

Re-defining Genre: Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* as an Ethnic Post-Colonial British Bildungsroman

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Abstract

The term Bildungsroman refers to narratives that deal with the process of formation and development of its protagonist from childhood to adolescence. This genre originated in eighteenth century Germany and soon became very popular. Genres tend to evolve over time, besides they are not impervious to the social, political, economic and technological changes taking places all the time. The Bildungsroman has been evolving and adjusting itself to new historical, social and literary concerns and a significant shift seems to be taking place, particularly in the case of immigrant Bildungsroman. This paper attempts to explore how migrants of two generations negotiate, re-negotiate identity in the multicultural British society in the 70s. The paper addresses postcolonial departures from the canonical Bildungsroman and examines how the socio-political and historical changes of the time influenced the way the migrants of two generations experience construction and reconstruction of identity.

Keywords: Postcolonial, Bildungsroman, Identity, Immigration, Orientalization, Exoticization.

Since the time the British Empire disintegrated, there has been a constant flow of immigration towards the metropolis in search of a better life. It was as a response to the demand for cheap workforce that first encouraged migratory movements. But then, after that initial period, they were submitted to control and strict reduction, also disclosing national fears about denaturalizing British society and weakening of culture in presence of numerous external influences represented especially by Asian immigrants - Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi in particular.

It is now a well-established fact that Britain has been home to a Black and Asian population for well over 400 years, at least as long, that is, as the history of the Empire abroad. It is thus worth noting that Britain was as much the home of the colonial encounter as were the colonies themselves, normally situated abroad in the so-called peripheries. "Hence, as many historians such as Antoinette Burton, Peter Fryer, and Rozina Visram have persuasively argued, the arrival in Britain of several generations of black and Asian 'immigrants' in the period following decolonization and Independence was not simply the residue of the end of Empire, it was the culmination of a long but often hidden relationship, a relationship that has persistently been written out of the nation's political, cultural and literary histories" (Sahgal qtd. in Nasta, Prologue 2).

Questions surrounding refugees and forced migration, displacement and exile, home and host, have reached new levels of popularity and timeliness after a record-breaking swell in global displacement marking recent years up to 2016-2017, though, there remains a problem, in the tendency of the predominant discourse to eclipse and essentialize, staticize and passivize the Refugee and Forced Migration subject. Refugee and Forced Migration Literature is an especially productive and revelatory sub-genre in the coining of the Refugee and Forced Migration Bildungsroman. The Bildungsroman as a literary coming-of-age form offers unique capacities for the narrating character-protagonist as Refugee and Forced Migration subject provides a non-traditional kind of lesson in the coming together of education (*bildung*) with the novel (*roman*).

The Bildungsroman as a novelistic genre refers to narratives that deal with the process of formation and development of its protagonist from childhood to adolescence. German in origin, “bildungs” means formation, and “roman” means novel. The Bildungsroman leads the reader to greater personal enrichment as the protagonist journeys from youth to psychological or emotional maturity. Attention during the last quarter of the twentieth century Bildungsroman particularly has increasingly shifted towards post-colonial and minority writing. The rise of feminist, post-colonial and minority studies during the 1980s and 90s broadened the definition and approach to Bildungsroman to include increasingly global and fragmentary narratives of transformation and rebellion. Many emerging postcolonial writers have migrant backgrounds and their personal experiences of migration are translated into their works, which have come to serve as metaphors for identity reconstruction.

Despite its origins in a national tradition, the evolution of the Bildungsroman suggests openness to gendered and global issues and points to the fact that it is flexible enough to incorporate cultural and global specificities. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland observe that [i]t has been a tradition among critics of the Bildungsroman to expand the concept of the genre, first beyond the German prototypes, then beyond historical circumscription, now beyond the notion of *Bildung* as male and beyond the form of the developmental plot as linear, foregrounded narrative structure (Elizabeth A. et al, 13-14). When genres are immersed within socio-historical postcolonial contexts they are portrayed as expanding upon and departing from traditional generic forms. Genres, then, are not static; rather they adapt in response to the constitutive characteristics of social and historical contexts. In this sense, genres can be viewed as mobile, constantly transforming to “describe a generic reality and participate in constructing it” (Pyrhönen 114). Genres’ continual transformations are shaped by the changes in society as Döring pertinently observes:

“Those who began publishing in the context of post-Thatcherism and New Labour multiculturalism frequently focused on the challenges of growing up in the diaspora and coming to terms with an extended but often broken or disjointed family history. Perhaps not surprisingly, as is evident from Hanif Kureishi’s landmark 1990s novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*, which confidently heralded the hybridity of its mixed heritage British Asian narrator, Karim – ‘I’m an Englishman born and bred, almost’ – the

Bildungsroman was a readily accessible frame to extend and challenge the dominant narrative of black, Asian, and mixed-race lives” (509).

The very definition of a genre is problematic, given the postmodern turn in the humanities in the latter half of the twentieth century. In a world where essential, fixed, definitive categories break down and become prone to flux, any kind of postcolonial reading of a literary text in the light of genre becomes tricky, given that genres embody what can be bordered and well defined within a specific politico-aesthetic space, and rely on establishing convention and expectation rather than in disrupting either (Ansari 1). Ericka Hoagland echoes the same view, “. . . a plain truth of genre in general: it does not exist in a vacuum, cut off from socio-historical forces and changes, and its definition, always subject to the desires of its interlocutors, is not immune to challenge or change. The emergence of a rich Bildungsroman tradition in postcolonial African literature is a powerful example of that truth” (220).

According to Hiddleston, “In ‘new’ literatures in English, genres map points of tradition and innovation, continuity and change, adding, “postcolonial narratives which take up traditional genres and “reinvent [...] generic conventions in order to represent postcolonial experiences” (2). Heta Pyrhöhen suggests that this “dynamic process [...] is dominated by repetition, but also fundamentally marked by difference and change” (118). Hiddleston notes, “For postcolonial criticism the notion of generic “fixes” opens up ways of thinking about how traditional generic forms take on new formulations in narratives that address the unsettled historical conditions of colonization. The conventions of genre shift and expand in postcolonial narratives as “postcolonial writers have manipulated and reshaped these forms” (8). When “drawing on and upsetting [genre] conventions” (6) particular generic changes occur within postcolonial literatures to suggest the transforming conceptions within postcolonial society and culture.

Postcolonial Bildungsromane, and especially narratives that deal with diasporic, immigrant, or transnational identities, by virtue of occupying the fringes, or the spaces in between, competing binaries, are especially set up to reflect on the nature of the spaces they occupy, and the tensions inherent in binaries such as political, cultural, economic, theological, gender, race etc. suddenly take center stage, become explicit. To the maturing diasporic protagonist of the postcolonial *bildungsroman*, the answers to questions like “*who am I?*” and “*what am I?*” are questions fraught with risk (Ansari 3).

Jose Santiago Vazquez points to examples where the postcolonial Bildungsroman integrates “western formal and generic structures into the narrative” (Vazquez 1997, 30), and where prototypical elements borrowed from the traditional Bildungsroman prevail, namely experiences of “childhood, the conflict of generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-education, alienation, ordeal of love, the search for a vocation and working philosophy” (Buckley, 18). As Helena Maria Lima commenting on the relationship between the traditional Bildungsroman and the thriving evolution of its postcolonial reconfiguration, suggests that “postcolonial novels of formation continue to ask the genre’s traditional questions about the relationship between experience, subjectivity and social structures [;] they explore all its possibilities, thereby expanding its genre” (Lima, 434) by infusing it with greater social and

historical intricacy. In this way, the postcolonial Bildungsroman opens up new spaces for culturally intricate and specific worldviews to be incorporated into a more flexible and dynamic genre. Departures from the traditions of generic narratives enable innovation in postcolonial literatures. The adaptation and appropriation of traditional genres is a tactic which indicates that genre is a dynamic construct.

In postcolonial Bildungsromane the process of *Bildung*, the protagonist's decisive passage towards self-formation, self-assimilation, and integration into society, is troubled since the supposed journey of growth and self-discovery must engage with experiences of alienation and loss. Bonnie Hoover Braendlin argues that as the traditional Bildungsroman is cast by postcolonial writers into a postcolonial discourse, its identity changes: "This new *Bildungsroman* asserts an identity defined by the outsiders themselves or by their own cultures [and] evinces a revaluation, a transvaluation, of traditional *Bildung* by new standards and perspectives" (75). Most characters in *The Buddha of Suburbia* undergo a sense of alienation and loss.

Set in Britain in the 1970s during Thatcher years, *The Buddha of the Suburbia*, which is considered to be one of the most important works of post-colonial writing, is dominated by this political background and can be regarded as a fictional reaction to dominant British ideology. While the novel mainly examines the problems experienced by immigrants living in a new culture, it also focuses on concepts that reflect the reality of contemporary social order such as immigration, identity, otherness, stereotyping, and the East. *The Buddha of the Suburbia* reflects on how the discriminatory, marginalizing, and racist attitudes faced by first-generation immigrants and their second-generation representatives in the postwar British society have problematized the concept of multiculturalism.

Karim the young protagonist of *The Buddha of Suburbia* is a mixed-race teenager; his father is an Indian Muslim and mother a British. He is a second generation migrant desperate to escape suburban South London and to have new experiences in London in the 1970s. He is quick to seize an unlikely opportunity when a life in the theatre presents itself as a possibility. When there is no work for him in London, he goes to New York for ten months. Returning to London, he takes on a part in a TV soap opera. Through his work with two theatre companies, Karim gets to know new people from completely different backgrounds, like the working-class Welshman Terry, who is an active Trotskyite and wants Karim to join the party, or Karim's lover Eleanor who, though middle-class, pretends to be working-class. In the beginning of the novel Haroon, Karim's father, a first generation Indian immigrant, a boring bureaucrat living with his family in a grey London suburb, is suddenly discovered by London's high society, which is hungry for exotic distractions, and so he becomes their Buddha- a spiritual guru. With the help and guidance from Eva – his new-found love, Haroon starts to exploit the differences that he represents to the British. He leaves home abandoning his wife and family. Karim throws in his lot with his father and goes with him. From the beginning of the novel, Karim's story is intertwined with the story of his father as they both try to find their identity and place in British society.

Another important postcolonial departure that stands out in *The Buddha of Suburbia* is the integration of the protagonist remains incomplete by the end of the narrative. Joseph R. Slaughter suggests that “in many postcolonial *Bildungsromane* the genre’s traditional conclusive event of social, civil, and self-integration is perpetually postponed, so that the sovereign undivided human personality remains a vanishing plot beyond the frame of the text” (Slaughter, 215). The development towards growth, which involves the character’s movement towards wholeness, is thwarted, forcing the youthful protagonist to distance herself from society not being able to realize her aspirations.

Also, there is no “homeland” (Moretti, 26), no wholeness of community, no place of safety that the hero may claim in order to settle down and thereby conclude his psychological journey towards self-formation and resolution. This is especially true of Karim Amir as he is a second generation immigrant who has known no other place to be his home except where he was born and brought up and where he lives. Karim notes with regret that he has never tried to find out about his community or religion when he witnesses Anwar’s burial taking place and the people, his own people, whom he never got know and partly he blamed his father for this, “So if I wanted the additional personality bonus of an Indian past, I would have to create it” (Kureishi, 213).

Like most other Western countries, Great Britain was in a state of transition during 1970’s. The last noticeable remnants of the colonial empire having already gained independence in the previous decade, Britain’s influence as a significant world power was on the wane. At the same time, immigrants from both the former colonies and elsewhere were immigrating to the UK, presenting a challenge to the classic homogenized notion of ‘Englishness’. It is in this societal ambience that the novel takes place. The migrants, though initially welcome, soon began to be regarded as a threat to the national identity and demographic homogeneity resulting in the unleashing of a wave of hostility against the migrants.

Enoch Powell spearheaded the most radical movement against immigration, because he believed that it was directing Britain to a “total transformation to which there is no parallel in a thousand years of English history” (Powell, 282). In his famous speech “Rivers of Blood” Powell describes immigration as a foreign invasion undermining the foundations of British society. The novel has a reference to his speech. When Karim goes to see Helen, his white girlfriend, her father Hairy Back sets his Great Dane on him and tells him that he sided with Enoch (Kureishi, 40). Later the Tories and especially Margaret Thatcher borrowed this rhetoric for the so-called New Right. In Thatcher’s view being born in England did not make Asians British. She refused to accept that immigrants would be integrated into society and become a member of society. She held immigrants responsible for disrupting the social structure and promised to stop immigration during election campaigns.

Following Frederic Jameson’s understanding of Western societies as being postmodern since the 1950s, the story of the novel can be assumed to unfold in a postmodern age. As postmodern Britain evolves, a new aspect is added to the mix: multiculturalism. In 1970’s, Britain was in a turbulent transition to the postmodern, multicultural society it is today. The societal changes compelled Britain to renegotiate its national identity, as the classical homogenized notion of

'The British' was in a state of erosion. Despite the rapid demographic shift, issues such as nationalism, culture and ethnicity are still highly debatable in British society today. First and second-generation immigrants still feature pre-dominantly in public discourse. Though not openly acknowledged, these groups are still perceived as the 'others' or the out-group, defined by the in-group not by what they are, but by what they are not. Public debate fuels and perpetuates the notion of 'otherness' constantly reinforcing the alienation of those who are born and raised in the host country.

Hanif Kureishi depicts the extraordinary resilience of Orientalism's vestiges in late twentieth-century British culture in his novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*, more than forty years after the disintegration of empire in India. His own experience as a boy of mixed parentage, growing up in London's suburbs, serves as the autobiographical background for his novel. Tired of his suburban childhood experiences of being called 'Shitface and Curryface', and counting himself 'lucky to get home from school without serious injury', the protagonist Karim is propelled by his desire to finally 'make-it' as an actor in the highly competitive London theatre world and 'blend in' with white Britain.

Mark Stein argues that the Black British *Bildungsroman* "has a dual function: it is about the formation of its protagonist as well as the transformation of British society and cultural institutions" (Stein 22). Whereas traditional novels of formation project society as a normative construct, the novel of transformation delineates a dialogical process. The hero no longer merely changes with the world; instead, the world also changes with and through him. Hanif Kureishi underscores this argument: "It is the British, the white British, who have to learn that being British isn't what it was. Now it is a more complex thing, involving new elements. So there must be a fresh way of seeing Britain and the choices it faces: and a new way of being British after all this time" (qtd. in Stein 21).

Identity is not pre-given but it is a performative process. There are factors in the identity formation process such as culture and politics. In *Buddha of Suburbia* Kureishi creates a set of characters who are stuck in the margin of host culture and face prejudice from the host culture. The formation of identity is considered to be a lifelong process, and the specific need for social relations thus changes over time. The primary social relation for an infant is with the parents and caregivers, but later it might be with classmates, friends, coworkers or a romantic partner. Identification with other social beings plays an important and necessary role in the process of forming an identity and it is at this juncture the need to belong begins. This need to belong has taken different forms with the passage of time. In traditional societies, social affiliations were characterized very differently than today; they were more often inherited rather than acquired. It was within the family and local community that main affiliations were formed. These were the relations in which people sought to be accepted and belong.

As noted earlier, the influence of other human beings is essential in the process of creating and (re)constructing an identity. Through these interactions one can mirror oneself and thereby form an identity, a self. However, in contemporary society, this process has become more difficult as postmodernism has resulted in a fragmentation of identity, which means that the rules of socialization have changed. As a consequence of these changes the individual

constantly attempts to accommodate and respond to different social relations. An individual's interactions with others help to define his distinguishing traits, and the unit that prepares him to function among those others is the family, described by British and Guyanese postcolonial critic Paul Gilroy as "the key unit out of which nationality is built, as well as the central means of cultural reproduction" (Gilroy 1994, 30). Gilroy makes explicit the link between family and nation, between filial relations, and the transmission of culture.

According to Stuart Hall, one can find his/her identity by comparing and contrasting himself/herself with the other (428). Further, Hall argues that identity is not stable and it is open to changes and development. In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, the protagonist Karim engages in many different social relations as he tries to come closer to a definition of his identity. One central aspect of this struggle and process of identity formation is Karim's (changing) family relations. At the beginning of the novel he is part of a traditional family. The problems at home bring into picture Karim's second family: Anwar, Jeeta and Jamila. The doors to the new world are opened by Karim's third and last type of family, namely Eva and Charlie. Though he does not deliberately search for these relations in his cultural roots, it is through his father Haroon and his childhood friend Jamila that he is still connected to them. Haroon and Jamila both have very different ways of handling the issues of immigrant identity.

Although Haroon's personality, story and evolution throughout the book are closely connected to, and highly influential on Karim's life and fate in the novel, some differences remain between the two characters, due to their different backgrounds- India born first generation immigrant Haroon and British born second generation immigrant son of mixed parentage Karim. The contrasting and yet parallel qualities of Haroon together with his particular perception and navigation of the problems of belonging, racism and personal identity help understand one the one hand, Karim's formation of identity and on the other hand, Haroon's mid-life crisis leading to reconstruction of his own identity and its impact on his son's identity. Even though they grew up on different continents and Karim is half-Indian only by birth, they both seem to be fixed in the role of the "Indian immigrant coming to England", and they both have to struggle in order to find just the smallest kind of acceptance in the British society.

Haroon's lack of integration as far as British food culture is concerned contributes to the reader's perception of Haroon as an immigrant that has not managed to integrate and fully adapt to British society. That he is a social outcast is evidenced by the many racist attacks, which he tries to avoid by changing routes, he encounters on his way to work, "for fear of having stones and ice-pops full of piss lobbed at him by schoolboys from the secondary modern" (Kureishi 28). The situation is no better at his workplace. He feels discriminated against and barred from promotion on account of his skin color: "The whites will never promote us. (...) Not an Indian while there is a white man left on the earth" (Kureishi, 27). Even when he takes on the persona of a guru and gains a kind of respect from his fellow commuters and colleagues, he is still an outsider at work: "But the office, where he was an unelevated lazy Indian who had run away from his wife and children, there was disapproval from the clerks he worked with: there was mockery behind his back and in front of his face" (Kureishi, 115).

However, things only finally seem to change when Haroon decides to take a different route to success and social recognition. This happens when his decision to cast away his attempts at assimilation and donning the role of a spiritual guide coincides with the entry of the upwardly mobile, ambitious socialite Eva into his life. Now instead of trying to be English in order to fit in, Haroon starts to exploit the differences that he represents to the British. The stereotypes that are applied to him and the things that make people think of him as a failure are harnessed and transformed into tools that will help him to gain respect and recognition, instead of being a victim of them. By exaggerating his accent, his clothes and his skills as a yoga teacher or guru, and playing on the mystery of the Orient, he mystifies himself and thereby attracts English citizens' interest and attention. People start to believe in him and view his teachings and guidance as a service to the nation.

Haroon's change from a person with dreams of longing and acceptance and recognition who tries everything to achieve his objective which is evident from his habit of bringing a dictionary on the train in order to learn new words because, "you never know when you might need a heavyweight word to impress an Englishman", (Kureishi, 28) his constant effort at getting his accent quite as natural as a native Englishman, to an Eastern mystic speaking accented English, Haroon's transformation, his new avatar is complete.

Initially, Karim enjoys a special relationship with his father, who has learned to wield his perceived exoticism for gains in social capital by modeling himself as an Eastern spiritual teacher – earning the moniker Buddha. Karim, caught between Eastern and Western identities, witnesses and often participates in the identities that his father creates for himself by way of language modification and public performance. As Karim matures, he acknowledges his father's influence and simultaneously attempts to assert himself as an individual, separate from Haroon's guidance. He imitates his father by following his language modulation but goes beyond it by subverting it when he adopts Cockney accent in the middle of his representation of Mowgli, in what amounts to an act of mimicry. Karim and Haroon share the desire for change in their own lives. They both dream of getting out of the suburb where they find themselves stuck and imprisoned, and instead, seek acceptance and recognition in British society. Alongside these shared dreams lie parallel interests. After Haroon begins his affair with Eva (and later moves in with her), Karim discovers that "[he] realized that [he] too had been very keen to hear from her again" (Kureishi, 20). It is also with her son Charlie that he has an 'affair' and later moves in with in New York. Both father and son are interested in movement and being part of modern life, but this could also be subconsciously motivated by their fear of failure. As in the case of Haroon, perceived failure in all the corners of his life (education, economics, social status, family life and expectations,) weighs heavily on his shoulders.

Karim must negotiate a number of identities that Haroon has created for himself, and it is the son's imitation of the father that results in Karim's career as an actor and his ambiguous national identity. Karim, like his father, comes to recognize the social capital connected to dialect. The first stage director, with whom Karim works, Jeremy Shadwell, admonishes Karim during his initial interview for not knowing how to speak Punjabi and Urdu. Karim has learned from his father that many aspects of one's identity can be modified— and should be

modified—in the interest of social mobility. As John Clement Ball notes, “father and son both become Faux-Indians, successfully marketing back to the English warmed-over versions of their own popular appropriations of Indian culture” (Ball, 233).

The Buddha of Suburbia presents the story not only of the formation of an adolescent’s identity but also the special relationship of father and son, together with their mutual influence on each other, which adds a compelling dynamic that is at the core of *The Buddha of Suburbia*. A Bildungsroman is traditionally a novel of education, and an important aspect of Karim’s education is learning how and where to position himself in postcolonial England with one Indian parent and one English parent. Much of the education passes from Haroon to Karim—from father to son.

The protagonist of a typical Bildungsroman finds himself at odds with the expectations of his family leading to his loss of faith in the values of his home and family, forcing him to look for substitutes. The father’s repression is often the main force behind the youth’s assertion of his independence. The father-son relationship in *The Buddha of Suburbia* takes on a different trajectory compared to classical Bildungsromane and the father-son relationship in this novel has to be seen in the backdrop of their status as first and second-generation immigrants. The theme of father-son relationships takes on new and significant meanings in a world where one’s personal sense of national identity is complex, hybrid, divided, contested, and more difficult to determine.

Haroon has struggled for much of his life to be accepted into English society. By participating in the current social system, Haroon has become a subject indoctrinated with the social norms and cultural expectations of that system. By taking his son along with him to his speaking engagement as a spiritual guru, Haroon exposes Karim to his performance of the Oriental. With his actions as well as his words, Haroon teaches Karim that, “We must find an entirely new way of being alive” (Kureishi, 36).

As the first and the second-generation migrants, both father and son face different challenges but try to come to grips with the challenges using the same *modus operandi*. As first-generation migrant, Haroon at first takes the route of assimilation before rejecting it in favour of exoticism, while for Karim, a second-generation migrant it is not only a question of assimilation but also identity reconstruction. Haroon first tries assimilation through following the British ways and picking up the native accent but having failed in his attempts, he changes tack and returns to his eastern roots and uses exoticism as a way of conditional assimilation. He reinvents himself; he dresses in a costume and to English residents and image of Eastern philosophy, which the English people have themselves created.

Karim, who is a born British, has to follow his father’s footsteps, but unlike Haroon, exoticism is forced upon him by his directors. Haroon’s donning of an eastern spiritual guru role is self-imposed. Thus, both father and son find their salvation in what Parama Sarkar calls a process of “self-orientalization” (Sarkar, 47). Despite evidence to the contrary, Karim has always believed himself to be a British. The very first line of the novel he introduces himself, “My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost” (Kureishi, 3). He

has had his share of racial discrimination and is sick of being called, “Shitface and Curryface, and of coming home covered in spit and snot and chalk and wood-shavings” (Kureishi, 63). He goes to the extent of admitting, “Every day I considered myself lucky to get home from school without serious injury” (Kureishi, 63).

Kureishi says that one’s identity is “some sort of alliance between the way you see yourself and the way other people in the world see you” (qtd. in Yousaf, 50). Haroon and Karim manage to synthesize how they perceive themselves and how they are perceived by people as “oriental” and “exotic”. Haroon learns the lesson himself and passes it on to Karim making them fellow travelers on the journey to finding their real identity; both the father and the son benefit from the stereotypical perspectives of others.

Conclusion

The continual transformations of genres are shaped by the changes in society. As Helena Maria Lima comments on the relationship between the traditional *Bildungsroman* and the thriving evolution of its postcolonial reconfiguration, she suggests that “postcolonial novels of formation continue to ask the genre’s traditional questions about the relationship between experience, subjectivity and social structures [;] they explore all its possibilities, thereby expanding its genre” (“Decolonizing Genre” 434) by infusing it with greater social and historical intricacy. *The Buddha of Suburbia* written in the backdrop of socio-political changes in contemporary Britain holds up a mirror to society- where two generations of immigrants pursue the goals of post-colonial society’s ideals of success and in that process add a new dimension to canonical *Bildungsroman*.

Tobias Boes, who has noticed a growing trend concerning the traditional *Bildungsroman* as one of the most salient genres for postcolonial fiction, argues that [d]uring the past few years, attention within twentieth-century *Bildungsroman* studies has increasingly shifted towards post-colonial and minority writing. As a result, it has become obvious that the critical commonplace of a decline of the genre during the modernist period is a myopic illusion. In reality, the novel of formation continues to thrive in post-colonial, minority, multi-cultural, and immigrant literatures worldwide (“Apprenticeship” 239).

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