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# No Country for Diasporic Men: The Psychological Development of South Asian Masculinities in The Buddha of Suburbia and The Mimic Man

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NO COUNTRY FOR DIASPORIC MEN:  
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH ASIAN MASCULINITIES  
IN *THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA* AND *THE MIMIC MAN*

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of English  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, Kentucky

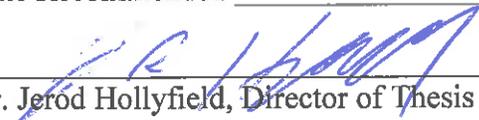
In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

By  
Zehra Yousofi

May 2016

NO COUNTRY FOR DIASPORIC MEN:  
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH ASIAN MASCULINITIES  
IN *THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA* AND *THE MIMIC MAN*

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To my parents, sisters, family, and friends for their love, support, and humoring my many ventures. To Rumi, providing me your subtle guidance.

Dr. Reddy for helping me understand my hybridity.

and

To my brother Mohammad—I finally found something worth writing about.

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The purpose of this thesis is to examine the psychological development of South Asian masculinity in a diaspora that is depicted in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* and V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*. Together, Kureishi and Naipaul construct a complete understanding of masculinity through childhood, adolescent, young adult, and adulthood. Chapter 1 explores the need to displace their father's masculinity and seek better masculine models that align with the social norms of the diaspora. Chapter 2 establishes the motivation behind seeking peers to define the meaning of masculinity in a diaspora and the disadvantage of this pathway. Chapter 3 demonstrates two possible outcomes for South Asian men attempting to construct a secure masculinity. The difficulties these characters encounter when developing their identity is both a product of their diasporic environment and the lingering effect of colonization through the presence of hegemonic masculinity. They attempt to rectify the inadequacies in their masculinity by refuting a portion of their identity tied to being South Asian in order to better assimilate to the ideals of their diaspora. Ultimately, there are two possible consequences for South Asian men in a diaspora: one is to attempt to negotiate their position as a mixture of both the ideals of the diaspora and South Asian culture and the second is to continue to live a fragmented life of denying aspects of their identity tied to either the diaspora or South Asian culture.

## Introduction: Unlocking Masculine Discourse in Postcolonial Studies

“The empires of our time were short-lived,  
but they have altered the world for ever;  
their passing away is their least significant feature.”  
-V.S. Naipaul, *The Mimic Men*

The psychological development of South Asian masculinities demonstrated in postcolonial novels captures the difficulty first- and second-generation South Asian men face when establishing their identity within a socially dominant white or Caribbean concept of masculinity in a diasporic environment. The inability of young South Asian men to establish a secure masculine identity in a diaspora is demonstrated in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* and V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*. Both texts highlight this issue through the protagonists' strained relationship with their South Asian fathers and their need to idolize their peers' dominant masculine identities in the pursuit to create a confident one within the realm of the diaspora.

Critics regard Kureishi's work as an essential postcolonial novel depicting the difficulties first-generation immigrants encounter while living in the suburbs of England. First published in 1990, the book was well received by many, including academic scholars, and prompted the later BBC miniseries adaptation of the novel. *The Buddha of Suburbia* is a satirical bildungsroman novel set in London during the 1970s—a period of heightened racial and class tension. The protagonist, Karim Amir, is a half-Indian and half-British teenager who is attempting to find his place in society. His father, Haroon, is a first-generation immigrant from a wealthy family in India and works as an office clerk. Margret, his mother, is from a low-income British family. In an attempt to overcome his

frustration with his unfulfilling profession and marriage, Haroon becomes a self-proclaimed guru for upper middle class suburbia. Kureishi's novel illuminates the challenges young, second-generation South Asian men face in the former colonizer's nation. In addition, Kureishi's novel highlights the disparities in South Asian father and son relationships due to the social norms of the diasporic environment, which forces them to rebuild and construct a more acceptable identity.

The academic conversation surrounding this text is predominately concentrated in postcolonial studies with a keen focus on physical and cultural hybridity of the protagonist. However, this text can be applicable to theoretical frameworks such as queer theory, Marxist theory, and psychoanalytic criticism. *The Buddha of Suburbia Reader* by Nahem Yousaf notes that critics largely recognize notions such as the politics of identity and hybridity within the text. Other aspects of the academic conversation surrounding Kureishi's work are rooted in a discussion of Homi K. Bhabha's theories about third space and hybridity, which seek to identify Karim as an ideal example of such concepts. While these theories are revisited within this project, the primary function of these theoretical frameworks is to better understand the relationship South Asian men have with the diaspora and the manner in which the diasporic society views them. The overall critical standing of *The Buddha of Suburbia* is that Kureishi's text captures the complexity of being an Asian British male. Nevertheless, while Kureishi's novel might capture the critical receptions of academic scholars regarding his position within London as a South Asian British male, the impact his diasporic environment has upon the development of his masculine identity as an ethnically South Asian male is

further explored. Furthermore, Kureishi's depiction of the readjusted masculine identity for the protagonist's father as a Buddha lends itself to further research of the generational differences the diaspora has upon their identities.

Published in 1967 by Caribbean author V.S. Naipaul, *The Mimic Man* received positive critical acclaim and is considered a quintessential postcolonial novel because of its influence in the development of theory. *The Mimic Men* is a memoir-like novel written from the perspective of Ralph Singh, an individual claiming political asylum in suburban London. Ralph is born with Indian heritage but raised on the British-dependent Caribbean island of Isabella. His mother comes from a wealthy and successful family whereas his father, Kripalsingh, is a poor teacher and a failed politician. Kripalsingh is plagued by his lack of respect and influence both at home and on the island. Naipaul's novel attempts to find order for third- and fourth-generation indentured Indian servants, still living on a Caribbean island, and the challenges they face such as displacement and identity loss. Naipaul's text provides insight into the South Asian father and son relationship in a more reflective manner with intertwining memories, experiences, and maturity.

Similarly, academic critics consider *The Mimic Men* as an essential postcolonial literary work that has given rise to literary theory such as mimicry—the act of doubling actions or language to match the colonizer's desires, which in part alienates the colonized from their community. Postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha notes in his "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," "the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts

its authority...the partial representation/recognition of the colonial object...Naipaul's colonial politician as play-actor" (268). For this reason, many critics consider Ralph as an archetypical portrayal of mimicry in postcolonial theory. Since Naipaul's novel heavily lends itself to this theory, the lack of exploration and elaboration of the theory within this project would be considered a great hindrance. Furthermore, the use of this theoretical framework functions to better understand the relationship to the diaspora and the need to perform accordingly within this environment.

Other critics credit Naipaul's text as demonstrative of the displacement caused by colonization by focusing on a South Asian protagonist brought to a Caribbean island as an indentured servant. According to Ian Smith, "Both Kincaid and Naipaul are witnesses to a historical process inevitably attached to colonialism that encourages a commitment to signs emptied out of any real content and cut off from observable reality" (816). The academic conversation surrounding Naipaul's text is largely rooted in postcolonial theories such as third space, hybridity, and mimicry, which make this text an ideal example of such discourse to pursue further studies of postcolonial view of masculinity in a diasporic environment. However, the protagonist and his father being unable to reconcile their identity and connection to their diaspora is a concept that is yet to be examined in Naipaul's novel. Furthermore, the psychological impact of such disconnection from South Asian masculinity and culture within their Caribbean island remains undiscussed in academic conversation.

Both Kureishi's and Naipaul's novels are semiautobiographical works which blend aspects of their own identity and background into their characters. For instance,

Kureishi's father is from an upper-class family living in Pakistan and his mother is a British woman and together they resided in the suburbs of London. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Kureishi reveals the difficulty in constructing an identity while "in the past, Kureishi has admitted 'denying my Pakistani self,'" revealing a new tune.

Challenged by this, he retreats to the conundrum of his identity: 'I just didn't know what to do with it or what use it could be to me...' (McCrum). The interviewer, Robert McCrum, comments: "Books were essential to his assimilation. It was through his life as a writer that he began to discover who he was and to reconcile the warring parts of himself. The doubleness persisted" (McCrum). After the publication of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Kureishi has not been able to replicate the success of that novel.

Fascinatingly, Kureishi's last publication in 2014 is called *The Last Word*, in which the press release prompted an interview with the Guardian's journalist, McCrum. McCrum notes that Kureishi's new book resonates with aspects of Naipaul's life, "The idea that the end of a life is as interesting as its beginning is a fruitful one, with echoes of the relationship between V.S. Naipaul and his biographer Patrick French. But, at heart, it's really a commentary on the complicated inner turmoil of Kureishi's own career." Much like his character, Ralph, Naipaul grew up on the Caribbean island of Trinidad as a descendent of indentured Indian servants and continued his education in London.

Unfortunately, the controversy surrounding his biography, written by Patrick French, depicting his deplorable treatment of women and his poor health has caused Naipaul to become more reclusive from the public. His last publication was a nonfiction book named *The Masque of Africa* in 2010. After the publication and success of these two

novels, both authors published nonfiction works about their fathers' experience of failure in the attempt to become writers, and are apologetic about their personal success as novelist. Kureishi says:

Father gave me what he wanted for himself, and it was a lot: for a start, the education he lacked. If I've been interested in anything it came through what was in his head... Then, out of father's attempted writing cure, the energy of his narrow commitment, I found my own stories to tell. (198)

Kureishi's connection with his father as a writer notes his effort to reclaim his agency as a writer. This need to redefine his father's identity as a writer regardless of success is Kureishi's attempt to reposition his father's legacy in the diaspora as not only a writer but also his greatest influence. This connection to his father mirrors that of the relationship with the protagonist and his father, with the exception that both characters in the book wanted to be actors. Naipaul makes a similar remark about his father: "For Seepersad Naipaul (Pa), the life of the mind—the writer's life—was everything: to record the ways of men and women, with a shrewd, comical and kindly eye, and to do that from within his own originality, was to live nobly" (introduction). Naipaul's observation about his father being meticulous is a characteristic that blends within the protagonist's narrative in *The Mimic Men* with his need to be observant yet reserved. Although the lives of these two authors are seemingly unconnected, their need to understand their identity in a diaspora through semiautobiographical books and their reflections about their fathers is the thread that intertwines them. By pairing these books together, one can obtain a complete understanding of the difficulties South Asian men

face in a diaspora at each stage of their life because both Kureishi and Naipaul seek to rectify the complexity of their identity within the realm of their diaspora and in a postcolonial world.

The aspiration of this project is to better understand the psychological development of South Asian masculinity in a diaspora and to uncover recent trends of second-generation South Asian males gravitating towards more conservative or extremist views, even after being raised in the diaspora. In order to reveal the psychological motivations behind extremism or conservative beliefs within the diaspora, it is necessary to examine the cognitive development of South Asian male identities in their early stages. Both novels examine the psychological development of South Asian masculinity in a diaspora and together construct a complete understanding of masculinity from childhood, adolescent, young adult, and adulthood. Furthermore, these texts provide insight about atypical situations for first-generation immigrants and second-generation children living in the diasporic society without the dependency of pocket immigrant communities that form within such environments. Exploring atypical circumstances for South Asian males might reveal the inclination towards extremist and isolating ideals for some second-generation males. Beside providing support for South Asians that are completely alienated from their communities, both texts highlight a specific time period ranging from the late 60s and early 90s and explore early South Asian immigrants in a period prior to the 9/11 attacks, which drastically changed the manner in which the diaspora views South Asian males.

Chapter 1 explores the need to displace their father's masculinity and seek better masculine models that aligns with the social norms of the diaspora. Chapter 2 establishes the motivation behind seeking their peers to define the meaning of masculinity in a diaspora and the disadvantage with this pathway. Chapter 3 demonstrates two possible outcomes for South Asian men attempting to construct a secure masculinity. The difficulties these characters encounter when developing their identity are both a product of their diasporic environment and the lingering effect of colonization through the presence of hegemonic masculinity. They attempt to rectify their inadequacies in their masculinity by refuting a portion of their identity tied to being South Asian in order to better assimilate to the ideals of their diaspora. Ultimately, there are two possible consequences for South Asian men in a diaspora: Attempt to negotiate their position as a hybrid of both the ideals of the diaspora and South Asian culture, or continue to live a fragmented life of practicing mimicry by denying aspects of their identity tied to either the diaspora or South Asian culture.

#### Chapter 1: Recognizing Suggestive Methods of Oppression in a Diaspora

Conventionally, the bond between a father and son in South Asian culture ensures the child will develop a secure and confident masculine identity. This manner of upbringing reinforces religious and traditional practices, which helps the child gain a better understanding of their place within the family, community, and society. As sociologist Radhika Chopra noted, “[the father] educate[s] his son into the way of being, the ways of becoming an adult to secure the skin of his status. The responsibility for the transformation and incorporation of younger males into social persons rests with

fathers” (Chopra 44). In diaspora, however, the presence of more preserving notions of masculinity fractures this bond; furthermore, this environment dismisses the value of South Asian cultural practices by considering these as foreign and irrelevant concepts. Therefore, young South Asian males must reject and displace their fathers’ example as an ideal masculine model in such circumstances. Also realizing the insufficiencies in South Asian masculinity, the fathers reconstruct their identity by embracing Orientalism to better adjust into their diasporic society. This need to restructure their masculinity forces the sons to decipher and construct their own masculine identity, upholding the social norms of their environment. Thus, the typical South Asian father and son relationship is severed due to the demands of the diaspora. South Asian masculinity is disregarded in a diaspora; this notion is proven through the side character, Anwar, choosing to continue his native masculine identity despite its ineffectiveness and lack of support. For this reason, Haroon from *The Buddha of Suburbia* and Kripalsingh of *The Mimic Men* choose to recreate and replace their masculine identity to align with the conventions of the immigrated society. Both Haroon and Kripalsingh, the fathers of the protagonists, accentuate their “oriental” background and practices in order to mitigate their masculine identity with the expectations of their diasporic environment. This need for the fathers to redefine their identity with their surroundings forces Karim and Ralph into a premature authoritative position to suffer from low self-esteem and to negotiate their hybridity alone. This chapter establishes the circumstances that influence the protagonists to displace their fathers and search for more relevant and accepted masculine models that capture the social norms for their gender in a diaspora.

## **South Asian Masculinity**

South Asian masculinity is irrelevant in a diasporic environment such as London. This is demonstrated through Haroon's childhood friend and side character, Anwar. Both Anwar and Haroon come from wealthy families in Bombay, and they were sent to London to continue their education. These seemingly similar characters' histories diverge when Haroon marries a native British woman, but Anwar fulfills his role as a South Asian male by upholding his arranged marriage to Jeeta, his Pakistani wife. Anwar's partaking in the traditional South Asian cultural practice of arranged marriage and his later deciding that she will join him in his diaspora depicts Anwar as an embodiment of South Asian masculinity. Anwar's need to equate a strong masculine identity with professional success and the ability to provide for his family further supports Anwar as representative of South Asian masculinity in a diaspora. For instance, Anwar belittles Haroon's early interest in mysticism during a conversation between the two: "'I haven't got the time to dream!' interrupted Anwar. 'Nor should you be dreaming. Wake up! What about getting some promotion so Margaret can wear some nice clothes...'" (Kureishi 27). Anwar's valuation of gaining professional success and being able to support his wife's desires displays the ideals of South Asian masculinity. Sociologist Radhika Chopra reports the importance of work for South Asian masculinity: "[work is] 'the crucible out of which male identities are forged or through which they are given shape and meaning'...*Pesha* is a presentation of self to the public gaze...which reflects belonging to a group, a life style and a status" (43). Anwar perceives Haroon's disinterest in his profession and his inability to provide his wife with

more luxurious possessions as a rejection of South Asian masculine identity through discrediting the value and social status work provides for men. This perception signifies Anwar as a character that represents standard notions of masculinity that align with South Asian culture.

### **Inaptitude of South Asian Masculinity in a Diaspora**

South Asian masculinity, however, has little relevance in a diaspora, because the absolute authority associated with South Asian male identity is under scrutiny and dismissed in the diaspora. This concept is supported when Anwar decides to arrange his daughter's marriage with a man from Pakistan and he is confronted with unbending resistance from his daughter. Judith Butler notes, "trouble became a scandal with the sudden intrusion, the unanticipated agency, of a female 'object' who inexplicably returns the glance, reverses the gaze, and contests the place and authority of the masculine position" (preface). Butler observes the detrimental blow to absolute masculine authority when a female with agency, such as Anwar's daughter, questions male authority. Anwar in retaliation decides to go on a hunger strike: "I won't eat. I will die. If Gandhi could shove out the English from India by not eating, I can get my family to obey me by exactly the same."... "She must do what I say or I will die. She will kill me" (Kureishi 60). Anwar going on a hunger strike to force his daughter to obey him displays the ineptitude of South Asian masculine identity in a diaspora. Anwar perceives his decision to go on a hunger strike to make his daughter, Jamilla, "obey" him to be equal to Gandhi's efforts to remove the British colonial rule. This statement regarding his protest is ironic, because Gandhi strove to end the British's absolute rule, whereas

Anwar is doing so in hopes of suppressing his daughter. Anwar's remark demonstrates the inappropriateness of South Asian masculinity in a diaspora by appropriating Gandhi's nonviolent protest in the hopes of removing his daughter's agency.

P.K. Vuayan observes the significances of authority residing in the collective decision of the family for South Asian cultures: "in India... men and women [believe] that individual rights must be strengthened not by pitching yourself against or isolating yourself from family and community, but rather by having your rights recognized within it" (369). Therefore, Jamilla's act of rebellion challenges Anwar's South Asian masculinity, which forces him to misappropriate Gandhi's nonviolent protest to regain his masculine authority within his family. Stuart Hall states, "the question of diaspora is posed here primarily because of the light that it throws on the complexities, not simply of building, but of imagining... nationhood and identity, in an era of intensifying globalization" (543). Hall notes that the diaspora becomes a realm in which the intricacies of the inhabitants, both native and immigrated, can come into question without the promise of a solution, particularly in an increasingly diverse society. Thus, Jamilla can question Anwar's continuing practice of South Asian masculinity, especially his need to have absolute authority within the family, and thereby deny him the ability to mitigate his identity with his surrounding. For this reason, South Asian masculinity is unimportant in a diaspora because it is scrutinized, does not follow the conventions of the immigrated society, and lacks prevalence and support.

### **Reinventing South Asian Masculinity**

In contrast, realizing the ineffectiveness of South Asian masculine identity, Haroon chooses to fabricate his Oriental background as a means of diluting his native South Asian masculinity with that of the fragmented understanding of Asian practices in the diaspora. Early in the novel, Haroon participates in a more socially acceptable male role for a South Asian male by abandoning his previous notion of South Asian masculinity in order to better align with the expectations of his environment. This idea takes form when Haroon receives an invitation from a wealthy British woman named Eva Kay to speak and enlighten her guests about Asian mystical philosophy. Haroon accepts and undertakes this position as an enlightened Asian mystic as a means of reducing his South Asian identity to include the demands of his diaspora. Karim scrutinizes Haroon's reconstructed identity taking shape within the realm of his new surroundings:

I (Karim) ran and fetched Dad's preferred yoga book – *Yoga for Women*, with pictures of healthy women in black leotards – from among his other books on Buddhism, Sufism, Confucianism, and Zen which he had bought at the Oriental bookshop in Cecil Court, off Charing Cross Road.... (Kureishi 5).

In this passage, Haroon embraces Asian mysticism in order to meet the perception of Western societies' understanding of Asians. Karim begins by critiquing the origins of Haroon's mystical insight as being attributed to a yoga book which he mockingly notes is intended for women. Karim then specifies that Haroon purchased this book from an "Oriental bookshop in Cecil Court, off Charing Cross Road" to emphasize that Haroon fostered this identity while living in London. Haroon accentuating his Asian background

to include various religious notions of mysticism founded in Asia is an example of Orientalism. Postcolonial theorist Edward Said states, “the orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experience” (71). Said argues that Western societies created an encompassing narrative about Eastern nations’ practices and their people being mysterious, ancient, and romanticized ideals. For example, Eva Kay’s falsified perception of Haroon knowing Asian mystic philosophy shows a Western romanticized view of individuals from Asia; furthermore, Haroon’s undertaking this role demonstrates Said’s theory of Orientalism. In fact, academic scholar Şermin Sezer contends that Haroon does not have any real connection to Oriental philosophy:

he [Haroon] starts to impersonate a Buddhist and he becomes a “Muslim commodifying himself for white suburbanites searching for the ‘inner room’ as an Oriental-Hindu ‘Buddhist’ guru”... in fact, he was born as a Muslim and was never interested in Buddhism when he lived in India so he can relate himself to Buddhism only as much as any other Englishman. (3)

Sezer asserts that Haroon coming from a Muslim background has little connection with Buddhist practices. He also states that Haroon’s efforts to create a link between such teachings should be considered a similar distortion as that of a native British person embracing these foreign ideologies and theologies. Sezer’s statement reveals Haroon utilizing Orientalism to dilute his identity as a South Asian man with a more peaceful and passive personality ascribed to him by the lingering narrative of the colonizer’s

romanticized perception of Asian mysticism still residing in the diaspora. By doing so, Haroon rejects his native South Asian masculine identity and appropriates Orientalism as a way to reconstruct himself as a South Asian male within the social conventions of the diaspora.

### **South Asian Masculinity in a Diaspora**

Haroon extends his use of Orientalism as his newly adulterated South Asian masculine identity through embellishing his accent to support the expectations and social conventions of the diaspora. He receives positive reinforcement from Eva and her guests as the party's personal spiritual guru, which further encourages Haroon to remodel his identity to better match the social expectations for South Asian immigrants by accentuating his Indian accent. Karim observes:

The other thing happened, the thing that made me realize that “God,” as I now called Dad, was seriously scheming, was the queer sound I heard coming from his room as I was going up to bed. I put my ear against the white paintwork of the door. Yes, God was talking to himself, but not intimately. He was speaking slowly in a deeper voice than usual, as if he were addressing a crowd. He was hissing his s's and exaggerating his Indian accent. He'd spent years trying to be more of an Englishman, to be less risibly conspicuous and now he was putting it back in spadeloads. Why? (Kureishi 21)

Haroon authenticates his diaspora-influenced South Asian masculine identity through amplifying his Indian dialect. Karim initially detects Haroon cunningly planning and

practicing for his next public appearance. Karim then realizes that Haroon is speaking to himself; however, he is not doing so “intimately” or in a reflective manner. Karim deduces that Haroon’s manner of speech imitates that of an individual “addressing a crowd.” Karim determines that Haroon is linguistically “hissing his s’s” and “exaggerating his Indian accent.” This alternation of his dialect illustrates Haroon’s need to endorse his newly-constructed Oriental South Asian identity through language to make his connection to India more reputable and prominent. Said describes this: “Orientalism, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience” (71). For Haroon, the purpose of fabricating his Indian accent functions as an affirmation of Western familiarity with South Asian immigrants being audibly different from native British speakers. By doing so, Haroon is indirectly acknowledging that he is not able to assimilate to his surroundings and his only means of connection to his diaspora is reinforcing his position as an outsider. Hall observes, “the closed conception of diaspora rest[s] on a binary conception of difference...[it] depends on the construction of an ‘Other’ and a fixed opposition between inside and outside” (548). Concluding the passage, Karim distinguishes that Haroon dedicated many years to masking his accent by attempting to be “more of an Englishman.” According to Şermin Sezer, “[Haroon’s] previous desire to become racially invisible is now replaced by a desire to be culturally visible...‘he has found a way to be accepted by the white English’” (5). Haroon uses Orientalism to redefine his identity as a South Asian male to align with the expectations of the

diaspora; however, by accentuating his differences, Haroon further impedes himself from being able to completely integrate into his surroundings.

Unlike Haroon, *The Mimic Men*'s Kripalsingh must adopt Orientalism in his diasporic setting because he has no means of accessing South Asian notions of masculinity or Caribbean masculinity due to his displacement in both societies. Kripalsingh lineage as an indentured servant on the Caribbean island of Isabella prevents him from understanding and practicing South Asian masculinity by fractures his connection with South Asian traditions. Kripalsingh also cannot construct his identity with the prominent Caribbean concept of masculinity, due to his ethnic background. His inability to claim a cultural or ethnic masculine identity is further agitated by his inadequacies in his family and social status. For Kripalsingh, his sense of manhood is contested by his lack of importance in his family, community, and employment. Frustrated with his lack of agency in his life, he seeks comfort by sharing his sorrows with the Isabellian dockworkers. Upon hearing of his defeat, the dockworkers rally behind Kripalsingh and encourage him to begin a political movement as their leader, renamed Gurudev. A transport contractor's widow attends his speech to the dockworkers and interprets his actions and movement as one that mirrors a person searching for Hindu spiritual enlightenment. Ralph reflects:

The mystery of the widow of the transport contractor who saw in my father a deep distress and sincerity and, from that first day, offered him her Aryan ancestors. He had ceased to be a householder and man of affairs; she saw him entering the stage of mediation before the final

renunciation. It was an idea which in its essence he lived out with her.

(Naipaul 153)

In an attempt to reclaim his agency, Kripalsingh is encouraged to accept Orientalism as his Caribbean-influenced South Asian identity through the demands of both the dockworkers and the transport contractor's widow restructuring his role in this society as a spiritual leader. Initially, Ralph refers to the widow as if she was a fable: "the mystery of the widow." Ralph then attempts to illustrate the widow's perception of his father by drawing a connection to his "Aryan ancestors." By doing so, the widow is redefining Kripalsingh to have a stronger link to his ethnically Indian background without the necessity of being either raised or living there. Ralph follows with listing the steps the widow believes Kripalsingh is taking to become a Sadhu<sup>1</sup>, which are: leaving family, social activism, and retiring into an isolated place to further mediate. Ralph perceives the widow's understanding of Kripalsingh as a self-fulfilling prophecy, which he claims that his father acts upon because of her: "its essence he lived out with her." The dockworkers renaming him Gurudev, spiritual light, and the widow interpreting him as a Sadhu demonstrate the expectations of the diasporic society for South Asian males to continue to be recognized as immigrants within this environment.

According to Pal Ahluwalia, "[the] provocative question of when does a settler become a native is one that is problematized... It questions the efficacy of delineating fixed categories such as settler and native which were a product of colonialism" (510). Ahluwalia questions the effectiveness and relevance of permanent labels such as

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<sup>1</sup> A Sadhu is an individual who removes themselves of worldly and materialistic interests and chooses a life of devotion and isolation.

“native” and “settler” as an old method of classification for the colonizing empire’s continued existence in the modern diaspora. In particular, the dockworkers’ and the widow’s need to reconstruct Kripalsingh with a more prominent and Oriental claim to South Asian masculinity is indicative of reinforcing the diaspora’s perception of Kripalsingh as an immigrant, when in fact, Kripalsingh’s family has been on Isabella for at least two generations before him and his tie to his “Aryan ancestors” is far removed. Disregarding his generational displacement, Kripalsingh’s diasporic environment forces him to utilize Orientalism as the only masculine identity available to him because of his ethnic background, which discounts his cultural upbringing on the island.

Kripalsingh passively accepts Orientalism as his South Asian identity ascribed to him by his diaspora by recreating his narrative with the ideals of Hindu spirituality. Later in the novel, after the decline of his political movement, Kripalsingh continues to live in the forest with the transport contractor’s widow. Before leaving the island to pursue his education in London, Ralph resolves to visit his father in the forest; there he has a brief interaction with the widow:

She spoke to me in Hindi: “Have you come then for a sight of him?” She used a word with strong religious associations: *darshan*... She said: “It is his day of silence. He has given up the world. He has become a true Sanyasi”... Sanyasi, a yellowed-robed, among woods! Woods hymned endlessly in Aryan chants and found here on an island surrounded by a brown-green sea. It was his day of silence. (Naipaul 211)

Kripalsingh embraces Orientalism as his South Asian identity, which is recognized by his diaspora, through allowing the widow to reconstruct the language surrounding him to be influenced with native South Asian ideals. Ralph's initial recollection of his interaction with the widow is that she is speaking to him in Hindi. This use of Hindi not only linguistically highlights the displacement of such practices, but also forces others to only interact with Kripalsingh in this manner. Ralph then stresses the widow's use of the word "darshan," in order to further emphasize Kripalsingh's diaspora influenced South Asian identity. The widow follows by casually stating that today is "his day of silence," which implies that Kripalsingh is far too involved with his spiritual meditation to be disturbed. She informs Ralph that "he has given up the world" and "he has become a true Sanyasi." By doing so, the widow is able to restructure Kripalsingh's narrative to be more aligned with the diaspora's expectation for him as a South Asian man by speaking Hindi and using religiously-connected vocabulary.

Said notes the importance of language and organizations such as religion: "Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrine..." (71-72). Said identifies Orientalism as exploiting cultural and philosophical practices to accentuate the differences, with little regard to the correct application, between Eastern and Western societies. For the widow, Kripalsingh meditating in the forest proves his role as Gurudev, whereas Ralph perceives his father's newfound spirituality as a Sanyasi as absurd. Ralph critiques the manner of Kripalsingh's role as a Sanyasi as lacking true depth by listing his clothing, location, and Aryan chants, in

relation to his actual place on an island, in his diaspora, as being far away from India and holy Hindu sites like the Ganges River. Ralph's final remark sarcastically repeats the widow's statement about Kripalsingh performing as a Sanyasi without guidance and far removed from holy sites demonstrating him redefining his identity and purpose in connection to his surroundings. Through reconstructing his narrative as a Sanyasi and including Hindi in his vernacular, Kripalsingh is allowing Orientalism to define him as a South Asian man and displaying his willingness to distort religious ideals to correlate with the expectations of his diaspora.

Both Haroon and Kripalsingh adopt Orientalism by exaggerating their characteristics and understanding of theological practices in an attempt to redefine their identity according to their environment, because South Asian masculinity lacks value and reinforcements in the diaspora. These characters receive support, acknowledgement, and encouragement to adopt this oriental performance because it validates romanticized-colonial narratives about the colonized nations and their citizens. This manner of performing inadvertently distracts these characters temporarily from their true, natural state of being displaced. In their diasporic setting, Haroon and Kripalsingh are displaced because they do not belong in their diasporic environment or in India. Thus, Haroon and Kripalsingh, by attempting to find their identity and purpose, are—in actuality—distancing themselves from negotiating their displacement. According to Sanjay Srivastava, spiritual leaders or gurus seek isolation as a means of purification and simplifying themselves. This concept of purification and simplifying oneself is significant because both Haroon and Kripalsingh seek spirituality to complicate

themselves and gain agency. In an attempt to redefine themselves, Haroon and Kripalsingh fail to provide their sons with an appropriate model of a secure masculinity; therefore, both Karim and Ralph must decipher their South Asian masculinity alone, with no means of accessing their fathers' Oriental-influenced identities, and they are ethnically differentiated from their peers that are considered native by the diaspora's social norms. These factors contribute to both young men developing low self-esteem in this diasporic setting.

Karim develops low self-worth because his ethnicity as a mixed South Asian and British male prevents him from embracing the only society and home he knows; this is due to the diaspora's nature to categorize its inhabitants as either native or settler. At the beginning of the book, Karim asserts that he welcomes any type of situation, movement, or interest as a means of changing the current state of his family. Karim states,

Anyway, I was looking for trouble, any kind of movement, action and sexual interest I could find because things were so gloomy, so slow and heavy, in our family, I don't know why. Quite frankly, it was all getting me down and I was ready for anything. (Kureishi 3)

Karim suffers from low self-esteem through his passive tone and inability to alter his situation at home. This passage begins with the word "anyway," which implies that he is reorganizing his thoughts. He proceeds with emphasizing his desire to find some sort of experience or belief. This longing and searching for an experience or movement indicates Karim's low self-esteem by placing a greater value upon external events or involvements to act as the catalyst for change. Following this, Karim explains that the

source of his desire for change is his family. He uses vague adjectives to describe the atmosphere at home such as “gloomy,” “slow,” and “heavy.” This use of vague adjectives illustrates Karim’s use of passive tone by his inability to articulate the problem at home with his family. Karim affirms that he is unable to verbalize the concern at home by saying, “I don’t know.” Karim finally reflects upon his current emotional state as an immediate reaction of discussing his family by declaring, “it was all getting me down.” This reaction represents Karim feeling vulnerable through his inability to control his emotions, even when talking about the situation. His last remark reiterates that he is anticipating an outside influence to intervene. Karim’s dependency on external forces suggests that his diasporic environment denies him the ability to claim an identity as a British South Asian male and nationhood as British. Early postcolonial scholar Frantz Fanon sought to understand the psychological impact of colonization in Africa, with a particular interest in concepts of nationhood and identity for colonized individuals. Although Fanon’s theory of self-esteem is very specifically focused on observation of French colonized African nations, this portion of his theory applies to second-generation South Asian men such as Karim and Ralph, due to their inability to claim nationhood and pressure to construct their identities according to the only environment they know. Furthermore, Fanon’s theory lends itself to more contemporary attempts to understand cultural autonomy, especially when the legitimacy of its inhabitants is questioned. Fanon states, “the lack of self-esteem...is virtually total, resulting in an overwhelming feeling of helplessness toward life and people as well as a complete rejection of any feeling of responsibility...it is only from these others that he

expects any improvement of his lot” (55). Karim’s dependence upon external factors symbolizes Fanon’s claim about the psychological impact of being denied a strong identity connected to his environment.

Pal Ahluwalia later inquired about the efficiency of labels such as “native” and “settler”, and he later reveals the complexities of the diaspora’s need to categorize its inhabitants by exploring the significances of citizenship: “citizen identities are the defining elements which shape the character of communities. Such identities can be socially cohesive. However, when they are found to be lacking, legitimacy itself becomes problematic” (505). Ahluwalia notes that the diasporic environment can provide residents the ability to be communal, while questioning the validity of others. Karim is unable to be completely immersed within his native British society due to his ethnicity as a mixed South Asian and British male. Berthold Schoene argues that “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” (117). Karim reinforces his dependency upon a form of “movement,” “action,” or “interest,” which demonstrates his lack of agency with his inability to alter his immediate environment. This lack of agency is due to the diasporic society’s need to categorize its inhabitants by their ethnic background with little consideration of citizenship and origins.

Furthermore, the diasporic environment’s inclination to create binaries contributes to Karim’s lack of confidence because he considers himself as an Other.

Karim describes early in the novel the difference between the way boys his age dressed when in and outside of school. Karim observes:

Most of the boys, so nondescript during the day, now wore cataracts of velvet and satin, and bright colours; some were in bedspreads and curtains. The little groovers talked esoterically of Syd Barrett... I had to study the Melody Maker and New Musical Express to keep up. (Kureishi 8)

Karim embodies the characteristics of an Other through his use of syntax and fear of being excluded. While describing his peers, Karim uses vivid language with words such as “nondescript,” “cataracts,” and “esoterically.” By doing so, Karim is using language to emphasize their creativity and individuality through descriptive diction. Then, he transitions into a more informative and direct use of language when speaking about himself: “I had to study.” This shift from a creative to a more direct tone signifies Karim considering himself an Other; by separating his language from describing himself and his peers. Fanon highlights the term “the Other” as being a motif in the apprehensive narrative of the former colonized individual. Fanon builds upon this term: “To be ‘the Other’ is to always feel in an uncomfortable position, to be on one’s guard, to be prepared to be rejected and ...unconsciously do everything that’s needed to bring about the anticipated catastrophe” (57). He defines the Other as being an individual overcome by discomfort, defensive, and attempting to prepare themselves for rejection. Rita Felski claims that “Kureishi’s hero is constantly confronted with the differences between his background and that of his new friends” (38). In his final remark, Karim asserts that he puts a great deal of effort just to emulate his peers, and Karim’s determination to match

his peers reveals his fear about being excluded. The binaries the diaspora fosters within its society forces Karim to constantly reevaluate himself as an Other when compared to his peers.

This need to reflect upon his place in the diasporic society as an Other influences his language by being defensive and attempting to anticipate his failures. While attending a party with his father at Eva's house, Karim sees a male classmate that he greatly admires. Immediately after seeing him, Karim is overwhelmed with grief and discomfort. Karim reflects, "To be honest, I felt like a fool. I needed a fast dose of God's head-medicine right now...why had he gone silver? Were we entering a new hair era that I'd completely failed to notice? I forced myself back into the living room" (Kureishi 37). Karim's use of defensive language and his manner of expecting rejection illustrate that he is an Other. The passage starts with Karim sharing a sincere emotion of feeling ridiculous. Next, he switches into a more comical tone with saying he needs a "dose of God's head-medicine." This quick change from a vulnerable state to a comedic tone represents Karim's defensive use of language with his inability to further verbalize his discomfort. Fanon examines this concept: "This lack of affective self-esteem always leads...to an extremely painful and obsessional feeling of exclusion, to never fitting in, and to feeling out of place, affectively speaking...Being 'the Other'..." (57). Fanon denotes that the lack of self-esteem contributes the feeling of uncertainty of whether or not you are accepted. Following this, Karim attempts to understand his peer's motivation behind changing his hair color. He then contemplates whether or not there is a "new hair era" that he was not informed about. According to R.W. Connell and James

Messerschmidt, “masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action...” (836). By doubting his understanding of the latest style trends, Karim is subconsciously preparing himself for rejection. Karim, in his last comment, completely dismisses his thought by refocusing upon his current emotional state: “I forced myself back.” Rita Felski states that the protagonist occupies a third space in the article, “Nothing to Declare: Identity, Shame, and the Lower Middle Class.” She writes: “Kureishi’s hero is confronted with the differences between his background and that of his new friends” (38). This recentering on his emotions demonstrates his use of defensive language with his implied desire to withdraw. Due to the diaspora’s need to differentiate between its citizens, Karim suffers from low self-esteem because he is forced to perceive himself as an Other in his native society.

Similarly, Ralph develops low self-worth with feeling inadequate and anticipating rejection because he is unsure of his connection to his native yet diasporic environment. While recalling his childhood experience, Ralph emphasizes the difference between his peer, Cecil, and himself. Ralph states, “It was different with me. I could scarcely wait for my childhood to be over and done with. I have no especial hardship or deprivation to record. But childhood was for me a period of incompetence, bewilderment, solitude...” (Naipaul 109). Ralph’s low self-esteem is demonstrated through his language. Ralph begins with underlining the difference between his childhood and Cecil’s. He then proceeds to stress his discontent with his childhood by asserting that he waited for it to end. Following this remark, Ralph explains that he had

no specific “hardship” or “deprivation.” Ralph’s sentiment about his childhood reinforces Fanon’s understanding of low self-esteem with his feeling of being inadequate, uncertain of himself, and alone. Continuing from this, Ralph notes his anticipation of rejection through his need to condense his memories. Ralph reflects, “A complying memory has obliterated many of them and edited my childhood down to a brief cinematic blur. Even this is quite sufficiently painful” (Naipaul 109). Ralph’s desire to filter his childhood memory demonstrates his anticipation of rejection by reducing it to a short, movie-like haze. The passage starts with Ralph focusing on the act of abridging his memories. Afterwards, he expresses that the act of recalling his childhood memories in itself encourages him to “obliterate many of them.” Ralph places blame upon the act of remembering his childhood as his motivation to eliminate several of his early memories.

This need to screen his memories indicates his expecting rejection from his audience by defensively choosing to eliminate some as a precaution. Following this comment, Ralph states his longing to reduce it into a more impersonal distortion, in the passage above, “a brief cinematic blur.” His wish to turn his childhood memories into a movie-like scene displays his anticipation of rejection through distancing himself from his own experience. Accordingly, Ghisalberti comments, “he [Ralph] realizes that a narrative sequence would have perpetuated the ‘disturbance’ he felt his childhood, with all its accumulated experience of disorder, the episode that had led to this ‘shipwreck’ not as a single event, but as a permanent and always compromised self-understanding” (73). Ghisalberti analyzes Ralph’s narrative style as a symbolic gesture attempting to

reflect upon his deficiencies and constantly seeking a better understanding of himself. By focusing solely on the 'disturbance' of Ralph's childhood, Ghisalberti overlooks the motif of shipwreck in the novel representing his capricious connection to his diaspora as being incidental and imagines himself as an outlander. Ralph's ambiguous position and connection to his environment as a child fuels his feeling of inadequacy and expecting rejection, because the nature of the diaspora considers Ralph as an outsider.

As a result of the uncertainty of his place in the diasporic society, Ralph perceives himself as an Other in his native surroundings. He reminisces about visiting his friend Champ Deschampsneufs and his family before leaving for London to continue his education. Ralph recollects:

Not a pleasant memory for me, that afternoon tea at the Deschampsneufs', when I thought I was saying goodbye to the island; and Wendy grown up revived all my embarrassment. I had never questioned the family's credentials, but I had never felt they were of interest to me. The descendant of the slave-owner could sooth the descendant of the slave with a private patois. I was the late intruder, the picturesque Asiatic, linked to neither. (Naipaul 93)

Ralph's perception of himself as an Other is apparent through his opinion of himself as a late trespasser. The excerpt starts with Ralph recalling the discomfoting nature of his farewell meeting with the Deschampsneufs. He resumes with accusing an adult Wendy Deschampsneufs of carelessly restoring his humiliation. Deluding from his memory, Ralph defensively asserts that he never suspected the Deschampsneufs' qualifications,

which implies that Wendy asked about his family's credentials. Building on this notion, Ralph reflects that their past was of little significance to him. He then generalizes the historical and present relationship between the island's former slave-owners and slaves being of importance. In contrast to the relationship between former slaves and owners, Ralph declares that he was a later intruder that shared no connection to either. By doing so, Ralph's perception of himself arriving afterwards and not belonging to either group of descendants found on the island reflects the isolating nature of the diaspora by granting a select few the right to claim origins and purpose within it.

Both Karim and Ralph lack agency and perceive themselves as an Other due to the isolating characteristics of the diaspora. For Karim, the act of being vulnerable or verbalizing his distress is one he cannot endure; whereas Ralph, being an older man, is able to vocalize his sorrow. Since both characters suffer from a lack of self-esteem, they are unable to negotiate their hybridity while living in their diasporic environment. By being seen as an Other in the only society they know, both Karim and Ralph try to distance themselves from the part of their identity connected to being South Asian because they believe that portion of themselves prevents them from blending within the diasporic society.

Karim struggles with his hybridity because he believes the South Asian aspect of his identity prevents him from assimilating into his native environment. Karim's impression of himself and his parentage demonstrates Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity. At the beginning of the novel, Karim introduces himself as British:

I am Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don't care – Englishman I am...Perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored. (Kureishi 3)

Karim's hybridity is proven through his image of himself and his origin. He begins the excerpt with asserting that he is an "Englishman." Afterwards, he supports his statement by claiming that he is "born and bred," to which he quickly interjects, "almost."

Continuing, he causally remarks that he is an unusual type of Englishman and considers himself a "new breed." This perception of himself as a strange and uncommon type of Englishman signifies Karim as a hybrid. Karim explicitly recognizes his hybridity by acknowledging that he "emerged from two old histories." Shortly after, Karim disregards his hybridity by saying "but I don't care." Karim's attempt to dismiss his hybridity further validates Bhabha's concept of hybridity being susceptible to a split of identity through his inability to recognize himself as more than just an "Englishman." Bhabha builds on this notion of hybridity: "displacement from symbol to sign creates a crisis for any concept of authority based on a system of recognition: colonial specularly, double inscribed, does not produce a mirror where the self apprehends itself; it is always the split screen of the self and its doubling, the hybrid" (162).

Bhabha identifies hybridity as generating a dilemma within the hybrid—of being uncertain of themselves. Karim then revisits the idea of being a hybrid by reflecting on his unusual parentage and his feeling a sense of "belonging and not." Accordingly,

Selime Onmus comments, “right from the beginning of the story we feel Karim’s hybridity, how his sense of identity fluctuates.” Resuming, Onmus critiques, “he calls himself English and mostly feels English but sometimes accepts his Indianess...” (22). By recognizing his background and partially introducing himself, Karim indirectly emphasizes his hybridity through his need to fragment his identity. With splitting his identity, Karim is unable to negotiate his hybridity and he is forced to display one while suppressing the other in hopes of better integrating within the diasporic society.

Due to the isolating nature of his environment, Karim can only reveal the South Asian portion of his identity in the secluded presences of another hybrid such as himself. During a conversation with his family friend Jamilla, another first-generation immigrant from Pakistan, Karim is able to reflect upon his hybridity, which aligns with the ideals of the colonized in the diaspora. He detects, “the thing was we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it” (Kureishi 53). Karim displays his hybridity through fragmenting his identity to align the principles of the colonized. The passage starts with Karim reflecting that both Jamilla and he are theoretically British, because they were raised in South London. However, he realizes that to natives, they are consistently seen as outsiders. Appropriately, Bhabha states, “To see the culture not as the *source* of conflict – *different* cultures – but as the *effect* of discriminatory practices – the production of cultural *differentiation* as signs of authority – changes its value and its rules of recognition” (163). Bhabha expresses the difficulty and challenges first-generation immigrants’ children face while being raised in diasporic setting. According to Meinhard Winkgens,

Kureishi's immigrant protagonists—torn between the prescribed binary subject positions of cultural assimilation and diasporic isolation—are primarily concerned with trying to locate themselves, to make sense of their 'in-between-ness' and to sort out the concrete options of their potential for cultural and ethnic hybridity. (230)

Winkgens perceives Karim's position as a hybrid as granting him the ability to cross economical boundaries instilled by societal need for financially-driven class structures. In the hopes of truly integrating into his society, Karim publicly denies the South Asian part of his hybridity and only recognizes it in private settings with other hybrids such as himself.

In contrast, Ralph attempts to make his hybridity more apparent by changing his name in order to make his connection to the diasporic environment noticeable. While remembering his childhood, Ralph recalls his early desire to change his name. He reflects:

My reaction to my incompetence and inadequacy had been not to simplify but to complicate. For instance, I gave myself a new name. We were Singhs. My father's father's name was Kripal. My father, for purpose of official identification, necessary in that new world he adorned with his aboriginal costume, ran these names together to give himself the surname of Kripalsingh...I broke Kripalsingh into two correctly reviving an ancient fracture, as I felt gave myself the further name of Ralph...

(Naipaul 112-113)

Making his hybridity more tangible, Ralph's decision to alter his name symbolizes his fragmented identity in a diaspora. Ralph begins the quote by recognizing his lack of self-worth and sentiment about being an Other as his motivation to not "simplify but to complicate." Accordingly, Bhabha states:

The revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates it. (159)

Bhabha explains hybridity as the combination of both the ideals of the colonizer and the colonized. Ralph's desire to make his hybridity more apparent and obscure others' perception of him symbolically represents his internal struggle with his split identity and displacement within society. As he progresses, Ralph distinguishes the origins of his surname and the manner in which it changed over time. Next, he informs the reader that his father, overcome with indigenous Indian roots, joined the two names together. Lastly, Ralph states that he divided the two names in order to revive "an ancient fracture." Continuing, he clarifies that he changed his name from Ranjit to Ralph. Ralph's inclination to restore an "ancient fracture" represents the portion of his identity that is attached to the former colonized nation. Comparatively, his preference to change Ranjit to Ralph shows the aspect of his identity that is connected to the former colonizer's nation. By changing his name, Ralph is attempting to create a verbal

connection with his environment through crediting the basis of his identity, his namesake, as a union of his ethnicity and diaspora.

Together both Karim and Ralph embody characteristics of Homi Bhabha's theory about hybridity; however, both characters differ in their approach and perception of being a hybrid in a diaspora. Being a teenager, Karim encounters great difficulty in attempting to negotiate his hybridity. Therefore, he chooses to simplify himself by displaying his identity in fragments based upon his surroundings. When he is with his peers, he displays ideals matching the colonizer. In the company of another hybrid, such as Jamilla, he is able to show those of his principles that align with the colonized. This manner of division is problematic because Karim is unable to accept the complexity within his identity and become self-confident. Ralph, in contrast, is an adult reflecting upon his life, and he is able to recognize his hybridity. For this reason, Ralph decides to "complicate" himself through changing his name to one that forces others to interact with his hybridity. By doing so, Ralph is ensuring that his "ancient fracture" and his current diasporic environment remain connected. However, Ralph's desire to force others to interact with his hybridity does not necessarily mean that Ralph is able to embrace his hybridity. In fact, Ralph is motivated to complicate his name as the result of his lack of self-esteem, which implies that he is unable to accept his hybridity through forcing others instead of himself to interact with it. Unfortunately, both Karim and Ralph's low self-esteem, because of the binaries their environment enforces, prevents them from being able to appropriately negotiate their hybridity.

### **Performing South Asian Masculinity in a Diaspora**

Due to the nature of the diaspora, Haroon and Kripalsingh are encouraged to embrace Orientalism as their new South Asian identity. Leaving both Karim and Ralph to interpret and construct their South Asian masculine identity alone. Sadly, Karim and Ralph are unable to do so because of the constrictive use of labeling residents according to their ethnicity in the diaspora. Therefore, both characters suffer from insecurities related to their inability to claim nationhood in their native environment. As a result, both Karim and Ralph fail to recognize and accept the complexity of their identity as male hybrids of both South Asian and diasporic norms. This failure influences their decision to choose a masculine model in the form of a peer or relative that captures socially dominant concepts of masculinity in the diaspora.

## Chapter 2: Transforming Male Communities as a Passage into Diasporic Society

The bond between a young South Asian male and his peer acts as a surrogate masculine relationship to take the place of a missing bond with the father. Given a diasporic environment, young South Asian males turn to a peer that embodies their idyllic masculine traits in accordance with their environment—hegemonic masculinity. This manner of surrogacy is problematic because it prevents South Asian young men from coming to terms with their hybridity within the diasporic environment. Since their peers are still developing a masculine identity, young South Asian men are not exposed to a secure masculine model. Therefore, South Asian youths are left mimicking behavior or certain traits they believe to be attached to an archetypal secure masculinity, but are not. As a result of this peer-influenced standard, young South Asian males are inclined to distort their connection with their peers. Both Karim and Ralph look for the guidance of their peers to develop a secure masculine identity; however, they find that they are only permitted to imitate certain behaviors. Due to their insecurity about their masculine identities, Karim and Ralph distort their relationship with their peers through falsely identifying the connection with them as affection and indifference. The challenges South Asian males like Karim and Ralph face when constructing their identity is the result of the lingering effect of colonization through the presence of hegemonic masculinity dominating other masculine forms and the perception of individuals from the formerly colonized nations as inferior men still existing in the diaspora.

### **Modeling British Masculinity**

In an attempt to construct his identity according to his native environment, Karim turns to Charlie, his peer, to model British masculinity. However, the remnant of colonial discourse recognizes Charlie as a hegemonic masculine figure and Karim as inferior. Karim selects Charlie as the ideal British masculine model due to the admiration he receives from his peers, his appearance, his inaccessibility. Karim observes, “He [Charlie] was a boy upon whom nature had breathed such beauty—his nose was so straight, his cheeks so hollow, his lips such rosebud—that people were afraid to approach him, and he was often alone” (Kureishi 9). Karim identifies Charlie’s characteristics to establish him as the standard of British masculinity when in actuality, Charlie embodies traits connected to hegemonic masculinity. Karim begins with emphasizing Charlie’s beauty as being attributed to his “straight nose, hollow cheeks, and rosebud lips.” Karim’s description of Charlie’s features is significant because he notes attributes attached to individuals of a Caucasian background. By doing so, Karim is implicitly referring to the facial features that are ethnically prominent for South Asian as inferior. Following this remark, Karim begins to list and describe Charlie’s attractive appearance. Afterwards, Karim mentions that others are intimidated by his appearance and for this reason he is often “alone.” Accordingly, R.W. Connell and James Messerschmidt note, “hegemonic masculinity [differs] from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities...[and] was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it...It embodied the...most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it...”(832). Hegemonic masculinity assesses the performance of other types of

masculinity. Additionally, hegemonic masculinity becomes the standard even though a select few are able to perform it. Similarly, the idea of hegemonic masculinity considers other performances to be placed in accordance with their dominance.

Thus, hegemonic masculinity characterizes the traits of colonization by categorizing a select few individuals as dominant and others as inferior by the implemented standard. The idea of others feeling intimidated by Charlie's appearance implies his hegemonic masculine identity through others evaluating themselves in relation to his performance. Moreover, Charlie's isolated state denotes the exclusivity of his masculine identity. For Karim, Charlie is an ideal masculine role model because his appearance encapsulates hegemony through highlighting and valuing Caucasian facial features. Hegemonic and inferior masculinity being tied to their appearance demonstrates the presence of colonial discourse which functions in the diaspora as a means of preventing Karim from becoming hegemonically masculine as an ethnically South Asian male.

Charlie's appearance grants him the ability to practice hegemonic masculinity methods of evaluating other masculine identities. Karim observes that Charlie's mannerism and style replicate that of influential people. He states:

One of the boys was Charlie, who'd bothered to turn up to school for the first time in weeks. He stood out from the rest of the mob with his silver hair and stacked shoes. He looked less winsome and poetic now; his face was harder, with short hair, the cheekbones more pronounced. It was Bowie's influence, I knew it. (Kureishi 68)

Charlie's behavior and style demonstrate his having a hegemonic masculine identity by being able to imitate influential hegemonic masculinity figures. Karim starts the passage with generalizing Charlie's behavior as part of a typical pattern of some schoolboys attending classes sporadically. Dismissing his earlier statement, Karim notices Charlie's distinct and unique sense of style with having "silver hair" and "stacked shoes." Continuing, Karim realizes there is a transformation of his appearance of one from initially being "poetic" to "harder." Karim's final remark about Charlie's appearance credits his style as mirroring musician David Bowie. Charlie's replication of David Bowie is a layered performance because Bowie challenges traditional notions of masculinity. Philip Auslander states, "Bowie's performative treatment of gender and sexuality...I [argue] that Bowie's performance as Ziggy Stardust reflected a complex interplay of masculine and feminine gender codes enacted by male performer" (140). Karim assumes that Charlie's imitation of David Bowie fortifies his position as a hegemonic masculine figure because of the popularity among his peers. Connell and Messerschmidt perceive there is internal hegemony: "internal hegemony refers to the social ascendancy of one group of men over all other men...internal hegemony typically has been understood in an 'elitist' way" (844). Karim considers Charlie as a hegemonic masculine model through his ability to adopt and perform a well-known hegemonic masculine identity such as David Bowie without fully understanding the complexity of Bowie's gender performance. According to Elahe Yekani, "Charlie, working on his career as a rebel rock star, embodies hegemonic white masculinity" (166). Yekani continues, "Karim often finds himself misunderstood as an 'exotic' 'half-caste' when in

reality, he feels like an average ‘English bloke.’ He has never been to India, speaks no other language than English and his cultural role models come from British popular culture” (167). For this reason, Karim seeks Charlie’s guidance because he embodies the behavior, traits, and style associated with hegemonic masculinities at the time. However, Karim’s ethnicity as a South Asian male prevents him from participating as a hegemonic masculine figure.

### **Defining Caribbean Masculinity for South Asian Males**

Unlike Karim, Ralph initially seeks guidance from his maternal grandfather, to act as a surrogate for his father, because Ralph perceives Nana, his grandfather, as representing hegemonic masculinity. Nana is perceived as fair, reserved, wealthy, and influential in the Isabellian society, and these qualities represent hegemonic masculine identity for Ralph. This bond between Ralph and Nana is idyllic because Nana is a developed masculine figure and he is South Asian. Ralph fractures this relationship after witnessing the conditions and lack of resources Nana’s factory workers endure. He reflects:

I hated the speaker. For the first time he had disappointed me. I had thought of him as ascetic and fair and pious. I thought that these qualities, which I admired, had come to him with that money and success to which I was so devoted; and for a long time...I attributed these qualities to people who had made their money the hard way...I noted his quiet sincere taste...and now I was disappointed (Naipaul 118-119).

Ralph's perception of Nana being a hegemonic masculine model dissipates shortly after seeing the deplorable working conditions for his grandfather's factory workers. The quote begins with Ralph expressing his unhappiness towards his grandfather's remark about his workers and realizing his grandfather's inferiority through his not being as noble as Ralph once perceived. Ralph encapsulates his emotional response about Nana by noting the rarity and significance for him. Next, Ralph attempts to verbalize his perception of his grandfather as being "ascetic," "fair," and "pious." Ralph then attributes these characteristics to his grandfather's wealth and influence. Finally, Ralph reflects upon his current state as being "disappointed." This realization about Nana dismisses any illusion of him not having any faults for Ralph. As Oyèrónkẹ Oyěwùmí notes in "Colonizing Bodies and Minds: Gender and Colonialism," "Colonial rule itself is described as 'a manly or husbandly or lordly prerogative.' As a process, it is often described as the taking away of the manhood of the colonized" (339). Ralph realizes that Nana's power and nobility are an illusion and such characteristics as "ascetic, fair, and pious" can solely be attributed to individuals with true hegemonic masculinity. As a result, Ralph removes his surrogate relationship with Nana, and similar to Karim, he is forced to seek guidance for creating a hegemonic masculine identity from a peer.

Therefore, Ralph goes to his peer, Browne—a black Caribbean—to interchange his relationship with his father because he believes Browne exemplifies hegemonic masculinity. However, Browne is in actuality performing in accordance with Aimé Césaire's idea of negritude. Ralph recalls Browne's popularity and charisma as a child. He states:

Browne was also famous. He knew many funny songs and whenever a song was required at school he was asked to sing. At our concerts he wore a straw hat and a proper suit with a bowtie; people applauded as soon as he came on. His biggest hit song called: 'Oh, I'm a happy little nigger;' his miming during this song was so good that people jerked forward on their seats with laughter and often couldn't hear words. I deeply envied Browne his fame and regard. For him the world was already charted. (Naipaul 112)

Ralph believes Browne characterizes hegemonic masculinity, when in fact he is performing in accordance to negritude. Ralph begins the quote with emphasizing Browne's popularity. Resuming, Ralph 'observes' that Browne knew "funny songs" and people asked him to sing. Next, Ralph notes Browne's outfit for his performance and the immediate response of the audience simply by his appearance. Ralph specifies Browne's most noteworthy song and performance being attributed to a song called "Oh, I'm a happy little nigger." Postcolonial theorist Aimé Césaire coined the word "negritude" as a term meaning a belief as a means to reclaim agency for Caribbean masculinity. Léopold Sédar Senghor defines the term as:

negritude is none of these things. It is neither racialism nor self-negation. Yet it is not just affirmation; it is rooting oneself in oneself, and self-confirmation: confirmation of one's *being*. Negritude is nothing more or less than what some English-speaking Africans have called the *African personality*. (183)

The act of accepting oneself as a confirmation of one's existence allows Caribbean masculinity to negotiate both certainty of their identity and ambiguousness of their past. Senghor returns, "it was the West Indian poet Aimé Césaire who coined the word negritude, is to have attempted to define the concept a little more closely; to have developed it as a weapon, as an instrument of liberation and as a contribution to the humanism of the twentieth century" (183). This behavior and performance of Browne represents Aimé Césaire's negritude because he is reinforcing Browne's history and lineage through performing former slave songs. For Browne, the act of performing allows him to simply validate his identity by focusing on himself instead of other masculine performances. At the end of the passage, Ralph emphasizes his jealousy of Browne's "fame" and "regard" suggesting he is "envious" of the outcome of Browne's negritude, though not necessarily of him being a strong hegemonic masculine figure. For this reason, Ralph mistakenly perceives Browne as a hegemonic masculine model to replace the connection he is supposed to have with his father.

### **Masculinity modeled by Peers**

Under the guidance of Charlie, Karim attempts to construct a similar masculine identity by mimicking his behavior towards women. Later, Karim is able to put this advice into practice when a classmate named Helen takes an interest in Karim. He says: "look, I said, turning sharply on her and utilizing advice I'd been given by Charlie about the treatment of women: keep 'em keen, treat 'em mean. 'I've got to walk to the bus stop. I don't want to stand here all afternoon..." (Kureishi 70). Karim demonstrates mimicry by appropriating Charlie's authority he uses with women attracted to him.

Karim starts the passage with emphasizing and accentuating his authority with his firm tone and gaze. Following this comment, Karim credits his behavior as being influenced by Charlie's "advice" about dealing with women. Finally, Karim replicates his earlier behavior with stressing the importance of his actions over Helen's concerns.

By doing so, Karim is mimicking Charlie's mannerism towards women as an attempt to "appropriate" his authority. According to Bhabha, "mimicry is thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (126). Bhabha observes the doubling effect of mimicry; however, he deciphers that there is a slight variation of the performance. Karim practicing this authority upon a woman is significant because it mirrors the dominance over gender found in hegemonic masculinity. However, the slight variation is that he is only permitted to demonstrate power to individuals of the opposite gender. According to Butler, "the sexuality that emerges within the matrix of power relations is not a simple replication or copy of the law itself, a uniform repetition of masculinist economy of identity" (30).

Butler notes that the demonstration of sexuality is tied to singular form of power designated to men. Specifically, the ability to hold power over other men is solely reserved for Charlie and his true hegemonic masculine performance. Leila Ahmed explains the use of early colonial rhetoric about the veil to establish the narrative about inadequacy of the colonized male:

whereas Christianity teaches respect for women, and European men  
"elevated" women because of the teachings of their religion, Islam

degraded them, Cromer wrote, and it was to this degradation, most evident in the practices of veiling and segregation, that the inferiority of Muslim men could be traced. (322)

This perception of inferiority found in colonized men is one that still exists within the colonizer's nation and becomes exceedingly evident in a diaspora when such masculine performances are forced to interact with each other. Thus, Karim's use of mimicry is a double articulation of Charlie's performance and does not release Karim from being considered an inferior man. Even with Charlie as his masculine model, Karim is unable to embrace hegemonic masculinity due to lingering discourse about South Asian males being inferior. Therefore, Karim is only able to mimic the behavior and never truly become part of the diaspora's socially dominant masculine identity.

Karim continues to mimic Charlie's behavior towards women in the hope of creating a masculine identity aligning to the social norms of his environment. Karim notes that Charlie's persistent behavior towards women he finds attractive is similar to robbery. Karim observes:

I began to perceive Charlie's charm as a method of robbing houses by persuading the owners to invite you in and take their possessions...there were objects of yours he wanted. And he took them. It was false and manipulative and I admired it tremendously. I made notes of his techniques, for they worked especially with girls. (Kureishi 119)

Karim's observation about Charlie's mannerisms illustrates his use of mimicry by reporting and later implementing Charlie's method. The quote begins with him

perceiving Charlie's charm as symbolizing the act of robbery. Karim proceeds to build on this analogy of individuals allowing Charlie to loot them for his gain. Resuming, he reports Charlie's dishonesty and devious behavior in pursuit of his desires. Karim, succeeding, vocalizes his admiration of Charlie's strategy. His final remark emphasizes this procedure as particularly effective with women. Bhabha states, "mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers" (126). Karim's observation of Charlie's tactic with women being similar to robbery represents not only Charlie's power as a hegemonic male similar to colonial rule, but also, for Karim, the danger, and controlling influence, of partaking in such behavior. Karim utilizes mimicry with the aspiration of actually belonging in his environment; however, the very nature of this practice limits him from being identified as a native British male by allowing him to only replicate certain behaviors.

### **Searching for Hegemonic Masculine Role Model**

Ralph is unfortunately unable to find one individual to model hegemonic masculinity; therefore, he decides to mimic certain mannerisms he believes to be attached to it. Early in the novel, Ralph notes his need to keep items and log his interactions with women he is attracted to—such behavior is ascribed to an outside influence. He states, "I took to retaining trophies from the girls who came...though even now I cannot understand my motives. I believe I had read or heard that it excited some men...nor can I understand why I began keeping a sexual diary" (Naipaul 30-31).

Ralph's habit of keeping mementos and recording his interactions with women demonstrates his adopting practices displayed by hegemonic masculine figures through their treatment of women. First, he emphasizes his behavior of keeping souvenirs of women. Following this comment, Ralph contemplates his reasoning for acting this way. He then haphazardly marks the information coming from either a written source or an individual. Particularly, Ralph stresses the value of the information over the source of it by acknowledging that "it excited some men." Ralph is characterizing this behavior as hegemonic masculinity by emphasizing the reaction of other men over the source.

Due to Ralph's need to mimic certain mannerisms associated with hegemonic masculinity he is unable to release himself from the cycle of mimicry. While reflecting about his place in society, shortly after removing his grandfather as a masculine role model, Ralph returns, "we pretended to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New World, one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to the new" (Naipaul 175). Ralph's reflection about his relevance in Isabellian society is significant, because he recognizes his attachment to mimicry. The quote begins with Ralph speaking on behalf of the collective individuals that are displaced by colonization. Next, he starts to list verbs he imagines that would define him. Continuing, Ralph identifies himself and the collective group as "mimic men of the New World." This title is important because it represents Ralph attempting to categorize individuals that are displaced from colonization. Accordingly, Bhabha states, "a desire that, through the repetition of partial presences...the basis of mimicry, articulates those disturbances of cultural racial, and

historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority” (126). Bhabha asserts that mimicry is a desire that must be created through repetition to rectify “articulate” the “disturbance” of cultural, racial, and historical practices of the colonizer power. By continuing to mimic certain mannerisms connected to hegemonic masculinity Ralph fails to realize the absolute masculine standard by which his the social norms of the diasporic setting evaluates him. Therefore, he goes on practicing mimicry without realizing that this notion of masculinity is reserved for an ethnically select group of men.

### **Distortion of Male Relationships**

Karim misinterprets his friendship with Charlie as love because of his inability to be recognized as a British male, contributing to his lack of self-worth in his native environment. This concept is reinforced through Karim’s discomfort during Charlie’s absence from school. Karim considers, “Oh Charlie, my heart...He’d been away from school, too, cutting a demo tape with his band. The pain of being without the bastard, the cold turkey I was enduring...so far there was no sign of him” (Kureishi 32). Karim’s anxiety and displeasure about Charlie’s absence illustrates his distortion of their relationship. The passage begins with Karim affectionately saying Charlie’s name in association with his heart. Karim then clarifies that the source of his pain is due to the absences of Charlie and his work on a “demo tape.” Following this comment, Karim emphasizes his hardship without Charlie by equating it to being cut off from an addictive substance – “cold turkey.” By doing so, Karim is altering his perception of their friendship with being greatly dependent upon and in love with Charlie. As Fanon himself writes, “this lack of self-esteem...has serious consequences. For one thing, it

keeps the individual in a state of profound inner insecurity, as a result of which it inhibits and distorts every relation with others” (57). Fanon explains the lack of self-esteem as the reason to alter their relationships, in particular with their peer or significant other. This misrepresentation of their relationship signifies his lack of agency in his native society as an ethnically South Asian male because he believes his connection to Charlie provides him with a strong connection to his native environment.

In fact, Karim realizes, upon further reflection, that he truly wishes to be Charlie. While Karim is deeply entangled in his thoughts about Charlie, he is able to briefly acknowledge his passionate bond with him. Karim contemplates:

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

This quote demonstrates Karim's true motive for the distortion of his friendship with Charlie: his lack of self-esteem. Initially, he reflects upon his affections for Charlie and he concludes that his love is “unusual.” The idea of his affections for Charlie being atypical symbolizes his distortion of their bond. Building on this idea, Karim states that it is not “generous,” which he later explains he “didn't wish him [Charlie] well.” This remark displays Karim's falsification of his relationship by claiming to be selfishly in love with Charlie. By doing so, Karim is presenting an unorthodox manner of affection because it is unkind toward the person Karim claims to love. Continuing, Karim

acknowledges that he liked Charlie more than himself and he would rather be Charlie than be himself. Karim begins listing Charlie's admirable qualities such as his ability, appearance, and fashion sense, wishing they were "transferred" to him. Significantly, Karim's desire and preference for Charlie over himself illustrates his low self-esteem. He truly envies his ability to be a hegemonic masculine figure with influence in their diasporic environment. Karim's misinterpretation of his relationship with Charlie as love displays his desire to be considered as a native in the diaspora and to access hegemonic masculine identity.

In contrast, Ralph distorts his relationship with his wife Sandra due to the uncertainty of his position in the diasporic society negatively influencing his self-esteem. While reflecting over his marriage to Sandra, Ralph recognizes that there was a disconnection between his wife and himself. However, Ralph chooses to remain silent about their inability to communicate and distances them from one another, which results in both Ralph and Sandra carrying out numerous affairs during their marriage. Ralph recollects:

I found myself about to say to Sandra as we were dressing to go out – the sentence was fully phrase: delight had been converting itself into reporting words all afternoon – ‘Darling, I’ve had a most marvelous afternoon. I’ve been in bed with a most skilled and delightful woman’”  
(Naipaul 85).

Ralph's desire to casually inform Sandra about his affair with another woman illustrates his misrepresentation of his relationship with his wife as being one that mirrors a

friendship with his willingness to share his infidelity. At the start of the passage, Ralph considers his feeling of immediate “fulfillment,” “exceptional gentleness and optimism.” This notion of Ralph feeling immediate satisfaction, gentleness, and optimism after cheating on Sandra illustrates his distorted relationship with her through his lack of regret or dishonesty towards his unfaithful behavior. Sequentially, Ralph recalls one particular moment, as Sandra and he prepared for an evening out and wanted to share his happiness with her by informing her about his afternoon. Ralph’s desire to share his experience with Sandra displays the alteration of their relationship through his complete disregard for their marriage. Fanon asserts, “It is an object capable of arousing friendship or love that the individual is unsure of himself” (57). Therefore, Ralph misinterprets his relationship with Sandra because his uncertainty about his position in his native environment causes him to perceive his relationship with his wife as ambiguous, thus taking on a more casual manner associated with friendship.

Furthermore, Ralph’s lack of consideration for Sandra demonstrates his need to obscure his relationship by removing his accountability for her. Ralph reflects upon his bond with Sandra shortly after considering telling her about his afternoon with another woman. Ralph states: “would I be believed if I say that my first thought was not for myself but for Sandra? I was filled, I was overwhelmed, with pity for her; at no time since we had met did I feel such responsibility for her” (Naipaul 85). Ralph’s disregard for Sandra displays his distortion of their relationship by depicting it as a friendship and not as a marriage. The excerpt begins with Ralph contemplating whether or not it is believable that he thought about Sandra before himself. This contemplation represents

Ralph doubting his concern for Sandra. Ralph next says he is overcome with “pity” for her. This sensation of pity for Sandra suggests a bond more similar to a friendship by Ralph’s undesirable need to help her. Afterwards, Ralph reflects that he has never felt accountable to Sandra at any time during their relationship. By removing his accountability towards Sandra and their relationship, Ralph is able to surround his life with ambiguity in the hopes of creating continuity with his obscure relationship with his home, Isabella.

Both Karim and Ralph distort their relationship with individuals they are closest to due to their lack of agency in their native environment. Karim believes he is in love with Charlie when actuality he wants to be him over being himself, whereas Ralph distorts his marriage with Sandra by wanting to share his sexual experience with other women with her and through his disregard to her well-being. Ralph displays his low self-esteem by distancing himself from Sandra and the chance of a strong emotional bond in a manner that mirrors his diaspora’s method of Othering him. Both Karim and Ralph illustrate Fanon’s notion of self-esteem, resulting in the alteration of their relationship with others.

Under these circumstances, young South Asian men are unable to create a confident masculine identity because they are relying on individuals that are attempting to develop their own masculinity and have certain masculine privileges such as hegemony and negritude. Accordingly, Karim depends upon Charlie to emulate a strong and secure masculinity in a diaspora, whereas, Ralph does not have one peer embodying characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. For this reason, Ralph is forced to mimic

behaviors he believes to be attached to dominant masculine performance in his immediate surrounding. Ultimately, both characters seek their peers' guidance in the hope of developing a secure masculine identity aligning with their environment. However, their peers are unable to do so, which leaves Karim and Ralph feeling further displaced and uncertain in their diasporic environment. The problems both protagonists encounter while developing their identities is the result of the lasting presence of colonial rhetoric about individuals who were colonized as being inferior and the use of hegemonic masculinity to support supremacy over other concepts of masculine identity. In the attempt to correct their inadequacies, both characters reject the portion of their identity associated with being South Asian through mimicking behaviors that are socially acceptable to the diaspora, in the hopes of fully assimilating within the society.

### Chapter 3: Seeking Self-indulgent Identity within the Diaspora

“Until the bigger truth came: that in a society like ours, fragmented, inorganic, no link between man and the landscape, a society not help together by common interest...”  
-V.S. Naipaul, *The Mimic Men*

Under the influence and supervision of their peers, young South Asian males living in a diaspora expect their bonds to be similar to those of a traditional father and son through relying upon their support during difficult circumstances. Ill-advisedly, their peers’ masculine identity, which South Asian boys value, is largely centered upon their racial privilege and still being developed, which prevents them from practicing hegemonic masculinity in the diaspora. As a result, these men are forced to confront these differences and remove their peer as an ideal masculine figure. Once their peers are displaced, South Asian young men are able to reconcile their hybridity by identifying themselves as being in a limbo-like state, known as the third space—the place between the homeland and the diasporic environment. While occupying this space, these men tend to appreciate their father’s masculine performance. However, some South Asian males are unable to negotiate their hybridity, which causes greater uncertainty. Given this situation, these men subconsciously become their fathers by repeating their shortcomings. Karim realizes the deficiency of having a peer as a masculine model through Charlie’s inability to help him after breaking up with a woman he loved. Furthermore, Karim’s ability to negotiate his hybridity by accepting his occupancy in the third space allows Karim to appreciate Haroon’s masculine identity in a diaspora. On the contrary, Naipaul demonstrates Ralph’s inability to reconcile his hybridity; therefore,

he subconsciously becomes Kripalsingh through mirroring his failures. Ultimately, there are two possible outcomes for South Asian men in a diaspora: either attempt to negotiate one's hybridity, or continue to live fragmentally through denying parts of one's identity associated with the diaspora or South Asian culture.

### **Seeking Guidance from Peer**

After enduring a tumultuous relationship and distressing breakup with a woman named Eleanor, Karim turns to his hegemonic masculine guide and peer, Charlie, to guide him through this hardship. Towards the middle of the book, Karim joins a theatre production as an actor and there he meets Eleanor, a fellow performer in the play. Applying Charlie's advice about women, Karim begins a relationship with Eleanor. Unlike his experience with women in the previous chapter, Karim falls deeply in love with her and he is heartbroken when he discovers that she is cheating on him with the director. Shortly after breaking up with Eleanor, he agrees to join the production on tour in New York City. While in New York, Karim meets with Charlie, a now successful musician living in the city. Karim reflects upon his situation with the production and Eleanor and asks for Charlie's support:

As I stood there...ready to walk to the theatre and sad to leave him – he seemed so generous and charmed to be with me – I said; ‘Charlie, me and the whole cast, we’re all living in this big apartment. And I can’t bear to see Eleanor every day. It breaks my heart.’ Charlie didn’t hesitate. ‘I’d be ‘appy to ‘ave you ‘ere. Move in tonight.’ (Kureishi 247)

Karim asking for Charlie's help demonstrates Karim's reliance upon Charlie as a father figure by seeking his support and guidance during this difficult circumstance. The quote begins with Karim reflecting upon his current physical and mental state before leaving Charlie. Karim then considers Charlie's sentiment toward him to be "generous" and "charmed." The fact that Karim perceives Charlie's temperament towards him to be thoughtful and delighted suggests an emotional bond more like that of a father and son. Continuing, Karim informs Charlie of the difficulty and hardship he endures by constantly being around Eleanor. At this moment, Karim uses passive voice to ask Charlie if he can stay with him. This use of passive voice reinforces—through language—a father-son bond by mirroring the degree of respect given to the father's authority. Quickly, Karim interjects and emphasizes Charlie's strong resolve and remark about living with him. Ending the quote, Karim cites Charlie's exact words and accent, which represents Karim eagerly awaiting his support by placing greater value upon Charlie's response. At the present time, Karim depends upon Charlie's support and guidance to help him through his separation with Eleanor. However, soon afterwards Karim realizes that Charlie's masculine identity is undeveloped and based upon his racial privilege.

### **Displacing a Peer-Based Model of Masculinity**

Shortly after moving in with Charlie, Karim witnesses Charlie fabricating his British accent while living in New York. This indicates that Charlie's masculine identity is underdeveloped and founded on his racial privilege. Once Karim moves into Charlie's home, he becomes more aware of Charlie's manufactured cockney accent. Karim notes:

I walked down the street, laughing, amused that here in America Charlie had acquired this cockney accent when my first memory of him at school was that he'd cried after being mocked by the stinking gypsy kids for talking so posh. Certainly, I'd never heard anyone talk like that before. Now he was going in for cockney rhyming slang, too. 'I'm just off for a pony, ' he'd say. Pony and trap-crap...He was selling Englishness, and getting a lot of money for it. (Kureishi 247)

Charlie's need to appropriate a cockney accent displays his premature masculine identity and racial privilege. The excerpt starts with Karim being entertained with Charlie's alteration of his accent. Transitioning his thoughts, Karim recalls his initial memory of Charlie being teased for speaking eloquently by children in a lower class. By adopting a cockney accent, Charlie attempts to redefine his masculine identity with individuals from the lower economic class, in accordance with his diasporic environment in America when in actuality, Charlie belongs to an upper economic class. Karim also notes the rarity of speaking in such a manner and the evolution of Charlie's accent becoming more rhythmical. As an illustration, Karim begins narrating Charlie's lyrical slang and his rhythmical pattern, "pony and trap-crap." Charlie, utilizing a cockney accent, mirrors Haroon fabricating his Indian accent as discussed in the first chapter. Completing the quote, Karim reasons that Charlie's motivation for changing his accent is that it is a profitable performance. This concept of "selling Englishness" demonstrates his racial privilege through his ability to alter and represent British ideals at his discretion, whereas others perceive Karim as an outsider in the only society he knows—

the British one. By recounting Charlie's accent, Karim is able to witness Charlie reconstructing his masculine identity and utilizing his racial privilege, which provides Karim the opportunity to critique Charlie's position as his hegemonic masculine model.

Given this diasporic environment, Karim is able to assess Charlie as an ideal masculine figure to replicate. This forces him to acknowledge the flaws with and insufficiency of having Charlie model masculinity. After living with Charlie for some time, Karim is able to recognize that they are equally dependent upon each other:

He [Charlie] didn't want me to leave. It was eerie, our growing dependency on each other. He liked having me there as a witness, I suspected...But he liked to tell me everything in the old schoolboy way. With me, he could be dazzled by the people he met, the places he was invited, the gifts that were thrown at him. It was I, Karim, who saw him stepping into the stretch-limo... (Kureishi 250)

By identifying Charlie's dependency upon him, Karim is able to notice the imperfections of Charlie modeling masculinity. The passage begins with Karim emphasizing Charlie's desire for Karim to stay. Following this remark, Karim determines his relationship with Charlie as being unsettling, especially their developing dependency upon each other. This perception of Charlie and Karim's relationship as uncanny and reliant upon one another illustrates Karim's ability to perceive the inadequacies in their bond through noting its untypical manner. By doing so, Karim can question his connection to Charlie and reliance upon him to bear witness. This manner of suspecting Charlie's reasoning for his reliance upon Karim denotes the removal of

Charlie as a masculine ideal through critiquing his behavior and motives. Karim next explains that Charlie enjoys mentoring him in the same style as he did in school. Then Karim observes that, through his presence, Charlie is able to appreciate his fame and success. Ending the excerpt, Karim asserts his value and worth in their relationship. By identifying his role in Charlie's celebrity lifestyle, he is able to gain agency and establish his equally important position in their bond. This understanding of being equally reliant upon each other signifies the removal of Charlie as a hegemonic masculine figure, by removing Charlie's absolute authority. Once Karim reestablishes his relationship with Charlie as one of rightful peers and equals, he can reconcile his hybridity within the realm of his diasporic setting.

### **Negotiating Hybridity**

Returning to his diasporic setting, Karim is able to mitigate his hybridity within the third space after re-characterizing his relationship with Charlie. After Karim recognizes his bond with Charlie as abnormal and equally reliant upon each other, Karim severs the father-like bond with Charlie, which enables Karim to understand himself through his dismissal of behavior and ideas: "I didn't care either for or about him [Charlie]. He didn't interest me at all. I'd moved beyond him, discovering myself through what I rejected" (Kureishi 255). By removing Charlie as a masculine model, Karim explores his identity on his own. Therefore, Karim decides to go back to his original diasporic environment to understand himself. Karim adds:

On the flight to London I had a painful toothache, and on my first day in England I arranged to go to the dentist...as the dentist's nurse led me to

the dentist's chair and I nodded at him in greeting, he said, in a South African accent, 'Does he speak English?' 'A few words,' I said. (Kureishi 258)

Karim attempts to reconcile his hybridity within the third space only after returning to London. The passage starts with Karim experiencing pain from a toothache, which prompts him to set up an appointment with a dentist. At his appointment, Karim remains very quiet, and the dentist questions whether or not he can speak English. Karim's response to the dentist is a playful remark: "a few words." The use of humor represents Karim trying to negotiate his hybridity through acknowledging both aspects of his South Asian identity—the doctor questioning his ability to speak English and be British—identifying the dentist as an immigrant. According to Simon Gikandi:

global culture has brought us to a point where the traditional association between national spaces and cultural practices cannot be sustained: there no longer seems to be a clear relationship between cultural practices and localities. (617)

Gikandi claims that recent trends of globalization permit individuals once perceived as settlers in the diaspora to embrace the ambiguous connection between their culture and environment. Gikandi's assertion is further supported through Karim and the South African dentist both recognizing each other's ethnic background and their surroundings. Karim's ability to negotiate his hybridity is due to his position in the third space. Bhabha defines the third space as:

the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of culture but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. (56)

Bhabha describes the third space being a result of the blending and changing nature of culture. As a result of globalization occurring in the diaspora, individuals that are considered as Others are able to appreciate the complexity between cultural traditions and their disconnected surroundings in the diaspora within the third space. Therefore, Karim embraces his hybridity due to globalization and accepting his identity as a South Asian British male in the realm of the third space.

While negotiating his hybridity, Karim decides to reconnect with Haroon; unfortunately, Karim comes to the realization that his bond with his father can no longer be the same as it was before Charlie's guidance. Karim decides to visit his father to tell him that he has been offered a role in a soap opera as an Indian shopkeeper's son. Karim is greatly surprised by Haroon's appearance:

I was shocked by Dad's appearance as he got up to embrace me. 'Hallo, boy,' he said. He wore a thick white collar around his neck, which pressed his chins up around his jaw. I thought of how, when I was a kid, Dad always out-ran me as we charged across the park towards the swimming pool. When we wrestled on the floor he always pinned me down, sitting on my chest and making me say I'd obey him always. Now he couldn't move without flinching. I'd become the powerful one; I

couldn't fight him—and I wanted to fight him—without destroying him in one blow. It was a saddening disappointment. (Kureishi 261)

Karim's attempt to reconnect with Haroon represents his willingness to embrace and understand the portion of his personality that is Indian. The quote begins with Karim describing Haroon's unexpected appearance. Haroon's frailty is significant because Karim realizes that his relationship with his father cannot replenish the years he spent under Charlie's mentorship. Refocusing his thoughts, Karim recalls his early memories of Haroon's strength and power. By doing so, Karim is verbally restoring Haroon's masculine identity. Concluding his memories of Haroon, Karim notes that he promised to submit to Haroon's will. This need to abide by Haroon is imperative because Karim is indirectly acknowledging that he broke his promise to his father by seeking Charlie's guidance over Haroon's judgments. In addition, Karim's repetition of the word, "always" represents him attempting to comprehend Haroon's aging and fragile state. Continuing, Karim asserts that he has become the stronger person in their relationship, which signifies that Karim is placed in an authoritative position. Karim ends the passage by saying he wishes to "fight" but without causing great damage and he reflects that Haroon's current condition is a disheartening blow. This desire to fight represents Karim's longing for their former bond with each other and Karim realizing that he cannot reestablish the relationship he had with Haroon due to his elderliness. Haroon's weak state transforms their connection into a traditional South Asian father and son relationship with the father depending upon the son's strength. Given Haroon's condition, Karim is left to mediate his identity as a hybrid on his own.

Under these conditions, Karim is only able to conceptualize a potential future in which he is able to negotiate his hybridity and masculine identity. At the end of the novel, this notion is illustrated when Karim is celebrating his new acting job and later his father's announcement to marry Eva. While at dinner, Karim contemplates his life:

I could think about the past and what I'd been through as I'd struggled to locate myself and learn what the heart is. Perhaps in the future I would live more deeply. And so I sat in the centre of this old city that I loved, which itself sat at the bottom of a tiny island. I was surrounded by people I loved, and I felt happy and miserable at the same time. I thought of what a mess everything had been, but that it wouldn't always be that way.

(Kureishi 284)

Karim's ruminating over his past and envisioning a more hopeful future illustrates his aspiration of constructing his own masculine identity, one that recognizes his hybridity. The passage begins with Karim considering his journey and the challenges of creating his masculine identity. Following this thought, Karim compares his experience to a more optimistic future. By thinking about his past and future, Karim represents his growth through acknowledging the difficulties trying to negotiate his previous actions with his coming understanding of himself. Also, Karim's focus on the past and future symbolizes his current position of not fully understanding the complexity of his hybridity. Accordingly, Gikandi states, "making culture the primary terms in the relationship between 'life' and its 'images' it is much easier to have a handle on a world in which social realities and cultural representations seemed to be out of joint" (617). Gikandi

identifies the transnational characteristics of culture in comparison to the isolating manner of identifying oneself by nationhood and ethnicity. Next, Karim focuses on his microcosm being filled with people he loves on a “tiny island.” This statement is significant because his perception of his diasporic environment as being relatively small when compared to his immediate surrounding characterizes Gikandi’s claim that stronger bonds are connected to culture in regards to “life” and “images.”

As a result, Karim is able to appreciate the duality of his hybridity through his emotions, feeling “happy and sad at the same time.” Karim’s final thought is observing the pattern of his experiences changing as time progresses. This represents his acceptance of his ambiguous connection to his environment and his identity as a British South Asian male living in London. Ultimately, Karim conceptualizing a hopeful future as a hybrid suggests he will develop a secure masculine identity that allows him to explore the complexity of his identity in terms of the diaspora.

### **Fragmented South Asian Masculine Identity**

Similar to Karim looking for Charlie’s support, Ralph relies upon Browne to help him overcome the end of his marriage to Sandra. After having a number of affairs, Sandra decides to leave Ralph and the island of Isabella to move to America. Following Sandra’s departure, Ralph turns to Browne for guidance and support. Once Ralph rekindles his friendship with Browne, he is able to consider the nature and force that connects them:

But I was also a prisoner of my special relationship with Browne...A burdensome relationship, a boyhood uneasiness never quite forgotten

when we met. Now it was flattering. He needed alien witness to prove his reality...He presented me with a picture of myself which it reassured me to study. This was his generosity... (Naipaul 224)

Like Karim, Ralph examines the essence and significance of his relationship with Browne. The quote begins with Ralph recognizing that he is bound by their unique connection to each other. This notion of being imprisoned by his bond with Browne linguistically represents Ralph's unwilling dependency upon him. By identifying the usual links to each other, Ralph ruminates about the origins of their new link to each other and the current need to revitalize that link. Initially, Ralph reports that the premise of their relationship as children was influenced by experiencing turmoil, and presently it is encouraged as a favorable collaboration. As an illustration, Ralph distinguishes that Browne requires a foreign observer to validate his existence. In return, Browne provides a complete image of his identity to memorize. This concept of their bond being mutually beneficial demonstrates how Ralph perceives Browne's masculine identity as equal to his own. Furthermore, this moment parallels Karim participating as a "witness" for Charlie. Both formerly considered dominant masculine identities—Charlie and Browne—require the presence of a spectator. The central difference between Karim and Ralph as observers lies in the significance of their location. Being in America, Karim is able to reevaluate his connection with Charlie and reject it, whereas Ralph seeks Browne after reentering his original diasporic environment, which enables him to acknowledge the benefit of having such a connection—gaining an image of himself. For Ralph, Browne imparting an impression of him as a secure masculine figure is valuable because

this supplies him with an obtainable standard in constructing his identity. By considering the advantage of his relationship with Browne, Ralph is unable to negotiate his hybridity because he chooses to retain Browne's perception of him rather than define his identity on his own.

Ralph's desire to view and study a distorted image of himself by functioning as a "witness" for Browne demonstrates his inability to negotiate a masculine identity within this diasporic setting. After replacing Browne as his dominant masculine model, they begin to pursue careers in politics. As described in the previous chapter, Browne is extremely gifted with the ability to capture the attention of an audience and Ralph and Browne both achieve great success and hold significant political positions. Ralph says: "So I went on, naming, naming; and, later, I required everything – every government building, every road, every agricultural scheme – to be labeled. It suggested drama, activity. It reinforced reality. It reinforced that sense of ownership which overcame me" (Naipaul 257). This passage is significant because it illuminates the idea that Ralph's reality of political influence and power stems from his ability to name objects such as buildings and roads. The passage begins with Ralph emphasizing the importance of "naming" and requiring that everything be "labeled." Ralph's compulsion to name objects is interesting when paralleled with his decision to change his name in the previous chapter. In the context of this passage, Ralph perceives the act of naming as "suggested drama activity," and then follows said remark with "it reinforced reality." Ralph's use of the words "suggested drama, activity" builds upon the notion of implied performativity simply by changing the names and follows the remark that it reinforced a

reality that Ralph perceived as a “sense of ownership.” Ralph greatly valuing his ability to name and label objects illustrates his desire to create a verbal bond or connection to Isabella, whereas changing his name earlier forces people to recognize his hybridity. Peggy Nightingale claims in the article “Journey Through Darkness: The Writing of V.S. Naipaul” that Ralph’s choosing to change his name represents him choosing to redefine his understanding of reality (100-101). Nightingale’s understanding of Ralph’s wanting to name objects as indicative of him altering his reality is interesting, especially in regards to his previously altering his name in an attempt to make his hybridity more apparent. Nightingale’s remark about Ralph making his hybridity more evident is intriguing, however, she fails to understand Ralph’s desire to do so being largely influenced by his inability to claim a connection to his diasporic environment. Accordingly, W.E.B. Du Bois’ idea of double consciousness is applicable to this postcolonial content: ““this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity”” (251). Ralph’s need to name objects and change his name symbolically represents his double consciousness through his altering his name in an attempt to assimilate into the colonizer culture while maintaining a fragment of the indigenous community with his last name, Singh, functioning as a “revival of an ancient fracture.” Naipaul demonstrates Ralph’s unbalanced sense of self in this quote, with him placing more value upon the dramatic action of labeling objects and the conscious diminishment of his identity by changing his name.

Diverging from Karim's path of reconciling his hybridity, Ralph unconsciously becomes his father by repeating his failures and actions. In the novel, Browne and Ralph achieve great success in politics; however, similar to their political predecessors, they too become corrupted by power and influence. As a result, Ralph leaves the island of Isabella and seeks political asylum in London. Alone in London, Ralph decides to write a memoir in the hopes of bringing order into his chaotic life. After considering his failed marriage with Sandra, his part in a successful political movement, and recent alienation in London, Ralph interprets his life as following his father's and the spiritual Aryan legacy. Ralph deciphers:

At the age of forty I should find myself at the end of my active life. I do not now think this is even true. I no longer yearn for ideal landscapes and no longer wish to know the god of the city. This does not strike me as loss. I feel, instead, I have lived through attachment and freed myself from one cycle of events. It gives me joy to find that in so doing I have also fulfilled the fourfold division of life prescribed by our Aryan ancestors. I have been student, householder and man of affairs, recluse.

(Naipaul 300)

Ralph's perception of completing his father's and Aryan ancestors' legacy demonstrates Ralph's continuously distorting his identity through his inability to mediate his masculinity as a hybrid. The passage starts with Ralph considering his age and the temperament tied to it. He then contrasts this concept by saying he no longer believes that his life at forty will be inactive. Following this remark, Ralph begins to list his

indifference towards his environment and knowledge associated with it. According to Jacqueline Finch, “Singh is not blessed by the gods...he is ignored; the gods are indifferent to his existence. At mid-life, he is fading into obscurity and has had no lasting impact. He is a man in exile, alone and forgotten. Only his memories stand as a record of his life as writer, husband, and politician” (33). By being detached from his surroundings, Ralph is insinuating that he is unable to negotiate his identity in accordance with his diasporic setting. Therefore, he chooses to reject the significance of his environment. According to Bhabha’s article “The World and the Home,” the term unhomeliness applies to Ralph’s rejection of his diasporic environment.

[the] displacement, the border between home and world becomes confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting...The unhomely is the stock of recognition of the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world. (445)

Ralph’s apathy towards his diaspora—both Isabella and London—displays unhomeliness because he detaches himself from an essential aspect of his hybrid identity: the influence of being raised in a society separate from South Asian culture. For this reason, Ralph’s perception of his life aligns only with the South Asian portion of his masculinity and completing the life cycle of a Sadhu. However, this singular view of himself is a complete distortion—in a manner that mirrors Kripalsingh—by creating an association with an idea like a Sadhu without fully understanding the process and value of it. Conclusively, Ralph becomes Kripalsingh through their joint inability to construct

a strong masculine identity, one that negotiates their hybridity and diasporic environment.

Both Karim's and Ralph's struggles to create a secure masculine identity are the result of their diasporic environment. Karim finally is in a position to reconcile his hybridity and gain a better understanding of his place in the diaspora, whereas Ralph is left fostering his perversion of completing a Hindu spiritual fulfillment while living in London as a mimic man.

### Conclusion: The Development of South Asian Masculinity in a Diaspora

In an attempt to construct a secure masculine identity, both Karim and Ralph reject their father's oriental-influenced masculinity and seek a hegemonic masculine figure that aids their hope of completely assimilating into their diasporic environment. Instead, both Karim and Ralph find they can only mimic certain behaviors or characteristics. This further influences their lack of self-worth, leaving them envious of their peers' racial privilege and their ability to formulate a secure masculine identity affiliated with the social norms of the diaspora. Under these conditions, young South Asian men—such as Karim and Ralph—are given two possible outcomes: reconcile their hybridity independently and without guidance, or continue to deny fragments of their identity. The challenges South Asian males are confronted with when constructing their identity is both a product of their diaspora and the lasting and subtle impact of colonization, with the creation of hegemonic masculinity as a means to dismiss Others' notion of masculine identity. As a quick means of remedying their shortcomings in their masculinity, South Asian men reject the portion of their character associated with their ethnic background to better integrate themselves in the diasporic society.

Fundamentally, these men's identities are contingent upon two possibilities: accept their hybridity, or continuously deny themselves their complexity and become mimic men.

Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* and V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* provide early insight about the difficulties both first- and second-generation South Asians encounter because of the binaries created by their diaspora. However, this research is greatly limited to the experiences that these two characters, and their fathers,

undergo in their search to redefine South Asian masculinity in the diaspora. Additionally, the use of these two novels demonstrates untypical South Asian male behavior by rejecting and isolating themselves from immigrant communities. Furthermore, this project confines itself to examining only first- and second-generation South Asian males. More recent exploration, such as observing third- and fourth-generation South Asians living in a diaspora, would be beneficial. Moreover, the lack of theoretical framework for exploring South Asian masculinity, of course functioning outside the realm of Said's Orientalism, Bhabha's hybridity, mimicry, and third space, restricts further understanding of the psychological hindrances these men encounter because of their diaspora. For this reason, Frantz Fanon's geographically-focused theory about the psychological impact on African nations colonized by the French was partially explored within this thesis to mitigate the deficiency of theoretical support. Another limitation of this project is the lack of exploration of second-generation South Asian female characters, such as Jamilla in *The Buddha of Suburbia* in comparison to Karim, her male counterpart. A final restraint upon this project is the absence of exploration of South Asian male's sexuality, particularly, the evaluation of the power dynamic in the interracial coupling that occurs in both novels for the protagonists, in terms of mirroring their relationship to their diaspora.

However, more recent works in postcolonial literature such as Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* encourage greater research in the construction of masculinity within and outside the diaspora. Also, more modern postcolonial theory of globalization suggests a transformative understanding of South

Asian masculinity, one that might include Western ideals within countries such as India and Pakistan. Comparatively, the presence of these ideals severely incites extremist discourse and resistance, especially organizations such as the Taliban, which attempt to remove any external influence within the nation. Apart from the transformation occurring within South Asian countries, the diasporic environment too has undergone significant alteration regarding the perception of South Asian males after 9/11. Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* attempts to address concerns for first-generation South Asian males living in Western societies during and after the 9/11 attacks. Although Hamid's novel seeks to capture the suspicions of South Asian males within the diasporic society at the time, the novel does not provide insight or perspective of young second-generation South Asian males being raised in the diaspora during and after the event. Continuing research on this topic could provide essential insight regarding second-generation South Asian males leaning towards more extremist ideals of religion and culture within the diaspora as noted through Smith's character Millat Iqbal in *White Teeth*. Also, ongoing investigation could reveal the differences in South Asian males raised in cultural microcosms within the diaspora and those living outside the community.

Fundamentally, the aspiration of this thesis is to initiate a conversation about the challenges specifically first- and second-generation South Asian males encounter because of the lingering colonial binaries existing within the diaspora.

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