly reproduces its identity precisely in this intermediate space, namely the Third Space. In this context, these concepts can be concretized through Hanif Kureishi's novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*. The novel offers powerful examples of how cultural hybridity, identity performance, and ironic mimicry of Western norms can produce both resistance and dependence. In particular, the attitudes of the characters in staging, transforming, and negotiating their identities make Bhabha's theoretical framework visible on the literary plane. Although this study presents only a basic and limited framework regarding the Third Field theory, the examples offered in the novel clearly demonstrate the applicability of the theory to postcolonial literature in general. Indeed, hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence are not themes unique to this novel; they are fundamental dynamics that reveal that identity is not fixed but constructed as a negotiable and often contradictory structure in most postcolonial texts. Therefore, Bhabha's Third Space approach offers an indispensable theoretical possibility that makes visible the fact that postcolonial identity is not a fixed essence, but a constantly negotiated, conflicted, and productive process of *becoming*.

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