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HOMES AND BELONGING(S)

The interconnectedness of space, movement, and identity in British-Pakistani novels

Éva Pataki

Belongingness as a sense of belonging to a particular group, person, or place, or of being a fundamental and vital part of something, is a natural and universal desire. But how does one achieve belongingness? What does it mean to share a sense of belonging and belongings with a fellow community member, immigrant, diasporian, citizen, or human being? Where and how is such a sense created and what factors determine its creation? How do spaces, places, homes, and homelands relate to belongingness and how can movement – in a simplified meaning of not being at home but on the road – generate a sense of belonging? In an attempt to answer these questions, the present chapter investigates notions of home and belonging as common recurring tropes in British-Pakistani diasporic fiction, and as highly relevant issues in our modern world characterised by various experiences of and attitudes to migration and diasporisation. Through the close reading and comparative analysis of three British-Pakistani novels, I examine Pakistani diasporians' experience of belongingness, with a special focus on various ways in which the (trans)formation and construction of identity and space, as well as different forms of movement, interconnect with alternative ways of belonging.

Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) provides us with an insight into the condition of working-class British Muslims alienated and segregated in their exclusively immigrant neighbourhood. Through the story of the honour killing of Jugnu and Chanda, and the focal points of Shamas, Kaukab, and their children, Aslam portrays how British-Asian immigrants create their diaspora space¹ in England and how, despite the shared immigrant experience, a community may be pulled apart by religious, cultural, and generational differences, thus depriving its members of a sense of belonging. Having proposed a new definition of national identity, a 'new way of being British' (1986: 18), Hanif Kureishi gave life to the British hybrid *par excellence*, the protagonist of *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990). Karim Amir is running away from the rootedness, boredom, and stasis of the white lower middle-class suburb of Bromley; yet, paradoxically, it is the restlessness of the suburbs that makes him fidgety and eventually drives him to engage in perpetual motion between urban and suburban spaces, greatly determining his sense of belonging and identity construction. Suhayl Saadi's *Psychoraag* (2004) has received critical acclaim for its redefinition of Scottish identity and been recognised as the first Scots Asian novel, and may also be marked out for being a contemporary Glasgow novel with an ethnic twist: presenting the city as 'Migra Polis' (Saadi 2004: 310), a postcolonial space reterritorialised

and hybridised by the Pakistani diaspora. With its insightful representation, *Psychoraag* provides a new aspect of regional diasporic identity in British-Asian fiction and highlights both traditional and alternative ways of belonging for the diasporian.

The close reading of the maps, spatial positions, and routes of the British-Pakistani protagonists of my chosen corpus – varying from hybridised diasporians on the move to nomads and transcendent selves – reveals how diaspora space is created in an attempt to have a home to belong to, as well as ways in which different spaces and places contribute to or hinder the experience of belongingness. I shall contend that urban and suburban spaces may serve both as confining factors and as motors for movement and transgression, thereby becoming significant loci of belonging and what Simone Weil calls ‘rootlessness’ (1952),² as well as points of departure for so-called ‘mobile subjectivities’, for whom Britain itself becomes a multicultural, lived diaspora space appropriated, practised, and travelled.

Aslam’s multifocal narration exposes the underlying patterns of a universal(ised) diaspora experience – the loss of the homeland and the unavoidable feeling of unbelonging and loneliness in an alien land – as he describes the Pakistani diasporians’ (im)migration: ‘Roaming the planet looking for solace, they’ve settled in small towns that make them feel smaller still, and in cities that have tall buildings and even taller loneliness’ (2004: 9). The immigrants’ consciousness is characterised by repeated moments of awakening to the fact that, although one is part of a global network of worldwide diasporas, part of a community and culture, one will forever feel the loneliness and uprootedness of a scattered people – isolated, unbelonging, displaced. The general description of diaspora experience as displacement entails a sense of placelessness³ or “unhomeliness” which can be defined as the obscure feelings that simultaneously draw and repel a person in her relations to a place’ (Leon 2009: 15). To resolve this ambiguous feeling, the diasporic community in Aslam’s *Maps for Lost Lovers* tries to create a sense of belonging by re-christening places ‘to give the map of this English town a semblance of belonging’ (2004: 156): with each new immigrant arriving in the town, place names are changed to resemble well-known streets, squares, and hills back in the homeland (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc.). The only name equally accepted by each immigrant group in the neighbourhood is the name of the town: ‘Dasht-e-Tanhaii. The Wilderness of Solitude. The Desert of Loneliness’ (2004: 9).

The renaming and reappropriation of space suggests the possibility of interpreting both immigration and the creation of diaspora as a result of ‘deterritorialisation’ and, as a compensation for the lost homeland, the ‘reterritorialisation’ of the place. The two terms were originally coined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari as part of their theory of nomadology: deterritorialisation denotes ‘the movement by which “one” leaves the territory’, it is ‘the operation of the line of flight’ and ‘may be overlaid by a compensatory reterritorialisation obstructing the line of flight’ (1987: 508). In diaspora studies (not entirely in the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari), deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation denote the loss of an old territory (in the homeland) and taking possession of a new one (in the host country) (cf. Kalra, Kaur, and Hutnyk 2005: 32). Since the immigrants in Aslam’s novel yearn for roots, stability, and a certain symbolic identity, their rootlessness in England is not the symptom of deterritorialisation in a Deleuzian sense, but an indicator of an attempt ‘to unsettle and unpack the problems associated with having multiple belongings or no sense of belonging at all’ (Kalra, Kaur, and Hutnyk 2005: 4), and of their failed attempts to achieve reterritorialisation and a fixed place/identity associated with it. Therefore, in their case, deterritorialisation becomes a spatial metaphor of identity formation, while reterritorialisation may indicate the diasporian’s wish for a fixed identity, manifested in their inability to secede from the homeland, but also in attempts to create a certain sense of belonging in the host country by renaming and various cultural practices. The latter, according

to Anne-Marie Fortier, are ‘collective performances of identity and belonging’ (2000: 6) (such as going to the mosque or the Hindu temple, celebrating religious festivals like Eid and Ramadan, and visiting cultural events such as a performance by the renowned Sufi singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan in the local bookshop), which ‘mark out spatial and cultural boundaries for the immigrant population’ (Fortier 1999: 42) – boundaries which simultaneously protect and confine.

Boundaries and belonging (or the lack thereof), as well as de- and reterritorialisation are also emphatic tropes in Saadi’s *Psychoraag*, which depicts postcolonial Scotland as a place still perceived by the English as a ‘dusty frontier post’ (2004: 178) and Glasgow as ‘Migra Polis’ (2004: 310). Saadi’s description of the Pakistani diaspora in Glasgow is confined to racialised inner-city spaces and the ‘petit bourgeois Punjabi folk of Glasgae’ (2004: 334). Saadi’s immigrant community, like the diaspora subjects in Aslam’s novel, attempts to fight the feeling of transience and placelessness by reterritorialising the cultural space of the city through various cultural practices and renaming its neighbourhoods: Kinning Park, for instance, is known as ‘Wee Faisalabad’ (2004: 102), named after a village some immigrants came from but simultaneously indicating the influence of the host country.

Another thought-provoking aspect of renaming is that besides suggesting a yearning for the lost homeland and for belonging, it may in fact intensify a self-induced sense of being isolated, excluded from, and not belonging to the cultural space surrounding them. The Pakistani immigrants in *Psychoraag* live ‘hermeneutic lives’ (Saadi 2004: 205) in their neighbourhood, while the Pakistani Muslim characters of Aslam’s novel form a closely-knit community which marks its own territory and creates its diasporic space within urban space by trying to isolate itself from both ‘white’ England and other diasporic communities. In doing so, *Maps for Lost Lovers* metaphorises otherness and cultural isolation by the somewhat paradoxical tropes of ‘the country within the city’, and the alleged (or hoped) cultural purity of diaspora subjects and diaspora space.

A slightly different approach to and appropriation of diaspora space is depicted in Saadi’s description of Kinning Park, a place where ‘the Changezi Family ruled [...] Big shoes, bhangra boots, markin out territory. The pavements hereabouts were all Punjabi’ (2004: 373). While the immigrant neighbourhood in *Psychoraag* seems to be just as exclusive as the one in Aslam’s novel, Kinning Park is reterritorialised and terrorised primarily by the second-generation ‘Kinnin Park Boys [...] a gang of about thirty or so lads’ from the ‘*barathierie*’,⁴ a ‘mini Cosa Nostra’ (2004: 102–4) who, ‘not knowing what mask tae wear, had acquired those of East Coast Gangstas’ (2004: 253) and taken over the crime scene in the immigrant neighbourhoods. Not for a sense of belonging but for the sake of belongings, the Kinnin Park Boys treat Glasgow as their personal territory, defined by invisible yet clearly marked boundaries and a certain power over space, which is also apparent in their exercise of a form of ownership and control by crime, having a hold on various enterprises and the media (including Radio Chaandni). As Ali Madanipour points out, such a sense of territoriality is ‘derived from emotional attachment and familiarity’ (2003: 44); conversely, by renaming and reterritorializing, the immigrants may achieve emotional attachment, which enables them to appropriate and control the place as their own primary territory and may offer a sense of belonging. Territorial behaviour, then, may be a third aspect of diasporic belonging, besides cultural practices and renaming.

The protagonist DJ Zaf’s primal territory, the home where he belongs, is his childhood neighbourhood, Pollokshields: an immigrant ghetto; a confined, peripheral space where all the houses ‘faced inwards [...] built to be blocked off’ (Saadi 2004: 376) from which young diaspora subjects yearn to run away, since ‘growin up in the Shiels in those days wis purgatorial and, for years, Zaf had existed in a state of unrequited life’ (2004: 377). Zaf’s experience of home indicates not only isolation and confinement but also a concomitant

identity crisis, which strongly affects the diasporian's sense of belonging: it is manifested in the first generation's inability to belong to their current location or to return to their country of origin, and the second generation's unwillingness to accept their parents' birthplace as their home. In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, one of the neighbourhood women wonders 'why her children refer to Bangladesh as "abroad" because Bangladesh isn't abroad, *England* is abroad; Bangladesh is *home*' (Aslam 2004: 46; emphasis original). For the first generation, Dasht-e-Tanhaii may be a reterritorialised space but it will never be home; it may seem to be a replica of the homeland but merely an imperfect, fractured one. For the second generation, however, it is indeed home but a home they are bound to leave: in *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Kaukab and Shamas' older son Charag moves out and marries a white woman, their daughter Mah-Jabin has the looks and the life of an independent young woman in London, while in *Psychoraag* Zaf claims to have 'grown up and away' (Saadi 2004: 272) from his diasporic community and neighbourhood, only to find himself in an equally ambivalent space and position at Radio Chaandni.

DJ Zaf's cubicle is a small confined and divided space where he feels safe from the ghosts of his past but also imprisoned; it is a cultural space which both manifests his identity crisis and serves as a place of and a motor for movement, as the following quote suggests:

By the end of every six-hour session, Zaf would have become the room. And, as the weeks had gone on, he had found it more and more difficult to define an existence outside of Radio Chaandni and his life on the air [...] He felt suffocated. Trapped [...] He had the sudden urge to get up and walk out.

(Saadi 2004: 13)

Instead of engaging in perpetual movement like Karim in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Zaf opts for mental movement (in the form of recollections, visions, and hallucination) and his perception of becoming the cubicle – spinning silently and standing poised – results in a ritual pacing:

Zaf moved round and round the cubicle, slowly [...] and as he walked, he trailed the end of his fingers along the grey cones so that, by the end of the whirls, his skin would be electric and [...] a hazy brown line had formed, at waist level, [...] like a border, dividin the room into two separate halves.

(Saadi 2004: 62)

Pacing in the cubicle may be a movement to mark out his territory, a personal space which, according to Madanipour, 'may start from the person's mind and extend to the personal space of the body' (2003: 46), which then 'locates an individual in the physical world' and 'marks out a personal territory, enabling the individual to develop a sense of identity' (2003: 30) and belonging. Furthermore, the division produced by pacing in the cubicle may be interpreted as the spatial manifestation of his identity performance⁵ as a diasporian (i.e. emphasising his Asianness to match the image of the radio) and his cultural positioning as a hybrid.

Such identity performances are also highly emphatic and significant in Kureishi's novel, which starts off with Karim's trenchant self-identification and – positioning as a cultural hybrid:

My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman, born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don't care – Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London suburbs and going somewhere. Perhaps it is the odd mixture

of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored. Or perhaps it was being brought up in the suburbs that did it. (Kureishi 1990: 3)

In claiming to be ‘going somewhere’, Karim both foreshadows the undetermined routes he shall take and displays a sense of inbetweenness generated both by his mixed-race origins and the suburbs. Furthermore, Karim’s words suggest several aspects of hybridity: first, he is a hybrid in a biological sense, as a man of mixed-race (Anglo-Indian) origin; then, as a second-generation immigrant born and brought up in Britain, he is hybridised by the dominant culture; thirdly, he is also a hybrid in the sense of being a representative of Kureishi’s vision of a new kind of Britishness; and, fourthly, as a suburbanite – the child of a hybrid, liminal space.

Without any palpable cultural roots inherited from and imposed on him by his father, Karim does not long for the lost homeland and the belongingness it may entail; nor does he admit belonging to suburbia, despite having lived there all his life. What makes his sense of unbelonging to the space he is most rooted in so contradictory is that, in a way, the suburbs can be interpreted as the spatial manifestation of Karim’s hybridity. In the introduction to his collection *Visions of Suburbia*, urban theorist Roger Silverstone claims that the modern suburb and its culture are both socially and culturally hybrid and that suburbia is ‘revealed, as well as masked, in all its overblown hybridity’ (1997: 4). For Julien Wolfreys, the hybridity of the suburb is manifested in ‘a certain ambiguity of identity, the result of its hybrid borrowing from more than one source or location’ (2010: 97), hence it may only be described by means of a set of dichotomies: ‘Instantly recognizable though never entirely familiar. Ubiquitous but invisible. Secure but fragile. Desired but reviled’ (2010: 4). Suburbia is, then, forever intertwined with the concepts of inbetweenness, liminality, and hybridity, and it is the quintessential metonymy of these notions.

Although Karim does not seem to be able to escape the feeling of inbetweenness in suburbia, nor his ‘destiny, which is to be a half-caste in England’ (Kureishi 1990: 141), every so often he manages to turn his hybridity into an advantage as he continues to engage in ‘direct mimicry’, a concept Roger Caillois (2003: 91) defines as a conscious decision to use a disguise. In Karim’s case, this intention and behaviour manifest in a constant role-play, performing his identity as suits the situation; for instance, he tries to fade into his environment by applying the ‘hip’ look and language of Western youth or emphasises his exotic appearance by wearing a ‘scarlet Indian waistcoat with gold stitching around the edges’ (1990: 5) which, according to James Procter, is nevertheless a hybrid look, because it is borrowed from 1960–1970s London fashion and its ‘fetishization of the orient’ (2003: 129). Karim’s Indianness, similarly to his father’s orientalism (Haroon Amir is the Buddha of the title), has little to do with connecting to the roots or yearning for belongingness – it is a theatrical performance given for an expected benefit, while the identity it suggests is a staged identity, a ‘staged exoticism’ (Procter 2003: 129). With all its narrow-mindedness, pretentiousness, and emphasis on the facade, suburbia appears in the novel as a theatre or a stage for acting out various roles and performances, which Karim consciously plays upon, yet simultaneously despises and wants to escape. Interestingly, it is exactly these performances and masks that make him a suburbanite and indicate his inevitable belonging to the suburban space from which, with the help of these very performances, he hopes to be able to break out, just as he wants to do away with his monolithic image as a hybrid and inbetweenner.

As opposed to the inbetweenness and liminality of the suburbs, the city represents for Karim ‘a house with five thousand rooms, all different; the kick was to work out how they connected and eventually to walk through all of them’ (Kureishi 1990: 126). Since Karim has always considered the suburbs as merely temporary accommodation, ‘a leaving place, the start of life’ (Kureishi 1990: 117), Bromley becomes a point of departure in contrast to the city, the place of

arrival, the place where he can finally 'be himself'. Karim's move to the city is, seen from this aspect, an instance of 'local migration' (Nasta 2002: 181) or what Clement Ball calls 'a small-scale migration' (2004: 233) to a new long-term residence. However, Karim's new residence in the city centre proves to be anything but a permanent location and his efforts to leave the suburbs behind are doomed to failure: whether in West Kensington or in Bromley, he is in-between what he has and what he wants to have, who he is and who he appears to be, and at times he is *in-between* in-between spaces: on the way.

Similarly to Aslam's protagonist Shamas, who frequently walks from the immigrant neighbourhood to the city centre and back, making journeys between the two cultural worlds and within the neighbourhood, Karim does not settle permanently either in the suburbs or in the city, but makes ceaseless journeys between the two. However, where journeying serves the purpose of mapping space for Shamas who as a hybrid embodies the border zone of the cultural spaces, Karim's perpetual motion is, in Procter's view, 'symptomatic of his desire to uproot himself' (2003: 150) and he is the quintessential hybrid of suburban space. Although I agree with Procter and also read Karim's perpetual movement as a wish to uproot himself and as a metonymy of his unstable identity, I interpret his journey as an indicator that he is a 'mobile subjectivity' – a term coined by Kathy E. Ferguson to denote subjects that are 'temporal', 'relational', 'ambiguous', 'messy and multiple', refusing 'to stick consistently to one stable identity claim' (1993: 154). While my understanding of the term draws on Ferguson's definition, it also involves the subject's ability and desire to be constantly on the move. Apparently, even when Karim leaves the suburbs for the city, he keeps returning to the suburbs, and especially to Bromley, the magnetic field of his roots, only to leave it again, fed up with the stasis it denotes. This undecidedness and the movement it generates may in fact indicate the lack of a home or the possibility of multiple 'temporal' abodes, as well as the contradictory yet simultaneous sense of longing for belongingness and not being able to truly belong anywhere at all.

The only instance when Karim settles in one location for a relatively long period of time is when he goes to New York as part of a theatrical production and decides to stay there for a while. In Karim's experience, New York is an even more enabling space than London, and he is perceived not as an exotic other or a half-caste but just 'an English boy'; that is, he is identified based on his permanent physical location and the concomitant nationality it entails. What I find most ironic about this perception is that both the suburbanite identity he has fled and the Englishness he is identified with here are place-bound identities (and for Kureishi they are practically synonyms), which may indicate that Karim has returned to the start line here in terms of his perceived belonging.

In contrast, in *Psychoraag* there appear to be three basic levels where belonging is experienced and manifested: the locale (the city of Glasgow), language (polyglottism), and music. Zaf the DJ claims that he 'Wanted to share himself with the whole of Glasgow' (Saadi 2004: 330), that he needs his voice 'go out to millions (well, hundreds) of people, all over Glasgow and beyond' (2004: 328) and hopes that 'his breath, his being, would go out to the silent ones' (2004: 128). His words imply that he wishes not only to be heard and to be able to share himself but also to achieve a renewed sense of belonging to the diaspora and, even more importantly, to create his own community of listeners as well, which points to the understanding of belonging as both self-identification and 'a sense of shared imaginary possessions or "belongings"' (Ferreday 2009: 29). Zaf's emphasis on the shared attribute of being Glaswegian suggests the possibility of building a community not on the basis of kinship, diasporic experience, religion, or nationality but on a regional identity. His aim to share himself reveals a desire to overcome his inbetweenness and identity crisis by connecting with Glaswegians and creating a community through music and language, thus manifesting Saadi's conception of music as 'a unifying force,

both in the individual and society at large' (2006b: n.p.), which Zaf translates as a relationship of love: 'They were his. An he wis theirs forever. Lovers on the ayre' (Saadi 2004: 333–334).

When Zaf calls out to his 'Junnunies' (Saadi 2006a: 97), the final night of *The Junnune Show* becomes a manifesto of his 'striving for unity' (Saadi 2006a: 131), for the shaping of a community on a basis other than ethnicity and cultural identity – a community that can influence the social and spatial composition of space, and, as Zaf claims, 'redraw aw the maps' (Saadi 2004: 208) and build a bridge between East and West, white Scottish and Scots Asian, based on the premise that 'in our hearts, we are all Glaswegian' (Saadi 2006a: 360). In my view, the most thought-provoking aspect of this identification is that it signals a considerable shift from the first generation's clinging to what Salman Rushdie calls 'imaginary homelands' (1992) (as portrayed in, for example, *Maps*) and a second-generation individual's sense of belonging to a particular location (Karim of *The Buddha* as a Londoner) to the possibility of belongingness for a whole community – including diasporians and white British – in the host country that has become home.

The concept of home is decidedly different in *The Buddha*, since Karim appears to be unable to settle permanently in any location or to experience belongingness *per se*. In fact, even before his 'official' departure from the suburbs for London, he refers to himself as an 'itinerant' (Kureishi 1990: 94), a free spirit leading a bohemian lifestyle, setting up makeshift homes at his relatives' and friends' houses:

[T]here were five places for me to stay: with Mum at Auntie Jane's; at our now empty house; with Dad and Eva; with Anwar and Jeeta; or with Changez and Jamila [...]
I now wandered among different houses and flats carrying my life-equipment in a big canvas bag and never washing my hair.

(Kureishi 1990: 93–94)

Being on the road between various locations – Chislehurst, Bromley, Beckenham, Penge, Peckham, and West Kensington – Karim marks out his own nomadic territory in Greater London: 'I was not too unhappy, criss-crossing South London and the suburbs by bus, no one knowing where I was. Whenever someone – Mum, Dad, Ted – tried to locate me, I was always somewhere else' (Kureishi 1990: 94). These locations serve as stages in his process of identity formation, as points of endless departures and as temporary resting places on a perpetual and ultimately non-teleological journey.

Karim's interim homes and routine paths may be understood more clearly in the light of Deleuze and Guattari's nomadology. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari differentiate their concept of the nomad from both the conventional anthropological definition and the migrant as the diasporic subject. They argue that while the migrant 'reterritorializes on its interior milieu', the nomad is 'the Deterritorialized par excellence' (1987: 381), he 'has a territory; he follows customary paths; he goes from one point to another' (1987: 283) and, in a way, he exists inbetween these two points, two places or locations. It follows that as a nomad and an inbetween, Karim's life, like 'The life of the nomad[,] is the intermezzo' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 284). Karim's inbetweenness is thus both a cultural and – perhaps even more emphatically – a physical, geographical, and spatial condition which consequently determines, if not redefines, his individual sense of belonging.

Karim may also be perceived as a nomad in a Braidottian sense, transgressing the borders of sexuality, race, and social roles, repeatedly deconstructing and reconstructing his own identity. Drawing on Rosi Braidotti's theory, I argue that Karim exists in 'transitory attachment' (1994: 25), in permanent fluidity, mental, and spatial movement: he is on the move from

adolescence to young adulthood, from one home to another, in transit between identities, performances, and locations. As opposed to the stereotypes of ethnic minorities in Britain, Karim's subjectivity is one that has little to do with migrants' displacement or with their desperate attempts to hold on to their roots; rather, he is a subject with no desire for fixity; his desire is for an identity of transitions and changes (Braidotti 1994: 22–23). Karim's *being*, then, is a case of perpetual *becoming*, that is, what Elspeth Probyn (drawing on Deleuze's nomadic approach to movement and becoming) refers to as 'the inbetweenness of belonging' and 'belonging in constant movement' (1996: 19).

When, at the end of the novel, Karim leaves New York for London, he does not return home *per se*, nor does he finally settle in a fixed mode of existence – his free-spirited, transgressive, dynamic nomadism persists. Although Kureishi portrays his protagonist as resisting any commitment or attachment throughout the novel, and Karim never admits to himself that his ceaseless wandering and identity performance are symptoms of his desire to belong, eventually he realises that he is very much rooted – not in suburbia as such, but in his nomadic territory of Greater London; he is not a mere suburbanite but first and foremost a Londoner. London, his contentious and ambiguous home, is, in Karim's words, 'where you start from' (Kureishi 1990: 249), and also the place to return to over and over again. By acknowledging London as his marked-out nomadic territory, he can finally locate himself in the world, 'reterritorializing and renaming' (Nasta 2002: 197) the spaces of the city and the suburbs and can achieve his own personal sense of belonging.

Another alternative way of belonging is suggested by Saadi, introduced in the musical narrative style and special language of *Psychoraag*, through which the novel positions itself as a hybrid cultural production. Music occupies a central position in the novel, as a means of getting in touch with the audience (and the readership), of evoking memories, conveying thoughts and various mental states, and indicating a carnivalistic, almost chaotic hybridity and cultural diversity, as the following quote implies: 'In places, the notes would merge and, from somewhere, there would arise a third tune, one that nobody had ever written but which sounded better than either of its component parts' (Saadi 2004: 239). This 'third tune' sounds like a vocal counterpart of Homi Bhabha's (2005) concept of third space and hybridity as a third entity,⁶ and indicates Saadi's alternative take on identity construction: although Zaf initially claims to be a sample, that is, a fragmented, faulty representation both in Scotland and in Pakistan, he later realises that his identity 'lay not in a flag or in a particular concretization of a transcendent Supreme Being but in a chord, a bar, a vocal reaching beyond itself' (Saadi 2004: 210). While Zaf previously identified himself according to his region (as a Glaswegian), his words here suggest an identity position beyond spatial concerns since it is music that describes and defines him; when he claims, 'music an soang [...] That's whit Ah'm about' (Saadi 2004: 208–209), he lays claim to an identity constructed and positioned in and through music.

On the radio, in the open space of the ether, Zaf finds his own voice which 'belonged to the whole world' and a self which 'wis immortal. Invisible, formless, perfect' (Saadi 2004: 85). This formless and invisible existence points to Aristotle's theory of the ether as the sphere of 'the divinely changeless' and of the soul consisting of ether, which may explain its perpetual movement (Merlan 1967: 40), and also evokes the Platonic concept of the immortal soul, 'an entity whose kinship to eternal, changeless beings occurs alongside its capacity to undergo radical and ceaseless transformation' (Brill 2013: 2–3). Through music and the rebirth it generates, Zaf in a sense divorces himself from the physical world and becomes the metonymy of an immaterial, spiritual substance in a state of perpetual movement, transformation, and transfusion, belonging nowhere and everywhere at the same time – he becomes perfect and immortal, a 'new and improved' diasporian *without* a diasporic consciousness and belonging.

Eventually, however, Zaf's voice may be 'conjoinin wi the magical, geometric dance ae the spheres' (Saadi 2004: 402) for the duration of the show, but it cannot maintain a transcendence of the self for good. Zaf's transcendent self is a complex but by no means divine self, since through the novel he remains decidedly human, with all the attendant bodily sensations, faults, desires, and attachments. Therefore, it is perhaps more expedient to view Zaf's transcendent self as one strand of his multiple identities, one stage in his process of identity formation and construction, as well as one possible alternative way of belonging.

My analysis of *Maps for Lost Lovers*, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, and *Psychoraag* revealed the diasporians' deep need for a sense of belonging which, especially for first-generation immigrants, appears to be a primary factor in the creation of diaspora spaces: a place may be produced as a diaspora space by a diasporic community's acts of renaming and reterritorialisation, cultural practices, and various other attempts to achieve belongingness. Similarly to immigrant experience, diaspora experience – encompassing the creation of hybrid diaspora space and subjects – necessarily brings about a sense of dislocation, placelessness, and inbetweenness, generated by the discrepancies between the dominant culture and the roots. These spatial aspects of the diaspora experience may necessarily involve diverse ways in which diasporians search for a sense of belonging to a place, a community, a human relationship, or even to an ideology or abstract idea.

In *Maps for Lost Lovers* the diasporic community displays a strong attachment to the lost homeland and a certain Weilian rootlessness, that is, unbelonging in their own diasporic community, while for the young diasporians of *Psychoraag*, belonging is first and foremost understood as control of space, as a means of self-identification, and as imaginary shared belongings. While *Maps* and *Psychoraag* portray the diasporian's search for a sense of belonging to a certain ethnic, religious, or local community through mapping, exclusion, and territorial behaviour, Karim of *The Buddha* chooses belonging in movement in his own nomadic territory of London, whereas DJ Zaf of *Psychoraag* calls out for a shared Glaswegian identity as a means of achieving belongingness and also experiences belonging in music and, for a brief period, transcendence. A shared characteristic of these divergent forms of belonging is their inter-relatedness with a certain kind of movement – whether mapping, following nomadic paths, pacing, or mental movement – in order to resolve or erase the problematics of belonging.

In the novels discussed in this chapter, diaspora space, suburbia, and the metropolis, with their safeguarded, transgressable or fluid and permeable borders, and the multitude of routes to take within and across these borders both literally and metaphorically, invite various forms of movement and various strategies of identity (re)construction, the creation of mobile subjectivities: the figures of the nomad and the transcendental self. These mobile subjectivities may thus be interpreted as the metonymy of an identity in the process of perpetual (trans)formation and re-construction, encompassing and reformulating their cultural roots, diasporic experience, and identity crisis, as well as their own perception and sense of home and belonging(s).

Notes

- 1 In cultural studies, diaspora space is defined as 'the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location' (Brah 1996: 208) and as such a liminal zone, while in human geography it is a space of 'ambiguity and discontinuity', 'a source of anxiety', and 'a zone of abjection' (Sibley 1995: 33). I use the term in both senses, to designate the contested concept of home and physical location of a diaspora in the host country.
- 2 Weil's concept of rootlessness refers to the loss of a collective communal spirit, that is, the loss of a common past and common ancestors (see Dietz 1988: 154).

- 3 I use the term 'placelessness' in relation to the diasporic condition to denote what Carol E. Leon refers to as 'a loss of place or context' (2009: 3) or Steve Pile as being 'out of place' (1996: 6), that is, being displaced or misplaced.
- 4 According to the novel's glossary, *baratherie* is an Urdu word denoting a person's extended family or a clan. Hereafter the translations of the Urdu in the text are drawn from the glossary.
- 5 I use the term 'identity performance' as a concept at the intersection of social performance as role-play and Butlerian performativity (2011), a construction and a display of a gendered cultural identity, with diasporians as both the subject and the agent of their own performative actions.
- 6 Hybridity for Homi Bhabha becomes a 'third space' of the 'in-between' – a liminal third term, the metaphor not of sameness, but of cultural difference (2005: 38, 115). The concept of third space enables Bhabha to make direct links between colonial and postcolonial hybridity, and between the hybrid nature of colonial and contemporary culture.

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