

## Kureishi, Gurnah and Naipaul Reveal Otherness: Double-Consciousness in the Buddha of Suburbia, by the Sea and One out of Many

Saman Hashemipour<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

---

Naipaul, Kureishi, and Gurnah reveal displacement and otherness through the Du Bois and Fanonian concept of double-consciousness. There is a connection between W.E.B. DuBois' concept of double consciousness and Frantz Fanon's work. The idea of double-consciousness for Franz Fanon and W. E. B. Du Bois reflects the colonised population who find themselves in another form and describes how they perceive the unique themselves in two different cultural identities. Double-consciousness states how a colonised person is feeling homesick in the colonised society, how colonisers deal with him, how he resists but ingratiates himself with false pretence, and how finally he dismasks? Naipaul, Kureishi, and Gurnah shed light on the much-discussed topic of identity and the sense of belonging through the experiences of various immigrants who attempt to integrate into a new society. Identity has a stable core that hybrid characters challenge. It identifies how they experience living in-between's, and how double-consciousness in the process of constructing a new identity works.

---

**Keywords:** Identity, Double-Consciousness, Otherness, Displacement

### Introduction

V. S. Naipaul, a homeless Indian in Trinidad, Hanif Kureishian ethnic-immigrant who positioned between British and Pakistani worlds, and Abdulrazak Gurnah, a Tanzanian in the United Kingdom, explore the issues of home, homelands, and belonging; of migration and borders; of ethnicity double consciousness, and the cultural interaction. Their creativity made available by considering their position as a writer caught between two cultures, ideologies, colours, languages, and classes that force them to struggle the politics of ethnicity to reinvent the self and resist against all forms of literary and political customs.

W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and later, Franz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) declared the concept of double-consciousness which is challenged in the psychology as looking at yourself through the eyes of a racist society. To rebuild the mind under the influence of duality, we have to emphasise awareness emphatically. Major characters in the novels and stories of Naipaul, Kureishi, and Gurnah try to unveil their masks to face the real self. These characters are migrated members of diaspora or members of the society who paddle and get down in the colonial society. This study questions how the main characters are got into double-consciousness and how they resist against it, how the leading figures' behaves proves Fanon and Du Bois's theories of the damning and humiliating overtones, how they resist against colonisation, and at the end, whether they conquer or not? These postcolonial authors reflect their theories of accommodation in an exotic society. Double-consciousness for Du Bois means "looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois, p.8).

In this sense "one ever feels his two-ness...two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." (Du Bois, p.8) Despite Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*, used "shadow" in the whole book to emphasise the misery of Negroes in the US in that period, but easily it can be extended to all opponents seeking freedom.

---

<sup>1</sup> Girne American University, Girne, TRNC via Mersin 10 – Turkey, E-mail: [smnpour@gmail.com](mailto:smnpour@gmail.com)

Besides, Franz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* describes black against white, and also, I versus Other through colonialism. In his introduction to this book, Homi Bhabha, examines the process of identity configured by Fanon and says Fanon's works "split between a Hegelian–Marxist dialectic, a phenomenological affirmation of Self and Other and the psychoanalytic ambivalence of the Unconscious, its turning from love to hate, mastery servitude" (Fanon, XXIII). To accomplish, Bhabha declares how "Sartre says the anti-Semitic consciousness—turns on the idea of Man as his alienated image, not Self and Other but the 'Other-ness' of the Self-inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity" (Fanon, XXVII). He continues;

*By following the trajectory of colonial desire—in the company of that bizarre colonial figure, the tethered shadow—it becomes possible to cross, even to shift the Manichean boundaries. Where there is no human nature hope can hardly spring eternal; but it emerges surely and surreptitiously in the strategic return of that difference that informs and deforms the image of identity, in the margin of Otherness that displays identification. There may be no Hegelian negation, but Fanon must sometimes be reminded that the disavowal of the Other always exacerbates the 'edge' of identification, reveals that dangerous place where identity and aggressivity are twinned. For denial is always a retroactive process; a half acknowledgement of that Otherness which has left its traumatic mark. (XXXIII)*

Moore (2005) looks at double consciousness from the Fanonian perspective. Moore has a similar understanding of double-consciousness with Du Bois. Moore avers that "it is not psychologically healthy to measure your worth through the eyes of others. Moreover, it is not psychologically healthy to be denied full expression of your blackness or manhood in a white-dominated society" (2005, p.753). Besides, Lacan's notion of subjectivity is modelled by the mirror stage and the practice of mimicry. In his famous work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon concerns himself with the production of subjectivity, and Homi Bhabha examines the relationship between Fanon's analysis of European man and his colonised other. Besides, Lacan's reading of subjectivity is characterised by an idealised mental image of the oppressed unconscious one.

*For Fanon, although the race has materialized in very discrete and polarized forms, it is possible for individuals to shift between these polarized worlds. One world, the world of the colonized, is white/ rich/powerful and the 'other' world, the opposite world of the colonized is characterized as the black/poor/alienated world. This is what Fanon referred to as the 'compartmentalized' sectors of the colonial condition. Yet, Fanon often refers to the mobility of individuals between these worlds. One is 'white' only when he/she internalizes racial hierarchy and seeks after the vain things of the world. Thus, he often refers to middle class, urban-dwelling Antilleans as white. (Kane, p.358)*

### **Double-Consciousness in *The Buddha of Suburbia***

Kureishi is a novelist and filmmaker of the comedy of ethnic-immigrant whose position between British and Pakistani worlds enables him to see through each with clearness. Hanif Kureishi's the idea of belonging is related to explore the issues of home, homelands, and belonging; of migration and borders; of ethnicity, critical consciousness, or double-consciousness and the cultural ethnic. Ethnicity in British cultural studies is shown as a mode of social critique. It is against accepted nationalisms and theorises the migrant border position as the new ethnicity.

The search for identity is a crucial theme of *The Buddha of Suburbia*. For Kureishi, the dominant desire and the primary need is to overturn the self-satisfied religiousness, and the sad cultural behaviours and beliefs developed in the ethnic struggling of Americanization, as well as British kind. He is a cultural critic of Homi Bhabha who calls the empowering condition of hybridity in *The Location of Culture*. The creativity made available by considering his position as a writer caught him between two cultures, ideologies, colours, languages, and classes that force him to struggle the politics of ethnicity. Kureishi reinvents the self and resists/struggle against all forms of literary and political customs.

The narrator of the first language is a teenager named Karim who is grown on the outskirts of London. The style of the novel is flowing and full of satire. The most painful moments in the private relationships of storytellers and their complex social relations have been written with such subtle humour that the reader remains laughing and crying.

The native Indian protagonist loses the protection of his traditional class-defined social identity and is forced to make a hybrid identity in the target society. At the end of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Kureishi's characters are mixed up in an affair of searching for identity or adopting others.

The contemporary identity policy is connected with history, the question of feeling at home, and the individual's roots. Karim is an observer of people, but not so good at self-analysis. There are several moments when he believes he has found the right path, but are false because, with every new beginning, Karim is still unaware of who he is. Only by the end of the book, he starts to recognise his roots and discover his identity.

As a first-generation immigrant, both Anwar and Haroon have a view of life in England, and both idealise living in India. Their searches take them different routes because Haroon tries to be true to himself while Anwar accepts an unfamiliar role. Anwar hugs Muslim merits he has never previously obeyed. He lives and dies in misery because he has adopted a role that does not fit him and presents a quest for identity. He never looks for his own identity but takes others' identities that lead him to fame and success.

Charlie is, ultimately, living in pain and misery because he does not know who he is. In the end, Margaret, a timid and poorly treated mother, and Ted, the uncle who changes his life completely, free themselves from roles that have been imposed on them and find their own real identities. Ted's adoption of Haroon's philosophy and his search for fulfilment is more successful than Haroon himself. Margaret is freed from the role of wife and mother when Haroon leaves. This loss of identity is shocking to her, but it helps her to search for a new identity and happiness. Margaret and Ted are the two characters who find themselves in the best place by the end of the book. The search for identity for most of them is a continuing struggle that brings the book to a hopeful, optimistic ending through duality and double-consciousness.

### **Double-Consciousness in *By the Sea***

Abdulrazak Gurnah is a Tanzanian novelist, born in 1948, Zanzibar who is now living in the United Kingdom. In the search for the protagonist's identities who are stuck in the limbo of staying in the United Kingdom or returning to Zanzibar, in *By the Sea*, Gurnah unrolls the migrants and their efforts to find a place of belonging on the catastrophic situation that migration to a new geographical and social setting causes. Fictional characters are constructing a unique identity for themselves to fit into their new environments. They always are living in their 'new' lives and their 'past' memories.

To Gurnah, who experienced displacement from his native Zanzibar and migration to Britain when he was 17, identity is a matter of continuous change. What the main characters in his novels do is to unsettle the fixed identities to where they migrate. Gurnah's narratives are all considered in the catastrophic situation that migration to a new geographical and social setting make for his character's identities. The condition of belonging to one place but living in another is the subject of Gurnah's complete fiction. Gurnah claims that he is not documenting his autobiographical experience. Gurnah's characters look back upon their pasts with mixed feelings of bitterness and guilt for what they have left behind. The movement to a different place causes the cutting of any contact with their past families Gurnah's characters. The conditions of ethnic, religious, moral or social differences, are the central themes of Gurnah's fiction that provide the central theme to discuss double-consciousness in the main characters.

In *By the Sea*, Saleh Omar, an old refugee who has just arrived in Britain, and Latif Mahmud, a university lecturer who lived in England for several decades, meet to uncover stories from their past. *By the Sea* is told from a different viewpoint with conflicting variations of the truth, both consciously, to deceive, and through memory's weakness. The central dynamic of the tale is a simple one: a man flees home and lives as an exile by the sea. Gurnah uses storytelling to explore the migrants and their efforts to find a place of belonging. The East African Asian narrators of Gurnah's novels tell different stories, and their simulation determines them to create a home in their new English environment with uncertainty. *By the Sea*, presents the characters a life where past and present connected by offering hope for the future: Two East African Asian narrators meet in an English seaside town, and their storytelling leads them to translate their sad histories into a shared present, thus struggling self-pity and isolation. Displacement is studied here reveals a long history of movements caused by trading activities, exile, and voluntary migrations. Gurnah's ideas of otherness operate outside the postcolonial notion, where the other is defined purely by a difference in the race.

It provides visions into the role of Islamic culture in the affirmation of national identity in Zanzibar, before and also, after independence and the 1964 revolution. The novel is written through but not about Islam and projects Zanzibar Muslim practices as the stick that binds society together. Gurnah shows idealised versions of the migrants' original homeland. Saleh Omar's reflections in *By the Sea* open the way for a vision of paradise in the simple future life of the elderly refugee, who has achieved in his old age the forgiveness that will allow him to search for some paradise within himself. In *By the Sea*, Gurnah suggests that in the concept of double-consciousness, this new world is at least partly a translation of the past.

### Double-Consciousness in *One Out of Many*

The word the Caribbean may remind all kinds of alive colours, but to Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul (b.1932) it suggests grey: a land by a fake history. Naipaul typically takes his readers into the heart of the third world (Africa, the Caribbean, Asia, the Middle East) to know what happens in postcolonial societies when foreign power moves away, leaving cruelty and chaos. His early Trinidad novels followed in his fiction and nonfiction, set in Britain, Africa, South America and India, the home of his ancestries. He has too many representative types and looks unhappy about homelessness and migration. He has also been against a political plan that calls for breaking cultural ties with European nations.

*In a Free State* is a collection of three stories: "One out of Many," "Tell Me Who to Kill," and the title piece, "In a Free State." Through, V.S. Naipaul presents a multilayered exploration of transcultural migration. Naipaul covers too much ground and presents a multilayered exploration of transcultural migration. These approaches have caused postcolonial intellectuals to complain about his lack of interest in local culture and to pessimistically reflect on politics, revolution, and the views of national rebirth. While postcolonial theorists want to find a new cultural life that they hope to see, Naipaul struggles for knowledge of self and world and achieves an artistic comprehension of the ethnicity and politics of Caribbean nations like Trinidad that provides readers with a broad sense of the West Indian experience.

As first generation immigrants, the main characters have a view of life in England and idealise the living in India. The displacing and alienating effects of a colonial past on today's post-colonial peoples is Naipaul's principal theme. Santosh is in Bombay working for a middle-level government official. When his employer is reassigned to Washington, D.C., Santosh faces the prospect of dismissal and obligation of returning to his village in the hills. Rather than suffering this loss of prestige and comfort, he presses his employer to take him to the United States. Crossing rural, urban and metropolitan landscapes, the protagonist from a country in India arrives in Washington, intended as the capital of the world.

Soon after, he regrets coming to the United States. In his new home, Washington, D.C., he feels unsafe and out of place. After he arrives, he has an experience that makes it impossible for him to return to India by becoming aware of his own identity. He loses the protection of his traditional class-defined social status and is forced to make a hybrid identity by the American social movements. The author visits or revisits a place and reveals the full richness of its people. In several cases, Naipaul's work has been categorised as travel writing, but it is not a book for travellers; it is a book by a traveller. As a writer, Naipaul remains a greedy traveller, and his journeys are interior as well as geographic. He feels that as much about where he lives (Wiltshire, England) as about the places he visits.

### Conclusion

Double-consciousness or dual vision is the matter of seeing yourself between and also, across cultures. Besides, it is unsettling narratives of origin and authenticity through the negotiation for displacement. Double consciousness in postcolonial literary works, such as novels of Naipaul and Gurnah reflects a sense of dilemma towards self is what in postcolonial criticism. Homi Bhabha adds that double consciousness relates to an in-between condition, the cultural displacement, the borders between home and world; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other. Diasporic characters experience double consciousness and are influenced by the practice of displacement that leads to experience the unstable sense of the characters' original identity. Hanif Kureishi's novel figures are the best example of this dilemma. Having a double consciousness, a diasporic person has nostalgic feelings about the native homeland, produces a confusing state of mind and prevents the process of authentic identity. As diasporic writers, Kureishi, Gurnah, and Naipaul present the identity crisis that the characters undergo to fit into the society where they live. In their struggle to create an identity, trapped between their home and host country, they are forced to create their own identity out of two cultures and displacement results in in-betweenness and double-consciousness until establishing themselves in the characters.

### References

- Bhabha, H. (1994). *Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Black, M. (2007). Fanon and DuBoisian Double Consciousness. *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, 5(3), 393-404. Retrieved May 27, 2018, from <https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1209&context=humanarchitecture>.

- Burghardt, D. B., & Edwards, B. H. (2007). *The Souls of Black Folk*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Demir, Ö. (2015). Neither Here Nor There: How to Fit in British Society in Kureishi's the Buddha of Suburbia and the Black Album? *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*,4(3), first ser., 689-696. doi:10.5901/ajis.2015.v4n3s1p689
- Fanon, F. (2008). *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press.
- . (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press.
- Glabazna, R. (2010). Theater of Identity: The Buddha of Suburbia. *Moravian Journal of Literature and Film*,2(1), 65-77. Retrieved May 27, 2018, from <http://www.moravianjournal.upol.cz/files/MJLF0201Glabazna.pdf>.
- Gurnah, A. (2002). *By the Sea*. London: Bloomsbury Pub.
- Kane, N. (2007). Frantz Fanon's Theory of Racialization Implications for Globalization. *Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*,5(3), 353-362. Retrieved May 27, 2018, from <https://scholarworks.umb.edu/humanarchitecture/vol5/iss3/32/>.
- Kureishi, H. (2009). *The Buddha of suburbia*. London: Faber.
- Lemert, C. (1994). A Classic from the Other Side of the Veil: Du Bois's "Souls of Black Folk." *The Sociological Quarterly*,35(3), 383-396. doi:10.1111/j.1533-8525.1994.tb01734.x
- Moore, T. O. (2005). A Fanonian Perspective on Double Consciousness. *Journal of Black Studies*,35(6), 751-762. doi:10.1177/0021934704263839
- Kane, Nazneen. "Frantz Fanon's Theory of Racialization: Implications for Globalization." *Human Architecture* (2007). 12 Aug. 2010 <[http:// www.encyclopedia.com/doc/IP3-1573095501.html](http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/IP3-1573095501.html)>
- Naipaul, V. S. (2002). *In a Free State: A Novel*. London: Picador.
- Said, E. W. (1994). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.