

Relocating and redefining space and identity in Hanif Kureishi's '*My Beautiful Launderette*'

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Abstract

Throughout the discourse within the literary realm, the space and identity has occupied central position. It's often been seen that the anxiety faced by individual in midst of displacement has occupied the center ground of discussion, so does the issue of diaspora formed due to large scale migrations to fulfill the aspirations. Hanif Kureishi's masterpiece "My Beautiful Launderette" is depicting such anxiety leading to the restructuring of space and identity amidst the individual's mental conflictual relation between the native land and the host land. Kureishi's theatrical conception echoes the underlying issues of identity, hybridity and last but not the least hostilities faced by diasporans during the acculturation process. This research primarily via the study of Kureishi's 'My Beautiful Launderette' will deal with the concept of identity and space, its role in shaping individual's existence and most importantly it will highlight that how in the moment of crisis one redefine and assert their identity, reach the moment of self realization and relocate, restructure their space thus forming the space way beyond the material,real physical space i.e. 'third space'.

Key Words: Identity, space, third space, diaspora, acculturation, hybridity

Introduction:

Homi Bhabha's conception of diaspora suggests an individual's relation to the native home and the current home, to a civilization left before and to a civilization now espoused. The first generation of a diasporic community persists in attaching itself to its old motherland's traditions and valuations while the alternate generation tries to acclimatize to the cultivation of the country they're abiding in. My Beautiful Launderette, a script penned by Hanif Kureishi, has explored effects like diasporic knowledge of home, identity, first and alternate generation diasporas, ethnical and artistic fracasas. Hanif Kureishi's work focuses on the relocating instantiations of letch and fornication within the gregarious and artistic realms in thatcherite Britain, opening up spaces in the artistic geography to carry designedly – the marginalised and politically disenfranchised, while inquiring at the same time hegemonic dialogues pertaining to the conformation of individualities. Critics assay that identity is a constantly evolving, and thus politically important outfit. This work puts forth several perceptivity as to how and why mannish fornication was offered the expressway in My Beautiful Launderette as well as its

connotations vis-à-vis the conformation of postcolonial identity for diasporic individualities in 1980s Britain(not only post social identity but other individualities beneath that, that's gregarious, political, profitable and cerebral. The compass of this paper, thus, is locating individualities and to assay Hanif Kureishi's winner number My Beautiful Laundrette in tours of identity question. My Beautiful Laundrette(Kureishi, 1986), a script penned by Hanif Kureishi, has explored effects like diasporic knowledge of home, identity, blood valuations, probity, mongrel, fornication, first and alternate generation diasporics, ethnical and artistic fracasas .

Contextualizing reading of the play:

The economic, socio-cultural, and political conditions of the 1980s significantly depended on the events of the 1970s. Critics called this latter era as the time of “social tension”, “economic pressure” and “payment crises” which was not solved by devaluation of pound as originally planned. During the 1970s, Britain had to face a rise in inflation that was followed by the long period of unemployment. Unfortunately though, these problems continued to rise and their consequences influenced the wide spectrum of British citizens and industries on a general level. “The nation's capacity to generate wealth, along with its share of world trade and production, were in serious, perhaps terminal decline”. A critic goes on to add that Britain became ingloriously known as the “sick man of Europe”. As a consequence of economic decline, the British experienced a considerable fall in their standard of living. This gave rise to the growing numbers of the trade unions members that had reached 13 million by the year 1979. The two miner's strikes followed in 1972 and 1974, making the Heath government fulfill unionists' demands and understand miners' power to impact the country's supplies. While the elderly and the young were unemployed and dependent on social services, the rest of the population capable of work was supposed to ensure their well being. The dissatisfaction among the British citizens caused by the aforementioned situation consequently led to numerous strikes in 1978-1979 known as the “Winter of Discontent”. These strikes organized by the public service employees were among the factors that supported the victory of Margaret Thatcher and her Conservative Party in the forthcoming elections. To summarize, the 1980s in Britain brought about the profound changes in both economic and social life. The new government of Margaret Thatcher symbolized new hope for many Brits. Nevertheless, her policies, as her critics point out, divided the country into two nations. Privatization and decrease in taxes brought favorable conditions for the rich, whereas the poor citizens suffered.

Plot:

The film is set in South London in the 80s, where groups of unemployed youths could be seen roaming around their dissipated working class suburb with no particular purpose. Amongst these young men there is Johnny , a white homeless young man in his early twenties who spend most of time squatting and hanging out with his friends of national front. His no goal existence begins to change when he met Omar, one of the Asian friends from School. On the other hand was Omar , the son of a Pakistani immigrant and leftwing journalist, Omar is young, ambitious and determined to climb up the social ladder. His life took a sudden change when he met his uncle Naseer- a powerful and successful entrepreneur with different businesses who supports a white

mistress, gave Omar a job at a small, run-down laundrette that belongs to him. Omar started indulging in various other activities to succeed in life and to earn extra money, later he decided to repair an old laundrette which proved to be success. Later he employed Johnny in his laundrette, this marked the start of the love relationship between Omar and Johnny triggering angry reactions from the social institutions.

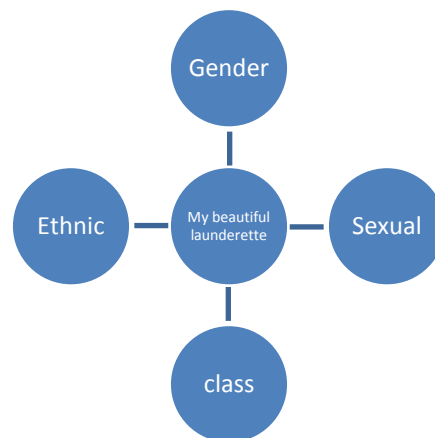
Quest for Identity:

“Identity” is a question which has come a content for exploration and conversations of across numerous fields of study. Sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, politicians, scientists not only these, economists have also taken an immense interest in the conception of identity in recent times. Numerous of the authors who deal with this conception, thus, described identity as “hyphenated”, “multiple”, “lapping”, “mongrel”, “multifaceted”, “segmented”, “multilayered” or “plural”. This list of features attributed to identity implies its variety of meanings in scientific literature. Nonetheless, it should be reflected that despite these different clarifications and in-depth exploration, there, indeed, still doesn't live an terse elucidation which would cover the entire compass of the present-day meanings of identity. All individualities a person may have, their content and the expressway one behaves under their influence are created and formed by mortal society. Tallying to Erik H. Erikson, our tone and its elaboration is directly connected with changes and evolution in society. He argues that the society and an individual “outline each other” and are truly “relative to each other”. This means that our conduct and the expressway we bear influences people, who reside around us. Also, the changes in the society we reside in have significant jolt on our lives. Tallying to them, a scientist, for case, tend to bear in a rational and thoughtful manner. She gives the print of a critically allowing person, who meets people with the analogous knowledge, fashions or inclinations and attends events with scientific themes. Her geste and the geste of individualities with the same (then scientific) inclinations will produce one special gregarious group or an association, which differentiates from others by its interests or the expressway of thinking. The analogous gambit can be observed in Hanif Kureishi's *My Beautiful Laundrette*, where one of the main protagonists belonged to the revolutionist political party. Johnny, Omar's nut, exercised to be politically disposed to the extreme right testaments, met people with the same political beliefs and life. Mostly, Johnny himself, his gang and people or groups with the same political opinions and stations created an organisation, which explosively defied immigration, broadcast abomination towards the non-white subjects, was criticized for racially motivated raids and disregarded birthrights of homosexuals. This political group is known as the neo-fascist National Party, which gained the utmost of its fashionability during the late 1970s. The party began as any other of the multitudinous significant or on-significant gregarious structures. As inferred over, there were originally individualities with the fascist ideas, who also gathered in extreme right political groups. These groups also joined in one consolidated National Party. As inferred in the illustration of the National Front given away above, gregarious structures or groups stem from the geste, inclinations or fashions of an existent. The gregarious structures give feedback to individualities, who can also acclimate or revise their geste tallying to their own opinions or prospects of the group they go to. The feedback which the close society provides for its

ingredients in *My Beautiful Launderette* is largely conspicuous and universal. It's substantially caused by the close concurrence of two different societies, stations toward life and beliefs that incontinently interact. An illustration of similar commerce and consequent feedback can be set on Johnny's and Omar's interracial- love working relationship. Johnny, an extreme right gang member, and Omar, partial Pakistani and sire of a leftist partner intelligencer, formed a fellowship vastly inconvenient for both Omar's Pakistani blood and Johnny's musketeers. Bearing Johnny's fascist identity in mind, the question also arises how is it practicable that Johnny didn't attack Omar, established fellowship and latterly love relationship with him? The relationship between Pakistani(Omar) and skinhead(Johnny) seems doubtful for Omar embodies everything that Johnny's ideological identity despises i.e. black, homosexual and indigenus. It may be astounding that the rejoinder to the question “ why they love each other is identical with the rejoinder to the question why they(should) detest each other. It is, indeed, their identity. As professor Hall explains, a person doesn't have only one single consolidated or fixed identity. Omar isn't precisely black and Johnny isn't precisely fascist but they've numerous occasionally antithetical and undetermined individualities, which may be modified or abolished.

So far, it has been argued that humans have multiple identities that create their sense of self, which is formed and shaped by society.

The identities that shape my beautiful Launderette are



The order of gender belongs to the most beginning individualities of one's life. It has a strong influence on the possibilities, prices and indeed liberties that a person may gain. To what extent and how the gender identity and its content influences mortal life will be studied through this thesis on *My Beautiful Launderette's* womanish characters- Tania(Nasser's son), Bilquis(Nasser's woman), Rachel(Nasser's doxy) and Cherri(Salim's woman). All the four women deal with relatively nonidentical situations throughout their plot but what they do have in common or garden in the strike that the gender identity imposes on them. For case, Tania, a son of Pakistani emigrants abiding in London, grew up in a cultivation which gives independence to women and where the most important political figure is a woman. She speaks

English, watched English academy and enjoys everything the English cultivation has to extend. Nonetheless, she faces a discordance at home, where she's treated as Pakistani women who are, tallying to the European norms, treated inversely. She isn't allowed to make her own life opinions and anticipated to marry her kinsman. Yet, she'd like to take over her father's business and be more independent in the way the white majority English women are. Unfortunately, her father would not even think of putting Tania in charge of his business because she is 'only' a daughter. Another identity which outline the geste of the characters to a high extend is "gregarious class". Although the description of gregarious class is as slippery as the tenure "identity itself, it can be understood as a sociological conception comprising " socioeconomic status(SES), artistic capital, gregarious networks, as well as beliefs, valuations, and actions associated with these substance and gregarious coffers. SES is one major index of gregarious class, generally taking into account one's blood profit, instructional accomplishment, and/ or profession position. Interestingly, the gregarious class status of the main characters appears to be relatively paradoxical. Throughout the play, Kureishi depicted Pakistani emigrants, who exceeded the undyed maturity, now lesser class working out for Pakistanis, who came rich and prosperous. As a result of serving consequently, the author implies that his character reside in a society where the hard-bitten work surpasses race. Yet he doesn't glamorise the nonage experience as he shows the unfortunate situation of Omar's father Hussein- a reputed intelligencer in his other country now tone- inadequate rummy. Assigning the upper class status to his black characters, Kureishi challenged the gregarious norm which assumes that the emigrants should be lesser class dependent on the former colonizers

GENGHIS: Why are you working for them? For these people?

You were with us once. For England.

JOHNNY: It's work. I want to work. I'm fed up of hanging about.

GENGHIS: I'm angry. I don't like to see one of our men groveling to Pakis. They came here to work for us. That's why we brought them over. OK?(Kureishi,1985)

The last identity which influences the main characters alongside with gender, class is their sexual identity. Although the conceptualization of this complex construct varies immensely here **sexual identity**/identities will be understood as "the label used to describe one's sexual orientation". That is homosexual orientation will be treated as homosexual identity. As explained in the lines above, gender and class identity are sources of conflicts or opportunities that the characters have in the context of the play, the role of sexual identity is, however, presented in much different, non-conflicting way. Even though the nature of Johnny's and Omar's relationship may sometimes seem as uneasy, their homosexual identity never causes any tension or difficulties. Instead, it is displayed as something naturalized and non-problematic in a way the relationship of a boy and a girl would be. Nevertheless, the fact that this relationship is so undisturbed by the socio-cultural, religious and political circumstances which should oppose it is quite unprecedented. The Lad gang which holds some of the facist believes should exclude Johnny for his sexual identity that does not correspond with the masculine type of personality that the society imposes on men. Also traditions and religious beliefs of his Pakistani family would never consider such a relationship as acceptable. Yet, the reader gets only the slightest hints of the non-acceptance coming from Salim's allusions that something is going on between the two and the only Papa's

remark : “Try and fix him (Omar) with a nice girl”, suggesting that there is something wrong with his son. Moreover, there is not a single negative instance of feedback from their social environment which was strongly influenced by Thatcher's ideas that didn't support anything that would not “fit in” - the rights of homosexual minorities included. Having described Johnny's and Omar's relationship the way he did, Kureishi managed to “normalize”, at least in *My Beautiful Laundrette*, what has been considered taboo or even abnormality.

Kureishi's screenplay for the film *My Beautiful Laundrette* has a special place in cinematic representation of ‘the other’ (defined in relation to the white populace). Against the white oppression and superiority was the collective front of a political category represented through Black British cinema. Through the 60s and 70s this cinema was identified as ‘cinema of duty’ which shouldered ‘burden of representation’ of replacing the negative representations that whites had constructed with a positive image. Therefore the films were expected to solve the problems of black representation at once. The colonial discourse had produced a narrative of these people as a fixed reality which was ‘the other’ and at the time was knowable and visible through racial stereotyping and could thus be appropriated and controlled. The cinema of duty corroborated the same stereotyping by focusing exclusively on blackness. Kureishi's screenplay deviates from this politics of representation. His approach is postmodern in the sense of the writer who doesn't judge characters, but just represents the encounters of the characters. Ian Jack praising Kureishi said, “Here at last is a story about immigrants which shows them neither as victims nor tradition-bound aliens. They're comprehensible, modern people with an eye to the main chance, no better or worse than the rest of us”. Leonard Quart mentions, “the film/play consistently succeeds in subverting the predictable and stereotypical, the once colonial Pakistanis who in London are often victims of violence, live well in large homes and luxury flats while their tormentors only have the government aid and street violence to console themselves.”

Nonage struggle requires cohesion but frequently cohesion leads to homogenization. In representation of an ethnic group as a monolithic unit there's ‘disarticulation of diversity’ within the group as the twice marginalized members of the group, women and homosexuals in environment of this play, are ignored. Under the mask of collaborative and participated individualities is a whole range of internal differences and prejudices. It's in the move to de-essentialize black identity as monolithic and heteronormative and within the environment of Thatcherite Britain that independent flicks like *my beautiful laundrette* were placed and raised ‘cold-blooded individualities’ engaged in creating a ‘third space’. Kureishi's script portrays characters' individualities as constructed across different axes of race, class, gender, sexual exposure and generation, which are interstitial and detect those characters in different and complicated positionalities to others. Omar's identity is basically cold-blooded. He's part of that changing demography of Britain which challenges unity and generality of common public-ethnic identity. Through him identity is represented as a nonstop process of meaning- timber and not stationary or rigid. His mongrel characterization is marked by both his birth(a Pakistani father and English mother) and by his generation, commodity he shares with Tania. Within multilateral paradigm and post colonialism, diasporas observes the conflict and concession between public and ethnic identity, homogenization versus individual as the family unit, which is generally

considered to be exemplification of the creation presented by nation, in similar cases is different structurally and since both immediate domestic terrain and public morality affect individual, there's a fracture. And the way first and alternate generation deals with this and constructs space and identity, are markedly different. Bharucha has refocused out that “ living in diaspora means living in forced or voluntary exile and living in exile generally leads to severe identity confusion and problems of identification with and disaffection from the old and new societies and motherlands ”. Diasporic scholar and critic Avatar Brah says, “ where is home? On the one hand, Home is a Jeremiah place of desire in the Diasporic imagination. In this sense it's a place of no return, indeed if it's possible to visit the geographical home that's seen as the place of ‘ origin ’. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a position ” utmost first generation characters of the play, pop(Hussain), Nasser, Cherry, Bilquis do n't consider the little islet of England their home. At utmost, for Nasser's financial enterprise under Thacterite period it's a little heaven. Yet as he says this, Salim is being beaten by tads who sweat and detest this changing demography from a homogenized state to multilateral. The alternate generation presented by Omar and Tania, both retain ‘ double knowledge ’ where the cold-blooded moment is articulated, a fracture in identity which faces dilemma of ethnical roots and present routes that's presented to them. They do n't suppose of Karachi as home, it was noway a environment for them. Omar has been called “ generally English ”, with “ too important english blood in his modes ” and Tania has been seen dressed in t- shirt and jeans unlike her mama and indeed holds ultramodern studies of being an independent woman disliking women who lives off men, yet both have a side which corresponds to their ethnical conventions. Omar and Johnny were both of same status economically when they first meet. But latterly as Omar becomes Johnny's master there's a change in power equation, rather a reversal of position as a white partner fascist is now recalling the bottoms of a social Paki who threatens to fire him. Naseer and Salim's commerce with the Englishman at their party is analogous. The difference is that Omar's relationship with Johnny has the contradiction of his love for him which stemmed from his Englishness of choosing his own homosexual mate and his connection with his race which was mocked and disrespected by Johnny in history as he marched against the emigrants. In his profitable superiority he finds a chance to vengeance the white man but his love for him left him bitter and crying. Tania has the same dilemma and just like Omar's homosexuality, her gender makes her twice marginalized. She dresses modernly wishes to be independent but when it comes to marriage and heritage her opinion is unheard and unsolicited for. Although similar contentions continue to be faced by cold-blooded characters, they frequently do n't choose either of the options of home and identity constitution available to them and go on creating a third space, a new space forming from the relations of two or further original moments. Omar cultivates a neo-liberal rapacity for success and embodies rudiments central to him in his work, e.g. the light gay colors of his launderette ‘ Maquillages ’. He forsakes his tradition for relinquishment of the English culture which allows redoing tone. Tania does the same by leaving her arranged marry and family where her identity was modeled by Pakistani conventionality and patriarchy. She leaves on the train which runs near Omar's home, the rail lines that run each over then and there and parallel, like their mongrel individualities.

Creating the space:

Space is a abecedarian area of study in numerous disciplines since time old. Plato emphasised that matter and space are the same and Aristotelian world is in totality i.e. space filled with matter. Descartes has rejected both Aristotelian and anti-Aristotelian studies on space, rather defined the material substance within the three dimensional spatial extension Kant's notion of space is neither Aristotelian nor Cartesian, but a priori, which shifted the converse of space from gospel to wisdom. Heidegger was the first to introduce the notion that the actuality is spatial. Norberg-Schulz believed that the mortal interest in space appeared from the need to comprehend the environmental relations that compass him, to give meanings and order to the events and conduct. The conspicuous energy in the spatial discussion is its dualism and qualifying one over the other. According to Henri Lefebvre, the philosophical space is given priority over the social and physical space. The space between the philosophical metaphysics and the material or the social space is the space that was often overlooked, disregarded and not conceptualized. The Third Space is this overlooked and disregarded space, a space that includes both the philosophical and social/physical and also the space that's 'in between'. The intention of this exploration is to examine the epistemologies of the 'in between' space or the 'third space' and its role as a space of radical openness and critical enquiry. According to one of the noted critics Hill (1999), "the megacity, in this respect, may be seen to offer a kind of interstitial space in which new forms of social connection are rendered possible, similar interstitial areas are also seen to be source of creative energy in which new forms of social and artistic identifications may be realized". In my beautiful *Launderette* the promoter is trying to fight balance his new form of identifications that too in interstitial space of South London. Edward Soja theorize the forms of identification and according to him the megacity is the third space characterized by simultaneity. therefore the question of race, class, gender, fornication and colonization constantly overlaps and escapes static categorizations. For Soja, everything coexists contemporaneously in this Third Space. Soja invites us to give up or at least temporarily suspend our conventional form of conceiving space "rested on" either "or" or "choices, and to imagine a sense of simultaneity, so that one can theorize space from a multifariousness of perspectives that are generally considered inharmonious. In order to do this it may be necessary to produce propositions suitable of crossing epistemological borders in favor of trans corrective approach, this sense defines a Third space, which" is no longer just dichotomously mothered or sexed, it's literally and figuratively transgressed with an cornucopia of sexual possibilities and pleasures, troubles and openings, that are always both particular and political and eventually, noway fully knowable from any singular digressive viewpoint". According to him there's a need of rebalancing trialectics of spatiality- historicity- socially. Which laterally and directly Omar is trying to produce a balance between these three and it's clear from above dialogues on identity how he's doing that. In my beautiful *launderette*, this third space in South London, where Omar and Johnny set out to run Nasser's *Launderette*. Omar's kin, Tania, lives off Nasser, her well off Pakistani businessman) entrepreneur father. unintentional to abide by the rules set by patriarchal system in which she grew, Tania ultimately breaks down from the system. South London is also home to Omar's father, a former intellectual and leftist intelligencer back in Pakistan, who's now an alcoholic confined in his flat. This extravagance of forms of identification- professional, sexual, gender, of class, race, race, among others- makes individualities so complex that a single theoretical or epistemological approach can not assay them. According to this, all individualities are always unstable, multiple, deposited and constantly negotiated and queried from a variety of

perspectives that attend in this third space. In some felicitations Soja's generality is analogous to Homi Bhabha's (1994) own foundation of third space, seen as the space of diction where all societies are constructed, disputed and resignified, in that "the meaning and symbols of culture have no early unity or fixity; that indeed the same signs can be appropriated, reworded, rehistoricised and read again" (1994). Drawing upon Saussure's idea of the arbitrariness of the sign in the enunciative process, according to which there's no correlation between signified and signifier, only an arbitrary association. It's over to the language stoner to establish such a connection. Bhabha contends that this third space of diction is a conflictual and at the same allows the language stoner and also Bhabha is especially concerned with those who "have suffered the judgment of history" (1994) by being settled, pacified or displaced and therefore doomed to social marginality; people like Omar and his kin, for illustration to challenge the dialogues of the colonial/ oppressor, suggesting that they're always rested in the voices of the settled/ persecuted and are inescapably cold-hybrid. It's only when we understand that all artistic statements and systems are constructed in this negative and equivocal space of diction that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the essential originality or chastity of societies are untenable, indeed before we resort to empirical cases that demonstrate the crossbred. (BHABHA, 1994)

Conclusion:

To sum up, *My beautiful launderette* may be described as mid 1980s British Asian film that escapes the "burden of representation" that characterized earlier black British cinema in two main ways. Firstly, through the representation of the British-Asian protagonist as homosexual with a Thatcherite entrepreneurial drive. And secondly, the film's generic and technical hybridity breaks with the realism of those earlier films and through its representation of reality as fragmentary, relative and contradictory, creates a space for the questioning of received notions of "identity". Thus, the British Asian protagonist is represented in the individualistic struggle as reconstructing his sense of identity out of the traces he finds most convenient from each of the different cultures that informs his ethnic hybridity. Finally the film's emphasis lies most conspicuously on its portrayal of hybrid identity as a site of conflict between the individual's different national identifications. Thus, through in contrast between comic and dramatic scenes as well through the non-resolution of the protagonist's ambivalent attitude towards his white ex-fascist partner, the film highlights the paradoxical nature of an "identity" inevitably slipping away between two worlds.

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