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MUSIC OF MY SOUL: FROM THE WHITE TO THE BLACK ALBUM

Abstract

The beginning of the 1960s was known for the change in the ideological matrix in Britain. The new political situation helped society change its attitude and become more open to the events that would come later. It was also a period marked by rapid and radical cultural changes. Pop culture became a way of life for young people, causing profound changes in their attitudes toward leisure and, as a result, affecting various spheres of life. The paper deals with the impact of popular culture on Hanif Kureishi, the writer of mixed-race identity. The special focus is on the impact of music and the musicians of the time Kureishi features in his writings: their texts, clothes, and style. By intertwining fine arts and literature with performing arts and music, Kureishi generates cultural identity.

Key words: Hanif Kureishi, leisure, youth culture, music, cultural identity.

1. Introduction

The formation of youth culture, a postwar phenomenon, was in full swing during the 1960s. The main idea originated in America, but it quickly gained popularity among British people. The phenomenon is based on the mutual collaboration of industry and culture, or more precisely it is “[...] a commodity culture, producing trends that have the same kind of

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market value as manufactured commodities, satisfying momentary whims” (Danesi 2019: 4). One of the most appealing features concerning youth culture is that “[...] it arises from new trends and needs, constantly revising itself according to mass opinions and tastes” (Danesi 2019: 3). In addition to that, it is not connected to any artistic tradition, and everyone can participate in it and show their creativity regardless of class, education, or racial background.

Youth culture in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s was an authentic response to a very complex situation in society which was in transition at the time. It represents “[...] an area of common symbols and meanings, shared in part or in whole by a generation, in which they can work out or work through [...] the special tensions of being an adolescent” (Storey 2019: 42). In his book *Urban Rhythms*, Iain Chambers argues that youth culture did not become the dominant force in young people’s lives by chance. The industrial reorganisation of consumer production caused profound changes in youth attitudes towards leisure. Soon, it was no longer seen as a time of liberation from work, but as a possible lifestyle. What is more, it was often characterised by freedom and independence. “To buy a particular record, to choose a jacket or skirt cut to a particular fashion, to meditate carefully on the colour of your shoes is to open a door onto an actively constructed style of living”(Chambers 1986: 16). Therefore, popular culture initially enabled young people to express themselves. It influenced how they dressed, talked, acted, walked, and behaved. It also allowed them to blend in, to be part of the crowd. Their worldview and personal choices were influenced by images from popular cultural forms such as music, cinema, literature, fashion, and the media. Moreover, the search for a youth identity at the time became an essential process in life. Difference and authenticity were the imperatives of their generation and generations to come. When it comes to youth coming-of-age, the significance of the rise of this phenomenon can be seen in the fact that “[...] money, clothes, and music, rolled together into a distinctive youth style of coffee bars, clubs, dancing, and American records, established the teenager as a provocative icon” (Chambers 1986: 152). In other words, a teenage icon comes from a very familiar world, shares common symbols and meanings, and once he achieves success “[...] he is transformed into a commercial entertainer” (Storey 2019: 43). Thus, this was a period when “you could be an inner-urban child with a boring circumstance, yet by one simple act – changing your name – you could be transformed forever into an electronic deity” (Savage in Kureishi and Savage 1995: xxiii).

In literature, popular culture influenced “[...] the death of an aesthetics based on the stable referents of the ‘authentic’, the ‘unique’, the ‘irreplaceable’” (Chambers 1986: 8), and the emergence of hybrid aesthetics. It stimulated “[...] auto-biography, the non-fictional, the fiction novel, personal journalism [...]” (Kureishi in Kureishi and Savage 1995: xix). Pop culture also introduced writers to “[...] the fringes of the respectable world, to marijuana, generational conflicts, clubs, parties, and to a certain kind of guiltless, casual sex that had never been written about before” (Kureishi in Kureishi and Savage 1995: xix).

Hanif Kureishi, a contemporary, post-colonial British writer, is a product of the lost empire, a child of mixed parentage and, above all, a product of pop culture. Kenneth Kaleta, in his book on Hanif Kureishi, points out that American literature and American pop culture, in general, had a strong impact on Kureishi’s writing. He compares Kureishi to the novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald by pointing out that both of them discuss developmental issues concerning youth in their novels. He also argues that Kureishi’s “[...] prose style is itself musical. His stories run with the rhythm of rock, sexy throbbing, hopeful and melancholy simulating the pulsating beat of the music of their time” (Kaleta 1998: 8). Significantly enough, the protagonists of his novels, short stories, plays, and screenplays are either different types of artists, such as musicians, actors, and writers or they are closely connected with art itself. The uncertainty that follows the life of an artist could be associated with the uncertainty of life which a multiracial mixed-breed person faces in post-war Britain. Although the causes of their uncertainty in life differ, they are both concerned for their existence and well-being since they never know what the future holds. Thus, it is important to emphasise that the fictional characters in his writings are also “[...] remarkable and repulsive, hopeful and devastating – as people are in reality” (Kaleta 1998: 6).

The main purpose of this paper is to reveal the link between Kureishi’s novels, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) and *The Black Album* (1995), and popular music. It also aims to identify the bands and singers mentioned in the novels in order to show that music, as a form of human expression, is fundamental to the social life of the main characters. To support this claim, we need to demonstrate that, at the time, popular music created a world liberated from social chains and enabled everyone, regardless of their skin colour, to express themselves. Furthermore, given that music is more than merely a form of leisure or entertainment, it is important to emphasise

its impact on the formation of collective and individual cultural identity. Inasmuch as the list of the bands and singers in the two novels is infinite, this paper will focus specifically on those who, through their work and existence, caused a musical and, consequently, a cultural revolution.

2. Music and identity in Kureishi's novels

Owing to the great success Kureishi has achieved over time, he has become one of the leading portrayers of Britain's multicultural society. In the novels, *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*, he maps his vision of contemporary issues, mainly the identity issues of the protagonists who are primarily the offspring of mixed parentage and solely represent the first or the second generation of immigrants. The novels show how difficult it was for a young man of mixed-race identity in post-war Britain to find his own place in a jungle of faces in a multicultural society. They also depict his struggle to deal with his own existence after the traumatic experience of recognising that he is "[...] almost the same but not quite/white" (Bhabha 1994: 89).

Karim Amir, a child of an English mother and a Pakistani father is the protagonist of the novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*. In the opening chapter, where he repeats the sentence about his nationality many times, he expresses enormous confusion and suspicion in everything he says. "[...] I am an Englishman born and bred, almost" (Kureishi 1990: 3). He knows that the fact that he belongs to "[...] a funny kind of Englishman" (Kureishi 1990: 3), pushes him into the background. Karim reveals his dissatisfaction by stating that he is not proud of being an Englishman and this sends a clear message that he is aware that he has been deprived of something. On the other hand, *The Black Album* is a novel that follows Shahid's problematic process of maturing. He also belongs to the second generation of immigrants since his parents come from Pakistan. The novel deals with different themes that marked the political, economic and socio-cultural situation in Britain. It explores the Prince phenomenon, the rise of the pop icon of the 1980s, the collapse of communism, the velvet revolution, and finally, the emergence of new dance music. The novel distinguishes between the positive and negative sides of multiculturalism and shows the possible conflicts which can be caused by these differences in cultural values and beliefs.

The importance of music, the bands, and the artists, which Kureishi proposes in his novels, is enormous. Both his novels are characteristically strongly related to the music genre as well as the mood of the time. Kureishi's debut novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, reflects the period of soaring optimism, idealism and serenity which characterised the 1960s and the early 1970s in Britain. In order to do that, the novel provides "a compendium of references of pop evolution [...] from the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, to hippy music to psychedelia, glam rock and punk" (Moore-Gilbert 2001: 115). What is more, in the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*, for example, everything is related to music. The story and the life of the novel's protagonist Karim start within the world of music. His parents first meet at a concert, and a few months later they start their life together. "On Fridays and Saturdays, they went to dances and smooched blissfully to *Glenn Miller* and *Count Basie* and *Luis Armstrong*. That is where Dad first laid his eyes and hands on a pretty working-class girl from the suburbs called Margaret" (Kureishi 1990: 25). Karim, the product of their passionate love, experiences music in the same way. "I favored the tuneless: *King Crimson*, *Soft Machine*, *Captain Beefheart*, *Frank Zappa* and *Wild Man Fisher*" (Kureishi 1990: 62). He enjoys his life and the vices which accompany the modern lifestyle, or has a problem with racism, runs away, and hides in the world of music. In other words, music allows him to enter "[...] another world" (Kureishi 1990: 62), the one that is safe and provides protection. Contrary to *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Kureishi's second novel *The Black Album* portrays the rise of anger and discontent with life among the British population. It shows the decline of social liberalism and the emergence of fundamentalism during the 1970s and the 1980s. As for the music in Kureishi's second novel "labyrinthine history of rock music is again a recognized element of his storytelling [...]" (Kaleta 1998: 141). The rise of punk as a musical genre helps young protagonists to express their rebellious nature, with its spirit meticulously interwoven into every sequence of Kureishi's stories. The novel also describes the emergence of new dance music, an inevitable part of rave parties, where a rave is "[...] street jargon for a gigantic, all night, drug-using dancing party [...]" (Kaleta 1988: 122).

Christin Hoene, in *Music and Identity in Postcolonial British South-Asian Literature*, discusses the importance of music and identity formations as well as the way music is used for the interpretation of post-colonial identities. She argues that music is an essential part of the human

condition and very important for the expression of post-colonial identities since it “[...] easily escapes constructs of meaning just as the post-colonial condition defies meta-narratives of Western culture and supremacy” (Hoene 2014: 2). Thus, the identity that music represents cannot be fixed, calculated, or in any way stable, but rather fluid and changeable. She also states that “musical references [...] act as symbols and metaphors, and they inform the characters’ identification with their cultural heritage and surroundings” (Hoene 2014: 2). In addition to that, Edward Said in *Musical Elaborations* indicates the importance of the concept known as *transgression*. He associates it with music and explains that transgression in music represents “[...] its nomadic ability to attach itself to, and become part of, social formations, to vary its articulations and rhetoric depending on occasion as well as the audience [...]” (Said in Hoene 2014: 4). It is also observed as “[...] a highly productive concept [...] because it accommodates concepts of fluidity and the possibility of hybridity” (Hoene 2014: 5), which consequently means that the discussion of post-colonial identities is plausible.

With these two novels, Kureishi raises questions about personal, cultural and national identity, thus depicting how it feels to grow up in one culture with the roots in a completely unfamiliar one. *The Buddha of Suburbia* caused a certain kind of revolution in British literature, and it was worshipped by many, especially those who were of the same mixed identity as the book characters. By introducing Charlie Kay, Karim’s friend, who personifies the white lower middle-class but no longer wants to belong to it, the novel is also seen as an important literary work that provides an answer to what it means “[...] to be English in a post-colonial country that has won the war but lost the empire” (Hoene 2014: 86). Compared to Kureishi’s first novel, which reflects the period of soaring optimism, his second novel has a pessimistic approach to similar issues. Moreover, when Kureishi discusses music and its role in the lives of the novels’ protagonists, he shows that they, Karim and Shahid, approach it differently. In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Karim strives “[...] to identify himself with the youth culture of the time” due to the fact that he “[...] very much feels like an outsider struggling to keep up with current trends in popular culture” (Hoene 2014: 86). Hence, Kureishi, in this novel, rather insists on the collective identity. In *The Black Album*, music for Shahid “[...] means on a much more personal and individual level than the general connotations with pop music and youth culture would imply” (Hoene 2014: 87). Shahid’s identification

with Prince, one of the most important musicians of the time, helps him to reveal the answers concerning his problematic coming-of-age.

Finally, the appearance of these two novels has influenced the change and the redefinition of the images of Englishness not only among immigrants but also among English people. Kureishi illustrates the importance of music in the protagonists' coming-of-age, especially those with fluid identities, due to the fact that music reveals "a way of being in the world [...]" (Frith in Hall and Gay 1996: 114). Therefore, inasmuch as Kureishi's novels contain copious references to the music of the time, and the music directly influences the protagonists' coming-of-age, it is fair to say that these novels "[...] illuminate a distinctive new national identity" (Kaleta 1998: 4).

3. The White Album: The Beatles

The Beatles or the "paradigm of the age" as the famous American philosopher and writer, Allen Ginsberg, used to call them, is a unique musical phenomenon of both British and the world music in the late twentieth century (as cited in Kureishi 2011: 90). The musical revolution first started in their heads, before spreading its influence worldwide. The way their music connected and united young people from all over the world remains unprecedented. They were the real example of the idea that all the madness of this world could be put into a song.

Hanif Kureishi, in his short essay, *Eight Arms to Hold You*, discusses his first encounter with the music of The Beatles and their role in popular culture. He stresses their importance for the music scene as well as the obstacles they had to face at the beginning of their very successful and prolific career. "Not that you could ignore the Beatles even if you wanted to. Those rockers in suits were unique in English popular music, bigger than anyone had been before" (Kureishi 2011: 82). Kureishi also depicts Mr. Hogg, his teacher of music and religion, who was just one of many well-educated people at the time who tried their best to minimise and undermine both the reputation and the role of the group. Through his character, he tries to portray the confusion that occurred at the time. For a person like him, it was difficult to accept that the shallowness concerning many things that he associated with the members of the group could be the foundation of such great success. According to Kureishi's teacher, they

were not literate enough to write the songs that were ascribed to them. They did not finish any recognizable school or university which could prove and underpin their talent. However, The Beatles stood up against all the prejudice and showed that it was possible.

First of all, through their music and songs, they indirectly *attacked* the class system in Britain. The 1960s were the years when it was still unacceptable and impossible for the young people of the lower middle class, who were stigmatised as rude, poorly educated, aggressive, ill-mannered, and ill-bred, to achieve such fame. Besides, “[...] none of us thought we’d become doctors, lawyers, scientists, politicians. We were scheduled to be clerks, civil servants, insurance managers and travel agents” (Kureishi 2011: 83). What was more frightening, according to Kureishi, was the fact that Mr. Hogg’s not believing in The Beatles was a clear sign that he and all the other teachers did not believe in his generation and the generations to come. However, the very foundation of the system, which had been like an impregnable fortress for too long, was finally badly shaken by the power of music. Some elements of the system changed, and some disappeared completely. As a consequence of the attack on the class system, high culture was also attacked. The *cultural vertigo* that was happening came as a shock to many. The Beatles also represented a menace to high culture as their existence and work disarrayed the hierarchy of art. There was no more certainty in the world of art. Everything that once mattered and represented any kind of authority, at that moment, at The Beatles moment, became a contentious issue. That is why, according to Kureishi, Mr. Hogg’s view of art and the hierarchy in the arts disappeared into thin air. What once used to be the last on his list became the first and the most popular type of art among British as well as among Western people in general. “At the top were stationed classical music and poetry, besides the literary novel and great painting. At the bottom of the list, [...], were films, television and finally, the most derided – pop music” (Kureishi 2011: 82).

Ian MacDonald, in his book *Revolution in the Head*, takes a close look at the rise of The Beatles phenomenon, their fame, and their infinite influence. He discovers another feature that should be associated with their work – it is known as the *nowness* or “[...] ‘to live now, this moment’ [...]” (Wenner, 1973, as cited in MacDonald 2008: 21). The Beatles and their focus on the now mentality went so far that from their perspective “waiting killed the spontaneity they so prized [...]” (Wenner, 1973, as cited in MacDonald 2008: 22). They observed it as a big step back. The return to

the past was all but prosperous. MacDonald also points out that the now mentality, later on, became the leitmotif of the 1960s in general, not only that of The Beatles. In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, this mentality is associated with Karim, the novel's protagonist. From the beginning of the novel, we recognize a young, dreamy boy, full of life, who is keen on conquering London. He adores everything that has to do with fashion trends, music, art and popularity. He longs to try various drugs and to have as much sex as possible. He welcomes changes and wants to taste all the forbidden fruits the 1970s seemed to be offering. "In bed, before I went to sleep, I fantasized about London [...]. There were kids [...] who lived free lives [...], there were thousands of black people everywhere so I would not feel exposed, [...] there were [...] bookshops [...], shops selling all the records you could desire [...]" (Kureishi 1990: 121). In *The Black Album*, the now mentality is associated with Shahid, the protagonist of the novel, and his elder brother, Chili. They represent the second generation of immigrants in Britain and consequently support an ideology quite opposite to their father's. It is a new ideology, an ideology of mixed-race children. Neither Chili nor Shahid perceive the wealth their father created as something that they should increase. They do not want to work hard but rather live like all the other young white boys. What is more, Chili believes that his father's money should be spent on a luxurious life.

When Kureishi, in his essay, discusses Lennon's role in pop culture, his unquestionable greatness, and above all his voice, it bears an uncanny resemblance to Kureishi's voice in literature. "It's strong but cruel and harsh [...]. It's expressive, charming and sensual [...]. It is aggressive and combative but the violence in it is attractive since it seems to emerge out of passionate involvement with the world. It's the voice of someone who is alive in both feeling and mind" (Kureishi 2011: 91). In other words, while writing about Lennon and his voice in pop music, Kureishi unconsciously writes about himself and depicts his voice in literature. Furthermore, in the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Kureishi considers the Beatles phenomenon as the personification of great opportunities and pleasure. Everything that the group members did was new and epochal for millions of young people who yearned to belong somewhere and, most importantly, to have their voices heard. The Beatles were not only their heroes for the reason that "[...] no authority had broken their spirit; [...] they answered back, no one put them down" (Kureishi 2011: 86), but they were also their role models. The novel shows that the existence of the Beatles and their success sent

a clear message to young people that it was no longer important whether they belonged to the lower class or not. It was just a matter of their will to succeed. Kureishi also depicts their music as a liberating factor and observes that “[...] everything about the Beatles spoke about enjoyment, abandon, and attention to the needs of the self” (Kureishi 2011: 86). Consequently, the Beatles’ music in *The Buddha of Suburbia* personifies the free world of great possibilities accessible to everyone regardless of their gender, race, background, or skin colour.

4. David Bowie: The sense of Camp

David Jones, alias David Bowie, is another eminent artist who has an exceptional place in Kureishi’s oeuvre. He was the most prominent figure of the new style characterized by glitter, gender ambiguity and an androgynous look, especially popular among male performers. “What is most beautiful in virile men is something feminine; what is most beautiful in feminine women is something masculine” (Sontag 1964: 4). Besides, Bowie is probably Kureishi’s favorite musician. They have many things in common. Firstly, they were both born in south London in a lower middle-class family. They also attended the same school, Bromley Technical High School in Keston, the only difference being that Bowie had attended the school a decade earlier. They both use the sensibility of Camp¹ and different literary techniques in their writings, such as irony, to express their view of the world they live in. Above all, they are real examples of the idea that social disadvantage is essential to pop culture.

The bond between these two artists is emphasised in Kureishi’s first novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Kureishi suggests that among a great number of popular artists who played an important role at the time, David Bowie stood out. Thus, when Karim, on his way to London, persuades his father to “[...] stop off at the Three Tuns in Buckingham” (Kureishi 1990: 8), he wants him to go to the very same place where Bowie started his musical career. On the other hand, many years later, Bowie took part with his songs in the soundtrack for the BBC adaptation of the very same novel. Iain Chambers in *Popular Culture: The Metropolitan Experience*

¹ Camp is the consistently aesthetic experience of the world. It incarnates a victory of “style” over “content,” “aesthetics” over “morality,” of irony over tragedy (Sontag 1964: 10).

sees David Bowie as the “master of metamorphosis” (Chambers 1986: 11). According to Chambers, Kureishi’s literary protagonists become the canvas for psychological trauma. However, the very same characters, in terms of music, become the canvas of urban signs. He also points out that contemporary art should be associated with contemporary life, hence the necessity to depict the importance of everyday life down to the last detail. In the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*, the love for metamorphoses is shown through Charlie – Karim’s friend. In his search for a new sound, he rejects his old hippy identity in the face of punk. “That’s it, that’s it [...]. That’s fucking it. [...]The sixties have been given notice tonight” (Kureishi 1990: 131). Despite the fact that punk is observed as a sound that is “[...] intrinsically linked to social criticism, rebellion, and an aggressive anarchic vision” (Hoene 2014: 105), Charlie sees it as a possibility not much for rebellion but for personal accomplishment. Charlie’s urge to perform, to become successful and recognized all over the city of London, the country, and even abroad, breaks all the boundaries. What is more, Charlie, in inventing and manufacturing a hybrid identity by primarily changing his name and becoming Charlie Hero, achieves two goals at the same time. First, he becomes a superstar, popular among young people. Second, he finally leaves the suburbs and, in a short period of time, leaves the country and moves to the United States. Furthermore, according to Sontag, Camp represents the glorification of character, and what is appreciated the most in the Camp sense is the “force of the person” (Sontag 1964: 8). Charlie definitely succeeds in influencing people around him, not to mention his female audience. Karim compares Charlie’s charm to the most lethal weapon and says that he is “[...] magnificent in his venom, his manufactured rage, his anger, his defiance. What power he had, what admiration he extorted, what looks were in girls’ eyes” (Kureishi 1990: 154). Although Karim recognises the tricks Charlie uses to transform punk and his performance into selling goods, that does not stop him from expressing his delight and admiration.

During the 1970s, consumerism or “[...] the secret language of style” (Chambers 1986: 7), the uncontrolled use of drugs, clothes and music, as well as ontological insecurity, established the foundation for the rise of a new style in music, and consequently in fashion. In the 1960s, music was observed as a “[...] vehicle of thought and feeling” (MacDonald 2008: 13). Unfortunately, “Thatcher’s trope against feeling was a resurrection of control, a repudiation of the sensual, of self-indulgence in any form

[...]” (Kureishi 2011: 92). As a result, the new style was a response to political, economic, and social changes. When it comes to consumerism in Britain, it swamped everyday life to the extent that it soon became the subject of parody in different spheres of art, mainly in music and literature. In Kureishi’s novel, *The Black Album*, consumerism or a *new religion* is closely connected with Shahid’s brother Chili. “At home, he had a wall of suits, linen for the summer, and wool for the winter, arranged according to the color [...]. There were cashmere coats, Paul Smith scarves, Cardin umbrellas [...]” (Kureishi 1995: 199). Whenever Chili appears in the novel, it is always about the materialistic side of life. He belongs to the second generation of immigrants, and his life ideology and goals differ from his father’s. He wears expensive clothes, always signed by a world-famous designer, and drives expensive cars. “In Chili’s hand were his car keys, Ray-Bans and Marlboros [...]. Chili drank only black coffee and neat Jack Daniels; his suits were Boss, his underwear Calvin Klein [...] his drug dealer would come to him at all hours [...]” (Kureishi 1995: 38). Chili is, therefore, portrayed as a boy locked into a new ideology called consumerism. His love for luxury life and drugs prevents him from becoming mature. As a result, he becomes like *Peter Pan*, “the archetype for pop icons” (Savage in Kureishi and Savage 1995: xxiv) and those who participate in pop culture. In the text, Chili never grows up. Unfortunately, consumerism takes him to the other extreme. He becomes a drug addict and, consequently, a victim of drug abuse.

If anyone had the power to influence other people, particularly artists, with their attitude, songs, and performances, it was David Bowie. His stylistic transformations were unique, as was his visual appearance. He proposed a new way of dressing: androgynous, eccentric, and flamboyant clothing, accompanied by the use of various cosmetics such as eyeliner and lipstick. He also showed his love for exaggeration, the unnatural, and artifice. In doing so, Bowie proved that he was a true representative of the Camp, since “Camp is a vision of the world in terms of style – but a particular kind of style” (Sontag 1964: 3). Thus, it is not surprising that he eventually becomes an idol and an inspiration to young people, especially to Charlie, one of the protagonists of the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*. With his attitude, he reminds us a lot of Bowie and his coming-of-age, since Charlie is white, belongs to the low-middle class, lives in the suburbs, and longs for fame. Another similarity is the awareness that they have to change themselves and their performance in order to achieve

success. Therefore, while in the suburbs, Charlie, the aspirant rock star, is completely impressed with Bowie and openly shows his adoration by identifying with him. “He stood out from the rest of the mob with his silver hair and stacked shoes. [...] It was Bowie’s influence, I knew” (Kureishi 1995: 68). Moreover, Charlie’s love for exaggeration, the unnatural, artifice, and metamorphoses becomes more pronounced when he develops affection for punk music. “His hair was dyed black now, and it was spiky. He wore, inside out, a slashed T-shirt with a red swastika hand-painted on it. His black trousers were held together by safety pins, paper clips, and needles” (Kureishi 1995: 151/2). Therefore, Charlie definitely recognises the potential of punk music and the opportunities which it provides for him. That is why he discards his previous hippie look and embraces the spirit of punk as a means of self-reinvention and, most importantly, his future career.

5. The Black Album: Prince’s dandyism

Prince, Rogers Nelson, is another musician who fuels the pages of Kureishi’s writings. He is one of the greatest singers, songwriters and record producers of all time. He knew how to reach the audience all over the world with his wide vocal range and unrivalled stage performance. The combination of different musical styles which encompass funk, rock, pop, rhythm and blues (R&B), and soul helped him to create the image of a diverse, and a rather unique artist.

There is a striking resemblance between Kureishi’s literature and Prince’s music with regard to the themes they explore. Both of them belong to the generation which has a problem defining their identity. Their hybridity, reflected through their skin colour, is the stigma that shapes their lives, as well as their destinies. Stan Hawkins and Sarah Niblock, in their book *Prince: The Making of a Pop Phenomenon*, discuss the intolerance which exists towards those who are *almost white* and point out that they are seen and described in “[...] animalistic terms, as a strange creature” (2016: 27). Furthermore, both Prince and Kureishi continuously wage war against fixed identity, patriarchal conformity, white authority, and any other fixed category, but mainly against the stereotypes that prevent them from being acknowledged. They also insist on “blurring the binary distinctions” (Hawkins and Niblock 2016: 26), which consequently means combining the things that have never been

combined before and interpreting them in a non-traditional way. Although their authenticity is “[...] established by a politics of representation that is continuously double-coded” (Hawkins and Niblock 2016: 33), they succeed in proving that the authentic *other* can be seen as “[...] a unique and original ‘genius’” (Hawkins and Niblock 2016: 35).

The link which exists between Prince and Hanif Kureishi, two prominent and prolific artists, is based on their advocacy of *hybrid aesthetics*. On the one hand, “Prince created a hybrid style that began to redefine pop music immediately upon its arrival. He blended [...] the funk of James Brown, the synths and drum machines of New Wave, the melody of Top 40 pop, the energy of hard rock, and even the angst of punk [...]” (Hahn and Tiebert 2017: 8). Therefore, his ability to fuse styles and genres makes him the most unique, beloved and above all, the most influential artist who has altered the trajectory of music for good. On the other hand, “in Prince, [...] Kureishi most graphically represents pop as the crossroads not only of different cultural influences but as a site in which plurality of identity – whether at the level of ethnicity, class, gender or sexuality – is celebrated” (Moore-Gilbert 2001: 117).

The transgression of boundaries concerning gender, culture or music is another characteristic they share in their artistic worlds. Gender play, the use of the epicene style which is seen as the triumph of the Camp sense, was the most important and the most urgent issue during the 1980s. Kureishi and Prince, in their artistic expressions, proffer bisexuality and the fluidity of identity as a tool for the disruption of conventional codes, but also as a way of showing their disagreement with white supremacy. Prince does it through his lyrics, gestures, and his choice of clothes. He combines different styles, different appearances, and mimes different icons of pop culture. Unlike any other musician or artist of the time, he expresses his feminine side in an undoubtedly genuine way. Moreover, “the spectacle of Prince’s posturing was important in challenging traditional representations of gender, as he demonstrated the phenomenon of parodying the construction of masculinity” (Hawkins and Niblock 2016: 41).

When it comes to the themes of gender roles and gender play in Kureishi’s oeuvre, they pervade his first two novels, *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*, with a liberating effect on the novels’ characters who are finally free to remove the burden of traditional discourse. At the beginning of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, for example, in his quest for sexual identity, Karim spends some pleasurable time with

Charlie. According to Kaleta, Karim and Charlie's adoration of each other does not mean that they are romantically in love, but that they are in love with their maleness. He adds that it all happens because "[...] they are experiencing a hormone-related avalanche of sexual awareness: puberty" (Kaleta 1998: 179). Besides, Haroon, Allie, and Changez, unconsciously, with their acts, attitudes and appearances, express their feminine side. What is more, Changez's wife Jamila, is quite a man in their relationship. "She always seemed to be leaning forward, arguing, persuading. She had a dark moustache, too [...]" (Kureishi 1990: 51). Her masculinity is depicted in such a way that, on some occasions, she uses it to protect Changez and, on others, to beat him. In *The Black Album*, the gender role-play is unveiled through the scene when Deedee asks Shahid to wear make-up while she puts on Madonna's Vogue. Moreover, Prince's *The Black Album*, the title Kureishi uses for his novel, is riddled with the "[...] lyrics about masturbation and uncharacteristically aggressive attitude to sex" (Draper 2011: 119). The very same themes are explored in Kureishi's novel which is, according to many scholars, a more profound one of the two concerning the characters' attitudes towards sex and gender role.

With regard to fixed identity, Prince and Madonna, in the musical sense, are the two sides of the same coin. Their approach to the issue is based on the same ideas. In other words, "with lace underwear, eyeliner and sex-as-power musical mantras, they waged war on fixed, essentialist ideas about masculine and feminine identities and practices" (Hawkins and Niblock 2016: 28). Colin McDowell, in his book *The Man of Fashion: Peacock Males and Perfect Gentlemen*, discusses the semiotics of lace. He points out that the meaning has changed over time, although it has always signified the prestige and status of those who wear it. In the beginning, lace was associated with wealth, and later with both wealth and "[...] the man worthy of respect" (McDowell 1997: 18). However, when Prince wore it, it got the opposite meaning and it "[...] signified his desire to be provocative to patriarchal, white authority" (Hawkins and Niblock 2016: 46). From Kureishi's point of view, *the lace* which Prince uses to provoke white authority could be associated with the *ambition* that almost every white person in Britain has, which is not to be pushed to the margins of society, to be acknowledged for one's deeds, and to be allowed to finally have a voice. In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, for example, ambition is depicted in the scene in which Karim talks with his white fellow actor about his theatre role. Once again, Karim gets humiliated, this time by the fellow

actor's comment that only disadvantaged people are keen to succeed. On the one hand, Karim's ambition provokes the white man's jealousy, and on the other hand, the provocation proves that things are indeed changing, however slowly.

Furthermore, Prince also embraced *dandy style*, which first appeared in the late nineteenth century, to express his protest against white supremacy. In other words, he used clothes, like many before him, as a cultural weapon. Although clothes were used as a symbol of social status, Prince's goal was anything but. In the novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Karim also dresses in a very strange way. He dresses up in his grandmother's clothes. He wears her fur coat and ties a belt around his waist when he goes out on a date with a girl. Contrary to Karim, who voluntarily wears women's clothes, Shahid in *The Black Album* does the same, but involuntarily. Chad brings a cotton salwar kameez for Shahid, a traditional dress worn by both men and women. In doing so, Kureishi once again introduces an ambiguous scene that can be read in many different ways. The national dress consists of two parts, the kameez – a long tunic, and the salwar – baggy trousers, worn mostly by women in the Islam world. However, despite Shahid's open dissatisfaction, in this situation, he is forced to wear it.

Prince's role as a pop icon of the 1980s in Kureishi's writings, especially in *The Black Album*, where Kureishi describes him as "the river of talent" (Kureishi 1995: 250) is colossal. Everything that Prince communicates via his lyrics, performances and iconography concerning the socio-political and socio-cultural situation, Kureishi does through his oeuvre. They approach the same issues from two different artistic standpoints. They both use the body as "[...] if it was, and it often was, the only cultural capital [...]" (Hall in Hall and Gay 1996: 27). Thus, if Kureishi's oeuvre is seen as something that has influenced the change of the landscape of British fiction, then Prince's music career has done the same in the world of music. In addition, as regards Prince's influence on Shahid's coming-of-age, music offers a secure anchor for his existence in London from the very beginning of the novel. It is also tightly associated with violence, sex, and drugs and provides an "alternative history" of the time. Contrary to Charlie in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, who uses music to leave the suburbs and continue his music career abroad, Shahid in *The Black Album* writes an essay on music, specifically on Prince, to assure his spot in a London college. In doing so, Shahid recognizes Prince's individualism and ambiguity, manifested in his art and personality, and he strives for it. Shahid also recognises that

Prince and his music might help him to finally reach an understanding of his identity. Above all, presenting Prince as Shahid's role model proves that the novel "[...]" endorses a pluralistic view of identity not defined by religious or other certainties, but embracing ambiguity as its core" (Hoene 2014: 95).

6. Conclusion

Hanif Kureishi, in these two novels, unveils the universal truths about the period of the major clashes of extremes, big changes, the appearance of new trends, and above all, the rise of popular, teenage culture. Music, one of the forms of popular culture, plays a vital role in Kureishi's work. It permeates his texts in ways that are important for interpreting post-colonial identities and culture. That is why "characters that find themselves in-between nations and cultures come to rely on music's ability to cross borders between nations, cultures and languages" (Hoene 2014: 2). Moreover, Kureishi depicts the music and the musicians of the time: their texts, clothes, style, anything they use to express and introduce themselves. He combines fine arts—literature, with performing arts—music, in order to create cultural identity. It is an essential part of identity and provides a sense of belonging. Cultural identity affects how one perceives and responds to the circumstances or the surroundings. It is fluid and can evolve as one adopts or rejects various values, beliefs, behaviors, and norms of the community that one identifies with. Thus, cultural identity is also part of a collective identity, a metaphor for a fictitious society, in which case it is related to pop culture since "pop is the 'outsider's cry'—free speaking to a large audience – which has done more to remake British identity than any other form, and the spirit of punk still inspires it" (Kureishi, 2011: 364).

In these two novels, *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*, music operates in different ways. First, it is a kind of a *mise-en-scène*: a picture hidden in another picture. Regardless of whether Kureishi mentions the name of a band, the title of a song, or the name of a singer, it codes the narrative and generates a new discourse for the reader. Music clarifies and enhances the picture of the political and social moments in his stories. Namely, it is "[...]" consistently mentioned as a cultural and historical occurrence "[...]" (Kaleta 1998: 8). Therefore, when Kureishi discusses the importance of rock and roll, especially the rise of The Beatles in the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*, he observes rock as "[...] a rebellious

form of youth culture protesting against the status-quo, questioning older generations and the establishment” (Hoene, 2015: 149), and at the same time, he evokes the memories of a decade filled with freedom, love, drugs, unconventional sex, deceit, pain, and uncertainty. However, Kureishi is not a historian because his reconstructions of different periods are “[...] neither anthropologically nor historically based” (Kaleta, 1998: 83). By way of artistic arrangement and musical references, he leads the reader through the socio-political changes of the time and demonstrates their direct influence on the changes that took place in musical genres. Also, by intertwining music and literature, Kureishi helps the reader to identify more closely with his narrative, insofar as he provides them with a “[...] more personal interpretation of the stories” (Kaleta 1998: 8). He reveals his view of the world, the ideology he supports, the pleasures he strives for, and, above all, the idea of his personality in general. Finally, the music Kureishi depicts in his novels represents a different world: a world where everything is possible. It is a place where white and black people can meet freely and celebrate their diversity without humiliating one another. It is also a place where no homophobia, or any other phobia, exists. Music always goes one step further, raising its voice against politics and the law which protects racism and those who advocate it. Therefore, all the singers and bands mentioned in these two novels at some point have a particular importance: from *The White* to *The Black Album*, from *The Beatles* to *Prince*.

In the end, Hanif Kureishi shows that music, as a cultural form, has the power to make invisible voices visible. He emphasises that literature is not the only space where this type of articulation is possible and demonstrates how, when combined, the two art forms, music and literature, may complement and enrich each other. Music also enables young people to connect on a larger scale and allows everyone, regardless of skin colour, to have a voice and express themselves. It helps displaced people to articulate a shared sense of community. That is why, in his novels, short stories, and plays, he insists on music as an integral part of his writings. In addition, transgression in music is a factor that influences the destruction of fixed identity. Most importantly, it undermines the post-colonial binary, thus assisting literature in its struggle against it. In other words, Kureishi’s novels prove that music in literature expresses the concepts which, due to their complexity, are difficult to formulate otherwise. It enables the reader to uncover and comprehend the smallest details of ineffable truths. Furthermore, relying on Frith’s theory that “music seems to be a key to

identity because it offers so intensely a sense of both self and others, of the subjective in the collective” (as cited in Hall and Gay 1996: 110), we can conclude that music has a profound impact on the formation of identity.

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