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KUREISHI'S HYBRID IDENTITIES - *THE BLACK ALBUM* AND *MY SON THE FANATIC*

Abstract
Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Black Album* and the short story *My Son the Fanatic* depict contemporary Britain swamped in a religious explosion of radical Islam. They also illustrate white British hypocrisy and the constant molestation of hybrid immigrants. Due to their skin colour, they regularly suffer humiliation. The hostile behaviour of white Brits affects their maturation, forcing them to act in a different way. The aim of this paper is to analyse these two literary works and their protagonists as the epitome of hybrid identity within the postcolonial Bildungsroman tradition, and to demonstrate that the only viable option for them is the third way.

Keywords: *The Black Album*, *My Son the Fanatic*, hybrid identity, skin colour, the third way.

1. Introduction

The late eighties and the beginning of the nineties were significant years for the subgenre known as the postcolonial Bildungsroman. This was also the period of great expansion of postcolonial literature in general. Literary

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critics were not surprised by the growing interest in the process of the protagonist's self-formation from diverse cultural contexts. Therefore, many postcolonial writers turned to the genre because "[...] its focus on the process and progress provide the useful tools with which to deconstruct imperialism and its underlying ideals" (Mullaney 2010: 31).

While Barbara Harlow refers to the genre as "resistance literature", Mark Stein insists that the genre allows a writer to discuss the process of the protagonist's transformation as well as the existence of novelty. Stein also points out that the main difference between the traditional and postcolonial Bildungsroman is that the latter explores the issue of "[...] finding a voice and a relationship between an individual and a larger group [...]" (2004: 30). He argues that protagonists in postcolonial Bildungsroman novels hardly ever move from the country to London; instead, they are typically born and raised in London.

The issue of positioning oneself within society is quite a complicated process. Christopher Marlowe and Daniel Defoe were the first to write about this problem in English literature and "[...] both found it difficult to find a satisfactory place in the society of their day [...]" (Watt 2001: 131). The process of development and adjustment of the main hero is characterized by predominantly negative and painful experiences, regardless of whether the individual is white, black, mixed-race, or a first or second-generation immigrant. However, Merle Tonnies notes that there is a difference when it comes to blackness and other postcolonial issues, as they involve an additional process of transformation. Moreover, the very same process concerning the person facing multiple forms of marginalisation is even more complex. Hence, it is obvious that "[...] the concept of Bildung has to be transformed [...]" (Tonnies 2013: 52).

Hanif Kureishi is one of the most popular contemporary writers. He has produced significant work in a range of genres. Despite regularly expressing his discomfort with being labeled as a postcolonial writer and calling it a "narrow term" (Hanif Kureishi, 2002, pers.comm., in Yousaf 2002: 16), his writing is strongly rooted in English traditions while also exhibiting many features of the postcolonial Bildungsroman. The most important one relies on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory that the structure of the Bildungsroman can vary depending on the time period in which it is used to represent the emergence of the hero. In distinguishing between historical and cyclical time, he notes the difference in the typical emergence of the hero in the novels which follow one's adolescence, versus those which

"[...] depict man's path from childhood through youth and maturity to old age [...]" (1986: 22). Bearing in mind Bakhtin's concept of cyclical time and the fact that some of Kureishi's novels and short stories explore themes of identity and coming-of-age, this is a significant indication that his works align with the postcolonial Bildungsroman genre. Additionally, Sarah Illott, in her book *New Postcolonial British Genres,* reflects on the emergence of the Gothic Tales of Postcolonial England, which can be related to the postcolonial Bildungsroman. She discusses different post-traumatic experiences of the second and the third generation of immigrants and associates them with the gothic dimension, as their coming-of-age is saturated with racism, bullying, and alienation. Kureishi's writing also incorporates gothic vocabulary such as trauma, fear, silence, uneasiness, melancholy, haunting, and the uncanny "[...] to reflect contemporary manifestations of fear and trauma associated with the 'unhomely' experience of migration and the psychological and material traumas of alienation and racism that causes ethnic minority characters to experience themselves as Others" (Ilott 2015: 54).

After achieving great success with the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*, which reflects the period of soaring optimism, idealism, and serenity, Hanif Kureishi depicts the eighties in Britain in a starkly different manner. His trip to Pakistan opened many new horizons and resolved many issues. There, he witnessed the major expansion of religion and the process of Islamisation that was in full swing. In that very same period in Britain, the tension among young Muslim people was rising on a daily basis. The constant battle between liberalism and fundamentalism became one of the most important themes of his literature, and his focus, at the time, was exclusively on race and ethnicity.

The hybrid protagonists in the novel *The Black Album*, Shahid and Chad, and the protagonist in the short story *My Son the Fanatic*, Ali, confront numerous challenges in order to achieve their coming-of-age. The goal of this paper is to analyse the texts within the tradition of the postcolonial Bildungsroman, focusing specifically on the role and influence of skin colour stereotypes, a stigma that follows them throughout their lives. It also aims to show that the protagonists, who are almost the same but not white, carry the burden of their inheritance. To do so, the paper employs three key psychoanalytic concepts which depict events that disrupt identity and cause trauma: the uncanny, repetition compulsion, and abjection. In this paper, Sigmund Freud's concepts of the uncanny and

repetition compulsion are closely associated with the emergence of hybrid identity, while Julia Kristeva's abjection is presented as a normal phase of one's maturation. The concepts also depict the fear and discomfort which hybrid people experience when they look in the mirror and see their image. Furthermore, given that their identity is divided between two worlds and two cultures and that their destiny is quite uncertain, "the absence of secure anchors leaves many [...] characters adrift on a storm-filled existential sea [...]" (Moore-Gilbert 2001: 150). Finally, the paper examines the reasons why the protagonists shift the course of their lives towards Islam and how religion becomes the primary driving force in their lives. Why do they embrace fundamentalist ideology so vehemently? Is fundamentalism, for them, a last resort for salvation, or does it drive them even further into extremism? As such, this paper seeks to answer one of the most important questions: How dangerous is it for the protagonists to exclude the otherness in themselves?

2. Hybrid identity – an uncanny story of their lives

Stuart Hall, an influential cultural theorist, distinguishes three different notions of identity: the enlightenment subject, the sociological subject and the post-modern subject. The first two are characterised by the existence of a human person defined as a fully centred, unified individual capable of reasoning and acting. Moreover, when it comes to the sociological subject, the process of identity formation is fulfilled through relations with others. The outside interference, the interaction between self and society, plays an important role. Finally, the post-modern subject has all but a unified and stable identity. The post-modern identity is fragmented and usually consists of multiple identities. Sometimes those are contradictory, but that is what makes a person more versatile and adaptable (Hall 1996).

The uncontrolled influx of immigrants from the former British colonies during the post-war period had a direct impact on every aspect of British society. Britain also became a country with "[...] the highest number of mixed-race relationships anywhere in the occidental world [...]" (Alibhai-Brown 2001: 2). These mixed-race relationships as well as the offspring of second and third-generation immigrants influenced the emergence of a new hybrid identity, which directly deconstructs the concepts of fixity and stability. Thus, "with one black parent and one white, I was the orange

to my father's red and my mother's yellow, not quite either but rather something altogether new" (Varaidzo in Shukla 2016: 12). Individuals of mixed race argue that to be of mixed race means being raceless, being nothing – neither white nor black. Simultaneously, they face rejection by blacks and whites, Muslims and Christians, Pakistanis and the English. It also means to belong nowhere but present. Moreover, the focus is always on skin colour, which can lead to stereotyping and inaccurate assumptions, and potentially create problems. However, the fact that someone is not recognisable consequently means that one does not exist. Freud would probably connect this with the dread of castration. In blinding himself, Oedipus found the most appropriate punishment. In postcolonial Britain, however, society inflicts punishment by limiting the acts and existence of a new identity, while at the same time imposing an inferiority complex. Hybrid people are constantly made to feel unworthy, insignificant, and invisible. In doing so, it may incite a phenomenon known as repetition compulsion, an unconscious urge to relive earlier traumas. According to John Fletcher's book *Freud and the Scene of Trauma*, Freud insists on the "postulate of a compulsion to repeat that proceeds [...] from the very nature of the drives, a compulsion powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle" (2013: 319). Fletcher also adds that "[...] what is repeated is a highly specific, perceptual, and memorial configuration or gestalt, in which is invested the original affect of fright and a range of painful and distressing emotions that have not been worked through" (2013: 308). Thus, when we discuss hybrid identities, their acts, and their existence, it is entirely about the repetition of the repressed—either the traumatic event or its circumstances.

Furthermore, the idea of a double in any form or degree is highly disturbing. The emergence of hybrid identities is closely related to Freud's concept of the uncanny. It defines phenomena which are simultaneously both familiar and unfamiliar to the ego and "it undoubtedly belongs to all that is terrible – to all that arouses dread and creeping horror [...]" (Freud 1919: 1). The term is also associated with everything that needs to stay hidden and secret, but in the end becomes visible. Recently, the feeling of uneasiness has increased with the visibility of hybrid identity. The plurality and fluidity of identity might be the terms that explain and define it best. Consequently, the ability of hybrid people to adapt and transform themselves depending on the situation that determines the conditions is terrifying. The "strange faces" with a "strange colour" who master the

language perfectly well and who exhibit excellent manners. Thus, their skin colour, like a stigma or a token of a shameful act of their parents, reveals their identity and determines their destiny in advance. What is more, Frantz Fanon in his *Black Skin, White Mask*, discusses the influence of the stereotypes concerning skin colour. He distinguishes between Jews and black people. Fanon argues that "[...] the Jew can be unknown in his Jewishness" (2008: 87) since his skin colour is white. Besides, "[...] their conduct is perpetually overdetermined from the inside" (Sartre, 1946, as cited in Fanon 2008: 87), contrary to black people who are overdetermined from the outside. Consequently, Fanon points out that he is "[...] the slave not of the 'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance" (2008: 87). However, in theoretical psychoanalysis, abjection is a normal phase in one's social maturation. Julia Kristeva in her *Powers of Horror: Essays on Abjection*, observes that the moment of abjection appears when "[...] the subject, weary of fruitless attempts to identify with something on the outside, finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very being"(1982: 5). Kureishi's hybrid protagonists in both the novel and the short story struggle to assimilate their skin as a part of their sense of self, which is why they feel threatened by it. They all see their inner identity as English. In other words, although they were born in England or "[...] brought up with England as their home, they seem increasingly alien with their mother" (Ilott 2015: 82). They share the same customs, they do not recognise any other culture as their own, and they fail to acknowledge their own otherness. The problem arises the moment when they discover the discrepancy between their expected reflection in the mirror and the image they actually see.

Another thing that makes the lives of hybrid people even more complicated is when Freud's notion of the uncanny intersects with their place of birth – England. Namely, the country they have known all their life to be their habitat suddenly becomes unknown. Racist narratives suggesting that immigrants, even those born in England or belonging to the third generation of immigrants, should go home makes their existence in England unpleasant and inconvenient. That is why "the experience of being 'unhomed' manifests itself differently [...] for immigrants for whom England is the place known as home whilst racist rhetoric insists on their origin being elsewhere" (Ilott 2015: 77).

Although the hybrid identity has not been fully recognised yet, it is widespread and gradually emerging from the shadows. Moreover, when

different races and cultures intersect, a new generation with its own culture and its own hidden signs is created. Peter Brooks in his book *Body Work* discusses Frankenstein's Monster from the Lacanian point of view. He draws a distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic Order, with the Imaginary pertaining to the mirror stage and the Symbolic Order being concerned with language. In doing so, Brooks maintains that contrary to the Symbolic Order where the monster can "[...] produce and project his desire in language", in the Imaginary "[...] the monster will never cease to be the 'filthy mass'" (1993: 203). When viewed from Kureishi's perspective, or through the eyes of his hybrid characters, it becomes apparent that the "monsters" of the post-60s era were fortunate to have the language of pop culture to express their desires. Despite the protagonists' inability to change their complexion, this universal form of expression, found in literature, music and visual media, provided a transparent and meaningful means of communication not only for them, but for young people worldwide.

Finally, hybrid people face numerous challenges and discriminatory acts. At present, they must cope with feelings of rejection, solitude, darkness, alienation, dread, and sorrow. The prejudices that loom over their heads constantly bear down on them and their psyche. They always have the impression that they are not good enough, not smart enough, or have some kind of bodily dysfunction. Nevertheless, hybrid people regularly send a strong message that they are here and have no intention of leaving. They are the offspring of colonisation and globalisation. They exist, and their being will undergo major changes in the future. The greedy politics of colonial imperialism has created the monsters, so let them live.

3. Bildung and/or anti-Bildung: desire for authority

As has already been discussed with reference to the Bildungsroman, the final goal of the protagonist is to be accepted by the society he lives in. He undergoes a series of challenging situations, many of which are negative, confronts various obstacles, shows the rebellious nature he possesses throughout the process of maturation and finally assimilates. In other words, the protagonist finds the balance between the social and the private. As for the postcolonial Bildungsroman, a key plot element is the process of Bildung. However, achieving complete integration is impossible since the hero strives for a place in a society which is characterised by

instability and which goes through a constant flux and change. Thus, the novel usually ends either before the protagonist reaches any conclusion related to his identity or his striving meets with failure (Lopez 2001). On the other hand, hybrid identities insist on the fact that "it is the British, the white British, who have to learn that being British isn't what it was. Now it is a more complex thing, involving new elements" (Kureishi 2011: 34). Consequently, it is not the hybrid individuals who have an identity crisis, but white British people who have yet to acknowledge and accept that the British identity is changing. Therefore, taking into consideration both sides and their different approaches, it is fair to say that in the postcolonial Bildungsroman, a hero needs to reach a compromise. In Kureishi's literary world it means that "the best the young British-Asian heroes can do is accept their lot in a world driven by hypocrisy, selfishness, racism and class confusion, and, by immersing themselves in the pleasure of consumption, salvage what personal enjoyment they can" (Buchanan 2007: 42). But what happens with those who never get accepted by the society they live in, never get understood, or never find a compromise? In the novel *The Black Album* and the short story *My Son the Fanatic*, Kureishi associates those characters with religion. Shahid, for example, opens Allah's door naively, whereas Chad, Hat and many other members of Riaz's group, along with Ali, intentionally open the very same door. Their approaches might be different, but the consequences are the same. After becoming alienated, they usually decide to return to their communities and friends who share the same religious values, and they choose to start living a life solely in accordance with their religion. Through time, most of them begin to live a fundamentalist life instead of a regular one. From society's point of view, their story does not have a happy ending, or if it does, society will not see it that way.

3.1. *The Black Album*: the power of religion or the power of literature

Shahid, the twenty-year-old protagonist of the novel *The Black Album*, belongs to the second generation of British Pakistanis. His parents came from Pakistan and started to live their immigrants' dream in Kent. After the death of his father, Shahid moves to London for further education. He enrolls at a college to study literature. At the same time, he strives to distance himself from his family and become more independent, while primarily seeking to come to terms with his identity.

The novel follows Shahid's problematic process of maturation. The psychological maturation and transformation of the boy who would rather make an impact on the world as an artist than as a political, religious or any other kind of activist. One of the reasons for Shahid's great dedication to literature, particularly high literature, is that he truly believes that it will help him find the answer concerning his identity and habitat. "Literature, painting, architecture, psychoanalysis, science [...] and all this has gone hand-in-hand with something significant. That is: critical inquiry into the nature of truth. It talks of proof and demonstration" (Kureishi 1995: 99). Therefore, Shahid's process of coming-of-age is seen through the "[...] terms of intellectual rather than affective choices" (Moore-Gilbert 2001: 111).

From the very beginning of Shahid's stay in London, he experiences solitude and confusion with regard to various matters. Even though he attends a college where the majority of the students are either black or of mixed race, he has some difficulty identifying with them. Shahid's acquaintance with religion starts as a consequence of the forlornness he feels in London. He is not a boy who has been raised in a shallow religious environment. Shahid emphasises many times that his father has taught neither him nor his brother anything about it. What draws him to religion is not necessarily racism, although he was regularly bullied in school, but rather the fact that while walking around the area, he realises that it is all about joining. The mosque and religion erase the borders since "[...] here race and class barriers were suspended. [...] Strangers spoke to one another" (Kureishi 1995: 142). What is more, regardless of whether they come from Pakistan, Iran or any other Muslim country, or whether they are rich or not, they are equally treated.

The painful process of adaptation and loneliness lasts until the moment when he meets Riaz, the leader of the Muslim fundamentalist group who "[...] emphasizes origins at the expense of environment" (Buchanan 2007: 60), and Deedee, a lecturer at his college, a feminist, and the real representative of postmodern ideology and popular culture. She is also known for her drug addiction and preference for pleasure over politics. Both Riaz and Deedee very quickly recognise Shahid's vulnerabilities, innocence, and naivety. Like real predators, they use their powers to catch the prey. In this merciless fight, both of them strive to earn and keep his attention. Therefore, Shahid becomes the victim of his inner conflict. He also faces a dilemma of his life which is painful and potentially tragic. The main question is how to balance between his "[...] individualistic,

knowledge-and-pleasure-seeking urges, and traditional morality and [...] religion" (Buchanan 2007: 68). In other words, how to balance between two streams: the demands of militant Islam and the pleasures and vices of secular life. Since their ideologies are diametrically opposite, and because he finds consolation in both of them, the struggle becomes even more complicated. "[...] When he was with his friends their story compelled him. But when he walked out, like someone leaving a cinema, he found the world to be more subtle and inexplicable" (Kureishi 1995: 133). He experiences the same problem when he spends time with Deedee. The world, steeped in lust, drugs and literature, is not a place to be easily abandoned. Moreover, both sides endeavor to present London to Shahid. They use different perspectives, each depicting London in the manner which underpins their respective ideologies. Riaz, for example, on their first meeting, takes him to an Indian restaurant to meet with other fellow countrymen, while Deedee Osgood takes him to a rave party where they stay all night. She exposes him to the carnival of sex and drugs, a world he has never seen before. Riaz's secret goal is to reconnect Shahid with his father's country, whereas Deedee aims to free him from any bonds that suffocate his youth.

For Shahid, religion becomes a significan problem the moment he has to choose between the knowledge offered by literature and the knowledge of a single book – the Quran. Moreover, he gets deeply disappointed upon realizing that the group he belongs to is planning to use violence in order to show their disagreement with the book *The Midnight Children* (the writer presumably alludes to Rushdie's novel: *The Satanic Verses*) which has raised a great deal of tension in society. Since the debate about this book reveals the worst in everyone, Shahid decides to leave the group for good. "Shahid looked away immediately, with a guilty expression[...]. [...] If anything he felt ashamed. He was someone who couldn't join in, couldn't let himself go" (Kureishi 1995: 225).

By the end of the novel, he undergoes a significant shift and rejects everything related to religion. Shahid's journey finishes when he realises that he needs to find an "alternative belief system that counters the British lack of direction, but nevertheless offers the freedom and subjectivity necessary for the expression of cross cultural hybrid subjectivity" (Upstone 2008: 10). Therefore, the moment Shahid raises his voice and tells Deedee that he "[...] never likes being told what to do" (Kureishi 1995: 160), although he has always been told what to do up to that point, shows that

his process of maturation has come to an end. He has finally overcome the developmental gap, the lack of father's authority or any other authority.

While in Shahid's case education prevails over dogma, things turn differently for Chad. Being a Pakistani child adopted by a white, racist English family, his life trajectory changes drastically. As a child, he was brought to England and lived in an English way. Not only did he feel racism on his skin among his friends, but he also felt it among the members of his foster family. To further complicate matters, he felt the very same resentment among the Pakistani. When he decided to take classes in Urdu, they mostly laughed at him. "In England, white people looked at him as if he were going to steal their car or a handbag, particularly when he dressed like a ragamuffin. But in Pakistan they looked at him even more strangely" (Kureishi 1995: 107). Hence, rejection, humiliation and the feeling of homelessness drive him away from his family, and an accidental meeting with Riaz changes his life. From this moment onwards, he starts calling himself Muhammad Shahabuddin Ali-Sha, and later Chad, and insists that everyone call him by that name. In doing so, he uses the collective identity of Islam as a shield and protects himself from any possibility to be seen as a Paki, as something bad or ugly. "'No more Paki. Me a Muslim'" (Kureishi 1995: 128). Chad sees Riaz as a life-saver and Islam, the religion, as his identity. What is more, he finally discovers the real purpose of his existence. Religion helps him build self-confidence which drives him further, and he becomes more radical and aggressive.

In the beginning, his acts are quite understandable and even justifiable to some extent, as he shows empathy towards a Bengali family and all the others who were victims of racist attacks in Britain. He organises his friends and does his best to protect those people from the racists. Unfortunately, it does not end there. He becomes obsessed with the fight for his cause and the need to prove his commitment to Riaz and consequently to the fundamental ideology they support. To make matters worse, he starts enjoying his obsession to the point where his actions towards his opponents become violent. "Chad clenched his weapon over the child's head, and waved it about" (Kureishi 1995: 138). The climax of his violence occurs when he organises all the members of the group to go and attack Shahid in Deedee's house. He does that when he discovers that he no longer has control over Shahid. They beat Shahid almost to death. "Chad took hold of Shahid and threw him back against the wall, winding him and smacking his head. [...] 'This idiot hates us and hates God!'" (Kureishi 1995: 265).

3.2. *My Son the Fanatic*: the power of religion

Ali's commitment to religion in the short story *My Son the Fanatic* is a par excellence example of the anti-Bildung in Kureishi's oeuvre. Apart from dealing with race and ethnicity, this short story also features a father - son scenario. Moreover, the story does not explain the reasons for Ali's commitment to Islam, as it starts when the process of his conversion into a religious fundamentalist has already reached an advanced stage. The reader can only assume.

Ali is a young man who lives with his father Parvez, a taxi driver, a hard-working man, and his mother who has devoted her life to their family. He seems to have embraced the lifestyle of his English peers. Ali is a trained accountant, a vocation that will enable him to have a stable job and a promising future. The father's wish to have a successful son who will live a life like a real Englishman is the realisation of all his dreams. Unfortunately, Parvez's dreams start crumbling down when he realises that his son's behavior has changed. He cannot immediately discover the reason for it, as the actual reason is beyond his wildest imagination. Ali, who used to enjoy creative chaos as a boy, becomes a neat and organised person, to the point that his whole family becomes very proud of him. They do not realise that the apparent changes in his behavior are merely the tip of an iceberg.

The stories shared by the fundamentalists in the mosque, which concern the hard life of their brothers in Pakistan and whose intention is to evoke compassion and a sense of guilt, have a significant impact on Ali. His decision to help them and to sacrifice for Islam brings a new dimension into his life. According to Moore-Gilbert, Ali's decision to convert himself and become an exemplary member of the religious community bears a striking resemblance to Farhat – Hat in *The Black Album* as "[...] both are accountancy students who, disgusted with secular Britain, turn to religion" (2001: 150). Therefore, by entering the vicious circle of radical Islam, Ali goes through the process of rebirth. It is an inseparable part of both the Bildungsroman and the process of self-discovery, typically followed by the shedding of all the things related to the former self. What Ali does first is to eliminate all the people and things that remind him of pleasure and his former westernised life. Namely, "[...] Ali had parted from the English girlfriend [...] his old friends had stopped ringing. [...] He had bought him good suits, all the books he required and a computer. And

now the boy was throwing his possessions out!" (Kureishi 2005: 63). Ali's life becomes a personification of the room where he lives, as "[...] the room was practically bare. Even the unhappy walls bore marks where Ali's pictures had been removed" (Kureishi 2005: 63). Therefore, being seduced by radical voices and the purity of fundamentalist Islam makes everything in Ali's life simple, bare and infertile. His blindness and submission compel him to declare that his life finally has a purpose. However, "for young religious radicals, extreme Islam [...] kept them out of trouble, for a start, and provided some pride. They weren't drinking, taking drugs, or getting into trouble like their white contemporaries. At the same time, they were able to be rebels" (Kureishi 2011: 104). Thus, religion allows them to be both disobedient and conformist at the same time, which is the key to their commitment. Furthermore, their allegiance to radical Islam masks the violence which will eventually emerge.

Ali's attitude towards his father is troublesome. Contrary to Chad, it is not primarily about physical violence, but rather psychological violence which occurs in their relationship. Ali even goes as far as to molest and punish his father for the life he leads. According to Sigmund Freud, dreams of killing the father constitute a common stage in male development, although in Ali's case it happens much later. He does it by seizing the father figure's authority, unfortunately not for himself, and voluntarily consigning it into Allah's hands.

Parvez, Ali's father, is "a complex and often contradictory figure" (Buchanan 2007: 60), like most of Kureishi's characters. He possesses all the characteristics typical for the hybrid identity. On the one hand, Parvez is a hard-working man who values the liberalism that England generously offers and, above all, he appreciates jazz music. He loves his life and he is grateful to this country. "'But I love England. [...] They let you do almost anything here'" (Kureishi 2005: 70). On the other hand, he shows a traditional, almost puritanical relationship with both his son and his wife. Although the wife's name is intentionally not mentioned in this short story, Parvez expects her to respect and obey him. The traditional attitude towards his son is exemplified by his refusal to allow his son to choose his own path. He holds the opinion that the path he chooses for him is the right one even though Ali does not see it that way. Despite his self-proclaimed liberalism, Parvez's actions suggest otherwise. His attitude towards religion, in general, is ironically explained in a scene from his childhood in Lahore, in which he was forced to attend classes where all

the boys were taught the Quran. "To stop him falling asleep, when he studied, the Maulvis had attached a piece of string to the ceiling and tied it to Parvez's hair, so that if his head fell forward he would instantly awake. After this indignity Parvez had avoided all religions" (Kureishi 2005: 67).

Kureishi, who associated confusion with the children of second-generation immigrants in his earlier works, now uses and associates it with Ali's father, Parvez, when he discovers his son's commitment to religion. In his essay, *The Carnival of Culture*, Kureishi points out that British-born children display certain behavioural patterns. Neither are they more religious nor more politically radical in comparison with their parents. But what they cannot bear is "[...] their parents' moderation and desire to 'compromise' with Britain" (Kureishi 2011: 131). That is why Ali, in one of the quarrels between him and his father, asks him "'[...] how can you love something which hates you?'" (Kureishi 2005: 69). Moreover, he threatens him with the words that "the law of Islam would rule the world; the skin of the infidel would burn off again and again; [...] If the persecution doesn't stop there will be jihad" (Kureishi 2005: 69).

The short story concludes with the fight between Ali and his father, Parvez. It is a clash between two different ideologies which they vehemently support. Both of them show a certain level of intolerance and misunderstanding towards the recent lifestyle choices they have made. Ali does not want to accept that his father's life is led by desire, while Parvez cannot accept that Ali perceives Islam as "[...] a legitimate locus of resistance, communal self-help and solidarity" (Moore-Gilbert 2001: 166). Moreover, the final scene, in which Parvez hits Ali while he is praying, sends a deep and powerful message. It proves, among other things, that the patriarchate, tradition and conservative tendency in parenting still exist regardless of how liberal a person or a society may have become. Above all, it shows the complexity of the process of growth and maturation of hybrid individuals in Britain, particularly those who embrace fundamentalist ideology as their driving force.

4. Conclusion

Kureishi's two unique literary works, *The Black Album* and the short story *My Son the Fanatic*, offer us complex dramatis personae, Bildungs and plots which allow us to explore these two narratives from a postcolonial

Bildungsroman perspective. One of the characteristics of the genre is that it does not necessarily follow the protagonist's coming-of-age from his early childhood to adolescence, but instead depicts his journey from puberty to maturity. These two literary works, the novel and the short story, portray a situation where the protagonist's Bildung, or coming-of-age, takes an unwanted turn, resulting in an anti-Bildung narrative. They also show how the protagonist becomes the antagonist when radical Islam takes over his life and becomes the essence of his existence. Moreover, they demonstrate how the plot generated by a character, who has undergone religious conversion, can have significant structural and moral implications for a narrative.

The novel *The Black Album* and the short story *My Son the Fanatic* not only depict the issues which the protagonists confront in the process of coming-of-age in their distinctive ways, but they also show that the bond which exists between a father and a son is one of the most important motifs in Kureishi's literature. Once again, it plays an important role, and its failure causes significant problems for both the father and, notably, the son. After moving to Britain, Shahid's father dies. Chad is an abandoned child from Pakistan, adopted by an English family. Ali is the only one whose father is alive. Nevertheless, the father's extramarital relationship with Bettina, one of the "girls of the night", might be viewed as a contributing factor to Ali's feeling of abandonment and his abrupt, and certainly unforeseen, embrace of religion. Therefore, their desire for authority pushes them into an extreme form of Islam. Unlike Shahid, who deals with the same issues but somehow manages to find a compromise, the other characters, particularly the members of Riaz's group such as Chad, Farhat (Hat), and Ali, the protagonist of the short story *My Son the Fanatic*, fail to do the same.

In the end, while fundamentalist ideology may appear to be a possible anchor for an alienated British-Muslim protagonist, as it provides him with a sense of belonging and rootedness, the long-lasting consequences might be disastrous, even fatal. These two literary works demonstrate that "[...] finding a single or primary point of identification is an unnecessary or even dangerous task" (Ilott 2015: 42). In doing so, the otherness gets eradicated or suppressed and can lead to a sense of incompleteness. Furthermore, the protagonist fails in his pursuit of Bildung since the totality between the individual and society is thwarted. It consequently means that the protagonist fails to achieve a compromise, and his life becomes a profound

disillusionment. On the other hand, embracing the fluid and variable nature of personal identity, as well as living in accordance with it, is imperative for the protagonist. Finally, the ultimate goal is to uncover and accept the third way as the only possible way for a hybrid identity that rejects binary categoriations and essentialism.

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