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1. Introduction

After the end of the Second World War the British Empire collapsed. In 1947 India was the first country from the Asian subcontinent which gained its independence and established its own republic. However, the first years of the independence were not the easiest ones and many Indians decided, in a view of a better life, to move to the former capital of the empire – to the London.

The Great Britain, which was until this postcolonialism immigration wave from the cultural point of view homogenous, had to face new impulses. This was also the situation in the contemporary British fiction, which this thesis focuses on. The immigrating writers, most of them coming from the South Asian diaspora, were firstly seen as foreign. In their works they have, however, shown high artistic qualities. Thus, throughout the changing cultural and social clima immigrating writers have been equalized with the British ones. Moreover, the unknown or resented writers suddenly became internationally recognized and reputable. By this development the immigrating authors gave a birth to so called postcolonial¹ literature.

However, “the decentralization” of the British fiction - one of the biggest changes stressed in almost every critic – took place not only in the “personal” way described above. Also new topics in the fiction arose as the inhabitants of the East come to the absolutely diferent world of the West. Very soon they realized that they are not able to fully assimilate to the entirely different culture. Therefore, the postcolonial discourse is filled with the feelings of alienation, rootlessness, disbelonging and with the themes of the quest for identity, hybridity, East and West relationship, nationalism and of course migrancy.

The submitted thesis is divided into the three parts. In the first part I give a brief explanation on the postcolonial literature within the discourse of the contemporary British fiction as well as on other literary movements within in. Subsequently I proceed to the analysis of chosen works of two postcolonial writers – Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi. In the section devoted to Salman Rushdie and his novel *Midnight's Children* I demonstrate the characteristic features of postcolonialism as well as of postmodernism. Next section deals with Hanif Kureishi and his novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Some of the topics that have been discussed in the Rushdie's section are discussed and analysed again this time from the point of view of Hanif Kureishi. Finally, in the conclusion I compare both authors' positions.

¹ Either hyphenated - postcolonial - or not. In this thesis I will use the term 'postcolonial' without hyphen

The aim of this work and its motivation derive from the desire to offer a brief explanation of the works of more or less known postcolonial writers who influenced the way British fiction proceeds.

2. Theoretical Part – Contemporary British Fiction and its main Themes

2.1 The independence of the British colonies

In 1945 Britain was still the greatest imperial power in world history, its territories stretching over all five continents and covering a quarter of the world's population. However it is perfectly clear that the British empire of 1939 represented an already outdated form of imperialism. It was given a decisive blow by the circumstances of the Second World War, which accelerated rather than created the process of dissolution. The prestige by which a handful of British had dominated unsophisticated local populations was eroding. Elementary education had spread and the provision of secondary education for the most talented had created new middle classes.

The outstanding feature of the British Empire was political unity and an outstanding mark of its dissolution was a political conflict, as some of the territories failed to hold together. India was the main case in point. The leading Indian nationalists, such as Gandhi and the Nehru family, intended to transform the British Indian Empire into a single Republic of India within exactly the same boundaries. Despite all the regional, cultural, linguistic and religious differences within the vast territory, they hoped for an India which would be as much a single country as for example China.

It was the religious differences which brought breakdown. The Moslem population, led by the lawyer Mohammed Ali Jinnah, would not accept the dominance by the Hindu majority and pressed for a separate state of Pakistan. In the end, the two sides went their separate ways and, later still, Pakistan itself also broke into two, when in 1971 its eastern section became the new country of Bangladesh.

One of the problems which the granting of independence not only in Asia but in Africa and other ex-colonies created was that many people found themselves in the wrong country. Muslims were displaced in India, and Hindus in Pakistan. Asians who had grown up in East

Africa because their parents had been offered work there by the British were not wanted by the new African regimes. Many came to Britain, where, as citizens of the United Kingdom and colonies, they had rights of the settlement. Another immigration from the West Indies to Britain happened at a time the British economy needed cheap labour and when economic prospects in the West Indies themselves were poor. This was the beginning of the postcolonial era and the postcolonial literature as well.

2.2 Postcolonialism within contemporary British fiction

2.2.1 Development of postcolonial literatures and its textual strategies

Postcolonialism is concerned with writing by those people who were once colonized by Britain.² The term ‘postcolonial’ is used to “cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (Ashcroft 2), and not only the years after the decline of the British Empire, because the previous period has its effect on the contemporary literature as well.

Postcolonial literature’s development may be divided into several stages corresponding also to the rise of national or regional consciousness. The first postcolonial texts are usually written by the representatives of the imperial power, for example by settlers, travellers, soldiers, etc. However, the pure postcolonialism is linked to the second stage, in which the main ‘producers’ of the texts were the natives though they were still “under imperial licence” (Ashcroft 5). The independent literatures also called modern postcolonial literatures waited for their development until the decolonization era.

One of the main features of the postcolonial writing is the use of language. After the imperial control over the language and marginalization of ‘impurities’, a new way of using English emerged distinguishing between “the ‘standart’ British English inherited from the empire and the english which the language has become in postcolonial countries”(Ashcroft 8). The postcolonial writers refused the categories of the imperial culture and its ‘correct’ use of language, and adopted the English as “a tool utilized in various ways to express widely differing cultural experiences” (Ashcroft 38).

In the postcolonial narrative there is significant the use of metaphor and metonym. “Metaphor has always, in the western tradition, had the privilege of revealing the unexpected truth” (Ashcroft 50) and thus many critics read the tropes of postcolonial literature as a

² Though the themes is shared with countries colonized by other European powers, eg. France, Spain, etc.

metaphors. The texts, especially Rushdie's, are full of metonymic use of adjectives, the use of plurals and some of the postcolonial texts also employ neologisms. To convey the sense of "cultural distinctiveness" (Ashcroft 63) the postcolonial writers leave some words untranslated in the text. "Such a device not only acts to signify the difference between cultures, but also illustrates the importance of discourse in interpreting cultural concepts." (Ashcroft 63) Also the use of allusion is typical for the postcolonial as well as for the postmodern fiction. "Perhaps the most common method of inscribing alterity (...) is the technique of switching between two or more codes (...). The techniques employed by the polydialectal writer include variable orthography to make dialect more accessible, double glossing and code-switching to act as an interweaving interpretative mode, and the selection of certain words which remained untranslated in the text" (Ashcroft 71). All these techniques in the postcolonial narrative are the most common ways of demonstrating the cultural distinctiveness.

It is also important to mention the concern with place and displacement among the major features of postcolonial literature. "It is here that the special postcolonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place." (Ashcroft 8) All the experiences of dislocation, migration from one country to another, the enslavement or the oppression of the indigenous personality may result in the doubts about the valid sense of self. "The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of postcolonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two." (Ashcroft, 9)

However, the most important feature that distinguishes the postcolonial literature from the traditional western literature is the use of traditional national (in case of this thesis Indian) forms based primarily on oral narrative and religious epic. Moreover the techniques of repetition, "of circling back from the present to the past, technique of building tale within tale, and persistently delaying climaxes" (Ashcroft 181) are typical for the postcolonial literature (and is often seen in Rushdie's novels) and make it different from most of the texts of contemporary western literature.

2.2.2 National identity

Nationalism in general has always emphasized the territorial imperative and the mistreatment of minorities. In the post-war era and especially since the late 1980s, however,

“new nationalistic energies have been unleashed”³ and thus the position of the nations have become more volatile and harder to interpret. Nationalism of the emergent states then is perceived as a struggle for a new social organization.

The treatment of national identity in post-war fiction reflects two ways of viewing of nationalism – “wary of an uncompromising tradition on the one hand, whilst tentatively contemplating the reinvention of nationality on the other” (Head 119). During the 1980’s another position emerges as a consequence of such dialectism – “a kind of post-nationalism built on reappraised symbols and traditions that implicitly acknowledges the mongrelized nature of most British identities” (Head 119). This vacillation about national identity is very significant especially in “refigurations of Englishness, where the legacy of imperialism remains a dominant presence” (Head 119). The reinventing of Englishness is effected by the feeling that Englishness is still deprived by imperialism but also by the end of the Empire which in fact started postcolonial migration and therefore a new process of cultural hybridity which raised new questions of national identities. (Head 119)

Salman Rushdie in his *Satanic Verses* claims that the “trouble with the new Englishness is that their history happened overseas, so they don’t know what it means. Such imperial exhaustion led to the national re-definition, and the ‘vacuum’ has been filled by the narrative of the “‘children’ of Empire” (quoted in Head 124) with their postcolonial stories. This resulted in the displacement of English identity and made Englishness and England “potentially open to the multicultural moment that is the legacy of the imperial past” (Head 124).

2.2.3 Cultural Hybridity

The question of identity and national belonging became more complicated in the postcolonial era. “This is nowhere more apparent than in a post-war Britain facing the challenges of the end of the Empire and the process of national redefinition it brings with it, both in terms of international status and demographic composition.”(Head 157) The postcolonial fiction becomes a prolific place for the exploration of the hybridized cultural forms in multicultural Britain. However, the migrants’ stories are not a celebration of the independence and national freedom. The fictionalized migrants are “often embattled and

³ It was following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the birth of new nations in Asia and South Africa

vulnerable” (Head 157). This is possible due to the reception of migrants in the inhospitable background of Britain, which was rather unsympathetic to multiculturalism since the 1960s.

“The problem with ‘integration’ is that it often means ‘assimilation’ within a host culture that is insensitive to cultural diversity, and many novelists have been concerned by this new, internal form of cultural imperialism.” (Head 161) Britain in the 1980s failed to embrace the inevitable postcolonial future, which Salman Rushdie commented on as a “crisis of the whole culture, of the society’s entire sense of itself” (quoted in Head 161). The migrants were not accepted in Britain which led to the ethnic diversity in Britain situated between multiculturalism and flat assimilation. In his works, Rushdie is “defining the space of the hybridized culture of the postcolonial migrant, of crucial significance to all inhabitants of the new emerging culture” (quoted in Head 161).

A. Robert Lee indicates hybridization like “Asian-British”, “Caribbean-British” or “African-British” and warns that these connections contain “their internal dynamics and heterogeneity and... tension” (quoted in Head 161). The space of postcolonial writing is transitional and multiculturalism is seen as an active, conflictual process. However the main theme is hybridity, which is explored in postcolonial novels for most of the period of the postcolonialism. “In the post-war period we have witnessed an ongoing practice of redefining and rewriting the nation from within, and eventually, the emergence of what Homi Bhabha, a propos of Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*, terms ‘a hybrid national narrative’” (quoted in Head 162).

The misreception of ‘race’ was emphasized in post-war era by the immigration policies of successive governments. Immigration had always been perceived as a black immigration, which was in fact a huge problem, regardless of the fact that there were also white immigrants. The British Nationality Act of 1948 confirmed the right of citizens of the Empire to enter Britain, but this open-door policy was ended in 1962 by Commonwealth Immigration Act.⁴ “Further restrictions on East Indian Asians (1968) were followed by the Immigration Act (1971), which limited domicile to those born in Britain, or whose parents or grandparents were of British origin.” (Head 164) In 1981 British Nationality Act the Asians were denied the automatic right to British citizenship for children born in Britain (164) to restrict the naturalization of immigrants’ children. Obviously, under these conditions racism thrived. This legislative process demonstrates primarily the fact that national identity and affiliation is a mutable, political construction. Inevitably, postcolonial fiction reflects all these

⁴ It introduced the system of employment vouchers for Commonwealth immigrants.

events and reactions to them as well as the feeling of the migrants deprived of their rights in the host country.

One more term that needs to be mentioned is rootlessness, the feeling of disbelonging natural to the hybrid ones who are not able to find themselves in either their home or their new country. Yet as can be seen in Rushdie's as well as in Kureishi's fiction, rootlessness has been continually transformed from the inner lack into a personal strength, "enabling the migrant to remain untainted by surrounding social decline. This strength, however, merely denotes the potential for moving on to a more propitious environment, and beginning anew" (Head 171).

2.2.4 Urban thematics

In contemporary fiction as well as in the periods preceding the city was of high interest for the writers. During the 20th century the modern city (and in the postcolonial literature primarily London) undergone rapid development and became in some sense a metaphor for success and better living, "therefore, everybody who wanted to mean something, hoped to become somebody, or at least felt the urge to be around when things were happening, moved, though with various feelings and consequences, to the capital" (Chalupský 9). London in the contemporary British fiction of the last twenty years becomes one of the favourite themes of the writers such as Hanif Kureishi or William Self. "The diversity and versatility of the urban milieu are reflected by these writers' multifarious treatments of the theme, and so the city comes to life again in both its real as well as fictional forms" (Chalupský 23).

"After the Thatcherite experience of the 1980s, the British urban environment was transformed and polarized: an oasis of middle-class excess and greed was cultivated at the expense of those who remained outside, while a growing awareness of the degree of urban deprivation involved put difficulties in the way of any self-assured class hegemony." (Lane, 71) Contemporary fiction absorbed the 'ironic distance' from the "culture of greed" (Lane, 71). "Modern urban fiction also generates its own form of myth, a changeability often labelled as 'post-modern'" (Lane, 72). It is in fact concerned with the tension of the city, which is no longer the domain of middle-class professionals.

2.2.4.1 Trouble in suburbia

The relation of the suburbs to the city of London in contemporary British fiction is usually described as a conflict between the urban and suburban influences. With no doubts suburbia is the most difficult social space. Arthur Edwards says that “suburbia is a dirty word” (quoted in Ashcroft, 213), what in fact is true for many people who see the suburban areas as a place from which “everyone comes from and no one wants to go back” (Ashcroft, 213). The idea of the escape from suburbia occurs in several contemporary novels, especially in the writing of Hanif Kureishi. “In this dynamic of growth and advancement some of the familiar stereotypes of the suburban mind-set are evoked: the passive enjoyment of popular television programmes; the ‘fanatical’ approach to shopping, the passion for DIY; a philistine response to arts.” (Ashcroft, 221) In some characters there is obvious the spiritual emptiness of the suburbanites, others show signs of the need for the ambitious individual to repel the suburbanite from his or her soul. Thus the theme of an escape is the most significant one along with the theme of the quest for identity. In some sense the thematics of suburbia together with the question of identity “simultaneously summons and rebuffs the *Bildungsroman* with its typical equations between self and society” (Ashcroft, 222).

2.3 Postcolonialism and Postmodernism

Among postcolonial writers there are some which can be categorized as either postcolonial or postmodern. Salman Rushdie could be one of the examples. It is not an easy task to decide to which approach the author can be assigned. They share some thematics concerns regarding history, marginality, discursive strategies like irony and allegory, and also the magic realism, “even if the final uses to which each is put may differ” (Hutcheon 3). It does not mean that the postcolonial is becoming postmodern, but it may be assumed that “their concerns often take similar forms” (Hutcheon 3).

The technique of ‘magic realism’, characteristic of mixing the fantasy with the real, “has been singled out by many critics as one of the points of conjunction of postmodernism and postcolonialism” (Hutcheon 3). Especially the focus on history is shared by both the enterprises. Unlike the modernism rejecting the burden of the past, postmodernism “has sought self-consciously (and often even parodically) to reconstruct its relationship to what came before (...)” (Hutcheon 3), similarly to the postcolonialism also negotiating, and also often parodically, the colonial history with all its tyrannical weight. To sum up, postmodernism is also overlapping with postcolonialism in its focus on the theme of history.

There is another shared concern of both the '-isms', which is the thematics of marginalization. They have in common their de-centering movement dismantling the Western or colonial centers, though some critics claims the postmodernism to be “the dominant, Eurocentric, nee-universalist, imperial discourse” (Hutcheon 6). There are also some similarities in the field of the rhetorical area – the trope of irony, as a popular strategy working within discourses and at the same time contesting them. “Its inherent semantic and structural doubleness also makes it a most convenient trope for the paradoxical dualities of both postmodern complicitous critique and postcolonial doubled identity and history. And indeed irony (...) has become a powerful subversive tool in the re-thinking and re-addressing of history by both postmodern and postcolonial artists.”(Hutcheon 6)

2.4 Magic Realism

“Although the origins of magic realism can be traced back to earlier times, the term was first coined by Franz Roh in 1925 to describe a tendency in German painting in the early twenties.” (Mzali 6) Magic realism widespread during the 20th century from Latin America to Europe. Some of the characteristic of this genre of fiction are identified as the “mingling and juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic or bizzare, skillful time shifts, convoluted and even labyrinthine narratives and plots, miscellaneous use of dreams, myths and fairy stories” as J.A.Cuddon wrote (quoted in Mzali, 7). In the words of Bill Ashcroft it is usually used in postcolonial criticism in order to “interrogate the assumptions of Western, rational, linear narratives” (quoted in Mzali, 7). The significant feature is its fusing the magic and reality, instead of putting them in opposition, which in fact results in making the irrational be a part of reality as much as the rational. Magic realism in some writings is used as a tool for the political and social criticism, which can be seen especially in Rushdie’s novels.

Magic realism is usually associated with non-Western cultures, what Alejo Carpentier, the writer who first elaborates the term, assigns “to the presence of exotic magic and myth in the magic realist work” (Mzali, 9). However it is still established in reality. “The repeated more or less direct allusions to History and the history of the margins consolidated the reputation of ‘postcolonial’ identity for magic realism.” (Mzali, 9-10) In postcolonial discourse it is used primarily as a weapon of the marginals to ‘fight’ againts the inherited imperial history. In this sense magic realism is not just a way to explain world differently but also some kind of resistance to the hegemonic imperialism and its perception of history.

3. Salman Rushdie

The famous “controversial” postcolonial writer was born in Bombay, India, to a middle-class Moslem family. He grew up in India and when he was fourteen he was sent to High School in England. During the war between India and Pakistan he with his parents moved to Karachi in Pakistan and joined reluctantly the Muslim exodus, which in fact influenced Rushdie heavily. He finished his studies at Cambridge (his father was also a Cambridge-graduate). Before he wrote his first novel, Rushdie worked in a television, then he was an actor in a theatre group and later an advertising copywriter.

Salman Rushdie made his debut in 1975 with the novel *Grimus*. The first one is mostly ignored by critics, it is conceived as more abstract in the style compared to Rushdie’s later works. In comparison to what was to follow *Grimus* was a failure. His second novel, *Midnight’s Children* written in 1981 won the Booker Prize and brought him fame crossing the border of the United Kingdom. Other excellent novels followed having some features in common – using myth, allegory, religion as a fundamental of the story. Rushdie’s narrative technique connected his books to magic realism including such English authors as Angela Carter or John Fowles.

However his undoubtedly most famous and most discussed novel is *Satanic Verses* (1988), a highly allegoric novel satirizing the role of Muhammad and Islam which was banned in India and South Africa and was also burned on some streets in England. Ayatollah Khomeini offered a million-dollar reward for Rushdie’s death and Rushdie was forced into hiding. During the period of fatwa⁵ violent protest in India, Pakistan and Egypt caused several deaths.

I purposely did not focus on this well-known book in my thesis and chose what is probably still seen as Rushdie’s most important novel - *Midnight’s Children* - as a pivotal work among the others for my analysis of Salman Rushdie’s writing within the group of postcolonial British writers. To give an analysis on his work is not an easy task.

Rushdie situates himself in a position of perpetual in-betweenness, a migrant caught between three countries, unable to exist comfortably in any one. The trajectory of his work (including his essays and journalism)

⁵ Fatwa is a religious decree issued by a Muslim leader

shows an increasing concern with metafictional issues of representing peripheral histories and experience through a combination of modernist metropolitan and Third World narrative styles adequate to the post-colonial experience. More problematically, his work is often concerned with locating himself in relation to the diaspora culture in Britain, which is reflected most clearly in his essays but also in the pattern of his novels that mirror his own migration and settlement - India, Pakistan, and Britain. (Shama)

In his works he exploits his hybridity and makes it one of his main themes. In the following paragraphs I will focus on the techniques he uses in his novels and essays as well as on the typical features of contemporary fiction included there.

3. 1 Migrancy and its ambivalence in Rushdie's work

Salman Rushdie in his writing combines “the traditions of Commonwealth literature, the Raj novel, and anticolonial polemic to record the totality of neo-colonialism as a world system, with its absurd combinations of satellite broadcasts and famines, popular uprisings and populist rant, forced migration and tourism” as Tim Brennan states (quoted in Shama) rather than using political resistance within diaspora communities dissimilarly to the writing of Hanif Kureishi for example. Though he is not nation-centered, Shaila Shama in his critical essay called *Salman Rushdie: The Ambivalence of Migrancy* (2001) emphasizes that “his work still remained obsessed with the space of the nation he had moved away from and the failures of its nationalism”(Shama). He situates his earlier novels in India and Pakistan, but unlike other postcolonial authors he does not see these countries “as indissolubly linked to the British mother node” (Shama). According to Shama Rushdie's Pakistan destroyed itself rather from the weight of its own imperfect history and its own exploitative elite, civil and military, than from its relationship with England (Shama). In this approach he essentially differs from other writers coming from the subcontinent who rather defend their nations in relation to Britain.

Rushdie's representations lean quite heavily on the literature of imperialism, on Western, imperial representations of India, which in fact influences his view on the topic of migrancy. Homi K.Bhabha, one of the postcolonial and postmodern critics, wrote:

The migrant culture of the “in-between”, the minority position, dramatizes the activity of culture’s untranslatability, and in doing so, it moves the question of culture’s appropriation beyond the assimilationist’s dream, or the racist’s nightmare, of a “full transmissal of subject-matter” and towards an encounter with the ambivalent process of splitting and hybridity that marks the indentification with culture’s difference. (quoted in Mohr 85)

In almost all the postcolonial writing there are perceptible the discomfort and the insecurity inherent in the position of migrant culture, in contrast with Salman Rushdie, who in his works turned the in-betweenness into the way of achieving success and into a positive view of migrancy. In reading his books we can find migrants which are as Bhabha writes „rendered special by their hybridity, and ‘hybrants’ of this kind are cast as agents of innovation and translation, as mediators between the cultures and creative inventors in various domains” (quoted in Mohr 86). In comparison with Kureishi who treats migrants as unhappy and lost personalities, Rushdie’s trope of migrancy gives the feeling of rather advantageous position of the migrant.

In his essay *Imaginary Homelands* (1992) Salman Rushdie entirely elided the troublesome issue of immigration. Shama calls this essay as an “ode to the pleasures of migrancy”, Rushdie himself speaks about “freedoms of the literally migrant” (Shama). His argument for the concept of so-called equal freedom is that writers not only in Britain but everywhere should not have to be tied to any national origins and traditions used in literature, because he points out that a diverse set of influences shapes an imagination of authors in postcolonialism. However, this argument omits the differences between migrants.

A first-generation migrant refers to a person who was born in one country and then migrated to another during their adolescent or adult life. First-generation migrants typically experience feelings of cultural hybridity because they must find a way to merge their previously constructed cultural identities with those that they must adopt for survival, or to fit in or because they prefer them. Second-generation migrants are the children of the firstgeneration migrants who are either born in the home country and leave it for the host country at a very young age, or are simply born in the host country. Second-generation

migrants experience as much cultural hybridity as their first-generation migrant parents. Instead of moving from one country to another and having to negotiate new cultural practices into their old ones, second-generation migrants find themselves caught between their parents' home cultural influences and their surrounding environments' cultural influences. (Nierste)

“Rushdie, whose entire career is based on the questioning of historical givens and beliefs, invokes the metafictional trope of migrancy to invoke an absolute of root-lessness and hybridity.” (Shama) Again, it is important to say that his rootlessness and hybridity is meant to be rather positive.

As Sabrina Hassumani, professor from Austin Community College in Texas, writes in her book *Salman Rushdie: a Postmodern Reading of His Major Works*, (2002) Rushdie's rather positive view and using of his migrancy-metaphore is still one of the major reservations that critics have levied against. Aside this positive approach, there are some potential limitations as a part of his view of migrancy. Hassumani often quotes Revathi Krishnaswamy, professor of postcolonial and anglophone literature from San Jose State University in California, in her book. In Krishnaswamy's words, “although the figure of migrancy proved useful in drawing attention to the marginalized, in problematizing conceptions of borders, and in critiquing the politics of power...it also appears to have acquired an excessive figurative flexibility that threatens to undermine severely the oppositional force of postcolonial politics” (quoted in Hassumani 129). In other words the migrancy in postcolonial writing became so overblown, mouth-filling and formless which led to the rejection of any meaningful specificity of history. The words “diaspora” and “exile” are in fact rather politically charged than carrying its histories of pain and suffering. Their only use is to designate a cross-cultural phenomenon. According to Krishnaswamy this is a sign of similarity between postmodern and postcolonial texts. “As a result, the complex ‘local’ histories and culture specific knowledges inscribed in postcolonial narratives get ‘neutralized’ into versions of postmodern ‘diversity’ according to which ‘others’ are seen, but are stripped of their ‘dense specificity’” (quoted in Hassumani 130). In contemporary postcolonial discourse the migrancy-metaphore does not contain the economic and political forces behind immigration. In Rushdie's words, “the effects of mass migration has been the creation of radically new types of human being: people who root themselves in ideas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things; people who have been obliged to define themselves – because they are so defined by others-

by their othersness; people in whose deepest selves strange fusions occur, unprecedented unions between what they were and where they find themselves” (Hassumani 130). Salman Rushdie combines features of postcolonial literature with those of postmodernist in his writing, but his omission of historical location and interpretation might be as well attributed to another method of Rushdie’s narrative – to magic realism, which will be discussed later. What may be assumed now is that Rushdie dematerializes the migrant into an abstract idea by highlighting mental or physiological processes over sociological or political ones. It becomes clear that he purposely minimizes the historical or material contexts of the Third World immigration, but for Krishnaswamy he also fails to account two fundamental factors of immigrant experience – “the exigencies of neo-colonial global capitalism determining the dispersal of ‘third world’ peoples, and the distinctly class- and gender- differentiated nature of immigrant experiences” (Hassumani 131).

My reading of Salman Rusdie’s metaphor of migrancy is focused on its positive message. Moving between cultures and across cultural divides, migrants who have successfully imbibed their hybridity can become key figures who facilitate a transcontinental interaction. Being an immigrant teaches you to settle with your experience and disorienting loss by making up a new world to live. It is therefore not surprising that many of the postcolonial writers produce appreciated works as they are bringing their new worlds to the literature. However, Rushdie’s message is somehow different than the message of the other postcolonial writers.

3.2 Hybridity

Salman Rushdie in his works intermingles and fuses various stories, mixes a range of genres of cultural resources both from the East and the West. His mingling also includes numerous languages, culture references and events from history into his story-telling. “Rushdie also develops and intertwines a grand multitude of characters across multiple timelines, settings, and cultures” (Nierste). I have mentioned the term “hybridity” several times in the preceding paragraphs (because it goes inseparably with migrancy in Rushdie’s view) and I will be using it throughout my whole thesis as I consider hybridity as a main theme in Rushdie’s writing, namely the “many connections, disruptions, migrations and translations between Eastern and Western worlds” (Nierste) included in the dominant theme. “He is deeply concerned with the interconnectivity and fusion of these two worlds and of the

peoples associated with and between these Easts and Wests” (Nierste) as he experiences it personally.

In the part analysing migrancy I gave hindsight about hybridity claiming that Rushdie turned the in-betweenness (or hybridity) into a direction for success and positive view of migrancy. I borrowed a paragraph from thesis written by Leslie Nierste in 2010 to show the main points of hybridity. Leslie Nierste in his thesis believes that

first Rushdie does paint for his readers a confusing and painful world in which the hybrid must learn to function; secondly Rushdie advocates the idea that every hybrid must come to terms with his or her own “migrant consciousness”, which is the transition from an awareness of dis-belonging to a realization and acceptance of one’s position as “something new”; thirdly Rushdie believes in the idea that a multicultural, hybridized world can exist and that such a world is both beautiful and preferable to cultural “purism”; and the last point is that Rushdie sees the hybrid as in the perfect position to help the world work towards such a multicultural and hybridized world because of his or her ability to appreciate and see the advantages of pluralism in a way that the non-hybrid cannot. (Nierste)

In his essay *Imaginary Homelands* Salman Rushdie from the very first page talks about the positives of being a migrant or hybrid. It is obvious how he stresses the importance of this theme and takes it personally. “Our identity is at once plural and partial” Rushdie says. “Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for the writer to occupy” (15). The characters, these cultural hybrids or hybrants, for one reason or another, become split cultural identities or are caught between multiple cultural influences. The result is a feeling of dislocation simultaneously with gaining a better position to appreciate the pluralistic nature of the contemporary world.

Rushdie personally knows the feeling of being a hybrid. Being born and bred in India and later Pakistan but spending most of his life in Britain, this transition from postcolonial countries, from the East, to the modern capitalistic country, to the West, gave him this valuable experience he often uses in his story-telling. In fact, most of the postcolonial writers have the same experience, but every single one handles it differently. “Let me suggest that Indian writers in England have access to a second tradition, quite apart from their own racial history. It is the culture and political history of the phenomenon of migration, displacement,

life in a minority group. We can quite legitimately claim as our ancestors the Huguenots, the Irish, the Jews; the past to which we belong is an English past, the history of immigrant Britain” (Rushdie, *Homelands* 20). I do not need to mention again that for Salman Rushdie the migrancy and hybridity bears a rather positive message.

Unlike other authors Rushdie states that a hybrid may rather gain from his oscillation between more cultures and the gain is the invaluable and glorified newness, achieved by bringing together two apparently incompatible attitudes. However, if something new is gained, undoubtedly something old has to be left behind as a metaphor for crossing the borders of the “third space”, as Bhabha calls it. Starting a new life in an entirely different world means leaving behind something traditional of the world you were born to.

On the novel *Midnight's Children* I will prove my preceding statements by using real examples from the book. Saleem Sinai, the narrator of the story, the magical child born at the midnight moment of Indian independence, the twin of the new India, alludes to the notion of hybrid identity when he says: “O eternal opposition of inside and outside! Because, a human being, inside himself, is anything but a whole, anything but homogeneous; all kinds of everything are jumbled up inside him, and he is one person one minute and another person the next” (Rushdie, *Children* 328). In his later approach towards his personal identity he gives us an even better picture of hybridity: “Who what am I? My answer: I am the sum total of everything that went before me, of all I have been seen done, of everything done-to-me. I am everyone everything whose being-in-the-world affected was affected by mine. I am anything that happens after I have gone which would not have happened if I had not come. (...). I repeat for the last time: to understand me, you'll have to swallow a world” (Rushdie, *Children* 440).

“*Midnight's Children* is commonly labelled ‘magic realism’ to emphasize its juxtaposition of two normally incompatible frameworks. The events in the novel refer to the world outside the text and to a familiar narrative of history relying on conventions of verisimilitude, yet much that occurs is frankly fantastic, involving superpowers, a divinely mandated destiny, and a wildly implausible personal connection to the events of history” (Kortenaar 17). It can be said that magic realism in this sense is a literary expression of cultural hybridity. The whole the novel is constructed on such binarities. The narrative itself is between “Indian spirituality and European worldliness”, the novel often pairs polar characters – Adam Aziz, the western-educated doctor, and Tai, the oral story-teller, together as a metaphor of changelessness and progress, Aziz as a husband to Reverend Mother, bulwark of tradition. And Saleem Sinai, English-language writer who reads aloud to illiterate Padma

representing “sorcerer’s lore” (Kortenaar 18). In the story these characters work as binary elements who in fact complement themselves and thus emphasize the role of hybridity within the story.

The problem with this polar view of hybridity is that England is seen as linear, modern and scientific and India as cyclical, traditional and religious. Such Orientalizing is the common subject of Rushdie’s critics. My point is that Salman Rushdie is somewhere between: although India and the West can always be distinguished, all identities everywhere are hybrid and mixed and such thing as a pure identity never existed. It is not so difficult to distinguish England’s influences in *Midnight’s Children*, the problem is to recognize where India stops and Orientalism begins. According to Neil Kortenaar “the blend of genres that produces magic realism does not result from a clash of meaning-systems, Rushdie’s magic realism is not the combination of two different modes but a single mode that highlights its internal division” (*Self* 19). The explanation is simple – Saleem declares that he patterned his narration on the tales told by Mary Pereira, his ayah, or Tai the old boatman. Within Mary’s narrative we can distinguish the rumours, the tittle-tattle as she calls it, she mixes the past of the myth and the present of the news, folk tale and myth with the personal experience, divine characters and real human beings. This represents a perfect example of magic realism. Saleem throughout his narration consults his memory with what Mary would (or Tai, another storyteller) say about it. Therefore “Saleem’s magic realism is a hybrid of orality (folktale) and literacy (history)” (Kortenaar 21). The second one I will explain later, but it is important to state that the rumours that Mary conveys as fact illustrate the manner in which history is arisen and presented. Apparently history lacks objectivity and parallels the function of memory and thus history embraces subjectivity in which person’s memory grasps particular and significant events to that person.

One of the techniques Rushdie often uses in his narrative is personification. In his conception personification is closely associated with hybridity. Salman Rushdie uses literalized idioms for description of events or persons. “Obvious cases in Rushdie would include the ‘birth of the nation’, the idea that a nation has ‘many parents’, and that the ‘heritage’ of India is Muslim and Hindu and Christian (thus Saleem’s Muslim, Hindu, and Christian parents). Many national allegories are confined largely to techniques of this sort” (Hogan). Figuratively saying, the idea of hybridity through personification is involved in *Midnight’s Children’s* characters bearing in fact more than just one personality. As was mentioned before, Tai, the old boatman, emblemizes some “tie” that binds the present to the past and people to their custom. “Nobody could remember when Tai had been young. He had

been plying this same boat, standing in the same hunched position, across the Dal and Nageen Lakes...forever” (Heffernan). He is timeless, thanks to him tradition he seems eternal. Opposed to Tai is Aadam-for-progress, with his two weaknesses – women (Naseem) and history. As Patrick Colm Hogan says in his essay *Midnight’s Children: Kashmir and the politics of identity* (2001) “she [Naseem] is the one woman to whom Aadam is draw, and allegorically, she is the nation - India, as imagined at a particular historical moment. To say that Aadam has a weakness for women is to say that he has a weakness for the imagined nation”.

Naseem is a perfect example of hybridity. Rushdie connects her with India in many ways. Later in the story she is known as Reverend Mother recalling Mother India, her face is disfigured by two huge moles representing India with East and West Pakistan. Especially in the first chapter ‘The perforated sheet’, when she is observed by her future husband Aadam through a perforated sheet, while he sees just only fragments that mirrors anyone’s partial view of a nation (as we do not sense the whole outright, but imagine it). “So gradually Doctor Aziz came to have a picture of Naseem in his mind, a badly-fitting collage of her severally-inspected parts. This phantasm of a partitioned woman began to haunt him, not only in his dreams. Glued together by his imagination” (Hogan). An important parallel is made when Rushdie uses the word partitioned. That definitely suggests what happened in 1947 when South Asia was divided into India and Pakistan. Naseem behaves as a whole which will be partitioned in opposition to Saleem, who represents India after 1947, the result of the partition.

Above all, the character of Naseem serves as a picture of the uncompromising, vehement tradition, the repudiation of progress, and “she is married to Aadam because modernity and reactionary traditionalism are wedded to one another. (...) The two are inseparable” (Hogan). Aadam also has a dual function – representing modernity but also people caught somewhere in the middle of the road from tradition to modernity, those who are not fully at home in either of the camps, not fully modernized generation which suffer from “alienating hybridity”. At this point it is obvious that Rushdie’s vision of hybridity is not in all cases so much positive and Aadam is a good example.

However, Rushdie put these characters together to either stress the hybridity of the story, but also in order to support his idea of the positivity of the hybrid identities. As he advises, the hybrid may take the best from both the “roots”. Saleem is constantly rectified by Padma, who on the other hand is profiting from his reading to her (as she is illiterate). Aadam cannot exist without his Naseem and though it is not apparent, Naseem cannot fully realize

herself without her husband. The connection between Tai and Aadam as the connection between modern and traditional is also of a high importance in the novel. But as can be seen on Tai – he chooses not to assimilate anything from the modern influences and subsequently he dies. It seems to be some metaphorical expression of the necessity of the assimilation in order to live the live fully.

3.3 History

It is a question whether to conceive Rushdie's narrative as an example of a historical novel. Several articles claim that Rushdie's novels do not follow the historical line or chronology of historical events, that he instead writes some kind of a fairy tale, an allegory isolating the relevant historical facts, and therefore he does not have anything in common with those contemporary authors who consider history as a main theme of their narrative. But there is another approach that reader can use to understand Rushdie's concept of history.

Midnight's Children is historically specific. Though it may seem that the novel lacks attention to history of the nation, it is just the way Rushdie, through Saleem, narrates his story treating the specific historical incidents in the plot, but with "highly precise historical particularity" (Shama). According to Patrick Colm Hogan, the novel "undermines traditional notions of historical truth through its self-conscious use of errors". When Saleem informs the reader that "re-reading my work, I have discovered an error in chronology. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date" (Rushdie, *Children* 198) he is admitting that he got the date wrong, thus Saleem (Rushdie) also informs us that there is a correct date, the historical fact. However, for Salman Rushdie historical facts do not matter, "what really matters is the common belief about history"(quoted in Hogan). So the finding out what occurred in the history is crucial to be encoded in the events and persons of the novel.(Hogan) Moreover Rushdie stresses the importance of the distorting proces of memory over the historical facts. He states that the errors within the story are used to interrupt the narrative and force the reader to the questioning. Saleem as an unreliable narrator is an example of human fallibility and the limitation of the memory. The notion of 'memory's truth', is highlighted and of more importance than actual historical accuracy.

In *Midnight's Children*, "Saleem offers us his autobiography, but his story is also a history of twentieth-century India; every personal event in the life of Saleem and his family is inextricably linked to the historical and political events that unfold in India" (Price).The answer on what precisely is Rushdie saying about history can be find in David W.Price's

article *Use and Abuse of History in Midnight's Children* (1994), where he analyzes Rushdie's (hence Saleem's) narration according to what Friedrich Nietzsche in his essay *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* (1873) calls critical mode of history.

In Nietzsche's philosophy we can distinguish three modes of history – the antiquarian, the monumental, and the above mentioned critical. In Rushdie's fiction we find all three of them. “In his novel, (he) depicts both the antiquarian and the monumental modes of history as devastating weeds. (...) In India, only the third mode, critical history, appears to have the potential to contribute to life.” (Price) From this perspective we can say that Saleem's critical history serves as some counter-narrative to the “official” history presented by those who use the other two techniques.⁶ For better understanding, I would use Nietzsche's words: “the person who wants to do something great will appeal to monumental history; the person who wants to preserve tradition will espouse an antiquarian history; and only he who is oppressed...and who wants to throw off this burden at any cost, has need of critical history”(Price). All these approaches are going to be discussed in the paragraph following.

In Saleem's eyes William Methwold, with his desperate admiration of Britain and its credits on development of India, is representing the antiquarian mode of history. He preverses and reverses the past and looks back with piety. As he expresses to Ahmed Sinai: “You'll admit we weren't all bad: built your roads. Schools, railway trains, parliamentary system, all worthwhile things” (Rushdie, *Children* 126). Yet, as Saleem remarks later in the story, it is just Methwold's presence more than anything else that holds together the idea of the British traditions.

The character of the Widow, Indira Gandhi in *Midnight's Children* serves as an illustration of the monumental approach to history, “a mode that Nietzsche claims responds to the ‘demand that greatness shall be everlasting’” (Price). She is a member of the ruling dynasty, her first appearance in the story is in Saleem's nightmare, where she resembles the Goddess Kali – “Death and Destroyer”. She apparently represents something monumental. By being Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi implies the fame of past leadership and her name “associates her with one of the few truly deified humans in modern times“. Also through Saleem's eyes the Widow, Indira Gandhi, conflates her own image with that of the traditional Mother goddess. This might seem extreme at first, even though she was perceived like that by many Indians. Her cruel acting during the Emergency⁷ might be seen to be analogous with the

⁶ In the book represented by Indira Gandhi and William Methwold

⁷ 21 month period in which Indira Gandhi as a Prime Minister of India effectively bestowed on her the power to rule by decree, suspending elections and civil liberties

acting of Devi, the Mother goddess, which is what Saleem by his critical approach to history wants to indicate. “The lost opportunity of the Children of Midnight occurred because the monumentalist approach was used by the fledgling, independent Indian government to maintain and strengthen its hold on power. Rushdie’s novel, in part, is an examination of the consequences of choosing such an approach” (quoted in Price). Indira Gandhi was, of course, among the main traitors. Rushdie himself admitted in an interview that: “If *Midnight’s Children* had any purpose...it was an attempt to say that the thirty-two years between independence and the end of the book didn’t add up to very much, that a kind of betrayal had taken place, and that the book was dealing with the nature of that betrayal”(quoted in Price). Saleem in his effort to break the cyclical monumentalism employs the critical mode of history and his counter-narrative might be called as “new myth of freedom”. A new myth of freedom expresses Saleem’s hope that the Indians would adopt different and new position, described by Nietzsche as a goal of the critical mode: “It is an attempt to give oneself, as it were *a posteriori*, a past in which one would like to originate in opposition to that in which one did originate” (Price). Saleem narrates the history of India throughout the story about the children of midnight in the form of his autobiography and in this strategy he chooses the past he prefers. In addition, the person using the critical mode of history often chooses the past opposite to the past in which he or she originates. Saleem in his approach struggles against the mythic and religious past, against the traditional and monumental view of history, which is often used in political propaganda (as could be seen in Indira Gandhi’s acting) in constructing an “official” version based on “facts”, which Saleem also opposes. Saleem’s criticism is turned against both the traditionalism and modern form of government manipulation to offer some objective truth.

In Saleem’s constructed history the will and desires of all the people are reflected. He sees the true spirit of India in Mian Abdullah, the Hummingbird, founder of the Free Island Convocation – the antagonist of the Muslim League demanding the partition of India after independence (and as we know, they prevailed and Pakistan became a separate state). In Saleem’s eyes the Hummingbird embodies the hope of the widely diverse society with differing religions and social classes. After his assassination these features reappear in Picture Singh, the snake-charmer and the head of the magicians’ ghetto. “Picture Singh,” writes Saleem, “would follow in the footsteps of Mian Abdullah” (Rushdie, *Children* 477). He selects the Hummingbird and Picture Singh and their visions as possibilities for India’s future according to his view. (Price)

In his critical history Saleem apparently elides the “great” figures and builds up his story on millions of people from different groups among India’s population. Mahatma Gandhi, the person highly expected to be an essential character in such a novel about the birth of India and the years following hardly appears at all. The Nehru-Ghandi family is also presented only briefly and often allegorically. “Instead, Saleem records the daily activities of different “common” people and reproduces their wonderful language and idiosyncratic locutions” (Price). Among the “common” people we can involve Tai, the boatman, Saleem’s grandmother called Reverend Mother, characters in magicians’ ghetto, all of them with their intermingling of languages and own culture. Similarly, Ayooba, Shaheed, Farooq and, of course, Saleem as ordinary soldiers become our guides during the Bangladesh war. “In each of these instances, the focus is on the common, everyday experience of average people, and it is their experience, in Saleem’s estimation, that comprises a more accurate history of India” (Price). In such an approach there can be seen a similarity with magic realism – focusing on a huge number of average people could be seen as one of its most significant features. This will be discussed later.

Analysing history from Rushdie’s (or Saleem’s) view, one more term ought not to be forgotten – Saleem’s chutnification of history, a metaphor for writing resembling the pickling process, and pickle jars as a name for the thirty chapters in the book. And these jars are full of various delicacies that Saleem prepared for the reader.

He describes his “special blends”, which include “memories, dreams, ideas.” Chutnification involves “a certain alteration, a slight intensification of taste.” “The art,” he writes, “is to change flavor in degree, but not in kind; and above all...to give it shape and form – that is to say meaning,” which will produce the “taste of truth”. (Price)

Chutnification process in the story is used to emphasize the necessity to make truths sensed through the sensing organs such as the eyes, nose, ears, fingers which “help shape and form the very story that we narrate to ourselves and declare to be true”(Price).

However ambiguous *Midnight’s Children* are there is one thing we know for sure. Rushdie creates Saleem to stand in an opposition to all historians, either political, social or cultural (as mentioned before, in the story mainly in opposition to William Methwold and Indira Ghandi). According to him, artist and politicians are “natural rivals that seek to make reality in their own image” (Price) In other words, they are doing the same thing but seek for

the contrary, which is in fact the “myriad dimension of past experience” (Price) in contrast with historical truth. “In *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie represents the conflict between artistic and political rendering of history.”(Price)

Salman Rushdie is a master of allegory. In the context of the history of India a critical approach to history in his novel becomes an instrument for criticising the country’s political and social background. Saleem is “inviting the reader to participate in creating and discovering an alternative to the typical historical traditions of historical truth as merely recorded facts: memory and the process of recalling memories produces individual histories that overlap some aspects of recorded history yet remain unique, individual versions of history” (Santos). By using historical fact varying from the “official facts” in his narrative Rushdie constructs some plea for the freedom of our opinions. The purpose of fiction in Rushdie’s opinion is “to draw new and better maps of reality and make new languages with which we can understand the world”(Price) What follows from interviews and his own critical essays is the estimation of the times coming when the truth becomes manipulated especially by governments. Thus we are forced to look at the world in some way, but there are also some other ways, so that writers remains one of the last people able to make an entire narrative opposite to “unidimensional, simplistic, reductive, slogan-laden messages offered up by government and ‘free market’ advertising”(Price). Rushdie’s Saleem is used as an instrument for such acting. In his fabulous narrative he rejects both Indira Ghandi’s monumentalist history and the nostalgic vision of British imperialism represented by William Methwold to construct his own past.

3.4 Magic Realism in *Midnight’s Children*

A quotation from the book *Self, Nation, Text in Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children* written by Neil Ten Kortenaar could be used for the description of *Midnight’s Children* in the field of magic realism:

Midnight’s Children are commonly labelled magic realism for its juxtaposition of two normally incompatible frameworks. The events in the novel refer to the world outside the text and to a familiar narrative of history relying on conventions of verisimilitude, yet much that occurs is frankly fantastic, involving superpowers, a divinely

mandated destiny, and a wildly implausible personal connection to the events of history. (Kortenaar 17)

Saleem Sinai is born at the exact time of the independence of India and together with hundreds of other children is endowed with magical powers. His personal history is a parallel to the history of his country. In his narrative he mixes the real events with magic and also uses references to ancient mythology. Events such as nationalist propaganda or Emergency led by Indira Gandhi and many more are all seen through the magic realist lens. In fact, Salman Rushdie uses magic realism as an instrument of denunciation of Indian political figures' attempt to appropriate truth so as to serve their interests.

Magic realist writers, "thinking they could not represent the events in a discourse of realism, invented the continuum to present the truth and subvert it with astounding events. But in its challenge against the realist conventions magic realism does not totally dent the power of realism; in textual terms it also employs features of realism in order to subvert them from within the conventions" (Iskenderoglu). For Salman Rushdie magic realistic mode becomes a manner not only to present his version of decolonized countries, but also an opportunity to break away from the manner in which India has been presented in Britain. It breaks the previous binary categorization of the world into the colonizer and the colonized, in which all presentations of India relied on the genre of realism and were thus perceived as truthful. Magic realism, however, with its inherent relativist stance, tells the reader that there is not only one version of history. Magic realism with its mixture of genres, cultures and ideologies, with using different sources of inspiration recognizes various dimensions of reality and thus is also linked to the favor of a positive perception of hybridity. Events seen through the magic lens do not signal a withdrawal from history into mythology, but stand for the more critical look on them. The co-existence of multiple realities within the same space becomes a metaphor for the multi-faceted aspect of history and, by using it, Rushdie makes for himself the propitious space to present sharp criticism of the political life in India culminating in the Seventies during Gandhian regime.

The book is full of magical and mystical stories in addition to its oral storytelling narration, while supernatural events and heroes may also be found within. Saleem, however, is an unreliable narrator because of his making mistakes in chronological orders of events. However, these mistakes are not result of Rushdie's interest in developing magic aspect to the detriment of the 'real', they are meant to disrupt the world of facts and accuracy.

In *Midnight's Children* there are many examples of magic realism. It seems like there is no direct access to the reality in the book, it consists of other realities. (Iskenderoglu) At the beginning of the novel Saleem introduces himself:

I was born in the city of Bombay...once upon a time. No, that won't do, there is no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No it's important to be more...On the stroke of midnight as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectfull greeting as I came. Oh spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence I tumbled forth into the world. (Rushdie, *Children* 3)

In fact, Saleem's narrative begins thirty two year earlier, so as a protagonist, his role of the narrator is also fore-grounded. He tells the story he has heard and has remembered and therefore gives us one of the many versions of how the past is reconstructed in the present. As was mentioned before, this process according to Saleem is called 'chutnification of history, the pickling of time' and every chapter in the novel is like a pickle jar containing special blends. Saleem very soon realizes the presence of another world within the real world that exludes his family and friends. It is the world of one thousand and one children born during the first day of India's independence, the world shared only by Saleem's *Midnight's Children* Congress. Though rather magic, the child soon finds out they do exist, and through them he is able to discover the various aspects of reality of his country. Thus Saleem's magical skills do not force a withdrawal into fantasy, but instead give him the opportunity to touch on variety of social and political issues, which is, in fact, the major theme in the book as was presented in previous chapters.

An illusion of reality in the book is represented by introducing people or place which could exist in history, but the reality is disrupted by mythical allusions commonly used in the story. Rushdie especially uses figures from Hindu mythology. Shiva, Saleem's rival, shares a great power of destruction with the mythological god Shiva. Likewise, Devi, the Mother Goddess is used, rather ironically, as a description of Indira Ghandi, and her cruel actions are liken to another Goddess Kali.

"One of the most important areas in the book in the use of magic realism is that only family members show the great supernatural incidents except *Midnight's Children*"

(Iskenderoglu). This could be seen in the character of Naseem Aziz, Saleem's grandmother. She is called Reverent Mother, what is supposed to symbolize India, and is portrayed like traditional Indian women dedicating her life to her family. Her magic gift is the ability to see other's dreams. "(...) Reverend Mother began to dream her daughter's dreams...She eavesdropped on her daughter's dreams, just to know what they were up to" (Rushdie, *Children* 55). Saleem's grandfather, Dr. Adam Aziz, is also described as having magical power. His nose could envisage what happens. Saleem claims he inherited his magical powers from his adopted grandparents. Still the most magical is the telepathic ability of Saleem and other children of midnight, but Saleem loses his gift when he crosses the borders of India only to discover his other ability similar to his grandfather. He uses his nose to smell all kinds of things and emotions. "...only when I was sure of my mastery of physical scent did I move on to those other aromas which only I could smell: the perfumes of emotions and all the thousand and one drives which make us human" (Rushdie, *Children* 317). However, many more magical gifts could be found in the book, either more or less important - sisters making every man who sees them falling hopelessly in love with them, a boy with the ability to step into mirrors and reemerge through any reflective surface in the land, others with the ability of transforming themselves either in size or in sex and so on. Or Saleem's sister Jamila for instance, can communicate with animals.

To sum up, plenty of magical abilities are given to various characters in the story. Rushdie uses all the magic events and abilities for his allegories. "He uses magic realism for the symbols, metaphors and satire." (Iskenderoglu) The main allegory is when Saleem is born at the stroke of midnight and also at the very first second of India's independence. This can symbolize "that India's independence is magical, because the Europeans give the Indians an opportunity to present themselves as a country. However, the fact that the midnight's children's magical gifts have been taken by Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is a symbol that India rejects the opportunity given by the British". Thus, *Midnight's Children* are usually read as a national allegory. Magic realism is used to "undermine the dominant Western paradigm that equated truth with fact and imagination with falsehood". The line between the rational world and the magical is blurred to the point that the two are inseparably intertwined. Likewise, in the story history, memory and the imagination are all shown to contribute to the writing of Saleem's narrative.

4. Hanif Kureishi

British novelist and screenwriter Hanif Kureishi represents the second generation of immigrants, unlike Salman Rushdie who is among the first generation. Hanif Kureishi was born in 1954 in the Greater London suburb of Bromley in Kent. Though he is often compared to writers such as Salman Rushdie or Zadie Smith, his perspective as a fully Westernised middle class son of an immigrant father makes him unique. He is essentially influenced by Western traditions which he has adopted and used them in his writing, bringing new aspects to the British contemporary literature.

His first novel and also the focus of my interest in this thesis is called *The Buddha of Suburbia* and was first published in 1990. It was an immediate success, possibly because it is set in a politically and ideologically turbulent period during which Britain experienced a rapid demographic shift to a multicultural society. The struggle of Britain with its status as a postcolonial power in parallel with the personal journey of the main protagonist Karim to find out who he really is are the book's main themes. In fact, *The Buddha of Suburbia* examines the immigrant condition and explores the multi-faceted theme of identity from cultural and social perspectives. The story is full of colourful and incisive portraits of the immigrant experience, the clashes of cultures, the struggles of class, the elitism of art and it also focuses on the generation gap, all on the background of the 1970's London with its kaleidoscope of fashion, music and politics. Though using a historical context, the novel is primarily a study of universal and timeless problems of identity and alienation, especially experienced by the first and second generation immigrants.

4.1 The (National) Identity and Migrancy in Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*

In 1941, influenced by the crisis of a protracted world war, George Orwell presented his observation on the problem of nationhood. He claimed that the identity of the nation "relies on an amass conception of unilateral sameness within a group or community of individuals". It is formed by a "sense of timeless cultural tradition", "rigid principles of social classification" and notions of "ethnic origin"(quoted in Ilona 88). According to Orwell, these conditions can provide a perceived community with a sense of certainty and bring it together in extreme cases, like wars for example. The identity of community as a whole can be seen

only through an interaction with another community. However, according to Orwell, Britain's national wholeness is, or at least appears to be, most cohesive when compared to some excluded Other. "The condition of being an individual (or group) distinct from the surrounding environment can only be understood through an appreciation of the complementary network of interactions which that individual (or group) has with their surrounding environment" (Ilona 88). The mutable notion of nationalism is the main focus of Hanif Kureishi, but his works are in direct contrast to Orwell's conception. He calls for "revitalized and broader self-definition" (Ilona 88) in the evaluation of Britishness.

It is generally believed that the nation identity of the British has transformed over the last fifty years, and this was caused primarily by migrants coming from the outreaches after the Second World War. However, such a social change has resulted in a disjuncture and relation anxiety. In 1953, a number of governmental and voluntary organizations produced social statistics about the "black segment of the new migrant communities in Britain" (Ilona 91). Surprisingly, the incompatibility of the black migrant community was claimed to be the result. Step by step "racism was institutionalized, legitimized and nationalized" (Ilona 92).

Many Kureishi's works reflect his own experience of relations and interactions between people of different cultures or background in Britain. As was mentioned earlier, he was born in 1954, only after the social disorder begun, to a Pakistani father and an English mother. He was born and grew up in suburbs and his mixed heritage influenced him heavily. He alone do not agree with his placement among the postcolonial writers. When he was asked about his postcoloniality, he answered: "I can't think about myself as a postcolonial writer" (Stanecka). It sounds like some kind of trauma or the fear of being placed among postcolonial and thus minoritarian writers is upon him. His Pakistani heritage he is instantaneously aware of makes a boundaries between himself and the 'normal' inhabitants in Britain. His struggle against the marginalization of people with mixed origin is obvious in his words: "Critics have written that I'm caught between two cultures. I'm not...I'm British, I've made it in England" (Stanecka). Kureishi's deep feeling of being limited and trapped in a stuffy category induced him to abandon 'ethnic' matters and in this he differs from Salman Rushdie. He transformed his experiences of alienation and exclusion into the main character of *The Buddha of Suburbia*. The necessity of a denial of self and a total assimilation to the cultural and sub-cultural background in order to integrate into the society is evident in the young protagonist Karim:

We wasted days and days dancing in the Pink Pussy Club, yawning at Fat Mattress at the Croydon Greyhound, ogling strippers on Sunday mornings in a pub, sleeping through Godard and Antonioni films, and enjoying the fighting at Millwall Football Ground, where I forced Changez to wear a bobble-hat over his face in case the lads saw he was a Paki and imagined I was one too. (Kureishi 98)

Kureishi's first novel can be read as a an act of self-determination "through the externalization of the ambivalent discourse of national identity" (Ilona 98) achieved by a technique that can be called 'playing-not-me' (term used by Ilona 98).

The Buddha of Suburbia may be perceived as an Bildungsroman. Therefore, two main characters need to be presented in the part examining identity – the father and the son, Haroon and Karim – the father representing the first generation immigrant and Karim representing the second generation. Karim is the narrator of the story and through his eyes we can gain the experience of being of mixed nationality. At the beginning of the novel he introduces himself: "I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories (...) the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not"(Kureishi 3). He shows only a small interest in his ethnicity, he is more concerned similarly to ordinary teenager with clothes, music, sex,. He comes from a lower middle class family, lives in suburbs and so he measures life by possessions of money (the symbol of success he sees in his auntie Jean and uncle Ted with their posh suburban adress and lawn parties).

Significantly, the novel is divided into two parts entitled 'In the Suburbs' and 'In the City'. For Karim, the suburbs mean something predictable, complacent, staid and boring, while the city represents hope, discovery, opportunity and excitement and "thousands of black people everywhere, so [he] wouldn't feel exposed" (Kureishi 125). Yet in the city he soon learns he will not be fully accepted into high society. Though his "authenticity" is a ticket in, he is not able to compete with people born into such background. However Karim feels he does not really wholly indentify with either the Pakistani or the English roots. Such rootlessness means a weighty obstruction for him. Not only he is again and again reminded of his being different, but his identity is characterised by his non-Englishness, in spite of how English he feels, and this results in a deep frustration which is apparent throughout the novel. In the city, Karim finally finds out who he really is. As the director Shadwell declares, it is

Karim`s “destiny (...) to be a half-caste in England...belonging nowhere, wanted nowhere”(Kureishi, 141). .

Unlike Karim, his father Haroon is the first generation Indian Muslim immigrant. He may be highly influential for his son, but some differences remain between the two characters due to their different backgrounds as a first and second generation migrants. The question of personal identity is therefore much more crucial in Haroon`s case. Haroon`s Indian immigrant status seems to play a central role in his life.

His immigrant identity is obvious through his appearance as well as through certain aspects of his life. He still cannot find his way around his local area though having been living in London over twenty years and he is still not used to eat “Western” food. This behaviour shows his lack of integration and thus a reader`s perception of Haroon is that of an immigrant who has not managed to integrate and fully adapt to British society. (Very similar example could be seen in Monica Ali`s *Brick Lane* (2003) in the main protagonist Nazneen). The idea of a lack of Haroon`s integrations is very much encouraged throughout the story. The reader sees a picture of a rather passive man, who has somehow given up. After the dissolution of his marriage and later the break-up with Eva, he is seen as a failure by both his British and Indian family and also by the society in general – ethnically by being an immigrant and economically by his social status. (paraphrased from Andersen et al.) Such position in society leads to his abandonment of hope for the future and resigned passivity.

Throughout the story Haroon`s metamorphosis can be perceived. With the guidance of Eva, he ceases to struggle for becoming English in order to fit in, and starts to utilize the differences he possesses. He transforms his ‘failures’ into tools helping him achieve respect and recognition. As a guru he is an example of exaggerated authentication, a process of overestimating the qualities of being Indian, of being different: “(...) 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” (Kureishi 21). Karim at first seems to admire his father, however his admiration is of short duration because in his eyes such a sudden return to roots is viewed as inauthentic after twenty years of attempted assimilation. (paraphrased from Andersen et al.) Haroon manages to find his way and gain respect and thereby gain the feeling of belonging. However there is another person responsible for his success – Eva. It seems as if success were inextricably linked to the assimilation to the British background.

“It is the existential condition of migrancy that proves a significant trope in the reconfiguration of identity as an wholly interactive and mutable rather than fixed and timeless

idea in the *The Buddha of Suburbia*” (Ilona 98). In this statement by Anthony Ilona identity is meant to be influenced by continual relocations a constant encounter with the outside world and the idea of in-betweenes. It is similar to what Salman Rushdie writes in his essay *Imaginary Homelands* about the uncircumscribed conception of identity: “We (...) have been forced by cultural displacement to accept the provisional nature of all truths, all certainties. We cannot lay claim to Olympus, and are thus released to describe our worlds in the way in which all of us, whether writers or not, perceive it from day to day” (12-13). National identity here is seen as a “pre-given concept of geo-cultural or ethnic similitude” (Ilona 98). Caught in so-called in-betweenes, a place between two or more worlds with just fragmented memories of home and attempted assimilation to the new world, the migrant achieves a sense of national belonging. Rushdie’s migrancy was analyzed in the previous part and in *The Buddha of Suburbia* Hanif Kureishi occupies the same stance.

The condition of migrancy in *Buddha* firstly highlights the contradictory “referral to the alterity of the extrinsic world as a means of maintaining the idea of inward homogeneity, stability and timelessness”, secondly it shows the “instability and diversity of the intrinsic life of the nation” (Kureishi 99). In *Buddha* these are shown in Haroon, the Buddha of suburban Bromley. Though living over twenty years in a London’s suburb, he is still comparatively reflecting the uniformity of British life with the fulfilling enjoyable life in his homeland Pakistan. He feels that he is somehow tied to Pakistan more than to Britain. The second instance perceived by Kureishi is that of the similarity and larger relations between home and abroad and the suburb and the city. Haroon and Karim undertake such kind of migration when moving to West Kensington: “The move from the suburbs to ‘London proper’ becomes a local, miniaturized version of postcolonial migrancy and culture-shock – the move from ex-colony to metropolis. This London not only includes ‘the world’ in the sense of peoples, it also replicates within its borders the world’s spatial patterning”(Ilona 100). London in Kureishi’s writing is a mecca for the migrants, it shows a positive signs of diversity and social and cultural interaction. Kureishi’s depiction of the city will be further analyzed later.

London gives Karim the feeling of cultural diversity without the threat of being excluded that Karim could feel earlier when hanging out with Changez. There are many ‘excluded identities’ which allow Karim “not to feel exposed to those who do share an exclusive sense of belonging”(Ilona 100). For Karim moving from Bromley to Kensington represents an escape from adolescence to adulthood freedom (that can be seen in the parallel to bildungsroman). Not only for him the city means an escape. Eva finds a new career as an interior designer and Karim’s father Haroon builds his career as a guru for the metropolitan

bourgeoisie. As the critic John Clement Ball states in an essay entitled *The Semi-Detached Metropolis: Hanif Kureishi's London* (1996) “(The small-scale migration) as performed by Karim, Charlie, Eva, and the ‘new’ Haroon, results in a sensual pleasure, cunning, and the exploitation of identity as a fabricated image” (quoted in Ilona 100). In this statement it is obvious that the city in contemporary fiction is treated as prestigious and moving to it as a way to achieve happiness in life.

One more term needs to be explained when talking about identity and migrancy - “‘identity as a fabricated image’ – with regard to Kureishi’s depiction of London as the site in which identities shift and are performed.”(Ilona 100) As was mentioned before, the second part of *Buddha* is called ‘In the city’. London is depicted as a city without the stifling tension of suburbs, a city, where Karim faces an “unbounded interactive notions of British identity”(Ilona 101), where he can hide his mixed heritage because the city is full of cultural diversities and ethnicities. Kureishi’s London of “thousands of blacks”(Ilona 101) is stuffed with culture minorities and is inevitably influenced by them, and this London allows to perform the different identity. Therefore, Haroon becomes a fake Buddha and also Karim shows his difference when he takes up the role of Mowgli in the theatre. In Karim’s generation identity is seen as something mutable, and thus different identities are easier to assimilate. For Haroon and especially for Karim their new identity in London “becomes a dynamic, flexible and interactive concept” (Ilona 101). In playing-not-me as Anthony Ilona calls this technique they are actually playing a different version of themselves, shifting from the boundaries of identity they are caught somewhere in between the positive approval and a negative stereotype “as the route to an elevated sense of self-knowledge and worth” (Ilona 102).

4.2 Hybridity of the in-betweenes

Hanif Kureishi is often criticized as well as valued for his Anglo-Asian and insider-outsider point of view. His can be perceived as a hybrid identity and he knows the sense of belonging nowhere, of absolute rootlessness. It is very similar to Salman Rushdie who is in the same position though he belongs to the first generation of migrants. The sense of being in between two cultures is then obvious in Rushdie’s as well as in Kureishi’s works. In *Buddha* Karim declared his hybridity in the very first line, as was quoted in the preceding part. By denying his pure Englishness by the word ‘almost’, he places himself between two different cultures. Yet he is not enchanted by his mixed origin, because he knows he is made inferior,

which makes him dream about some change in his appearance. Though he acquires English language and culture, his identity is “at once plural and partial” as Rushdie writes (*Homelands* 15). The tradition in which he has been brought up is already ingrained in his personality. Despite his stubborn struggle for Britishness by his adoration of tea and cycling and English music, he is still reminded of his origin. When he wants to date Helen, an English girl, her father says: “She doesn’t go out with boys. Or with wogs. (...) We don’t want you blackies coming to the house”(Kureishi 40). In this manner Karim is offended by Helen’s father just because the father feels more rooted in the country than Karim though he was also born in England.

Here it is important to say that there are differences between the postcolonial writers of the first and the second generation. Rushdie’s, and thus first generation’s in general, view of hybridity was analyzed earlier. Kureishi’s, and thus second generation’s, hybridity is often associated with miscegenation. Born in England, his feeling of racial expatriation is stronger than that of the cultural expulsion, a feeling which is more painful for the first generation of migrants. Having been brought up in India it is not possible for them to forget “home”. The first generation might feel as trapped between two worlds, two continents, between remembering and forgetting. They could not easily live in either India or in England, which in fact makes them hybrids even for themselves. This could be seen in Karim’s father Haroon or his brother Anwar, as was stated earlier.

Haroon’s nostalgia for “home” is misunderstood by Karim: “[f]or years there were both happy to live like Englishmen. (...) Now, as they aged and seemed settled here, Anwar and Dad appeared to be returning internally to India, or at least to be resisting the English here. It was puzzling: neither of them expressed any desire actually to see their origins again”.(64) Surprisingly, the hybrid characters usually reject the idea of returning “home”.

Though Kureishi’s view of hybridity is rather negative, frustrating the identity with feeling of rootlessness, but it may also be concluded that in some sense it makes the hybrid ones stronger and more resistant than others. Here Rushdie’s advice to take the best from both cultures seems to be valuable as for him the multiplicity is better than the feeling of insufficiency. The hybrids are constantly under the process of transformation as can be seen in *The Buddha of Suburbia* and other Kureishi’s works. Karim is shifting from one identity to another when, in the least expected moment on his uncle’s funeral, he realizes: “I did feel looking at these strange creatures now – the Indians – that in some way these were my people, and that I’d spent my life denying or avoiding that fact. I felt ashamed and incomplete at the same time, as if half of me were missing, and as if I’d been colluding with my enemies, those

whites who wanted Indians to be like them” (Kureishi 212). This only confirms the idea of changeability rooted inside the hybrid ones.

What may be concluded about the hybridity from Kureishi’s points of view is that it is even more difficult for the second generation migrants to settle up in England and assimilate into this country, though they were born there. The hybridity in this sense is linked with the feeling of deep frustration, alienation, with experiencing racism. They are constantly remained of their being “Other”, which results in either a more vigorous effort to prove that they are in fact Englishmen or in absolute passivity and reconciliation with the fact of being always somewhere in between. Apparently, most of the writings of Hanif Kureishi are more or less autobiographical as he puts there his own feelings of hybridity that he experienced during his school years.

4.3 From the Suburbs to the City

In Kureishi’s works there is another recurring motif – an escape, the need to be on the move. It represents another postcolonial heritage. Not only searching for identity, but also “the move” is essential in Kureishi’s earlier writings. The postcolonial escape is caused by the hybrid feeling of in-betweenes and alienation of the migrants. The motif of the escape could be of two sorts – the literal and the metaphorical one, and it is hard to state which one is of higher interest. In Kureishi’s works and primarily in *The Buddha of Suburbia* there the need of the move to the centre, in its most common direction to the city of London is significant. It is probable that Hanif Kureishi in writing about such an escape reflects his own aspirations and dreams of life-changing movement. Similarly, Karim dreams about leaving the poor area of suburban Bromley. London used to be a place of desire for many people in post-war England. Yet, as Salman Rushdie writes, London was “no more than a dream” (*Homelands* 18). Indians were coming to the London with their hopes for a better life, but they soon lost their illusions and their rage became a sort of rebellion.

Kureishi’s works are preoccupied with the images of London, and he is some kind of an ardent devotee of London. He depicts London as a city offering freshness, adventure and primarily progress. As was mentioned earlier, it is a city which is able to hide the unwanted. He is aware of the two faces of London where the poverty of one bank of the river Thames is overshadowed by the affluence of the second one. The division of *Buddha* into two parts – In the Suburbs and In the City – only supports such idea.

The suburbs are usually loathed by young protagonists who dream about better and also wealthier existence. Karim in *Buddha* likes to remind the reader how much he hates suburbs: “I had continue my journey into London and a new life, ensuring I got away from people and streets like this” (Kureishi,97). Even when achieving his dream of the move to the city, he could not cut off himself from comparing the two parts of London. An escape to the London represents for Kureishi’s characters including Karim some kind of a quest for identity which they could not fulfil in the suburbs. Despite Rushdie’s observation of London as nothing more than just a dream, in Kureishi’s view it is an imaginary place where one can achieve Englishness so desperately desired. It is interesting that both generations of migrants have in common such view of a London as though it was hereditary. The admiration of London is even intensified by Karim’s image of the city as a multicultural place of ethnicity or cultural traditions where anyone can belong. Such an attitude can be called a complex of the suburbs.

In comparison to Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* Kureishi’s London appears to be a harmonious place where one can gain a new national and personal identity. It is definitely caused by his admiration and fascination with the city. Karim in *Buddha* shares the same attitude. Coming to the city full of colours and sounds is refreshing for him, and though it did not solve all his problems, he does not feel discouraged and continues in his quest for the fulfilled life. He soon finds out that the feeling of safety and possible invisibility inside the crowd is mingled with the feeling of alienation and loneliness. However, Karim’s first thrill of London is soon replaced with disillusionment as the main protagonist becomes tired of its bustling crowds and the feeling of an absolute anonymity.

By division of the book into earlier mentioned two parts, it could seem that “the novel is straightforwardly linear” (Thomas) as well as Karim progress from the margins to the city and from the lower class to the metropolitan middle classes. Thus it can be seen as superficial novel about the difference between ugly suburbs and thriving London. The role of the city is very important in Kureishi’s works. All his main protagonists of mixed origin come from the suburbs, similarly to the author himself, and long for living in the city. Their dream of escaping to the centre is both literal, as a way out of the grubby suburb, and metaphorical as a climb on the social ladder. However, they soon realize that their view of the city is only an illusion. At the time the story of Kureishi’s *The Buddha of Suburbia* takes place, London is racially prejudiced and intolerant though still charming. It may be concluded that Kureishi’s suburban characters are somehow rebellious and come to the city to find new opportunities which the suburbs do not offer.

“The suburbs which give the book part of its title are ‘leaving place’ while the city is ‘bottomless in its temptations’ (Thomas). The city become the dream if the suburbanians, because it represents freedom and the hiding place. Though it is not far away from the suburbs, it is perceived as entirely different world. “1970s London is breathlessly anticipated as a countercultural cornucopia. It is the absolute antithesis of suburbia most significantly, perhaps, in terms of racism” (Thomas). Therefore the possibility of the move to the city is also a possibility to get rid of the painful feelings of exposure. In Kureishi’s fiction the coming to the city does not expresses disappointment unlike many contemporary novels dealing with this theme. Kureishi (hence Karim) depicts suburbs as maddening and weird homogenous mass of semis that he hates and does not want to stay there though he has no idea how to run away. When he moves to Beckenham with his father and Eva, he feels that he is slowly approaching the big city. But instead he realizes that despite the fact they are geographically nearer to London, the area is far poorer and racially prejudiced. This is also the case of Chislehurst, where his friend Jamila lives.

“Guided by his step-mother, Eva, Karim eventually gets to smart, central London” (Thomas). The settings move to the West Kensington that is perceived as an area between the rich Kensington and poorer Earls Court. Yet Karim feels happy that he finally is on the culture map. Moreover he is offered job in a theatre company. Karim has a need to be expected by the London society and achieve a social rise. But later in the story Karim’s mind is filled with the feelings of disappointment while his dream of hedonic London with the artistic fame does not fulfil his imaginations. Thus in some crucial moments, his way forward is hindered by “sudden swerve towards South London” (Thomas).

Though the division into two parts of *Buddha* may suggest there are only two grabs of the problematic. In fact, Jamila in *Buddha* represents the third grab – the position in-between space. “Jamila is clearly the political heroine of the novel” (Thomas) and it is largely because of her that Karim does not lose his mind and find a kind of hybrid way to live in London – he both celebrates his journey to the centre but is also aware of the fact that everything is just a mess. Despite Karim desperate intention to get out from the suburbs, Hanif Kureishi transformed in his novel the traditional view of them as a much more interesting place.

5. Conclusion

The focus of this thesis is the comparison of two famous works written by Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi in the field of contemporary postcolonial British literature. The main difference between these two authors was analysed earlier in the thesis – Salman Rushdie as a representative of a first generation of immigrants and Hanif Kureishi as a representative of the second. Thus the experience of migrancy and ‘hybrid’ identity is peculiar to both the writers. In their fiction they share the same topics of postcolonial literature, however because of their different origin as well as of the almost ten years between the publishing of their novels they differ in the way they treat the single themes.

Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* is very complex novel which is hard to analyse within the contemporary fiction. It is influenced by postcolonial literature as well as the postmodern texts and magic realism. To decide in which discourse this novel was formed is not an easy task as all the ‘-isms’ are overlapping in some themes. What distinguishes Rushdie not only from Kureishi but also from many postcolonial writers is his view on migrancy and hybridity. It seems like Rushdie has never experienced the feeling of alienation and rootlessness though moving from India to Pakistan and later to Britain during his childhood. Nowadays Rushdie is valued as well as often criticised for this positive view of hybridity. Though he is not questioning the frustrating feelings of hybrid identities, he turns their experience into something enriching. In his essays and also through his novels he advises to pick up the best from all the identities that is intermingling in the hybrid either of the first or second generation. He emphasizes that the hybrid is in an advantageous position, because he or she may be influenced by different cultures and therefore may utilize this influences in art or in other various professional fields. Rushdie in *Midnight’s Children* utilizes this positiveness that the hybridity bears. He makes the narrator Saleem use whatever elements from whatever source he chooses. Thus the novel is full of allusions to the Indian traditions, Hindu myths as well as British houses and western influences in the city of Bombay. The novel itself is hybrid. Moreover Salman Rushdie puts together characters which are in some cases complete antithesis of themselves. For example Aadam Aziz in relation to Tai the boatman or his wife Reverend Mother, which were analysed before, are the typical hybrids. By putting them together Rushdie is stressing the difference between modern and traditional, education and illiteracy, urban and rural and uses it as some kind of metaphor for the difference between Western and India.

Hanif Kureishi in his view of the hybridity emphasizes rather the feelings connected with the negative impact that the mixed origin has on identity of the person. Similarly to Rushdie, he is putting his own experience into his novels and the main characters usually bear his autobiographical features. In *The Buddha of Suburbia* Karim shares with Hanif Kureishi the feeling of being rather Englishman than Pakistani and the frustration caused by a repetitive refusal from the British citizens. To stress his marginality, he sets the first half of the book in the suburbs of the London, where the racial prejudices are even more obvious. Karim is in desperate need of the move to the city of London, which serves as metaphor for the success and better living. Yet, even in the city, his identity is still split because he is not fully accepted by the British higher social classes though he struggles for the assimilation to the Britain's culture. The feeling of being rejected is even more frustrating because he was born in England and sees himself being more Englishman than 'Paki'.

Midnight's Children are often perceived as a novel of magic realism because of intermingling fantasy with reality in the background of the historical events. As was stated before, this technique is used to raise criticism on the political and social situation in India. The novel was written in 1981, a quite short time after the period of the Emergency led by Indira Gandhi. It is of no doubts that the main purpose for creating it was the unsatisfying development of India since its independence in 1947. Hanif Kureishi in some sense also deals with the theme of history in his *The Buddha of Suburbia*. His novel was published in 1990 but the story takes place twenty years earlier in 1970s London. It is based on the development of this city during the 70's that are significant for the Thatcherism, clashes of cultures and struggles of classes. This can be seen as another huge difference between Kureishi and Rushdie. Whilst Rushdie is deeply concerned with the thematics of India and its reception in the Western countries, Kureishi as a born British citizen is focusing primarily on the image of London and brings a new theme of suburbs into the contemporary fiction.

One more difference that was derived from the analysis of Rushdie's and Kureishi's writing is that Rushdie falls somewhere in between two influences – postcolonialism and postmodernism. His frequent use of allusion, repetitions, building a tale within a tale, irregular chronology and language plays such as the glossing, the use of metaphors and untranslated words connect *Midnight's Children* with the postmodern techniques. It stands quite in opposition to rather straightforward linearity of *The Buddha of Suburbia*.

Despite the fact that Rushdie and Kureishi are seen as representatives of postcolonial literature, substantial differences in the way they approach the main themes of

postcolonialism can be found. Therefore I conclude that both authors enrich the postcolonial literatures in their specific way.

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