

Men And Masculinities In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *The Black Album* & *Something To Tell You*

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Abstract- *The appearance of Kureishi's gay, South Asian businessman Omar in My Beautiful Laundrette (1986) caused much hype in the British media because of the presence of characters like Omar Ali. The portrayal of Omar's sexuality (i.e., as a homosexual) was out rightly rejected by many South Asians. The portrayal of a gay, South Asian entrepreneur is one of many controversial iden titles that Kureishi has portrayed in his works. Ruvani Ranasinha in "Introduction: Situating Hanif Kureishi" sees the character of Omar as the beginning of Kureishi's "exploration of the question of race through sexuality and constructions of masculinity." (Ranasinha 19) In his later novels like The Buddha of Suburbia (1990), The Black Album (1995) and Something to tell You (2008) Kureishi engages further with the "question of race" and deals with the changing character of masculinity vis a vis their ethnicity in the post-colonial era. My paper would theorize and map the gradual transformations in the production and circulation of masculinities in the last century by referring to the fiction written by Hanif Kureishi. The central idea of "transforming masculinities" is addressed in Kureishi's works by sketching the differences in the masculinities portrayed by the first generation immigrant and the second generation immigrant. There will also be an attempt to contrast the hegemonic masculinity of the first generation immigrant with the fluid and dialogic masculinities of the second generation immigrant. While dissecting the presentations of masculinities in Kureishi's work, masculinity would be looked at as a "cultural space" as something that defines the characteristic traits of men or simply as "what men do" as well as a "masculinity" as 'situational accomplishment' and as a "performative act" as suggested by Morgan, Kirsten and Butler theorized respectively.*

Key Words: Hanif Kureishi, Masculinities, New British Asian Subjectivity.

Hanif Kureishi in his writings has always tried to address diverse subjectivities by crafting as well as bringing together myriad characters of different social and economic backgrounds. Kureishi has in fact carved a niche for himself in the literary world by etching some of the most remarkable South Asian characters in his works like: the metropolitan picaro Karim of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Shahid the reluctant fundamentalist of *The Black Album* or the South Asian gay entrepreneur Omar of *My Beautiful Laundrette* whose appearance had sparked many controversies in the British media about Kureishi's unconventional portrayal of the South Asian community. Kureishi has not only reasserted the anxiety and angst of the second generation immigrant characters in his works but he has also introduced his readers to the world that exists in the peripheries of British Society like that of the homeless people, immigrants, gays, blacks, drug addicts etc. The familiar faces

of South Asians appear in a new light in the Kureishian narrative as the writer continuously imagines and reconstitutes various elements in positioning of the South Asian "subject"¹ vis a vis the dominant discourses of sex, race and class in British multiculturalism. It is in this process of reconstitution that Kureishi etches new black/brown subjectivities that were earlier absent rarely acknowledged in the British media. Very often his characters open up to the readers through the typical Kureishian narrative wherein the character is in the process of discovering and defining himself. Kureishi's literary career flowered at a time when Britain was on the lookout for "cultural translators" in its heterogeneous population. Kureishi became a familiar name after his association with Channel Four (Channel 4 was created by the British media in the 1980's with the intent of promoting the voices of minorities in the British population). Critics have at times pointed out that Kureishi's

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writings are a typical example of literature in a world where there is a continuous attempt to bridge this gap between 'self' and 'other', with the help different official policies like multiculturalism², concepts like convivial culture, cosmopolitanism, secular humanism etc. The appearance of Kureishi's gay, South Asian businessman Omar in *My Beautiful Laundrette* Kureishi was accused of tampering with the image of South Asians in the media by portraying characters of South Asian origin in an entirely different and new light. The portrayal of Omar's sexuality (i.e., as a homosexual) was out rightly rejected by many South Asians. Criticisms were hurled at Kureishi for representing South Asian characters in a negative light (characters like Salim in the narrative are greedy and unscrupulous). Commenting on this aspect of Kureishian narrative Ruvani Ranasinha in "The Politics of Representation: Political commitment and Ironic Distance" points out, "Kureishi appears to have accurately anticipated the hostility he would face with *Laundrette*...Kureishi justifiably refuses to take on the role of representing 'the Asian community'³. His portrayal of a gay, South Asian entrepreneur is one of many controversial identities that Kureishi has portrayed in his works. Ruvani Ranasinha in "Introduction: Situating Hanif Kureishi" sees the character of Omar as the beginning of Kureishi's "exploration of the question of race through sexuality and constructions of masculinity."⁴ In his later novels like *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *The Black Album* and *Something to tell You* Kureishi engages further with the "question of race" and deals with the changing character of masculinity vis a vis their ethnicity in the changing social context. This paper will focus on Kureishi's constructions of South Asian masculinities in his novels. There will also be an attempt to contrast the hegemonic masculinity of the first generation immigrant with the fluid and dialogic masculinities of the second generation immigrant.

Before moving into a detailed analysis of Kureishi's representation of different masculinities in the key texts it is necessary to understand the term "masculinities". This particular term has been the topic of many

debates and discussion in academia. John Beynon in "What is Masculinity?"⁵ explains the term "masculinities" along with a brief overview about how this term became a part of contemporary culture and theoretical postulations. Beynon explains that, "Masculinity is always interpolated by cultural, historical and geographical location" and in the last century movements like feminism and gay movement have been instrumental in interpreting masculinity as well as sexuality in a new light. Masculinity is interpreted in this context as "cultural" phenomenon as opposed to "maleness" which is biological. Masculinity therefore, can only be interpreted by taking factors like "class, subculture, age and ethnicity" etc. Beynon and other critics on "masculinities" have always emphasized the plurality that exists within the discourses of masculinities that are loosely homogenized under the categories of race, sex, class etc. Beynon, therefore points out that

...any easy generalizations like 'working class', 'middle class', 'gay' or 'black' masculinities are greatly misleading because within each of these broad categories there is considerable variation in both experience and presentation...men globally have never shared the conception of masculinity...it is interpreted, enacted and experienced in culturally specific ways⁶

Beynon's theoretical postulations can be interpreted in a better fashion by taking Morgan's explanations of masculinity into account. Morgan defines masculinity as a "cultural space" as something that defines the characteristic traits of men or simply as "what men do". This definition is further elaborated by theorists like Kirsten and Butler who have described "masculinity" as 'situational accomplishment' and as a "performative act"⁷ respectively. But it is only with the help of the body as well as its relationship with the world around forms one's identity.

Beynon argues that this new way of looking at "masculinity" as a "cultural" phenomenon is the

result of a series of changes in economy, technology, politics and the socioscope in the twentieth century. The Suffragette movement⁸ had influenced the lives of many women in countries like United Kingdom, Ireland, USA, Australia, and New Zealand. The years of Suffragette movement were temporally parallel to the years that had already brought a considerable change in the living conditions of people living in various developing countries after the world wars. The Great Depression era when millions of men were unemployed was catalytic in changing the ideal image of the man as the “breadwinner” or the provider of his family needs. The emergence of technology in the post depression era further worsened the situation for men. The closing of many heavy industries like shipping, mining etc further reduced the requirement for men in the industrial section. The changing scenario not only led to the new situation where men were under privileged but also the women were catapulted to a scenario where they could find employment with ease in the automobile industry. This transformation situated men in a completely new matrix of both consumption as well as production.

Benyon points out the major reasons by which this new trend of consumption soon became a question of lifestyle. Celebrity culture, the growing popularity of “image industry” and its successive growth as well as the increase in goods of luxury like cars were some of the many characteristic traits of consumer culture. Critics like Benyon have often pointed out that consumerism promoted a culture wherein desires become more important than needs. This culture points out Benyon has also led “masculinities” to a juncture where “masculinities” can also be commodified according to ones resources.

Nick Bentley in *Contemporary British Fiction* talks about Haroon's performance as *The Buddha*. Bentley points out

Karim's father, Haroon, is the suburban Buddha alluded to in the title and shows an ability to exploit cultural stereotypes to his own advantage. He takes on the image of the exotic mystic to get money out of the gullible, suburban, white middle class, and is,

therefore, aware of the way in which cultural identities can be used to turn the exploitation back on the colonial centre. His position as a 'lapsed Muslim masquerading as a Buddhist', whilst at the same time continuing his day job as a suited civil servant, shows this fluidity of cultural identity and how it can be used for personal gain.⁹

Haroon in the course of the novel is described by Kureishi as someone who is impeccable in his manners. He adds “Like many Indians... (he) was small, but... was also elegant and handsome, with delicate hands and manners, beside him many Englishmen would look like clumsy giraffes. He was broad and strong too: when young had been a boxer and fanatical chest expander.”¹⁰ Haroon is an employee of the British Government. He works as a Civil Service clerk and also acts as the mystic spiritual guru of the East on Eva's request. Haroon is actually an imposter posing as the guru. Haroon explores his connection with the East to its fullest. He not only becomes a small local star in himself who is mainly driven the exotic element of eastern spirituality but also manages to win Eva as his girlfriend.

Kureishi's characters like Omar, the rich gay entrepreneur of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, Karim, the ambitious bisexual actor of *The Buddha of Suburbia* and Mushtaq/John Cage, the talented gay singer, songwriter and musician; draw their identities from their difference (their choice of sexuality) with others (both with the characters in his text as well as with the characters of his plays or screenplays). Kureishi situates homosexuality as well as bisexuality in the post modern context. If we try and look at how homosexuality is interpreted in the present context, it can be defined in its relationship with the discourses of heteronormative sexualities. Manalansan points out that

- Homosexual relations have been able to escape the structure of the dominant heterosexual kinship system.
- Exclusive homosexuality, now possible for both partners, has become alternative path to conventional family forms.
- Same-sex bonds have developed new forms

without being structured around particular age or gender categories.

- People have come to discover each other and form large-scale social networks not only because of existing social relationships but also because of their homosexual interests.
- Homosexuality has come to be a social formation unto itself, characterized by self-awareness and group identity.¹¹

Therefore, the non-heteronormative sexuality of Kureishian protagonists is located through their “perverse” subject position- i.e., of being a part of “queer South Asian diasporic subjectivity”¹² and their non-belonging to the “heterosexual diasporic subjectivity”. As Iris Marion Young points out, I quote “Any move to define an identity, a closed totality, always depends on excluding some elements, separating the pure from the impure.”¹³

The sexuality of characters like Omar and Mushtaq can be accommodated in the construction of 'the new man' by refuting their Muslim identity but it is the bisexuality of characters like Karim that poses a bigger threat to the world (Western) that defines itself on the basis of difference. Eve Sedgwick in *Epistemology of the closet* points out that

*Current struggles over the “authenticity” of bisexuality illustrate the effect: if the world is divided into “same” and “different”, “homo” and “hetro”, then bisexuality is something which cannot exist, and individuals claiming a bisexual identity are confused or are in a state of transition.*¹⁴

Perhaps, it is Karim's sexuality that challenges his feelings of belonging to one place or the other. In a world etched on differences Karim finds it difficult to understand the basic facets of his identity, namely ethnicity and sexuality. Karim wants to construct his identity in opposition to the 'other' and this is his biggest limitation because he is both British and Asian as well as both a heterosexual and a homosexual. Karim is from the suburbs but he is also a Londoner. All these characteristic traits of Karim which makes him

the inhabitant of oppositional worlds challenges him into different situations where he belongs as well as not unlike his father who is straight and has the memories of the world that he once belonged. Kureishi very skillfully captures the dilemma of Karim from the opening lines of *The Buddha of Suburbia* “I am an Englishman born and bred, almost”¹⁵ till the end of the novel. The heterogeneity of Karim's character indicates how identity “should not be equated with labels for fixed or national groups, or indeed with labels of any kind. They are about 'choosing' and 'using' as well as 'being'”.¹⁶

In *The Buddha of Suburbia* Haroon's contempt for homosexuality manifests itself when he witnesses Karim and Charlie making love in the course of his spiritual sessions in Eva's house. Haroon exclaims

*I saw you, Karim. My God, you're a bloody pure shitter! A bum banger! My own son-how did it transpire?... I'll send you to a fucking doctor to have your balls examined!*¹⁷

Haroon is clearly troubled by Karim's act but both of them refrain from talking about this episode. Haroon's immediate reaction of contempt against same sex relationships is manifested clearly in the narrative when he sees Karim with Charlie together. Like most South Asian Muslim fathers of Kureishian narrative, for Haroon it is doubly impossible to accept Karim's sexuality both as a man as well as a Muslim. It is only when Karim starts seeing Eleanor that he muses

*Dad had already heard that I set my sights on Eleanor. This was relief to my father, I knew, who was terrified that I might turn out to be gay and he could never bring himself to mention the matter. In his Muslim mind it was bad enough being a woman; being a man and denying your male sex was perverse and self-destructive, as well as everything else.*¹⁸

Judith Butler in her work on sexuality and gender points out how the differences created by sex and

gender are instrumental in constructing 'heterosexuality' as the rule or the normal choice whereas other sexualities are condemned for being unnatural. Therefore this normative discourse of heterosexuality reasserts its fundamental postulations by recreating the circumstances that favour it through constant proliferation into new generations and by propagating its validity to them. This leads to the formation of 'subjects' who follow heterosexuality and the 'other' or the 'non-subject'. Kureishi's narrative gives a platform to these 'non-subjects' and their modes of resistance against the dominant culture.

This outright condemnation of homosexuality also resurfaces in Kureishi's latter novel *The Black Album*. Riaz, the Muslim student leader, and Hat criticize homosexuality in Shahid's presence:

*Hat had stated that homosexuals should be beheaded, though first they should be offered the option of marriage. Riaz had become interested and said that God would burn homosexuals forever in hell, scorching their flesh in a furnace before replacing their skin as new, and repeating this throughout eternity*¹⁹.

In *The Black Album* Kureishi does not etch any gay or bisexual character but the narrative is always accompanied by the image of the bisexual, pop star Prince who is described by Deedee as, "...half black and half white, half man half woman, half size, feminine but macho too"²⁰ Kureishi had named his second novel after Prince's *The Black Album*.

In *The Black Album*, for Shahid, like Omar and Karim, religion does not hold redemption but it rather poses a threat to them in performing their identities. Riaz on the other hand is an embodiment of agonistic masculinity.²¹ Riaz like Shahid transgresses the codes of masculinity by refusing the law and order of normal existence whereas Shahid who is in love with his teacher Deedee does not denounce his life of sexual adventure, drugs and music for leading the life of a chaste Muslim with his friends.

Shahid in the course of the narrative recounts how his father and his brother Chili bullied Shahid by calling him effeminate. Shahid recalls how his father got infuriated when he came to know that the former was reading poetry to his girlfriend on a date. I quote

*'Did you touch her?' Papa stabbed at his own wheezing chest.
'Or further down', he continued, slapping his legs, as thin as medieval Christ's. Chili was smirking in the doorway.
'No'.
'What have you been doing?'
'Reading poetry.'
'Speak up, you bloody eunuch fool!'
'Reading Keats and Shelly to her.'
'To the girl?'
'Did she laugh at you?'
'I don't think so.'
'Of course she did!'*²²

Shahid's character is completely in contrast with his father's who flew RAF bombers from East Anglia and was also awarded with an MBE and with his brother Chili, for whom both money and girls came easily in the 1980's. Shahid in order to understand himself leaves his house for college in London after his father's death. Shahid refuses to be a part of the patriarchal set up that had considered him effeminate. If Shahid's brother and father are from the old masculine era then Shahid is brought up in the culture of the new masculine wherein men have to play multiple roles like father, brother, lover, partner, worker etc. *The Black Album* concludes with Shahid breaking all ties with his friends. Shahid and Deedee are together and they choose to sever all ties with the world outside. The self confessed 'racist' Shahid who is often haunted by "killing nigger fantasies" in end takes the route of hedonism with Deedee. Shahid's performance of his masculinity in the end is completely opposed to how Shahid introduces himself to Riaz and the audience in the beginning of *The Black Album*. Both Riaz and Shahid can only be defined by their position of opposition against the dominant discourses. Their masculinities have to be in the process of continuous friction with the discourses woven around them (like religion or law

respectively).

In *Something to Tell You*, Kureishi's latest novel, the writer has made an attempt to address homosexuality by creating characters like Mushtaq/John Cage. Mushtaq or John Cage's image is contrasted with his father right from the start. Jamila's and Mushtaq's father was a very powerful man. He owned a factory in London but due to workers strike and other problems his business is almost destroyed. As a child Mushtaq loved reading *Young Americans*, loved *Rolling Stones* and watching T.V. Jamal describes young Mushtaq as “girlish” (81) as he is unaware of “football”. The incest committed by Ajita's father re-asserts his hegemonic masculinity as opposed to Mushtaq's choice of sexuality after his father's death. Mushtaq even confesses to Jamal that “If he were alive today he would disapprove of everything about me. I have to be glad he's dead—which is difficult”²³. Unlike Jamal (a south Asian Muslim, without a father figure), Mushtaq's homosexuality displaces him from his original place of belonging. Mushtaq's real identity is always camouflaged under the alias of John Cage, a very well known face in the popular culture circle. Mushtaq himself confesses how his colour and his upbringing were always instrumental in concealing his real identity as a South Asian.

In “Exploring notions of masculinity and fatherhood: When gay sons 'come out' to heterosexual fathers” Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine point out how “homophobia as part of masculinity and part of fatherhood provides an important context for the father—son relations” (Hoven et al 192) and how their set of familial relations, “acting at individual, social and cultural levels, in which masculinities are at play and potentially in great tension with each other”. The politics that govern this familial relationship are “alliance, dominance and subordination” as Young points out in his critique of hegemonic masculinities. The homosexual masculinities of the sons can be repressed by their fathers. Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine point out

men have been, and continue to be, exposed to, and interact with, hegemonic

*masculinity but through a discovery of their homosexual sexual identities they have transformed the way in which they engage with such a hegemony. The men are both marginalized from, and subordinated by, the dominant masculinity. Nevertheless some of them resist the negative practices and reject the 'patriarchal dividend' because they constitute a masculinity which contradicts the heterosexual masculine hegemony.*²⁵

Kureishi's characters underplay their Muslim identity as it is unable to accommodate one of the defining markers of one's identity, i.e., sexuality. Since, one can either be a Muslim or a homosexual. Kureishi's protagonists in the process of re-defining themselves turn towards an identity which is more secular i.e., their being British and situate themselves in opposition to the dominant discourses by locating themselves in the margins or in the popular culture scene their search for identity.

These new ways of asserting one's subjectivity separates the first generation immigrant character of Kureishian narrative from the second generation South Asian immigrant. Kureishi in his novels has always tried to address the marginal sexual identities of his characters. There had also been many attempts by the author to address this issue from the perspective of both the first generation and second generation characters. Kureishi's texts deal with these marginal sexualities and their respective conflicts with their families as well as with the society around them. Almost all of Kureishi's South Asian second generation characters are born into a middle class, immigrant, Muslim families. It is this Muslim identity that refuses to accommodate any kind of sexual diversions in the formation of the characters identity. Both Islamic masculinities as well as the 'social construction of masculinity in Western culture' (Stephen et al 61) have rejected femininity and homosexuality as threats to traditional notions of masculinity. Asifa Siraj in her essay “On being homosexual and Muslim: conflicts and challenges”²⁶ writes about the responses of various interviewees (most of them who were

Muslim, male and were either straight or gay) and how being gay and Muslim at the same time might evoke some fundamental problems. She re-iterates what Ellison has pointed out in this context: 'many gay men and lesbians repudiate organised religion or at least maintain a healthy distance in order to survive in a hostile context'²⁷. Asifa Siraj points out that in some cases the Muslim and the homosexual identity could be integrated on the grounds that homosexuality in most cases was a natural condition to some people and therefore "God given" but this connection could not be forged for all respondents.

Kureishi weaves in the narrative of changing identities in his novels and since most of his protagonists are men the changing essence the question of "what is it to be a man"/masculinities reemerges within new contexts and situations in his texts. In *Gabriel's Gift* Gabriel's father, Rex Bunch is a typical example of the new boy/man who does not want to take any responsibilities. In fact Rex is the complete opposite of the masculinities demonstrated in the working class where men grow up with the presupposition that if they want to play the role of a good husband then they should always be in a position to provide for their family. It is only when Christine throws him out of her house that he starts earning for a living. Rex is the example of the 'new man' who has not taken up the role of the "breadwinner" of his family.

In an attempt to move away from the writings typically associated with diasporic writers Kureishi plays with the idea of a dystopic reality where in bodies could be purchased, worn and discarded by human beings. In his novella *The Body*, Kureishi's body is the site of performance for different activities. Gender, colour, occupation etc set assorted roles for this body to be a part of social action. The 'mind' and 'matter' debate that had been the central debate of western philosophy is addressed by Kureishi. For, the postmodern writer Kureishi, the bridge between mentality and materiality is not 'imagination' but a technologically sound future that would enable new advancements. Kureishi decodes the possibility of a world where mind is specific and

bodies are readily available to everyone, a completely contrasting position to the functioning of the present world where the mind is free-flowing and the body is governed by constant sameness. Kureishi structures his protagonist's debacle and dilemma in such a way that the reader gets to explore various facets and functions of a normal, human body. Adam's act of exchanging body results in new permutations and combinations. Being in a new/different body for the first time explores the possibilities of youth and beauty. As Mark, he enters his own house and talks to his wife. He works in a Centre for women in Greece as an "Oddjob". His relationship with Patricia, Alicia or his new present is at constant friction with his past because he is being chased by Matte's men (Matte wants Adam's new body for his ailing brother). Adam becomes a subject who cannot be self-regulated anymore by the social order because of his multiple identities: Adam/Adam in Mark's body.

The Body, of Kureishi transports us to a situation where the body becomes 'cultural plastic'. The author takes us to a point in history where even the body is commodified as a garment that can be worn, used and in the end sold to get a better one when it is old from wear and tear. The body in Kureishi's story breaks the dichotomies of gender and race that are the crucial elements in positing the 'self'. This small piece of sci-fiction takes us to a futuristic plane where

*The body is no longer simply a dysfunctional object requiring medical intervention, but a commodity...which can be continuously upgraded and modified in accordance with new interests and greater resources.*²⁸

The body in Kureishi is thereby reduced to a 'pastiche'- a blank parody in Jamesonian terminology²⁹. Adam's new body does not have any memories just like the replicants in Ridley Scott's *The Blade Runner* (1982).

The extreme dystopic possibilities of our highly technologised culture are presented by Kureishi in his novella. The crisis faced by individual even

in the highest state of technological accomplishment and the other side of cosmetic surgery, sex change operations etc is the main subject of Kureishi's enquiry. Kureishi's first work of science fiction can be read as his attempt to move away from the "differential history" of mankind. Homi Bhabha explains this concept further in his essay "Race', Time and the Revision of Modernity"³⁰ where he discusses the "differential and relational nature of postcolonial identity"³¹ and the subversive nature of postcolonial politics. For Bhabha modernity is still an incomplete project undertaken by the West and it is only under the banner of postmodernism that it has made a new attempt in demystifying the non-West. He elaborates on his ideas by referring to Fanon's "phenomenological performance of what it means to be not only a nigger but a member of the marginalized, the displaced, the diasporic... whose very presence is both 'overlooked'- in the double sense of social surveillance and physical disavowal. And at the same time...made stereotypical and symptomatic"³². Kureishi in *The Body*, manipulates the reader into believing a future wherein the discourses woven around human body can be done away with. There is an attempt made by the author to forgo the oppositions created by modernity which denies the black man the ontological understanding of his identity since their identity has to be read with relation to "the white world". Kureishi like Fanon "...uses the fact of blackness, of belatedness, to destroy the binary structure of power and identity...Fanon writes from the temporal cesura, the time-lag of cultural difference, in a space between the symbolization of the social and the 'sign' of its representation of subjects and agencies".³³ Kureishi unlike Fanon refers to the future where the world has moved beyond the discourses perpetuated by modernity. The body does not hold the key to ones identity in Kureishi's future.

Kureishi in his novel *Gabriel's Gift* as well as in *The Body* do not have any South Asian characters. The identity of the characters in both the works of fiction is challenged by typical traits of postmodernism like schizophrenia and pastiche. Adam's sense of personal identity falls

in crisis when he meets Mark's friends from New York accidentally on the road. He does not know how handle the situation. Adam has hired Mark's body only for six months, to live, feel and enjoy the life that he has missed because of aging. The old Adam inside the body of Mark remains the person. Similarly Gabriel continuously communicates and seeks advice from his dead brother Archie. Both of these characters demonstrate symptoms of schizophrenia. Jameson describes schizophrenia as

the breakdown of relationships between signifiers...The schizophrenic, however, is not only "no one" in the sense of having personal identity; he or she does nothing...The schizophrenic is thus given over to an undifferentiated vision of the world in present...the temporal continuities break down, the experience of the present becomes powerfully, overwhelmingly vivid and "material": the world comes before the schizophrenic with heightened intensity, bearing a mysterious oppressive change of affect, glowing with hallucinatory energy".³⁴

This intensity can be traced back to Adam's primary reactions on his entering a new body. Adam describes his sensory perception post-operation, he muses in an amazed state of mind, "For the first time in years, my body felt sensual and full of intense yearning: I was inhabited by a warm, inner fire, which nonetheless reached out to others".

The painting by Lester Jones in *Gabriel's Gift* and the body of Adam in *The Body* both have a consumption value and to possess either of them one needs capital or one can exchange capital for the possession of either of the two. Like the painting, the body also has a resale/exchange value and there are bidders like Matte who can go to any extent in order to possess it.

Lester Jones's gift to Gabriel, a drawing that is autographed by Lester points is circulated in copies by the innocent Gabriel. The circulation of drawing not only points out how the drawing or the work of art is drained of its significance but also at the rapid circulation of copies in the post-

modern era. Gabriel's act of copying, circulating and later reaping the benefits from is a reference to the fast pace of production in the mechanical era where consumption holds the key for fulfillment of all desires.

Kureishi weaves in the narrative of changing identities in his novels and since most of his protagonists are men the changing essence the question of “what is it to be a man”/masculinities reemerges within new contexts and situations in his texts. Gabriel's father, Rex Bunch is a typical example of the new boy/man who does not want to take any responsibilities. In fact Rex is the complete opposite of the masculinities demonstrated in the working class where men grow up with the presupposition that if they want to play the role of a good husband then they should always be in a position to provide for their family. It is only when Christine throws him out of her house that he starts earning for a living. Rex is the example of the 'new man' who has not taken up the role of the “breadwinner” of his family. Kureishi's representation of the South Asian families as well as that of the dominant/white culture and relationships is much more nuanced and critical than any of his contemporaries as his writings deal with the fine intertwining of the question of race, class and culture in our fragmented present.

Notes and References

1. In any discourse the “subject” is the most crucial constituent in defining one's identity, for the 'self' is constructed when the 'subject' itself becomes a function of power. It entails that the 'subject' is 'subject' only when it has proved its supremacy against the 'object'; which in turn means that one's subjectivity can only exist in its relationship with the 'other'. The relation between the 'self' and the 'other' or in other words the orientation of subjectivity in relation to the 'other' is known as identity. In the maze of ever evolving “identity” the notion of “difference” acts as an essential ingredient in determining one's position vis-a- vis the 'other/Other'.
2. Multiculturalism has been adopted by different countries and promoted by each state with individual way of defining it like British multiculturalism, Australian mosaic culture and the American melting pot.
3. Kureishi, Hanif. (1990) , London: Faber and Faber,pp.49.
4. Ibid. pp.19.
5. Beynon, John. (2002) *Masculinities and Culture*, Buckingham: Open University Press, pp.1-25.
6. Ibid.pp. 3.
7. Butler, Judith. (1999) *Gender Trouble: Feminism & The Subversion of Identity*, New York & London: Routledge Publishers. 1999.
8. This movement started in the 1860's but it was popularized and well know from 1098 to 1928.
9. Bentley, Nick. (2008) *Contemporary British Fiction*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, pp. 165.
10. Kureishi, Hanif. (1990) Opcit., pp. 4.
11. Jana Evans, Opcit., pp.210.
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