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Home and Diasporic Belonging: Sam Selvon's The Lonely Londoners and Hanif Kureishi's The Buddha of Suburbia

Morteza Lak *
Assistant Professor of English Literature,English Department. Faculty of Literature, Humanities, and Social Sciences Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Tehran

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Abstract
The current paper examines the ways the concepts of 'home' and 'belonging' are conceived, accepted, and imagined by the characters of Sam Selvon's The Lonely Londoners (1956) and Hanif Kureishi's The Buddha of Suburbia (1990). Taken from two different but close-knit periods in twentieth-century England, the 1950s and the late 1970s, the novels represent the socio-political circumstances that formulated, and consolidated the discursive and ideological constructs, the operation of which had been aimed at impeding the immigrant characters' conceptualisation of England as home. The paper explains the moments in the narratives that testify to the systematic discriminating and undermining practices via which the protagonists' consciousness of home is destabilised, if not completely torpedoed. Employing postcolonial criticism as the theoretical framework, the current study unravels that although the British immigration policies in the periods in question encouraged multiculturalism, there was a handful of cultural and economic issues that practically impinged on the full realisation of such an anticipation. To this end, built upon the postcolonial theories of less acknowledged thinkers as Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, and Avtar Brah, whose theories enjoy identity- and race-related imbrications, the research underpins the transitory exposition of the meaning of home, belonging, and diasporic nostalgia. It will demonstrate that the discursive representation of immigration proves that home and belonging are defined essentially not on the basis of multiculturalism, but on that of ideological and racial dogma, as the novels in question illustrate.

Keywords: Hanif Kureishi; Sam Selvon; Postcolonialism; Home; Belonging

INTRODUCTION

'You can never go home again' as the saying goes. In many respects it would appear that this statement is true. 'Home' is a concept far more abstract and complex than a simple geographical position or settlement, and in the works of migrant authors in post-war Britain it appears to be of major concern. As Stuart Hall maintains: "migration is a one-way trip. There is no home to go back to" (1993, p.[135]), thus making necessary a quest to belong in the new country. This essay will explore the concept of home in two such novels: Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) and Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990). Though on the sur-

*Corresponding Author's Email: morteza.lak@gmail.com

face, they appear quite dissimilar thematically and temporally–the first dealing with the experiences of first-generation West-Indian immigrants in 1950s London, the second following the life of Karim, son of an Indian father and English mother, as he attempts to become an actor in London in the late 1970s–the idea of finding a place, not necessarily a physical one, to call home, or re-evaluating preconceptions of home, are important to both. The current article aims to show that first-generation immigrants', apparently more concrete, idea of home as a place which can be returned to segues, with time, and the appearance of second generations with no physical connection to their parent's homeland, into a more abstract understanding of home as being a shared culture/experience, or simply a shared need to belong. From the perspective of this morphing conceptualisation of the meaning of home, this research offers a paradigmatic postcolonial critical framework within which the characters' both concrete and abstract understandings of home are crystallised. Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) focuses primarily on the attempts of Moses Aloetta and his friends, a group of black and Trinidadian boys, to make England, the Mother Country, their home after leaving the West Indies, the Father Countries in the 1950s. In this respect it is concerned, superficially, far more with attributing home and a longing for home to a geographical space. By the end of the novel the characters find that home is perhaps most readily found in their friendship and sense of community/culture as immigrants from the West Indies, and this will be discussed more fully in this article. *The Buddha of Suburbia*, which narrates the story of an Indian family in London, on the other hand, starts with the line: "My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred," immediately complicated by the suffix of uncertainty "almost" (Selvon, 1956, p.1). The manner he introduces himself unveils his conscious obsession with the precarious identity he tries to build and attain; an identity which is anticipated to assist him to realise 'home' in an unhomely, if not hostile, atmosphere. Karim occupies a different position to the protagonists of Selvon's work; aware that he has little connection to any Indian culture or roots but also of the fact that his skin is darker than the majority of people around him. This makes his position interesting in that England is his home country but he is still searching for a space to belong to and call home. This attempt helps us disclose his conscious encounter with the discursive mechanisms that legalise and consolidate the immigration policies of England. However, the issue that complicates and challenges the stability of his desired identity is that part of his cultural detachment from the English culture that can be traced, for instance, in his name, which does not align with the British tradition of christening children with Islamic (Arabic) names, and his ambivalent conception of race and belonging. Concepts of home and cultural/national belonging have been put forward by Avtar Brah (2005), Stuart Hall (2000), and Paul Gilroy (1991, 2000), amongst others, and their critical insights will make up the critical approach to the investigation of the two novels in question. The main question that the present research aims to answer can be posited as: are home and identity possible in the face of the ideological and hegemonic forces that drive, manipulate, and shape the British culture into which the immigrants expect to be merged?

METHOD

The current article partakes of a refashioned postcolonial engagement with Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Hanif Kureishi's The *Buddha of Suburbia*, both of which continue to be canonical epitomes of immigrants' life and challenges in England. Although the novels have been separately examined through the lens of Homi Bhabha's ideas of ambivalence, hybridity or mimicry (1984, 1994), or other fashionable postcolonial thinkers' theories, they have not been studied from the criti-

cal perspectives of Avtar Brah (2005), Stuart Hall (2000), and Paul Gilroy (1991, 2000) whose concentration is rather on race and ideology than the subjective recognition of the coloniser-colonised interaction or counteraction.

Avtar Brah (2005) posits a very clear and simple query: "What is home?" (p.186). The semantic implication of the question, which replaces the possible *where* with *what* mobilises a fresh ontological conception of the term in a poststructuralist context in which the familiar meaning of home is decentralised in favour of elevating its less transcendental, connotative load. To acquire her desired connotation of the word *home*, she answers the question as: "On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality" (Brah, 2005, p.188). From this perspective, the mythic farfetchedness of home stands for a historical image or concept which can never be returned to, but which opens up a host of possibilities both good and bad. Brah's definition perhaps caters to a study of *The Lonely Londoners* in its explicit theorizing of what home means to those born in a former colony and immigrated to the land of the former colonizer. Brah's conception of home demonstrates a socio-cultural transmogrification that helps to illuminate the function of the discursive practices that shape the characters' identity-oriented (un)consciousness. In her abstraction of the term home though, Brah's analysis is equally applicable to *The Buddha of Suburbia*, where home is unequivocally rather abstract and less geographical than a concrete space where the character normally live.

Stuart Hall (2000) deals fundamentally with what he terms a "second phase in black cultural politics" (p.266). As will be seen in the fairly homogenizing unification of immigrants in *The Lonely Londoners*, the political and cultural category 'black' is fading, deconstructing into what Hall refers to as 'new ethnicity': an awareness of the cultural and historical positioning of all acts of representation. This idea is similar in some ways to that of Paul Gilroy (1991) in his lengthier work, *There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack*. In this work Gilroy seeks to (re)introduce race into the political discourse of 1980s Britain, and in doing so illuminates many ways in which black and white interact, similarly yet differently, in the cultural institutions of Britain. Gilroy's approach to building a syncretic model of British culture is grounded in exposing what he calls the "new racism" (1991, p.43) of Thatcher's Britain of the 1980s. New racism sees the 'problem' of blacks in Britain as cultural rather than the colour of their skin, which operates as a signifier that leads to sustaining more restrictive, conservative policies against the non-British. The issue of distinct, and apparently incompatible, black and white cultures is then transposed onto the idea of nation and national belonging: being British becomes a matter of actively participating in and accepting an imagined set of British moral and political ideologies. As an example of this, Gilroy (1991) notes that political parties on the left, right and ultra-right see a clear distinction between legally defined citizenship and "actual" national-belonging (p. 48). The syncretic model of British and black culture – then outlined chapter 5 of his work – shows the positioned nature of definitions of race and culture used along the entire political spectrum, and will become an important part of finding a concept of belonging in Selvon's and Kureishi's works.

DISCUSSION

When we first meet Moses Aloetta, the main protagonist in *The Lonely Londoners*, he is on his way to Waterloo Station to meet a newly arrived Trinidadian man, Henry Oliver (later to be nicknamed Galahad), whose ambition for success has directed him to England for the first time. Even in this moment he appears to

be aware of the complexity of his nostalgia for the homeland he himself left many years before: "when them fellars who here a long time see people running from the West Indies, is only logic for them to say it would be damn foolishness to go back" (Selvon, 1956, p. 24). Despite this, the scene of so many new arrival stepping off the boat-train fill him with a nostalgia for the West Indies which takes him by surprise.[1] It is this ambiguity, and Moses' particular awareness of it, are imaginary, fictive homelands reproduced and charted by mind. Nostalgia for the fatherland is also balanced by certain expectations of the motherland though. Moses lays it out quickly for Galahad, whose wide-eyed naivety is clear from the beginning, that the colonial education and being a British subject mean very little compared to the colour of one's skin (Selvon, 1956, p. 40). However, this consciousness is strong enough to destabilise occasionally his certainty of considering Britain homeland. The prevalence of the colour bar, and racism in general, become everyday parts of the lives of Moses, Galahad and their friends; as much a part of it as working, paying rent and buying food. Though this may make it impossible to feel truly 'at home', when faced with such unwelcoming facts, the ways in which the men spend their free time becomes a space in which a new sense of a British identity can be forged. The importance of this outlook on space and its ideological association with identity, especially when it turns out to be responsible for potential, dramatic changes in a given society's ethnological structure, intensifies the possibility of politicisation of space. From this perspective, Lefebvre (1976) offers his clear-cut interpretation of this possibility as:

> Space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics; it has always been political and strategic. If space has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents and thus seems to be "purely" formal, the epitome of rational abstraction, it is precisely because it has been occupied and used, and has already been the focus of past processes whose traces are not always evident on the landscape. Space has been shaped and molded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies. (p. 31)

Considering this revisionist identifying of space, the spatial poetics of the novel represents the mediation of identity, politics, and ideology; a versatile condition that decentralises identity as the sole basis of racial segregation and superiority. Applying this political aspect of space as a place where part of one's social visibility is realised to *The Lonely Londoners* enables us to defend that the fetes, parties and clubs that the men frequent are in stark contrast to the foggy drudgery of everyday life in London. One such fete is organized by Harris who "when he dress, you think is some Englishman going to work in the city [….] Only thing, Harris face black" (Selvon, 1956, p. 111). Harris almost comes across as being more English than the English. Polite and proper in a way far removed from Moses's description of English "diplomacy" (p. 40), Harris ingratiates himself with the rich and powerful of London and organizes such fetes for their enjoyment. The boys see it differently though. While Harris is putting on a fake English accent, denying his more raucous past in Trinidad and trying to help his guests enjoy the mystical, exoticness of the steel band, Moses and his friends are making use of the time as a release from their problems. Gilroy approaches the

1. When Moses awaits Galahad to arrive, he bumps into Tolroy a Jamaican acquaintance who is expecting his mother. He learns that Tolroy has invited his mother in the hope of taking benefit from the immigration laws, thus helping his mother to move from Jamaica to England. However, he is shocked when he finds out that his mother has brought along Tilroy's aunt along with three more relatives. Moses enrages and thinks to himself why so many Jamaicans come to the UK, and this is also the question a surprised reporter asks him at the station. What infuriates Moses is his concern for the hardship of life in London imposed on low-paid people.

phenomenon of such clubs and parties as one of the first ways in which "blacks have been structured into the mechanisms of [British] society" (1991, p. 155), and, from this point onwards, they created a new culture within Britain and British culture out of their own varied histories in the diaspora as a common circumstance that enmeshes a wide range of Black ethnicities, helping them generate their communal circles outside the land of origin. However, sustaining such a communal solidarity would be facilitated as an automatic process that is not merely contributed by the marginalised ethnic groups themselves, like the Jamaicans, the Indians, the Pakistanis, and the blacks, but by the systematic recognition of those groups through a variety of discourses that consolidate their diasporic identity via language. For instance, in *The Lonely Londoners*, the linguistic marking of non-British immigrants helps the relevant authorities categorise the immigrant groups in a politicised manner; a practice which is tantamount to the more condescending approaches to treating immigrants. In this regards, all of the Jamaican immigrant jobseekers, for instance, are the same and are treated in an identical way. This *sameness* (as Hall explains and will be discuss later) is best crystallised in the employment policies and the intense bureaucracy that Exchange Labour sustains to categorise the jobseekers. Having been fully acquainted with the ideological apparatus via which the categorising of applicants functions, Moses unravels to Galahad the linguistic and semiotic implication of filing the applicants' information:

> Now on all the records of the boys, you will see mark on top in red ink. J-A, Col. That mean you from Jamaica and you black. So that put the clerks in the know right away, you see. Suppose a vacancy come and they want to send a fellar, first they will find out if the firm want coloured fellars before they send you. That save a lot of time and bother, you see. (Selvon, 1956, p. 46)

The critical implication of this excerpt is conceived and explained through what Louis Althusser (2014) terms 'interpellation' which is a system of objectification that allows the ideological and repressive apparatuses to manipulate the concrete aspects of the subjects' (here the immigrant jobseekers') lives and shape their identities. Althusser's configuration of the function of ideology for the interpellation of minorities, e.g. migrants, corresponds with the filing method of Exchange Labour, for: "ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing" (2014, p. 190). Individuals as subordinates in postcolonial societies should be added to Althusser's mention of the process of subjectifying. This process necessitates the colonizer's manipulative strategy towards defining the colonial other. Concerning that definition, Boehmer (2005) is convinced that "the concept of the other, which is built on the thought of, *inter alia*, Hegel, Sartre, and Said, signifies that which is unfamiliar and extraneous to a dominant subjectivity, the opposite or negative against which an authority is defined" (p. 21). Furthermore, it is of no harm to contemplate the job market obstruction applied by the authorities to the postcolonial migrants who abounded in the 1950s, including Galahad, as an intentional and political barrier that underscores a contradictory situation that refutes the welfare-for-all discourse. As a matter of fact, Althusser's interpellation contributes to the understanding of the intensity of the broad segregations internalised in almost all aspects of life on the white-black dichotomy scale. In this regard, Galahad's desponding frustration with finding a job as an electrician exemplifies the labour office's microcosmic discriminative assumption that stands in the way of providing jobs irrespective of race, origin, and skin colour. To support the very intentionality behind such subjectifying, Lisa M. Ka-

besh (2011) purportedly maintains that "the influx of migrant workers provided a reserve army of labour for deskilled jobs, which increased competition for otherwise undesirable jobs, and thereby limited migrant workers' leverage to demand better wages" (p. 6).

Where racist ideologies have set English culture in opposition to an imagined, homogenous culture of blackness, Gilroy shows here the beginnings of what might be considered a more realistic, but vastly more complex, kind of culture. As he puts it: "the penetration of black forms into the dominant culture mean[s] that it is impossible to theorize black culture in Britain without developing a new perspective on British culture *as a whole*" (1991, p. 156) and its structure interwoven with power. Though it can by no means be considered 'home' by any traditional sense of the word, the sense of community found at such gatherings of immigrants and English is at least a kind of belonging found in this new home away from the original home. It appears that by the end of *The Lonely Londoners* Moses is able to look back on his time in Britain so far as a "life composed of Sunday morning get-togethers in" his flat (Selvon, 1956, p. 140). These get-togethers amount to little more than Moses and his friends sitting around, drinking tea and tell each other their woes "with London and life on the outside" (p. 140). The important point is that this realization disgusts him and he wishes to be out in the city with Harris and Galahad rather than locked in his small bed-sit with boys "only laughing because they fraid to cry" (p. 142). This is where the novel leaves Moses, standing on the banks of the Thames wondering whether it's too late to go home to Trinidad and then having an epiphany of sorts. It is a realization that "had a greatness and a vastness […] like it was something solid after everything else give way, and though he ain't getting no happiness out of the cogitations he still pondering, for is the first time that he ever find himself thinking like that" (p. 142). It is such thoughts, and the telling of stories amongst the men, that create some semblance of home for them in Britain. Rebecca Dyer (2002) how the men "furnish [their] temporary homes "with their acts and memories," both of which help to make these small sites within London their own" (p. 111). This may explain Moses' desire to be with Galahad too. The wide-eyed boy who Moses took a shine to in the beginning, who knew the names of all the sights and famous places in London, is now inhabiting them, looking a natural as is possible for him (Selvon, 1956. p. 90). Dyer (2002) cites Certeau in her assertion that these acts of walking, talking, and simply being in London subvert the colonial power London once held as centre of the British Empire, and inscribes the immigrant into its history (p. 110).

Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1998) ends with a scene similar to the Sunday get-togethers in *The Lonely Londoners*. Sitting down to dinner with the extended family he has acquired over the course of the novel, Karim Amir "felt happy and miserable at the same time. [He] thought of what a mess everything had been, but that it wouldn't always be that way" (p. 284). His experiences, the mess, "cannot be compared to [those] encountered by Selvon's Lonely Londoners" (Chowdhury, 1998, p. 472), yet there do appear to be many points of intersection in the two works' conceptions of home and belonging. The main point of divergence is in the ways that blackness has become politicized in the years since Selvon's novel (bearing in mind that *The Buddha of Suburbia* is set in the 1970s), and this is one of the major problems Karim faces when establishing his own identity; a problem which tends to exacerbate despite his endeavour to resist the barriers that impinge on his success sometimes. Simply by virtue of the colour of his skin he is expected, by blacks and liberals alike, to be invested in the political unity of non-white Britons. This automatically distinguishes him from simply being an 'Englishman', and much of the time he is expected to be far more 'Indian' than he perceives him-

self to be. Such a conflict is most apparent in Karim's work as a stage-actor, where is automatically assigned the role of the immigrant or primitive because of his skin colour. To advocate the historicity of the establishment of Englishness as an ideological modality employed to differentiate the white Britons from other nations, which might not have been essentially white, nor completely black, Rob Waters (2019) marks the discriminative practices that in post-war England formally led to the exact impediment that voided immigrants of having a homely feeling in England. He maintains that "the negotiation of Britishness by black Britons was fraught, particularly at a moment that Britishness was increasingly defined, culturally, politically, and in the legal structures of the state as a white identity, hooked around a provincial white Englishness." (p. 12). Extending the very systematised definition of Englishness, which was the conflation of both skin colour and cultural allegiance, to the narrative realm of the two novels examined pinpoints the exact circumstance that impedes the characters' successful integration into the socio-political context based on which their identity is considered legal and accepted.

Karim's first acting role is realised as playing Mowgli in *The Jungle Book*. He is "cast for authenticity" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 147), which ironically involves darkening his skin with makeup and putting on a fake Indian accent. To the white viewers this is acceptable, but for Karim's father, Haroon, and his cousin, Jamila, it is more than "pandering to prejudices", whilst "looking like a Black and White Minstrel" (p. 157). This conflict shows the difficulties Karim finds in being black/of Indian heritage and following his dream of becoming an actor. Because he considers England, geographically and nationally, to be his home his actions become an integral part of trying to prove, to himself and others, that he actually belongs. This first role, despite the mixed reactions it draws, leads a more prestigious role in a play directed by Matthew Pyke. The new play will "revolve around the only subject there is in England […] Class" (p. 164), and for this, Pyke needs "someone black" (p. 170). As Gilroy (1991) demonstrates, the subordination of race to class, is no longer relevant in modern consumer economies (p. 16), and elides the structural and ideological racism blacks are subject to. This turn is in stark contrast to Moses' observation that blacks "have a kind of communal feeling with the Working Class" (Selvon, 1956, p. 75), in the 1950s of *The Lonely Londoners*. This is also apparently Karim's first meeting with the concept of all non-white Britons being subsumed into the political grouping 'black': "I [Karim] didn't know anyone black, though I'd been at school with a Nigerian" (Kureishi, 1990, p. 170). According to Gilroy and Hall, this unification of immigrants was necessary to establish a political foothold in post-war Britain, but from the mid to late 1970s it was beginning to appear just as obsolete as the link between race and class. The origin of a unifying political blackness lies in "The struggle to come into representation [and] on a critique of the degree of fetishisation, objectification and negative figuration which are so much a feature of the representation of the black subject" (Hall, 1993, p. 266). Such a sentiment clearly critiques a character such as Mowgli but runs the risk of romanticizing blackness too.

Such a romanticizing occurs when the actors try to create their characters for Pyke's play, and Karim chooses to base his on Jamila's father Anwar, an old friend of Haroon. Anwar can by no means be said to represent a complimentary vision of immigrants in Britain: in trying to force Jamila into an arranged marriage, he goes on a hunger strike almost dying before Jamila surrenders to his will. Such a character in the play does not go down at all well with Karim's co-stars. Tracey, a black actress, takes issue with Karim's character, saying:

> - What you want to say hurts me. It really pains me! And I'm not sure that we should show it!'

- Really?
- Yes [….] I'm afraid it shows black people – 'Indian people'
Black and Asian people—
One old Indian man—
As being irrational, ridiculous, as being hysterical, and being fanatical. (p. 180)

Here we observe the confusion inherent in creating perceived homogenous groupings. Even at this basic level–disputing what the character of Anwar *is*–it, as Hall (1993) shows "that 'black' is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories," (p. 268) and that the apparently innocent suggestion that it shows black people in a poor light is akin to saying "that all black people are *the same*" (p. 268). A sense of belonging cannot be found in such broad categorizations, no matter how much power they may afford such a group. This is not the same for first-generation immigrants such as Haroon and Anwar. Karim notices in the beginning that they "appeared to be returning internally to India," despite openly expressing the opposite (Kureishi, 1990, p. 64). Haroon admits that any notion of an Indian home he has is imagined.

This is perhaps why both Haroon and Anwar turn to such extremes in their actions. Anwar becomes entrenched in the moral cultural values of his imagined India, of which Jamila's arranged marriage is just one example. Haroon instead becomes a kind of self-made stereotypical Guru, mixing a wide array of Oriental philosophies for the enjoyment of white, middle-class suburbanites (hence the title). In some ways, Haroon's new philosophy is similar to the cultural forms of the African diaspora, whose growth Gilroy explains in *There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack* (1991). For Gilroy this tactic allows immigrants to "found and extend […] new patterns of meta-communication which give [them] substance and identity" (p. 217). The way in which this allows Haroon to acquire and influence an audience gives him a sense of belonging in society. Conversely, Anwar's fanaticism, which clings blindly to an extremist view of Indian moral-values, sees him die alone and hated by his family.

In the end, home in its traditional sense is not to be found in *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), but just as Moses had his own revelation, Karim has also had his fair share. He apparently realizes the fictional aspect of being English, Indian, 'black', etc. and, like Moses, finds that a sense of belonging in a smaller, more familial, community is the nearest thing to any imaginary home available.

The above details how the individual subjects in *The Lonely Londoners* and *The Buddha of Suburbia* find a sense of belonging in Britain, despite being considered outsiders, but the texts themselves also seek to place themselves within a larger tradition of British writing. It is easy enough to place novels written by non-whites/immigrants (of whatever generation) into a 'new' genre of migrant or postcolonial fiction, but both of these texts seem to be explicitly inserting themselves into the canon of literature/culture. This relies, to a certain extent, on the role that London plays, and has played, in mediating British culture. Even many of the white characters in *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) seek to flee the suburbs and become a part of the cosmopolitan life of inner-city London (p. 134).

Rebecca Dyer (2002) makes clear this aim in Selvon's work when she says: "The London that Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, T. S. Eliot, and Virginia Woolf had previously portrayed is, in Selvon's fiction, being remade and its story rewritten through the incorporation of migrants' narratives" (p. 110). Dyer believes the authors listed above to be indicative of the colonial education Selvon would have received in Trinidad, and also indicative of the way in which England, and specifically London, was portrayed abroad. That Selvon appropriates some formal aspects of such writers in a (fictional) West Indian dialect

thereby inscribes the immigrant experience into British literary, cultural and sociological history, and it is then no coincidence that one of the final lines of the novel is: "[Moses] watch the tugboat on the Thames, wondering if he could ever write a book like [those written by immigrants in France], what everybody would buy" (1956, p. 142).

Though Karim never aspires to be a writer, the ways in which he and the novel interact with British popular and literary culture demonstrate that a similar tactic is also at work in Kureishi's novel. The books that Karim receives from Eva, Haroon's lover, exemplify a literary canon that *Buddha* seeks to belong to. Bart Moore-Gilbert (2001) lists just a few of the western author's and formal aspects that appear to have influenced the novel. From this perspective Moore-Gilbert defends that "Kureishi's novels eschew not just the linguistic, epistemological and formal play of fiction works […], also their recourse to non-western narrative resources" (p. 108). This is perhaps due to Kureishi's own status as a second-generation immigrant, but Moore-Gilbert even cites Thackeray and Dickens as influential in Kureishi's style and approach to London as a setting (p. 110).

It is not just the literary aspects that *The Buddha of Suburbia* reworks though. There are constant references to the music of the era, and the values associated to different styles of music, throughout the novel. Popular culture is an all-consuming part of Karim's life and also one which the novel explicitly places itself within. Just one example of this is the cover art for the novel by Peter Blake, an artist perhaps most famous for his cover art for The Beatles *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. *The Buddha of Suburbia* is very much about an era that saw "the end of the English novel and the beginning of the British one" (in Moore-Gilbert, 2001, p. 109), but also about the end of a homogenous, white, view of British culture as a whole. In this sense, it is of no harm to recognise the schism between the elemental Britishness and the formation of a multicultural society from which part of British culture stems as the integral part of the ideology that legalises this separation. In fact, the explication of this separation and its necessity, as the novel offers, can inclusively help to read *The Buddha of Suburbia* in light of the consolidation of this distance that stands in the way of the realisation of a true form of multiculturalism, thus impeding to feel at home in England. Berthold Schoene in his examination of race and culture in the novel describes this impracticality: "Kureishi's novel repudiates multiculturalist discourse which defines difference in order to ensure its preservation, causing individuals of minoritarian origin to suffer a categorical allocation of cultural belonging. Multiculturalism is prone to freeze minorities into fixed clusters of cultural stereotypes, from which the ethnic individual is unable to escape" (117). Likewise, in Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, which chronologically predates *The Buddha of Suburbia*, the public space and its pertinent discourse operate as a set of formative socio-political codes that hinders the process of cultural integration of Galahad, Cap, and Tolroy and his family into the so-called utopian society of Britain.

CONCLUSION

The ways in which both of these novels rewrite British culture and inscribe themselves and the immigrant experience into it, is similar to the descriptions of black music and nightclubs found in Selvon and Gilroy. Gilroy's statement regarding a new perspective on British culture applies just as much to the textual aspects of immigrant fiction, as to the specific events of the narratives. They, the immigrant authors and their works, are literally creating a home for themselves as an integral part of greater British culture. Although Gilroy's main aim is to bring the subject of race back into political discussions of non-white Britons, his work to show the complexity, or perhaps the complex diversity, of British culture is invaluable in examin-

ing the cultural productions of immigrants and their descendants. What this article would ultimately put forth, in light of the reading of these two novels, is that racism openly questions the immigrant's claim to Englishness and English identity, based on what is in reality an untenable ideological position. The cultural productions of non-white Britons more than prove that they belong, and in terms of the role they have played throughout Britain's colonial history, they always have. In this sense it is useful to go farther through Gilroy's subtle framing of the way in which the synergy of identity, politics, and power reconstructs the elements of the matrix of home, for "identity becomes a question of power and authority when a group seeks to realize itself in political form" (Gilroy, 2000, p. 99). To paraphrase Gilroy: there is no British culture without immigrants, and though this does not amount to a home in the traditional sense of the word, it makes Britain just as much of a home for them as for any of the white population. The conclusive statement which enunciates the (im)possibility of identity and home in the novels examined tends towards the regimented conservatism that consolidates the imperative of the British policies against immigrants' conception of England as home and Englishness as identity. Despite the fact that England appears welcoming to many immigrants, in practice, even the children of second generation immigrants, encounter the cultural, linguistic, and ideological discourses that steer them away from Britishness. Although multiculturalism, which is normally expected to secure immigrants' home and reshape their identity, thus supporting the macrocosmic principles of cultural diversity, can potentially help the British culture and society benefit from other cultures, the historically and ideologically established racial fixities disable people like Karim, Haroon, and Galahad to feel truly at home in England and to present their cultural identity as a catalyst for their systematic naturalisation.

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Biodata

Dr Morteza Lak received his MA from Uppsala University (2010), and PhD from Ghent University (2015). He is Assistant Professor of English Literature and Early Modern English. His research interests include print culture, material culture, paratext, book illustration, book history, 18th-century studies, Shakespeare studies, the Renaissance, and literary theory.

Email: morteza.lak@gmail.com