

Desire and Ideology: An Analysis of Hanif Kureishi's Novel *Intimacy*

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the Master of Philosophy in English.**

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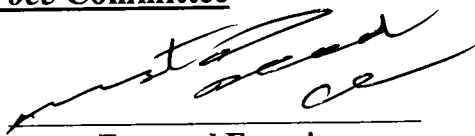
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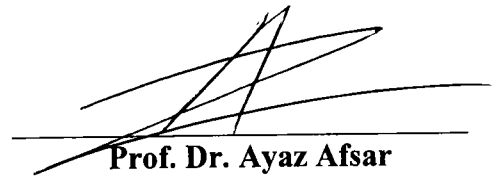
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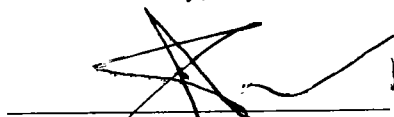


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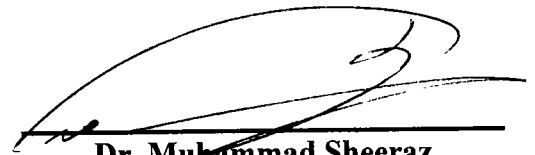


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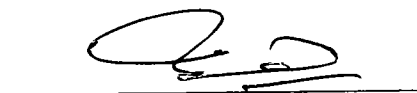


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DECLARATION

I, Muhammad Ehtesham, son of Fazle Rabbi, Registration No: 367-FLL/MSENG/F15, candidate of Master of Philosophy at International Islamic University Islamabad do hereby solemnly declare that the thesis entitled “Desire and Ideology: An Analysis of Hanif Kureishi’s Novel *Intimacy*” submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy at the department of English (FLL) is my original work, except where otherwise acknowledged in the thesis, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not be submitted by me in future for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university.

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ABSTRACT

Hanif Kureishi's *Intimacy* is a novel where the functioning of Lacanian desire and Zizekian ideology could be seen at work. The protagonist, Jay's overt constant attempt is to detach himself from what he has proximity to (his partner Susan) and connect to that which lies away (his mistress Nina or other women). However, he only detaches himself from one, in order to keep the other perpetually away as well. His desire is substitutional: from one object to the other; not only one after the other but back and forth as well. That is to say, his desire pushes away from Nina and pursues the same again in a circular manner. He, moreover, desires an object which is fundamentally inaccessible and cannot be defined in a definite way as something/someone. Jay and his friend Victor are both analysed as characters that attempt to subvert the familial status quo, seen as the family ideology and the big Other of social norms. However, their attempt at critique of ideology is deeply compromised because of ideological complications, since they function within the "official ideology" of enjoyment—all the while thinking they are subverting the structural impositions of the big Other and ideology.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This research analyses the British diaspora writer Hanif Kureishi's 1998 novel *Intimacy*, mainly under the lens of the French Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's concept of desire and the Slovene Philosopher Slavoj Žižek's understanding of how ideology functions. The novel revolves around Jay's (the protagonist's) contemplation and ultimately the act of departure from his familial monogamous relationship with Susan (his partner) and his two children. The motive behind Jay's abandonment is brought under investigation and is understood in terms of two determinants: desire and ideology.

The study maps the trajectory of Jay's movement away from the family structure in terms of the trajectory of desire as understood by Lacan. Jay's departure is fundamentally away from what he has, towards what he does not. However, it is not simply a departure impelled by desire for what one does not have. The desire that moves him is, moreover, for an unwanted object of desire that is fundamentally inaccessible: it is an object that cannot ever be attained in the first place and is at the same time not an object that one could put a finger on or something that could be clearly described in a definite way. In addition, Jay's desire is not aimed at satisfaction particularly but at desiring. For Lacan (1981), desire is directed at something that we know we love precisely because we do not want it. This desire is for the Lacanian object of desire that one feels one has lost though one never had it in the first place (Homer, 2005), which is fundamentally why there is no clear cut object of desire that could be defined. Satisfaction is irrelevant for such a desire; satisfaction is never actually aimed at (Lacan, 2017). It becomes almost commonsensical that since satisfaction is not aimed at, the aim of desire is to keep desiring. Hence, Jay apparently wants to move away from his family in order to be with his mistress Nina because he thinks he loves her

(Kureishi, 1998). Nevertheless, whenever he has had the opportunity to be with Nina, he either delays or denies himself a coming together with her as his object of desire. He desires Nina, because he does not have her at the point of narration. However, either during or before the time of narration, whenever he was capable of being with her, one way or another, he prevents that from happening (Kureishi, 1998). It is precisely when she becomes inaccessible that she is elevated to an object of desire; and, it is precisely when she is accessible that Jay deviates from her as object of desire to prevent some form of satisfaction. Moreover, Jay understands that whatever is worth having is that which is not demanded (Kureishi, 1998).

Kureishi's protagonist's desire takes on the Lacanian "metonymic" dynamic. It is fundamentally substitutional in character. For Lacan, the moment an object of desire is met or a certain proximity to it is attained, the subject is redirected from the object to another (Evans, 1996). Jay desires not only Nina but Susan (his partner) as well, only insofar as he does not have them. The moment he moves away from each woman (functioning as object of desire from Jay's perspective), he desires her. Moreover, throughout the novel's first person narration's retrospection, he is depicted as a character that moves from woman to woman (Kureishi, 1998)—either physically or psychologically. His desire, rather than being for an object of desire, is always fundamentally for *another* object of desire. Consequently, Jay frequently exchanges objects of desire and keeps jumping from one to the other. The trajectory of Lacanian desire is always towards "something else" rather than some *thing* in particular (Lacan, 2006) and ultimately is actually a desire for nothing at all (Lacan, 1991). Jay, as a result, remains in constant flight and keeps fleeing from attachments. He remains perpetually "on-the-go" (Kim, 2011), since desire always leads outwards. Jay, too, admittedly keeps moving outwards (Kureishi, 1998). The object of desire becomes away in perpetuity and Jay follows. His journey towards the object of desire is finally a journey towards essentially nothing at all. Interestingly, Jay perfectly follows the Lacanian trajectory of desire

insofar as not only does he travel away after the object, but also moves “in a curved space.” He initially moves towards Susan and then moves away from her. Once he moves away, he desires her again (Kureishi, 1998)—circularly. The novel, which is mostly monologue, finds him moving towards and away from Nina as well; back and forth, over and over. For Lacan (1981), the object of desire is thus encircled.

Moreover, Jay does not act totally as a non-agent under the unconscious control of the functioning of desire. Jay understands desire, insofar as he attempts to manipulate it. Since, the more distant he is from the object of desire, the more it becomes desirable and increased proximity deflects the subject from the object, Jay attempts to maintain a distance from and proximity to each object of desire. This is termed in this thesis as “the partner-mistress continuum.” This is part of Jay’s engineering as far as desire is concerned. In addition, he keeps moving towards and away from objects of desire in order to desire perpetually. Thus, Jay manoeuvres to keep desire afloat.

The second part of the present work is concerned with the attempted subversion of the big Other and ideology as motive behind primarily the protagonist’s and secondarily his friend Victor’s abandonment. Jay describes himself as a “recalcitrant” individual who does not follow the conformity and conventionality of socio-cultural norms seen as impositional compulsions (Kureishi, 1998) of the big Other’s ideology. The big Other, here, is “the communal network of social institutions, customs and laws” (Myers, 2003). Ideology is understood here as the distorted way in which reality is perceived by the human subject from a perspective where one fails to recognize it as social reality (Zizek, 1994). Jay more or less firmly stands against the familial monogamous structure as an ideological edifice. Consequently, he feels the need to leave his family and his partner Susan who comes to stand-in for the ideology that makes one believe that family life and monogamy are realities that need to be sustained. This belief is termed in this thesis as the family ideology. The

subversion of the family ideology becomes a motive behind abandoning the family structure. The whole novel revolves around this contemplation and finally the act of abandonment—something Jay’s friend Victor had already done before the point of narration. Jay challenges the position of loyal monogamy and believes that promiscuity could equally be valuable and seen as reality since human beings seem to him as basically promiscuous (Kureishi, 1998). This translates into an attitude that is perpetually “on-the-go”, since monogamy seems to be located at a static point whereas promiscuity is perpetual movement. Jay believes in movement, change and experimentation (Kureishi, 1998).

This author believes that Jay *claims* to occupy the position of a critic of ideology: the position of *understanding* that one functions under an “ideological consciousness” based on a distortion of reality. Critique of ideology occurs when the ideological consciousness would dissolve after having achieved this kind of an understanding (Zizek, 1994). However, this claim is highly problematic. Jay actually occupies the position of living under the illusion of subverting the big Other, all the while existing within ideology and impelled by it. While he thinks he is critiquing ideology, he functions under the ideology of enjoyment. Enjoyment, for Zizek, is the postmodern super-ego injunction that has become a dominant ideology in itself—a command from the socio-cultural big Other that the subject must enjoy sexually (Myers, 2003). Jay almost models his abandonment on the abandonment of his friend Victor, both of whom clearly abandon the family structure because they believe that there is a deficit or absence of sexual enjoyment inside the familial structure. This belief is clearly problematized by the fact that Asif—another friend of Jay—sexually desires his spouse. The motive behind Jay’s abandonment is clearly enjoyment. The belief in sexual satisfaction is not singular to him or his friend Victor but is an ethos of their generation (Kureishi, 1998). It is highly ideological. Hence, while Jay believes he is outside ideology, he is within it. This is how the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser (Zizek, 1994) believed ideology

functioned, since for the latter, what is precisely ideological claims not to be ideological. For Žižek (1994), as well, ideology appears where it is not expected to. Consequently for Jay, his belief in promiscuity, his glorification of movement, change, love and belief in happiness all function basically as covers under which lies the ideological compulsion of enjoyment. He becomes, contrary to what he claims, a highly ideological being.

Furthermore, even though Jay thinks he does not believe in the family structure or marriage, he nevertheless unknowingly believes in it and keeps it alive *through* his affairs, since, the affair is seen as an action which takes place in lieu of going out of the familial structure altogether. Jay, moreover, believes he and Victor both could settle down if there were love (Kureishi, 1998). In addition, promiscuity itself becomes far from radical as well; it seems the apparent “new order” that has become old and conventional. Overall, the subversion of the big Other’s ideology is highly compromised.

Though this thesis relies heavily on seeing Kureishi’s *Intimacy* purely under the workable functioning in the novel of Lacanian and Žizekian concepts, the present work nevertheless adds to theory. Jay’s negotiating between distance and proximity apropos objects of desire is seen as a manoeuvre that the subject consciously engineers in order to perpetuate desire by forming not only what is here termed as “the partner-mistress continuum”, but also realizing that a “distant object of desire” is required besides the object of desire in proximity. The subject, therefore, may begin to engineer desire with this understanding of desire in relation to distance.

1.1 THESIS STATEMENT

Fundamentally, the point of this thesis is that the protagonist Jay and other major characters in Kureishi’s novel *Intimacy* function under Lacanian desire and Žizekian ideology. The protagonist and his friend Victor continually desire not only what they

obviously do not have, but do so in a substitutional manner jumping from one object of desire to another. Moreover, there is always a sense of awayness and inaccessibility about the object(s) of desire. Therefore, Jay not only evades the object(s) of his desire but circles round it/them as well as manoeuvres between closeness and distance, so that no object of desire is fully met, nor is it completely relinquished. Secondly, apparently Jay and Victor attempt to subvert the family ideology by going out of the familial/monogamous structure in the name of rebelling against ideological socio-cultural norms. Nevertheless, both the characters are immersed within the ideology of enjoyment. Their attempt at going out of ideology not only lands them within it, but the attempt itself takes place precisely because of the ideology of enjoyment. Hence, ideology becomes inescapable.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the motive(s) behind the characters' (primarily the protagonist's) actions/inaction and the influences behind their speech.
2. To explore the influence of desire and how it relates to the objects of desire in the novel.
3. To understand the functioning of ideology in the lives of the characters.
4. To find out how the novel could add to one's understanding of desire and ideology.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) What motivates/drives/influences the speech and actions of the characters?
- 2) How does desire operate and relate to its objects in the novel?
- 3) What is the role of ideology in Jay's contemplation/act of abandonment?
- 4) How does the novel add to our understanding of desire and ideology?

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The objective of this research is primarily an investigation of Hanif Kureishi's *Intimacy*'s protagonist's motive behind his contemplation and act of departure from the family/monogamy structure. For this purpose, the thesis employs a qualitative analysis of the text from a Lacanian and Zizekian perspective.

The first part of the analysis primarily locates the central character's motive in desire. Since Jacques Lacan is a French psychoanalyst, this portion of the analysis is a psychoanalytic reading of Kureishi's text insofar as it is a reading of the characters' speech, thoughts and actions in terms of Lacan's concept of desire. Desire is the relationship that one has with the lack that one feels (Lacan, 1991). This lack, for Lacan, derives out of a sense of loss that stems from a perceived loss of some original object of desire that one feels one had lost (Homer, 2005). Moreover, desire is seen right at the point where we think we love something but in actuality we do not want it (Lacan, 1981). Need is expressed through a demand. Desire depends on demand, since the moment demand is expressed in language, something is left behind. What is left behind is a state of lack and impossibility: desire (Lacan, 1981). In addition, the relationship that desire has with satisfaction is "eccentric." Hence, desire turns this need into something that functions beyond both need and satisfaction (Lacan, 2017). This implies that desire has little to do, directly, with satisfaction. Therefore, in Lacan, the objects of desire refer to other objects in a continual process of "deferral" (Evans, 1996); since the aim is not satisfaction. Desire keeps moving towards "something else" (Lacan, 2006) and is, then, fundamentally for nothing at all (Lacan, 1991). Therefore, Jay's desire, as well as of other characters, is seen as a desire for what the subject does not have; what the subject overtly loves but does not in actuality want. and for an object that is

essentially inaccessible. Moreover, desire with respect to objects of desire functions as substitutional and in the end is desire always for “something else” that translates basically into a desire for nothing in particular. This part of the thesis reaffirms the idea that more than anything the subject wants to desire, since Lacan’s (1992) understanding of desire is also “the desire to desire”—insofar as he understands desire as “the desire of the Other”; and so this study deals with how the subject begins to understand this and can attempt to employ this understanding in order to engineer a condition where distance and proximity are manipulated so that desire could be continual.

The second part of this analysis employs a reading of the text where the characters’ motives, thoughts and speech are seen under the lens of the Slovene Marxist philosopher Slavoj Žižek’s understanding of ideology. Ideology could stand for any attitude that is based on a misunderstanding of its reliance on “social reality.” It could stand for beliefs that demand action as well as false notions that legitimise dominance. Ideology, then, functions as something because of which we tend to believe that the way we see things is the way they are. The problem of ideology, moreover, is that it appears wherever there is an attempt to evade it (Žižek, 1994). Furthermore, for Althusser, when one thinks one is outside ideology, one is within it (Žižek, 1994). This part of the thesis analyses how the central character attempts not only to take off ideological spectacles to see reality but is all the while immersed within ideology. The tool of critique of ideology is employed here to read the text. Critique of ideology is a critique that attempts to strip the distorting lens of a “naïve consciousness” in order to see social reality or reality for what it is (Žižek, 1994). The thesis moreover attempts to locate wherever characters (primarily the protagonist) function within ideology and where they think they function outside ideology or attempt to take off ideologically distorted lenses.

1.5 DELIMITATION

This dissertation is a Lacanian and Zizekian analysis of Hanif Kureishi's novel *Intimacy*. Other works of Kureishi are not brought under investigation. The scope of this research lies specifically within two theoretical ideas: desire and ideology. I thought, while reading the novel, that the characters and events in the novel could be explained and understood insightfully through Lacan's concept of desire and Zizek's understanding of ideology. There are, obviously, various thematic elements in the novel that lie outside the scope of an understanding of desire and ideology, which the thesis does not find within its space to analyse.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

This thesis contains the following chapters:

- 1) **Chapter 1** introduces the thesis; contains the research objectives, research questions, methodology and theoretical framework.
- 2) **Chapter 2** places the research in its research context, explores the context and identifies the research gap in which the work is done.
- 3) **Chapter 3** offers an analysis of the desire of the characters and the relationship of desire with its objects.
- 4) **Chapter 4** focuses on how ideology and subversion function in the novel.
- 5) **Chapter 5** summarizes the research briefly, concludes the research as well as makes recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study lies within the domains of Psychoanalytic Criticism and Marxist Criticism. The first part of the thesis employs Psychoanalytic Criticism, understood as an approach to interpreting literature by using “some of the techniques of psychoanalysis” (Barry, 2009). More specifically, this study employs Lacanian criticism. One of the things that Lacanian critics do is to view “literary texts in terms of a series of broader Lacanian orientations, towards such concepts as lack or desire” (Barry, 2009). This thesis analyses Hanif Kureishi’s novel *Intimacy*, using Lacan’s ideas about desire as discussed under “Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework” in Chapter 1 of this thesis. The second part of the thesis is a critique that is Marxist in nature. For Marxist critics such as Althusser, ideology is a very important term (Barry, 2009). “Marxist criticism is part of a larger body of theoretical analysis which aims to understand *ideologies*—the ideas, values and feelings by which men experience their societies at various times.” Some of these ideologies could be found in literature. Analysing such ideologies provides a deeper understanding of the past and the present (Eagleton, 1976). In line with Eagleton’s description of what Marxist criticism does, this study attempts to understand how ideology functions in Kureishi’s *Intimacy*. However, specifically this author employs the term ideology as understood by the Marxist philosopher Slavoj Žižek, as explained also in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

In the available literature, *Intimacy*’s protagonist Jay’s desire is analysed in the light of Lacanian Psychoanalysis by Cirakli and Nayeypour (2012). In their view, Susan (Jay’s partner) cannot, any more, fill Jay’s fundamental “lack” and so he “pursues the lost object—love.” His “hope” is that by finding some kind of satisfaction with Nina (Jay’s mistress), he could fill the void inside him. He obviously finds little satisfaction and ends up wanting

more. The replacement of Susan with Nina represents his “endless desire.” In accordance with the Lacanian “Mirror Stage”, Jay desires an object outside in the world which gives him an “illusion of completeness.” This object is Nina, whereas Susan represents the self in its fragmented form. This is the argument given by the authors, justifying Nina as an object of desire. Cirakli and Nayeypour (2012) also add that Jay “cannot promote his relationships” since he is not able to form communication through language, which “creates new holes” and what is signified is no longer the object but only “a substitution.” Quoting Meese, Cirakli and Nayeypour (2012) claim that Jay is constantly looking for the Lacanian Real which is “closely associated with desire” and is located in the “gap” between wishes given expression in words and their answers. The nature of Jay’s “search” is something that is neither “biological need [n]or spoken demand” which could find verbal representation in a specific object. In other words, his search could be termed as desire (which is “beyond expressed demand”). Jay understands the nature of desire as something that cannot be satisfied by achieving any particular goal/object; hence, the individual keeps shifting objects of desire. Jay admits that it is desire that causes him to leave his family. Therefore, the word “go” becomes central as a “manifestation of his desires”, since he is perpetually in a mode of going and “reorienting himself.” Cirakli and Nayeypour (2012) refer to the scene with the therapist, where Jay claims that desire and curiosity are the centre of life and that he has lost his curiosity regarding Susan. The loss of curiosity is understood as a reference to Lacanian infantile development. This also signifies that he was tired of the limitations of the Lacanian symbolic. Therefore, the claim of having lost curiosity brings to light the fact that he can no longer be satisfied by any object which is particularly demanded—in this case the object(s) being woman/women. Hence, he cannot stay with Susan, at least not exclusively, since he has realized that his object of desire is “beyond her.” His desire for Nina instead of Susan is caused by his desire to be loved as who he is—in a Lacanian way—as well. The authors

quote Meese to prove that Jay desires Nina since he is under the illusion that she will “complete him” being that Other which is “all that he is not.” This is essentially man’s desire of woman for Lacan. Moreover, Jay’s life is a demonstration of how subjects will keep “shifting” objects of desire, desiring different things but nothing will “permanently quell” their desire (Cirakli and Nayeypour, 2012). The present research adds that Jay knows this dynamic of desire very well and aims not at satisfaction or satiation but at *desire* itself. I have also explained Jay’s desire further in Lacanian terms with a more detailed focus on this element of “shifting” as regards the objects of desire. One object of desire may come to be the equivalent of another object of desire. In this particular process, exchange of objects of desire is made possible and no single object has any “special significance” (Lacan, 1953). In this thesis, as well, Jay’s want is precisely Lacanian desire because he himself claims he does not really want what he wants (Kureishi, 1998). For Lacan (1981), we desire that which we do not want. If a person “loves” something but does not want it, the person desires it. In addition, Lacanian desire is always for something “left over” after satisfaction. For Lacan (2017), desire manifests an “eccentricity [...] with respect to any satisfaction” and in this way desire is indifferent to satisfaction to say the least. Consequently, satisfaction is avoided by desire precisely because desire would potentially end at satisfaction, theoretically. Moreover, to add to this, in “the stages of the dream-work” it is clear for Lacan (1991) that desire is for an “x”—that is, it is for nothing in particular. So it goes with Jay, he loves women in general and Nina in particular (Kureishi, 1998) but he still keeps them distant. In this sense, this thesis adds to Cirakli and Nayeypour’s (2012) research in terms of providing a detailed account of what they point out in their paper. In this thesis, Nina is not treated as an object that could potentially complete Jay which is why she is loved in lieu of Susan, but Nina is yet another object of desire much like Susan—the Susan of the past and Susan once distanced—and love is merely a guise with desire hiding under it.

For Cirakli and Nayeypour (2012), Jay's desire leads him to a path of detachment from objects since he is not in search of any particular object, a fact which makes him free of "any social bond or any entity of the objective world." Like Kim (2011), Cirakli and Nayeypour (2012) also consider Jay's perpetual "fleeing" mode of central importance and for them it signifies his sustained discontent, since whenever he is close to what he wants, he flees. It is not possible for Jay to get what he wants nor does he really know what he wants. In Lacanian terms, Jay's desire is inherited from his infancy and is "beyond law." It is desire for an object "beyond reality" which is evident in his constant fantasizing about various women. Both the women in his life, his partner Susan and the woman he is constantly fantasizing about—Nina, represent different kinds of desires: the controllable and the uncontrollable. Susan represents law, and Nina represents that which is "beyond law." Nina is "a deferred object [...] of desire" which causes him to abandon his family. He, moreover, looks for pleasure outside marriage precisely because he remembers from his past how there was little pleasure in his parents' lives. The kind of love that he seeks cannot be fulfilled inside the limitations of an institutionalized structure like marriage (Cirakli and Nayeypour, 2012). This study acknowledges that law acts as a prohibition and so Jay's desire arguably *may* lie outside law; nevertheless, his desire is analysed as not lying entirely outside the ambit of the super-ego since the super-ego demands enjoyment (Žizek, 2008) and Jay seeks enjoyment. Moreover, in the opinion of this author, the prohibition of the law as regards *Intimacy* is the prohibition against the *absence* of enjoyment rather than the prohibition against enjoyment. For Cirakli and Nayeypour (2012), Jay's abandonment of his family is a "revolutionary action" caused by the "insatiable nature of desire" which functions "beyond law." In their research, desire is the "original stimulator and controller": that which predominantly determines Jay's actions. Jay is stuck between the conflicting forces of his "desires and his obligations" (Cirakli & Nayeypour 2012). However, in this study Jay's desire is analysed as

far from revolutionary since revolutions upset an “established order”, while for Jay breaking out of the family structure is completely in line with the demands of the established order: the new ruling ideology of enjoyment outside marital life. Hence, his desire may function “beyond law” only if the law forbids enjoyment; but totally within law if it forbids the absence of enjoyment. What seems like subversion is much more complex and is far from subversion pure and simple. The conflict “between his desires and his obligations” is also complicated since there is no clear opposition between his desires and obligations. Under ideology, his desire does not run contrary to his obligation, since his obligation is an imposed “injunction” of enjoyment which, for Jay, means abandoning his family: in line with desire as well. Cirakli and Nayeypour (2012) also see Jay’s perpetual “on-the-go” attitude and lifestyle as determined solely by desire, claiming that Jay knows that desire “makes fools of those who do not recognize its superior role in life” (Kureishi, 1998). This thesis views his “on-the-go” attitude as overdetermined, in the sense that not only is it determined by desire but ideology as well. In this case it is an ideology of desire and enjoyment, since it is not only desire pure and simple, but desire here functions like belief and that is what pushes him towards departure and abandonment. Moreover, Cirakli and Nayeypour (2012) mention that Jay wants Nina since he believes she will complete him and thus he will find happiness. This element of the “pursuit of happiness” is also analysed in this thesis as purely ideological, rather than only psychoanalytic.

One of the reasons for leaving Susan is also Jay’s hankering for unconditional love without which there is no point in life. He does not think that Susan loves him truly for who he is. More importantly, this yearning to be loved unconditionally is like desire, since for Lacan love is the wish to be the object of love. Hence, this depends totally on the other, where we want another person to view us the way we want them to view us; or we imagine such another person who sees us particularly in this way. This is why Jay is drawn to Nina

rather than Susan (Cirakli & Nayeypour, 2012). Jay says that the love he shares with Nina is the most important thing; at the same time, he acknowledges that people are vulnerable to illusion (Kureishi, 1998). This is interpreted in Cirakli and Nayeypour (2012) as Jay admitting that being with Nina again (fulfilment of desire) is only possible in an illusory state rather than in reality. However, this illusion becomes his belief, his conviction. Moreover, Jay himself claims that at times illusions become our central beliefs (Kureishi, 1998). The attainment of a perfect love, much like the fulfilment of desire, is impossible in “reality” but is only possible in “the real”—the Lacanian real. At the end of the novel, after leaving Susan to be with Nina, Jay says that he will call the latter “later”, since “there will be time.” This signals how he recognizes that chasing what he wants is a never ending process and having what one wants is only possible in a dream. This is why, immediately after this point, the novel ends with a happy fantasy: an imaginary state where fulfilment is achieved (Cirakli & Nayeypour, 2012). For Lacan, fantasy is precisely this—a place where a person becomes the central character and a desire is fulfilled (Homer, 2005). Jay’s “unconscious desire manifests itself” in a way that is bound up and mixed to a certain degree with social limitations as well as his “unrelieved sexuality.” The word “love” appears in the last line of the novel as something that signals this unfulfilled state of sexual want and at the same time, an imagination “of intimacy associated with affection and understanding.” The central point is that Jay’s desire is only possible in fantasy (Cirakli and Nayeypour, 2012) but in the present work, Jay’s ultimate fantasy is not satisfaction but a perpetual constancy of the state of desire.

Cirakli and Nayeypour (2012) also write that at the end of the novel Jay “lingers to get in touch with Nina” since he realizes that his desire can never be fulfilled. The present research adds that Jay’s reluctance to meet the much-longed-for object of desire is because he follows the trajectory of desire around the object: he “encircles the object” of desire moving in a “curved space”—to use Žižek’s (1992) term—around the object which causes him to

never meet it. For Lacan (1981), the object of desire, being what he calls the “object a”, is not only the object of desire but also “the object of the drive”; and the object of drive is the one to which desire does not attach itself but rather “moves around it.” Jay, moreover, wants to live in a state of existence with perpetual desire which is why he negotiates a certain distance between himself and the objects of his desire so that he could maintain desire.

Andreas Athanasiades (2013) touches the themes of desire and the complexity of “adult relationships” with respect to *Intimacy* and other works of Kureishi. Athanasiades’ dissertation deals with the issue of the “discontent” that Kureishi’s characters feel while they face a mid-life crisis. Athanasiades (2013) focuses particularly on this aspect of dissatisfaction in married life highlighted in the novel. He contends that Jay’s “promiscuity” provides a window through which “modern day relationships” could be understood. His dissertation remarks on a “failure of desire” but outside the context of Lacanian desire, which the present thesis deals with. Athanasiades (2013) associates Jay’s desire with “punishment” and sees this as one of the “failures of desire” in the novel. This thesis contends that for Jay, paradoxically, the continuity of desire is precisely an ideal state of being, even though he sees it as a “punishment” at more than one occasion in the novel.

Athanasiades’ (2013) critique lies more in the domain of biographical criticism as he connects the development of Kureishi’s work with his (Kureishi’s) own “maturity”, attempting to prove that in *Intimacy*—being a late 1990s work of Kureishi—he becomes more introspectively autobiographical. It is claimed that Jay’s act of abandonment and pursuit of newer pleasure is intellectualised since it is “process-oriented” rather than “object-oriented.” Athanasiades (2013) also mentions the lack of a “clear object of desire” for Jay in the novel. The present work develops this idea further, in Lacanian and Žižekian terms, exploring how the lack of a “clear object of desire” is fundamental to desire since “desire is eccentric to satisfaction” (Lacan, 2017) and by extension, desire will be eccentric to the

object of desire. Desire perpetuates itself, it is a “desire to desire” (Lacan, 1992) rather than directly pushing towards an object that could bring about satisfaction. This is why Jay’s desire in the novel is “process-oriented” rather than “object-oriented” in the present research. In this way, I explain in Lacanian and Zizekian terms what Athanasiades points out.

Athanasiades (2013) also remarks that Jay belongs to a generation of people raised in the 1960s who do not want to be chained by “heterosexual relationships.” Jay feels oppressed by marriage, responsibilities, work and life as a whole. Hence, he attempts to break free of these. Moreover, for Athanasiades (2013), desire is not only desire for another woman in the novel but the desire to “break free, to change.” Sexual desire, then, has an intellectual element added to it. Jay wants to go away from Susan because he desires Nina, but he “keeps Nina at arm’s length” because of a certain distance one has with the past: Jay’s opinion of love as a negotiation between distance and proximity is viewed as the relationship between the past and present. Jay also keeps Nina at a certain distance since desire translates into freedom from being married, from being a father and from the complexities of middle age. Athanasiades (2013) quotes from the novel, claiming that Jay believes that desire is something that cannot be manipulated. This thesis analyses the same act of breaking free of marriage and responsibilities, seeing them part of an ideology that Jay wants to break free of. At the end of the novel, for Athanasiades (2013), Jay’s belief in “sexual intimacy” as a means of understanding life and the world is a failure. He comments that Jay “succumbs to his desire”, but I think that Jay picks up on how to manage what is virtually unmanageable. He begins to understand desire by learning to keep a particular distance from what is desired. To a certain extent, Jay is successful in manipulating desire: by keeping Nina at a particular distance means precisely for him to perpetually desire her. This thesis also attempts to extensively answer what it is that Jay is attempting to break free of, such as the family structure and the ideology that sustains this structure, all seen in an ideological frame. For

Athanasiades (2013), Jay realizes the “disruptive” nature of desire but not its complexity; hence, this becomes the element which leads to the conclusion that desire becomes a failure, insofar as Jay understands it, since through desire he cannot find love. But in this research, Jay’s failure is of a different nature. The failure of Jay is in the fact that he thinks he can subvert ideology, all the while resorting to ideology in another form. The present work understands this in Zizekian and Althusserian terms, claiming that at the point that we think we have escaped ideology, it is right at that point that ideology is working on us (Zizek, 1994) and so it goes with Jay, Kureishi’s protagonist.

Athanasiades (2013) also writes that Jay comes off as a lustful and obnoxious character because he spends the night that his partner is giving birth with another woman, but on a deeper level Jay is symbolic of a person who feels constrained and dissatisfied by the way relationships are viewed in his time and looks back at a sexually freer past—being raised in the 1960s. This is why he desires to get back together with his *past* lover Nina in an attempt to relive the passion of the past. But he realizes that his “pursuit for passion” is useless since “he has grown old” and “cannot escape the burden of his past.” Therefore, on the other hand, he will never be able to abandon Susan completely—on a psychological level at least—since she will become part of the past, which is something that can never cease to exist (Athanasiades, 2013). In this study, however, Jay is unable to let go of his partner Susan because he desires that which is distant rather than that which is close. He finds it difficult to let go of Susan precisely because the thought of leaving her puts her at a distance and he desires her again.

Soo Yeon Kim (2011) analyses Kureishi’s *Intimacy* in terms of betrayal. He quotes Adam Phillips’ statement that adultery is an inherent “built-in” element that is part and parcel of monogamy. In “the triangulation of monogamy” adultery is a “logical element” of even the closest relationships. For Laura Kipnis, the act of adultery does not completely destroy the

structure of monogamy/marriage, rather the latter requires it to survive (Kim, 2011). For Kim (2011), Kipnis's book presents two alternatives: either never marrying at all or jumping from one monogamous relationship to another (hence, repeating the whole conditions again), since adultery becomes undesirable because it leads to anger and the "drama" of unfaithfulness. *Intimacy*'s Jay's act of "betrayal" is an "imperative" that is a radical act since it repudiates the institutionalized form of intimacy: monogamy. Since Jay's act of abandonment spurns any obligation to "moral ideologies" that dictate good and bad forms of intimacy as prescribed by the marriage/adultery binary, Jay's act of betrayal is a rejection of the status quo in favour of the formation of "a new ethic"—the resultant of which is "faith in hope, the future and change." Hence, the adultery in *Intimacy* is of an ethical nature that transcends good and evil in favour of what is perceived as "the better" rather than merely pursuing a lost lover. Consequently, it is viewed not merely as a story of "sexual betrayal" but as an opening of a new ethical paradigm. This aspect places Kureishi's *Intimacy* in a unique position in comparison with other works of post-war British authors who incorporate the theme of infidelity in their work, such as Doris Lessing, Iris Murdoch, Zadie Smith, Ian McEwan and Anita Brookner, whose work critique the marital monogamy structure but reinforce it nevertheless, since they fail to do away with the marriage/adultery "symbiosis" (Kim, 2011).

In Kim's (2011) understanding, for Kipnis, the fact that adultery is viewed as "childishness", bereft of its intellectual aspect of a transgression that breaks a structure is "regrettable." Kim (2011) thinks it is of urgent importance to find a narrative of intimacy that does not take the form of a fossil due to the "unrealistic command of lifelong commitment" dictated by monogamy in the guise of love. The protagonist of *Intimacy* leaves his "wife" but thereafter does not call Nina—for whom supposedly he is leaving Susan (his monogamous partner)—and thereby the novel "breaks out" of the marriage/adultery binary to uphold the belief that betrayal would be the agent of a perpetual pursuit of intimacies and a search for an

improved life. This act is tied to the fact that Jay never really married Susan in the first place since he thought of marriage as a suppressive institution that bound two people in a contract, the argument behind which no one really remembered. Jay asks why people who cheat are considered to have performed badly at marriage rather than considering people who do not cheat as having performed badly at “promiscuity.” Kim (2011) implies that this places adultery at the centre and marriage at the margin, which in turn means that Jay’s pursuit of chasing the object of desire is a proper radical political act that challenges the existing social structure, such as breaking a norm. Infidelity here represents change. Jay chooses not to be stuck in the dilemma of unsatisfactory monogamy and adultery but rather chooses to act in a way that would form what he calls “the new.” This choice breaks down the oppositional structure of the binary of marriage/adultery.

Kim (2011) thinks that for Kureishi, following pleasure inevitably harms other people or social structures. The value of “intractable desire” is precisely the fact that it takes the form of a revolt against “social oppression” and lack of change in an individual’s life, which the author sees as the cause behind “Jay’s departure.” Jay’s loyalty to desire forms a plot which is based on non-commitment rather than monogamous commitment which questions the dictated narrative of society about intimacy. Kim (2011) believes that *Intimacy* is not merely a story of sexual betrayal but a betrayal which—borrowing from Steinberg and Zaleski—takes the form of “self-renewal” and “losing oneself”, which Jay himself claims to be doing in the novel. Jay sets out to explore a “new ethic of intimacy freed from oppressive moral ideologies assumed in the monogamy/infidelity polarization” (Kim, 2011).

However, in the present work Jay is seen as far from breaking status quo ideological norms. Ideology, in the present research is understood in Zizekian terms:

‘Ideology’ can designate anything from a contemplative attitude that misrecognises its dependence on social reality to an action-orientated set of beliefs, from the

indispensable medium through which individuals live out their relations to a social structure to false ideas which legitimate a dominant political power (1994, pp. 3-4).

Jay is completely in line with the status quo since the status quo is the Zizekian ideological injunction. Slavoj Zizek's (2008) understanding of Lacanian super-ego is that essentially the super-ego's central dictate is "enjoy!"—a command that the subject *must* enjoy. Zizek claims that the new postmodern ruling ideology or official ideology in the west is the imperative of enjoyment which is an "injunction" that forces one to have sexual enjoyment (Myers, 2003). In this research, Jay is seen as acting in line with this particular ideology right when he apparently is subverting the family structure and its ideology. He is only following the ideological structure in which sexual desire has been elevated to an obligation that he/no one has any choice to opt out of. Hence, Jay's action, though seemingly subversive, is far from a radical act against a dominant ideology (or ideology in general), even if he apparently subverts the dictates of the monogamy ideology. Moreover, Jay's claim that his apparent betrayal is an act that forms some kind of a "better" or "new" is far from radical as well, since it is not a revolutionary act against ideology or any form of conformism but an appeal to the ideology of "the new" and "the better" as extensions of the same dominant ideology of enjoyment, if not a mask that covers up the enjoyment imperative.

Jay, moreover, thinks that lying is necessary in order to maintain what is important: not hurting others (Kureishi, 1998). "Through lying, we can encounter that which resides outside of the domestic, which domesticates the new, the better, the unknown, and the infinite" (Kim, 2011). This "treatment" of monogamous relationships (here Kim quotes Kipnis) is authentically isolated from the superficiality of "social falseness." This aspect of the novel is analysed in this study as lying in order to protect the same ideology (of the family/monogamy) that Jay sets out to subvert. Since "social falseness" could be compared to ideology—the term this thesis prefers; the fact that Jay lies keeps the monogamous structure afloat rather than compromising the structure. This is why his subversion is compromised.

Ideology becomes an element that cannot be done away with entirely. Nevertheless, Kim (2011) notes that Jay does not aim at lying, neither to himself, nor to his partner and is looking for some kind of an “ultimate value” in the truth, in the particular context of how his parents lived a lie; however, following desire within monogamy requires lying to oneself and one’s partner. This contradiction is resolved by claiming that Jay lies in order to reject the “denigration” of values such as lying and following individual desire. He, in short, repudiates the moral renunciation of any act which seems to undermine or insult “the Truth, marriage, family and human decency”, which is considered wrong by society rather than being “inherently wrong” in and of itself. For Kim (2011), then, Jay’s advocacy of lying doesn’t become another “moral law” but is a way of perpetually questioning “moralistic binaries” in order to get at his ultimate aim—“the better.” The present research sees both Jay’s search for “the better” as well as defending lies in order to repudiate morality that presumes things as inherently right or wrong, as ways of masking the ruling ideology of enjoyment. It is right at the point that he thinks he functions outside ideology, that he is seen functioning within it. This is exactly how ideology functions (Zizek, 1994).

Though Cirakli and Nayeypour (2012) write about how the protagonist Jay “shifts” objects of desire, this study felt the need for a more elaborate description of such substitutions and focuses more on a detailed explication of this element of Lacanian substitution as regards Jay’s desire. In this research, such Lacanian substitutions are explained in detail, as not only Susan-Nina substitution but a number of other substitutions of objects of desire as well. Moreover, Jay’s desire could also be seen clearly as for nothing in particular in Lacanian terms. Besides, this thesis adds that the knowledge about desire that Jay has is manipulated by him in order to perpetuate desire as well, since I feel that further explanation is required regarding Jay’s keeping away from objects of desire and avoiding some kind of satisfaction. For Cirakli and Nayeypour (2012), Jay seeks pleasure outside marriage because he

experienced in childhood the lack of the same, inside the marriage of his parents. Jay's "on-the-go" attitude is purely seen as a product of desire. I think that there is also a more socially/culturally structured ideological reason behind Jay's search for pleasure outside marriage as well as his "on-the-go" attitude. Hence, this analysis sees seeking sexual pleasure outside marriage as ideological, rather than being solely determined by desire. Athanasiades (2013) analyses this aspect of the character of Jay, and claims that *Intimacy* is a story where desire is associated with punishment; desire fails in *Intimacy*. However, I think that even though Jay's desire is associated with punishment, yet there is a need to analyse the same in terms of Lacanian Psychoanalysis, after which one would recognize that rather than a failure of desire, the story is about the way desire perpetuates itself: since, for Lacan (1992) desire becomes a "desire to desire." Though Kim (2011) sees *Intimacy* as a work where for institutionalized monogamy to be brought down, betrayal becomes an "imperative." In my view, this imperative of betrayal needs also to be seen in more ideological terms as a larger ideological imperative that functions under the principle of an imperative to enjoy, to which betrayal becomes a natural corollary. Rather than seeing the protagonist's struggle as one which only breaks the marriage/adultery binary, the way Kim (2011) does, the novel could also be seen as a failure at critique of ideology.

CHAPTER 3

KEEP MOVING: JAY AND THE TRAJECTORY OF DESIRE

The protagonist of Kureishi's *Intimacy* seems to be driven towards the Lacanian objects of desire along the path taken by such a desire. This desire, especially insofar as it relates to the objects of desire and the path that it travels towards, around and even away from such objects of desire is discussed in this chapter.

3.1 TO DESIRE THE ABSENT, THE UNWANTED AND THE INACCESSIBLE

Jay, the protagonist of Hanif Kureishi's *Intimacy*, feels an undefeatable need to leave his family and his partner Susan for a woman named Nina, who he believes he loves (Kureishi, 1998). Hence, Jay is a subject with a lack. For Lacan (1991), the fact that a subject lacks translates into the fact that the subject desires, since the relationship that a subject has with lack is desire. Since, this part of the thesis sees characters motivated by desire, it is worth mentioning that the characters themselves do not always claim that they are thus motivated. They usually claim that what drives them is love. For Jay, everyone wants love, a love that is presumed to be had at some point in the past but not remembered. Nevertheless, everyone is "compelled" since that first point of allegedly having it, to pursue it "as the single thing worth living for" (Kureishi, 1998). For Lacan, the " 'original' lost object " of desire is the phallus since it is that object of desire that was never attained in the first place (Homer, 2005). Hence, love here takes the form of a mask: something that stands in for a "lost object" insofar as it seems to hide that which the subject feels s/he possessed but had lost. Throughout the novel, often, love is spoken of in the language of desire. Love, moreover, acquires a form of symbolizing desire as well.

Desire, in *Intimacy*, firstly, is for something that one does not already possess—that which is absent, needless to say. It is for something that is outside one’s regular experience. The pattern of desiring or fantasizing about people other than one’s spouse/partner recurs throughout the book. Jay remembers how he had seen his mother looking at pictures from her youth with men, none of which featured his father (Kureishi, 1998). We see this even in Susan—Jay’s partner that seems to believe in monogamy—who (three years before the point of narration) mentioned in her journal how she “wondered” whether or not to go to her “lover” in Rome (Kureishi, 1998). When Jay complains about Susan never touching him, she asks him if the fact is surprising and supposes that it is not (Kureishi, 1998). It is almost as if it is commonsensical to know that we do not desire what we have. When Jay confesses to Susan that he is interested in someone else, she immediately asks him whether that someone is interested in him (Kureishi, 1998). Her surprise is focused on her own partner being the object of desire because she does not desire him anymore; hence, it seems surprising for her that he could be somebody’s object of desire. The point here is that it is obvious enough to be glossed over and taken for granted that she does not desire him since she already has him. Jay asks, at the juncture of contemplating to abandon Susan, why he did not “turn away” when “she put her hand on” his arm for the “first time” (Kureishi, 1998). He did not because she had become an object of desire—insofar as he did not have her back then—and he could not turn away without turning toward her first. He had to turn towards her as the object of desire; move towards her and then bend away. That is precisely what he does.

At the moment of Jay’s contemplation of departure, his children are “neither fighting nor whingeing for a change” (Kureishi, 1998). It all suddenly seems better the moment he has psychologically left: the world of his family becomes the object of desire the moment he intends to leave. Hence, not only what one does not have becomes one’s object of desire but what one intends to leave becomes an object of desire as well, insofar as one does not have it,

mentally. Moreover, there is this element of the “undiscovered” in “good relationships” (Kureishi, 1998) because what we have is what we have discovered already. What we have has no element of desire anymore. However, at times we already have something, yet there are undiscovered elements of a relationship or aspects of another person that we feel are undiscovered. Jay says he has recently “fallen in love” with his son, which then he equates with the mechanism of falling in love with Nina: “as an accumulation of amazement” (Kureishi, 1998). Love is equated with amazement, such as the amazement of discovery. This particular form of amazement arises out of the fact that one is not used to that particular object. For Jay, we are “a bag of insistent wants” and it makes sense to pursue *some* women, though not every woman, not knowing beforehand “what glory one might find” (Kureishi, 1998). It is this not knowing, this curtain that makes one desire. His equation of amazement with love resembles desire. Amazement is novelty, “accumulation of amazement” then is a form of an accrual of that which is not experienced regularly pertaining to an entity (his son/Nina). Any form of love/want of another person here functions in the manner of gaining what one does not have or experiencing what one has not experienced before. This element of discovery and amazement is what, for Jay, makes relationships successful, precisely because of the fact that we cannot desire fully what we already have, which translates into the fact that we cannot desire what we already have known completely. The point here is not that Jay desires his son but that Jay describes his love for his son as taking on similar mechanics as his love for Nina—his object of desire—where one might understand his relationship with his object of desire. Having something lies in the domain of satisfaction, but desire lies “beyond satisfaction” and has a relationship of “eccentricity” with satisfaction (Lacan, 2017). In this case, desiring another has little to do with having, and more to do with finding out, discovery and novelty. Jay remarks that Susan is not at all his type, but he is certain there is something about her he can enjoy, though he cannot put his finger on what this something is. He adds

that he would not want to be around her for a few months in order to forget her. This move would enable him to gain some clarity about her as an entity separate from him (Kureishi, 1998). Throughout the book, Jay shows little desire to be with Susan, but at this point of concrete departure he recognizes that there could be something about Susan he could enjoy because once he mentally leaves, he recognizes the possibility of an unrecognized enjoyment precisely because once he would leave, she would be absent and ergo desired.

Secondly, desire in the novel is not for what one overtly, clearly and unequivocally wants either. Though the characters desire what they do not have, that does not clearly mean they want what they think they want. For Lacan (1981), the only way to know you desire something is to know that you love it but do not want it. “Despite ourselves, we know what we like, and our errors and distracted excursions are illuminations. Perhaps only the unsought is worthwhile—like Nina’s face and the caresses of her long fingers” (Kureishi, 1998). In other words, we think we know what we like, then we bump into an error and get distracted away from the object of desire into an “excursion”—a detour, and meet something else and that is precisely the “illumination” here. Only the distant object of desire that is not clearly chased/wanted is “worthwhile.” This is precisely why the moment he seeks Nina and thinks he wants her, it turns out that he does not. Once he has access to Nina, he denies himself being with her. Jay *thinks* he knows what he wants and claims that what he wants is the accidental “unsought” Nina as object of desire but then if it is indeed her he wanted, he would have attempted to have her, which he does not—even though the whole novel is a chase after Nina and an attempt to be away from Susan. He does not want Nina simply, he desires her since it is when we desire that we claim to love something that we actually do not want. It is worth noting that Jay desired Susan, in retrospect, precisely because he “saw her by accident in the lobby” of a hotel (Kureishi, 1998). Whatever is desired is particularly found in a space of an accident since what is desired is not particularly wanted in order to be attained. In Jay’s

university life he would pick up women in the audience of theatres and during “intervals” they would speak to him. But when he was able to be with the women, he “never quite knew what to do with them” (Kureishi, 1998). They were just “intervals” for him; he never knew what to do with his object of desire since what you desire is not what you want.

Thirdly, desire in *Intimacy* is for an object which has to be inaccessible in some way. Desire, for Lacan (2017), is something that “perverts” need, which is given expression to as demand, and thereby functions both “beyond [...] need” as well as “beyond satisfaction.” If what is desired is found beyond what could be expressed as the thing one needs and lies beyond the domain of satisfaction as well, then it must be for something that is inaccessible, something unreachable. This must be true because something that is clearly needed or demanded has to be perceived as accessible in the world. Jay “enjoys” the “crude[ness]” and “sharp[ness]” of Susan’s tongue, her “combatant” nature; however, “her bitterness is too urgent to be witty; she lacks detachment.” Hence, he quickly goes on to say, “nevertheless one soon tires of it” (Kureishi, 1998). Susan, loses her place in Jay’s universe as object of desire precisely because she lacks this element of detachment. Jay no longer desires Susan because there is no inaccessibility about her, even though there are things about her personality that he “enjoys.” He wishes that after his departure Susan’s life would terminate, in the sense that he does not want her to have any life independent of him. While there is no love anymore, he would still feel “jealous”, since he believes that there might be another man in her and his children’s lives who would replace him (Kureishi, 1998). Once he imagines Susan to be inaccessible, she becomes his object of desire again. It is this particular kind of jealousy where one would want again what one had relinquished. He hopes she would be with someone wealthy after him, and hopes as well that not many people would want to be with her either (Kureishi, 1998), because the game he is playing is where he does not want to be the one to relinquish an object of desire. His disinclination as regards departure is

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essentially a move in the same playing field: he is reluctant since the moment he plans to leave—the moment he puts psychological distance between himself and home—Susan transforms into an object of desire. The fact that she would become an object of desire again makes him uncertain about abandoning her. However, Jay describes Nina as someone who is “aloof” and her doubts render her “inaccessible” sometimes (Kureishi, 1998). This inaccessibility about Nina is exactly what makes her the perfect candidate for being an object of desire. Moreover, Nina “drifted between boys” and thinks she is “too good” to be with them. This was true for everyone except Jay (Kureishi, 1998). Because Jay is already in a committed relationship with a family and is inaccessible from Nina’s perspective, he becomes her object of desire. Jay is the object for her that lies perpetually away. With other men she follows the trajectory of desire in a substitutional manner but with him desire is perpetuated because she could perpetually *not* have him. Moreover, when Jay is looking through his mind for “stimulating” memories and one of them, the last one he mentions, the one he probably settles on or cherry picks is where he was unable to take off his clothes—before he chooses to think of Nina (Kureishi, 1998). Essentially both fantasies of choice for him are fundamentally the same: where the object of desire could not be met.

It is also worth noting that Victor (Jay’s friend) was happier in the family structure than he is at the point of narration, having left his wife. This translates into following the path of Lacanian “mad desires” where one follows desire only because a particular desire “has been forbidden” (Lacan, 1981). Victor wants what Jay has, and wants to be like him—insofar as wanting to have what the latter has. This, for Jay, is Victor wanting “too much” (Kureishi, 1998). Fundamentally, Victor desires what he is forbidden to desire. Jay wants Nina because he cannot be with her, given the fact that he has a family with Susan. Victor wanted Nina because she was already with Jay. Moreover, this is why Jay desires Najma who is happily married to his friend Asif precisely because he cannot have her (Kureishi, 1998). They desire

what they cannot have, and it escalates into almost madness, but the desire exists precisely because it is forbidden in these instances to desire.

3.2 SUBSTITUTION

Lacanian desire is “metonymic” (Lacan, 2006), in the sense that the moment an object of desire is reached, the subject is deflected onto another object of desire and this is the process of perpetual “deferral” where like a signifier always “refers” to another, desire too functions similarly (Evans, 1996). The whole of the narration in *Intimacy* is a contemplation of leaving Susan to be with Nina. Nina apparently seems like a clear object of desire but as Jay is about to leave the bar where he comes to find Nina, after almost permanently leaving Susan and his family, he sees a woman alone, dancing. For a moment he mistakes her for Nina. At this point of the narration, he calls Nina “[his] love”; nevertheless, he shouts something in the ear of this anonymous woman and “imagine[s] going home with her” if she consents. He has had such experiences before, “lost in the city, waiting to see what will turn up” (Kureishi, 1998). The city represents the reservoir of objects of desire. He decides that from this random woman’s place he would direct himself to his friend Victor’s place instead of home (Kureishi, 1998). Objects of desire present themselves in a way that there is no “special significance of any particular object” and “one object can become equivalent to another” (Lacan, 1953). Yet again, we see how love functions as desire in the novel. Jay goes out in search of Nina—the woman he allegedly loves—but finds this anonymous woman and suddenly wants her. The nature of the object becomes irrelevant. He had planned to meet Nina and then go to Victor’s, but he conflates Nina with this girl, as a signifier replaces signifier, and decides he could easily go to Victor’s after this encounter—his condition of moving away from Susan and throwing himself at another object of desire being fulfilled. The plan apparently takes a turn but as far as desire is concerned, the path remains the same.

Nina is conveniently placed here as just an object of desire rather than an object of love as such. It is only a shift away from Susan not *to* Nina but to *any* object of desire that is not Susan that he requires—following the path laid out by desire. In addition, when he tells Asif that he is about to abandon his family, Asif asks if “the girl” is the reason for this (Kureishi, 1998). They do not name Nina, since no object of desire is special insofar as the metonymic nature of desire is concerned: it only functions as an object of desire. As a response to Asif’s inquiry (whether “the girl” is the reason behind his departure), Jay shrugs his shoulders (Kureishi, 1998). A shrug is the opposite of a proper emotive response. The shrug is either “I don’t know” or “maybe” or “why not?” We know he is close to Asif, but he either hasn’t told Asif Nina’s name, or he does not use it: both the conditions signal the same meaning that what is significant is not *which* object of desire but the fact that a shift in objects of desire needs to take place. Asif repeats this act of not naming Nina and calls her “the new girl” (Kureishi, 1998). This is significant, since from the perspective of Jay, it matters little which girl. What matters is the act of shifting.

Jay wishes to have been able to be content like children, not constantly mentally stretching out into the future, but he is unable to do that; ever since he had intended to leave his parents, he has needed a goal in the future (Kureishi, 1998). More so, he has always required to *invent* the goal as object of desire to sustain desire. Asif attempts to remind Jay that he must have had a well enough reason for choosing Susan as his partner in the first place, to which Jay responds that people change their minds: “If people are rushing away from one another in droves, it is because they are running towards other people” (Kureishi, 1998). This alteration and exchange of objects of desire is seen by Jay as what functions throughout society. Moreover, living with Susan is not the first time Jay has lived with a woman. He remembers a woman he had met in university life and lived with for some time (Kureishi, 1998). He is following the same trajectory from object to object, but what was

special about this relationship from his university life was that it included in its own principles an understanding of the same fact (of shifting objects) as part of a social category: it was an “open relationship.” Hence, this relationship is remembered as special not because any object of desire is special but because precisely this relationship presented no hurdle to shifting objects of desire. This was back in the late seventies when “relationships were nonchalant and easy, as if it had been agreed that the confinement of regularity made people mentally sick” (Kureishi, 1998). He calls her “an unmourned true love” (Kureishi, 1998); not only is it unmourned, it is also unnamed. She is unnamed at this point but right after the paragraph he mentions Nina (Kureishi, 1998). In the very structural arrangement of the novel we see this particular shift of objects of desire which represents the shifts taking place in Jay’s mind, since the novel is a first person narration with Jay as narrator. Moreover, since the novel is contemplation and the eventual execution of splitting with his partner Susan, it is noteworthy that this is not the first time Susan and Jay would split. They had split before and gotten back together again (Kureishi, 1998). It is when she was away that she became again the object of his desire. This departure and its reversal is essentially substitutional in nature, since from his perspective Susan presents herself not as anything special but an object of his desire.

Jay wonders about his reaction to having met Susan for the first time again and remarks that he would notice her twice, but not thrice (Kureishi, 1998). Twice becomes something like the initiation of desire; thrice is the shift to another object. Regardless, at the point of narration, once as he enters the room, he says he can see her hair and distinguish it from the “blanket and pillows.” He stands gazing at her and wants her to be “someone else” (Kureishi, 1998). For Jay, desire takes the form of this want for another object of desire precisely by encountering what is no longer an object of desire. The “attained” object of desire is wished to be replaced, transformed into another. For him, Susan is the kind of

woman who wants to “please men” and one could be under the illusion that that could be sufficient to sustain a relationship but sooner than later, he says, the women “resent” the attention they have given the men (Kureishi, 1998). This is how desire functions. Women’s general and Susan’s particular alleged eventual resentment signals becoming weary with what one has already attained. Resenting attention given to an object of desire has implicit in it a wish to transform or replace the object. Hence, since at the point of narration, Jay is already with Susan (the object is attained insofar as it could be), he wants to shift the object of his desire. This has always been how he has functioned since he could start “afresh” with every new woman (Kureishi, 1998). The question that if he needed to shift objects of desire then why did he live with Susan for ten years does not arise because even with her he was never monogamous.

Jay suggests that there is nothing that should make him think that he should have what he wants, since one cannot keep on continuously substituting people with people when they do not provide one with what one needs. There have to be other things that provide “sustenance” such as art or glancing “within” the self. This, however, is problematized for him by the fact that all forms of art are products of “love and desire”; hence, they cannot provide an escape from desire (Kureishi, 1998). Desire is seen as the universal, all-pervasive element that he can see functioning ubiquitously, rendering a thing “old” and undesirable, compelling to discard what you have and eternally set out to have what you do not. His boys demonstrate desire in a simulated play form that he plays out in his adult life. They go through their toys—sifting—putting aside what no longer interests them in favour of what keeps their interest alive. Jay says he is the same way “with books, music, pictures, newspapers” and wonders whether the same is possible with people. This could be “shallow” since the implication of the above would be to consider people as unreal. He goes on to ask, “but are they [real]?” (Kureishi, 1998). Here the children’s act of *sifting* becomes an act of

shifting. His desire is analogized by the way his children treat toys. People become objects that are shifted. Moreover, Nina tells him that she doesn't know any reason for living where she is and expressing the desire to be with him, while he moves away from "one bed in order to return to another." She asks, "can't you stay for ever, or at least tonight?" (Kureishi, 1998). This element of moving from bed to bed is precisely the shifting from person to person, following the trajectory of desire which is why he cannot stay.

Victor's place is where Jay plans on moving once he has left his family. Jay says that he is "exchanging" Susan and his family for Victor's place (Kureishi, 1998). The word "exchanging" signals replacement of objects of desire. Victor's place becomes a symbol for the new object of desire with all its novelty and nothing else: only a jump from "signifier to signifier." Even in conversation Jay "dash[es] from subject to subject" (Kureishi, 1998) and this conversational characteristic is symbolic of the trajectory of desire he follows. He asks the question fundamental to desire: would he want what he gets at Victor's place (the "monologues and pauses, draughts and pubs") all the time (Kureishi, 1998)? The new object will soon need to be replaced with another, since the object of desire—once brought into nearness—needs be either replaced or encircled. Victor's place offers no promise, but what is central is not what Victor's place can deliver. What is central is the exchange itself. Hence, Jay wants to create a mental picture of this last scene of his family etc. to carry around at Victor's place (Kureishi, 1998). This mental picture, being a signifier, is significant because of this awareness that now Victor's place is where his desire takes him, but when he will be there he would need to slide from this signifier to another. The mental picture of his family will be what would then stand for a distant object of desire. Jay would move to a psychological place where desire would be perpetuated, since he would always leave a space for something to be desired. That something could either be placed in the future as a goal or in the past as a memory.

Victor's place is especially symbolic as the place-to-go, insofar as following the substitutional trajectory of desire is concerned. Victor can never choose a particular woman, even if she is "attractive" and "good" he would always manage to find a flaw in order to reject her. "Potential loves passed through his room like actresses auditioning for a part yet to be written." And he would see Jay with Nina and "love" her, since he was not able to be with Nina. The moment he got too close, in a proper relationship, "he was off." Jay wonders why couldn't they both be with someone and speculates that maybe he could, if Victor couldn't (Kureishi, 1998). But this is obviously a false speculation as we come to know at the end of the story: Jay cannot even settle on Nina. Victor's journey of desire takes the form of a search for love because love becomes a by-word for desire. Jay as narrator suggests that Victor never loved any other woman and uses the word "love" only when referring to Victor desiring Nina, which fits perfectly in the scheme of desire, since for Victor Nina is a distant object of desire because she is *Jay's* mistress. "Love", insofar as it could be perceived as love proper, as far as *Intimacy* is concerned, could only be seen as desiring a distant, inaccessible object of desire. Victor's place, throughout, retains this kind of symbolism which functions like a mediator. For Lacan (2006), desire always has this element of mediation; taken to be understood from the earliest phases of one's life. If one desires food, the "food must be prepared", where the process of preparation takes place in the world as mediation. Victor's place acts as this mediator *through* which the object(s) of desire must be met/prepared. That is where Jay goes, in order to be with Nina after leaving Susan.

Asif, once told Jay—referring to the latter's numerous affairs—that Jay reminded him of a person who reads only "the first chapter of a book" without attempting to find out what occurs thereafter (Kureishi, 1998). And what Jay himself calls a mistake is beginning a book from its beginning and then reading until the end (Kureishi, 1998). The language here is the language of desire. It is not only that a shift of objects needs to take place once the object of

desire is reached, but *as soon as* the object is reached, the shift might take place quickly, since at this point the subject (Jay) knows a little about how desire works, so he deflects away the moment he reads “the first chapter of a book.”

However, Asif is the anomaly when it comes to desire, since Asif is described as someone who “yearns for what he has already” (Kureishi, 1998), which seems not to function like desire. Asif disturbs the understanding Jay has of desire. Jay thinks the fact that he desires unlike Asif, the latter might think of him as lacking “integrity” and claims he has his own kind of integrity. He wants to be “loyal” but to “something else now. Or someone else.” He claims that he wishes to be loyal to himself (Kureishi, 1998), but it is this “something else” that he wants to be loyal to. He wants to keep a semblance of loyalty but a loyalty to the idea of constantly shifting objects of desire. It all began to go wrong with Susan once Jay “opened” his eyes and “decided” he “wanted to see”, he claims (Kureishi, 1998). It started to go wrong with Susan the moment he got together with her, insofar as desire is concerned. It is almost irrelevant that after so many years he has decided to act on the path laid out by desire. He feels the need to be loyal to another object now. To desire, then, is to love oneself insofar as Jay is concerned.

Moreover, interestingly, while expressing interest in skirts Jay says:

I wanted to know what was under them. There was waiting, but there was possibility. The skirt was a transitional object; both a thing in itself and a means of getting somewhere else. This became my paradigm of important knowledge. The world is a skirt I want to lift up. (Kureishi, 1998, p. 19)

His “paradigm of [...] knowledge” is precisely how desire functions. It is the lifting of the skirt that is of interest, not what one will find under the skirt. Here, the need to know functions like desire. He reiterates this particular interest in skirts in the book (Kureishi, 1998). It is the skirt in and of itself that interests him; not what is beneath it, unconsciously. It is the symbolic covering that he is seeking, not the female body since lifting what is

underneath the skirt lies in the domain of satisfaction. The skirt becomes the object of desire which will redirect him the moment the skirt is lifted. Hence, interest in the skirt becomes symbolic of a substitutional, short-lived encounter with the object of desire. He goes into a monologue while attempting to internally answer the question posed by Asif regarding what he believes in. One of the things he mentions in the monologue is that he likes “what men and women make” (Kureishi, 1998). However, the monologue fails to answer anything since he doesn’t know exactly what it is that men and women make. Nevertheless, the one thing he tells him out loud is that he believes in “the possibilities of intimacy” (Kureishi, 1998). It is the *possibilities* that are stressed on, nothing else. What becomes significant is keeping the possibilities alive in order not encounter the object.

3.3 GOING AWAY, NOWHERE AND IN CIRCLES

Jay tells Asif that if the former could merely catch a glimpse of “[Nina’s] hair on her neck”, he would be able to “move outwards from that point” (Kureishi, 1998). Lacan (1991), commenting on Anna Freud’s childhood dream, where when the child desires cherries it does not merely dream of cherries, but “she also dreams of custard [and] cake.” These details that function as surpluses around what is desired are what signal desire. The hair on Nina’s neck for Asif is completely insignificant and trivial, but it is the indicator of Jay’s desire. However, we already know that Jay desires Nina as an object of desire, other than Susan. But once he will be able to see that which signals his desire, he claims he will go “outwards.” Where this outwards particularly leads is nowhere at all. Desire, for Lacan (2006), is something that perpetually takes the form that is “extending toward the desire for something else.” Desire, precisely, is for some kind of an “x”, something that cannot be named. It is essentially desire for “nothing.” This is what Lacan finds true in his understanding of Freud’s work on dreams (Lacan, 1991). Similarly, *Intimacy*’s Jay desires precisely nothing at all, since ipso facto

desire is neither for this nor that but always for “something else” that cannot be put into words: it cannot be located in the world. The latter is a fact pointed out by Cirakli and Nayeypour (2012) as well, as regards *Intimacy*. Desiring nothing, for Jay always functions in this way as constantly desiring something that lies at the same time away and nowhere at all. On another level, he feels the need to leave or the need to be with Nina. We see this need translated into demand, which becomes the demand to leave/be with Nina. Since, the need to leave has become a demand to leave, this demand could no longer be answered with a leave or not to leave choice; since, now he desires and there is no specific object anymore. Where shall he go? This precisely is the question now. As a result he ends up being sad (Kureishi, 1998). Since, desire functions “in dependence on demand,” and the moment this particular demand is “articulated in signifiers”, a residue is left behind which is always a condition of lack and impossibility—a fact also expressed by Cirakli and Nayeypour (2012) nearly in this way. This condition is desire for Lacan (1981). Hence, as such expressing or thinking in language the wish/will to leave or be with Nina becomes a demand which is expressed. Once articulated, it leaves a residue which results in desire or signals desire. Asif suggests to him that he could have an affair which “might take away the need” which would save his monogamous relationship with Susan (Kureishi, 1998). Asif suggests this knowing how desire functions. But Jay responds by saying that an affair does remove the need for a while but it all depends on the particular need and if it could be taken away. He adds that it also depends on whether or not this particular need is renewed and with what intensity (Kureishi, 1998). This is precisely because what is being termed as need has been through demand, which has been articulated and become desire. Desire cannot be taken away, since it functions beyond need. Hence, the fundamental question that we return to remains, “where is it that he must go?” The answer obviously is either nowhere or somewhere. The place closest to nowhere/somewhere is to be forever “on-the-go.” And that is precisely what he adopts.

While getting ready to leave and packing his stuff he says, paradoxically, that one requires “indirection” to see clearly. It is quite pointless to follow where desire leads. Feelings are described as “weapons [...] and words are their bullets” (Kureishi, 1998), since it is words that turn need into demand and form desire, which is why he would describe it all as a “redundant and fearful dance” (Kureishi, 1998).

Jay describes his act of leaving as not his “first flight” (Kureishi, 1998). He knows very well that following the object of desire would amount to nothing. If change is what he wants, change is not what he is going to get. Jay quotes the singer John Lennon to that effect (Kureishi, 1998). Jay had left home temporarily in his boyhood—what he terms as an “excursion”—and says that mostly the kids were like him as far as “fleeing something: their homes” was concerned. Jay used to read out the line “one is always nearer by not keeping still” from the Thom Gunn poem ‘On the Move’, in parties with other young kids (Kureishi, 1998). What one is “always nearer” to is the object of desire that is found always “on the move”—perpetually so.

Jay thinks he will stay at Victor’s place for “an unspecified period” (Kureishi, 1998), which makes it obvious that there is no concrete plan, that more than wanting to be with Nina, he simply wants to be away. He terms his situation a “waste”: knowing Susan for so long and then turning away. This is termed as a waste of “time”, energy and “feeling” (Kureishi, 1998). But it is a waste because of the fact that desire leads him up an alley only to lead him out of it. The waste is only the compulsion one feels in following the trajectory of desire. His description of his life on a “thin mattress” in a “tiny room” at Victor’s (Kureishi, 1998) is one of obviously disagreeable conditions to opt to live in. But what is significant is not *what* he is aiming at but the fact that he is aiming at something else, something other than what he has at the moment of narration. Moreover, Victor keeps most of his stuff in suitcases (Kureishi, 1998). Victor’s place retains the same symbolism of the-place-to-go as far as

desire is concerned. Victor keeps his stuff in suitcases because Victor epitomizes the subject moving in accordance with desire. Consequently, the stuff in suitcases becomes symbolic of never settling down on an object of desire but always being away. The suitcases are images that counter the image of the place as permanent residence or permanent object. In addition, Victor after leaving his wife, has only experienced “unsatisfactory loves.” Victor is someone who “can give women hope, if not satisfaction” (Kureishi, 1998). What is key about Victor’s place is this perpetuity of dissatisfaction. Victor and his place both begin to symbolize this Lacanian concept of pushing objects of desire from satisfaction to only the *hope* of satisfaction, so that desire is perpetuated. Even though Victor had to “persuade” his wife for pleasure that he wanted, he gets it nonetheless: the pleasure that she wouldn’t have given any other man. Nevertheless, the next morning he leaves her (Kureishi, 1998). Victor came to the point of attainment of the object, insofar as sexual pleasure is located in the object of desire, and so he leaves because he attains it, besides learning that the particular brand of sexual enjoyment he wants is more or less barred in his marital life given his wife’s reluctance. His wife, too, begins to “hate” him (Kureishi, 1998) not merely because he abandons her but also because both encounter the lack of each other; both came too close to the object—nothing more is left for desire to progress. Hence, Victor takes the tangential trajectory of desire: outwards and elsewhere—the place where desire leads. This is true of Jay as well. The night that Jay is with Susan and wishes to be with someone else, he says that “young people are out, going somewhere” (Kureishi, 1998). It is just going, somewhere, anywhere. He wishes to do just that. The same night, after taking his son back to bed he goes to a bar “without knowing why” (Kureishi, 1998). There is no clear object of desire but desire pushes forward nonetheless.

Jay speaks about what he had seen in the life of his parents: he describes his parents as “frustrated”; as people who were “faithful to one another” but “unfaithful to themselves”,

since they were unable to have what they desired—“whatever” it was that they desired (Kureishi, 1998). Again, the object is fuzzy to say the least and unknown. Hence, following the object of desire is to follow that which lies somewhere else and nowhere.

The therapist that Susan and Jay visit addresses Jay telling him that passion fades but what makes relationships successful after passion passes is “contentment” (Kureishi, 1998). Jay finds this stupid. Not merely as an idea but because he doesn’t want satisfaction. He wants desire, which he has lost for Susan. He says he has no “curiosity about Susan” and “no passion to know her soul” anymore (Kureishi, 1998). Desire again is equated with knowledge. He tells the therapist, to her incomprehension, that “all that matters is the hinge.” He explains that this “hinge” is “of one’s mind” and it matters if this “hinge” opened in or out, and exclaims: “Let it be—out!” (Kureishi, 1998). This represents how it matters to him that one faces outwards, towards a certain unclear away-ness rather than anything else. Moreover, he describes himself as “all for passion, frivolity, childish pleasures! Yes, it is an adolescent cry. I want more. Of what? What have you got?” (Kureishi, 1998) It is a cry for desire for the sake of it, where just about any object will do. This is why thinking of going home makes “blood [...] rise [...] into [his] head”—he would rather go to a “filthy bar” and grab a “chair” or visit somebody’s home and get a hold on the “host’s wife” (Kureishi, 1998). We see here the equation of the chair and the wife: both signifiers, equalized for the purpose of being objects and nothing more. Desire is always for something else just because it is something else. Instead, he grabs a drink and finds a disillusioned girlfriend of an acquaintance and wants to follow her but does nothing at all (Kureishi, 1998): perpetually bouncing away, here and there driven by desire and wanting to be driven by desire.

Jay claims that he had “learned to be cold” and indifferent towards the women who fell in love with him. Only when he is there (with Susan) and they are away does he desire them. “I wanted them; I got them; I lost interest. I never rang back, or explained. Whenever I

was with a woman, I considered leaving her. I didn't want what I wanted", he says (Kureishi, 1998). Desire reaches for an object that is always something else rather than some *thing*. He thought of their feelings towards him as revolting and funny. But at the point of narration, he cannot really tolerate the force exerted by his desire. Especially when he lies with Susan, with the knowledge that his "girlfriend—whichever one, but usually Nina—was out in the city" (Kureishi, 1998). The city represents the reservoir of objects of desire that always lie away. And it little matters whether he could be with whichever girlfriend as long as he desires someone else, someone other than Susan. He claims that he wants to leave Susan because he believes in love and thinks that out there in the city someone exists who will love him (Kureishi, 1998). This kind of away-ness is particularly remarkable of his objects of desire, as it is with any object of desire, since it must always have this element of away-ness and vagueness. He speculates whether Nina would be missing him with a "perhaps", but his speculation that she might be with some "young man" is marked by "probably" (Kureishi, 1998). "Probably" is more probable than "perhaps." This is so, since if she is with someone else, she thus becomes even more remote and hence, even more desired.

Furthermore, for Lacan (1981), "the object of desire is the cause of desire": what he calls the *objet a* (object-cause of desire). This same object is also "the object of the drive" and desire's path leads around this object. For Žižek (1992), Lacan was particularly interested in the paradoxical nature of the object of desire in courtly love because of how the woman as object of desire functions as the Lacanian *objet a* (object a) which is an object of desire that is not really any "positive entity existing in space" but is nothing really except "curvature of space itself", and causes the subject to "bend" when the subject attempts to get at it. This object, as woman, is "pure semblance" as a "paradoxical object which curves the space of desire" rather than anything. This is why in order to attain said object, the subject is led to diversions and tribulations. Kureishi's Jay, though not being a protagonist of a courtly love

fiction, nevertheless follows the same trajectory apropos his objects of desire without the trials specific to courtly love. Asif tells Jay that the latter is moving “round and round, but further and further” (Kureishi, 1998). This “round and round” and “further and further” is the tangential trajectory of desire as well as encircling the object of desire. As Jay moves with his lighter around the disco to find Nina so that he could leave Susan for the former, he is afraid that she might be with some younger man or hates him. Hence, he begins to wonder as to why he doesn’t pursue an older, more mature woman with whom he would be able to have conversations and decides to go to a place where there are such middle-aged women. He says then, since he thinks he could have found Nina at the disco, that it is characteristic of him to come close to something he thinks he wants and then run away (Kureishi, 1998). What is characteristic of Jay is to “encircle the object of desire” and to be deflected away from the object of desire the moment he comes close to it. The dark club where he comes to find Nina becomes a symbol for the way desire functions. You come in to seek an object of desire, thinking it is *the* object of desire, but once you are close to it, you go out of the door to find an object elsewhere, all the while desiring the same object of desire that you went in to find: hence, encircling it.

Jay declares his family is “complete” and “ideal” (Kureishi, 1998) but he does so the night he calls his “last”: only that night, because he can encircle the object of desire. He can escape tomorrow and leave the object, which is the very opposite of intimacy (the title of the novel). Additionally, Susan is a woman that he “want(s) no more of” (Kureishi, 1998). The very fact that he does not want Susan anymore is what makes the night even more ideal, given that once more she could precisely—at this paradoxical moment—be what he wants; hence, he feels sad at the point of the contemplation of abandonment. He puts psychological distance between himself and home/Susan, the moment this distance is achieved he wants the home/Susan again. In this way the object of desire is encircled.

Finally, Jay reminisces about sitting opposite Nina in Soho where she let him see her face properly and told him that if he wanted her, he could have had her. He terminates the travel into memory by “but that was before” and the chapter ends there (Kureishi, 1998). This is precisely the act of encircling round Nina as object of desire because this had happened before the point of narration. At present, he breaks away from Susan for Nina, and it is obvious that he did not choose to stay with Nina at that point in the past. Nevertheless, he will come back to the same place and choose to go back around the circle. By the end of the novel when he leaves Susan apparently for Nina, at Victor’s place, he delays calling Nina (Kureishi, 1998). The novel ends there. He never calls her; he completes the circle.

3.4 THE PARTNER-MISTRESS CONTINUUM

Jay unequivocally says, “I didn’t want what I wanted” (Kureishi, 1998). Slavoj Zizek (2012) believes that “we don’t really want what we think we want.” He further elaborates by presenting the case of a man who has a wife and a mistress. He keeps fantasizing about the wife somehow disappearing from the scene so he could be with the mistress—the object of his desire. However, the lesson from psychoanalysis is that if in case the wife were to disappear somehow, the man would “lose the mistress” as well. Desire in this case is not so straightforward and functions in a complex manner where the actual objective is not to be with the mistress but to keep the latter “at a distance, as an object of desire about which you dream.” In line with and adding to what Zizek says, this thesis posits that this particular partner-mistress structure is a continuum of elements—the partner and the mistress—who are not really different from one another but function as extremes as well. This partner-mistress continuum is a structure that is desire-sustaining where not only the mistress is a distant

object of desire but the partner is as well. Both the partner and the mistress are distant objects of desire and the subject lies at the centre, precisely to keep desiring both.

Jay thinks that he isn't able to describe himself as unhappy and amply satisfied in his life, having attained a certain "balance." He had "a tolerable partner" in Susan, "delightful children" and "the perfect mistress." When the latter became petulant he could distance himself from her (Kureishi, 1998). We see here that what he calls satisfaction is masked as very complexly the opposite of satisfaction. It is the perfect conditions for desire to function. What makes her "the perfect mistress" is not so much a remark about her personality or compatibility with him, since she does become petulant and she does go away to his displeasure (Kureishi, 1998). What then makes her "the perfect mistress" is the fact that she is always away—doubly away. Nina is the mistress and he has a family with Susan. A proper relationship with Nina is thus impossible. Having a mistress means also that he is distant from Susan as well. Moreover, Nina is herself "detached" and lives in a universe of her own, continuously arriving and departing (Kureishi, 1998). This then renders her doubly away; hence, the perfect object of desire: the one in whom away-ness is doubly intensified. However, this perfect "complex situation" is broken by his departure from the family structure. He had an affair with Nina while being with his partner Susan (Kureishi, 1998), which is the trajectory of desire being followed by him as laid out by Slavoj Žižek (2012). The pattern is exactly the same as explained by the Slovene Philosopher, since the moment he does leave his partner Susan, he does not call Nina at the end because Nina is no longer the *distant* object of desire and the continuum is broken. Hence, he perhaps cannot desire Nina the way he did before abandoning Susan, even though he defers being with her and she retains the identity of being the distant object of desire but outside the partner-mistress continuum. He moves from Susan's bed to Nina's and back and forth. Nina asks him to

remain with her either forever or the night (Kureishi, 1998). But the in-between is where he must remain to make it “successful,” as far as desire is concerned.

The night Jay meets his divorced acquaintance and the latter’s girlfriend, he finds out that the acquaintance’s wife—like Victor’s—wouldn’t let him see his children and the “romance” he had had with his girlfriend was in shambles. Through the whole fiasco, the acquaintance and his girlfriend had realized that they didn’t want each other either (Kureishi, 1998). She leaves the bar with foreknowledge of the fact that she will leave him. The nature of this fiasco is exactly Zizek’s (2012) observation: when you lose the wife you will lose the mistress as well. Not only does the man desire the mistress only in this structure, but the mistress desires the man too, only inside this structure. She will walk away, if the continuum is broken. Even though this woman claims that the man’s children are the cause of their romance’s death; nevertheless, we know that no matter what, she will disappear one way or another, once the wife is gone. Ergo, going through photographs, Jay remembers how when his eldest son was born, he left Susan at the hospital (not having kissed her—as she points out and complains about) and drinks the champagne Susan’s father had brought for them with another woman, Karen (Kureishi, 1998)—another object of desire. The partner-mistress continuum that keeps the “balance” (Kureishi, 1998), as Jay mentioned, is what is essential for Jay to maintain, whether the mistress is Nina or Karen is of little consequence. This is the structure where desire is sustained for him.

Moreover, his accountant friend after leaving his wife meets a woman whose condition of wanting him is that they be together in the same bed that she shared with her husband to provoke the latter (Kureishi, 1998). It is precisely in the bed of the husband that she chooses to be with her lover. The bed represents the space where desire is played out and it is there that desire is seen functioning not for a lover in isolation but for the lover in relation to the husband. If the husband is taken out of the equation, desire ceases to exist for

the lover within the affair structure. This is why the act of repeatedly lying to one's partner/spouse is cited as the reason why Jay has stayed with Susan for so long, and what has kept "the important going" (Kureishi, 1998). Of course it is the family structure that is "important" here but it is also this other structure, the partner-mistress continuum: the presence of the distant object of desire that is "important" as far as desire is concerned.

3.5 THE MANOEUVRE: SHIELDING FROM AND THE PERPETUATION OF DESIRE THROUGH DISTANTIATION

Kureishi's protagonist's primary characteristic is that he is someone who lives to keep desire afloat. Lacanian desire, which "is the desire of the Other [...] is nothing more than the desire to desire" (Lacan, 1992). It is obvious that there are occasions in the book where he does not know how desire functions, but there are also those places where he does seem to know how it works and attempts to manipulate it in order to perpetuate it—sometimes fully conscious of what he is doing, sometimes half aware, sometimes unaware.

Firstly, the occasions on which Jay is either half aware or completely unaware that he is making a move in order to construct a distance from objects of desire in order to perpetuate desire are analysed. He makes a complex move by not wanting to leave and wanting to leave at the same time which balances objects of desire. The novel opens with him contemplating abandoning his so-called monogamous partner Susan and their two kids, with the line, "It is the saddest night for I am leaving and not coming back" (Kureishi, 1998). But this sadness, caused by contemplating to leave and never return expresses the wish not only to distance himself from the idea of departure but also the desire for return. The trajectory of desire is set from here onwards. It is obvious that Susan is no longer his object of desire, as long as he has this proximity to her. But then once he mentally departs, Susan and his family becomes an

object of desire again for the precise reason that he has contemplated leaving. The meaning of “not wanting to desire” and desiring is essentially the same since “not wanting to desire is wanting not to desire” (Lacan, 1981). This is where the one constant that remains is desire. Jay decides to leave Susan because he is following desire. But Jay does not want to leave. He desires not to desire at this point. The fact that he will leave is “sad” for him, moreover, because he will place Susan at a distance and she will once again become an object of desire. The zero sum game is sad. This is why he dresses up and leaves the house to walk until he is too tired to walk further (Kureishi, 1998). This is a simulation of leaving Susan, as an act of fantasy—in order to place the home mentally away in order to want to be in it again. Almost the whole length of the novel is the contemplation to put distance between himself and Susan. The contemplation is filled with doubt. This doubt and the sustained thought of leaving throughout the length of the novel cause the deferral of departure which elongates the process of leaving. This delay favours desire in not acting on desire since it creates mental distance between him and Susan, where even though she is not overtly an object of desire anymore, she becomes one, psychologically, by virtue of distance.

When Nina tells Jay that he could have her if he wanted to, he replies with a “thank you” and while afraid of “yes for an answer”, he asks her if she actually meant that he could have her (Kureishi, 1998). This fear is basically the fear of the balance of things being disturbed. Not only the Partner-Mistress balance, and the balance between Susan and Nina but the perfect proximity to and from each object of desire is what forms his formula for happiness. Even though he claims to want to be with Nina, he nevertheless wants to put distance between himself and her.

Moreover, after saying that Jay had forgotten about the woman he had lived with, whom he had met in his university life, he says: “But Nina has not gone from my mind. I am unable to let her go, yet” (Kureishi, 1998). This “yet” does not mean “so far” in any non-

suggestive sense. He had withdrawn his desire from the woman he mentions. Nina is next. This is a plan which he will execute well at the end of the novel by leaving his family *for* Nina and being fully able to be with her and deferring. This final act of deferral acts as an ad infinitum deferral since the story ends there. It places the object perpetually away and ipso facto, perpetually desired.

Contemplating departure from his family, he thinks he should consider what it is that he loves about other people and life (Kureishi, 1998). He is already leaving, his mind is almost made up, but he is not sure what he is heading towards. That must remain open, which is the demand of desire that the object be nothing. He feels he must decide on the object of desire or he will be in the “wasteland” of not getting close to anything. He also connects not knowing what he wants with death (Kureishi, 1998). Nonetheless, being the Lacanian subject, this is precisely the condition he wants, without perhaps knowing it at this point. “Patience is a virtue only in children and the imprisoned”, he claims, while he goes on to express how sick he is of planning and “containing” seeking pleasure in his life with Susan. “When unnerved I start seeking pleasures to relinquish” because letting go of what he wants in his life with Susan had become a norm. He “will defer deferral” and exclaims “I want it now!” (Kureishi, 1998). When this life of containment causes him to panic, he paradoxically begins to want things only to let go of them. It is implied that this is caused by getting too used to letting go of what he wants. As ironic as it is, this is his move. When he does not find a way to act on desire, he will desire things only to relinquish them because to desire becomes a negotiation between distance and closeness. What he thinks he does as a consequence of not being able to desire, he does because he desires. He does not relinquish objects of desire because he is in the habit of containment; he does so because desire functions substitutionally. But here, he *plans* to substitute objects of desire before attaining them. In

other words, he plays the game of desire without being fully aware of it, in this instance. And the whole game is playing around with distance from and proximity to what is desired.

It is worth mentioning that Jay is particularly interested in the skirt rather than the body; the sheet, the notebook not the writing; the journey not the destination (Kureishi, 1998). All of this is about desire, symbolically, since he thinks that the way a fountain pen moves over paper is the way fingers do on skin. He remembers as a kid when he was asked to write what he did on a particular day. Having grown up, he wants to write about things he hasn't done on a particular day and in this life (Kureishi, 1998). He focuses on what he does not have, as a desiring being. This fascination with the skirt, the notebook and the paper translate into the fascination with the journey rather than the destination, which in turn translates into an awareness that beyond these things comes a point of encountering the object of desire and one must not meet it if one is to keep desiring—beyond these, the interest must fade. This reluctance as regards meeting the object or retaining it is Jay's major characteristic.

Moreover, Asif, from Jay's perspective, has an anomalous relationship with objects of desire, since he wants what he already has. Jay has elicited the admission from Asif that the latter, in fact, wonders what it would be like to touch a woman other than his wife. But right at that point of confession, Asif thinks of how his wife waits for him to return. He tells Jay that he sees her in the bed away from him while their children sleep between them both (Kureishi, 1998). However, Asif's relationship with desire is not anomalous at all, precisely because every day not getting what Asif desires is what sustains his relationship with Najma (his wife) and he thinks of her rather than any other woman. The maintenance of desire is achieved by this regular distance he has from her, caused by the children that function as in-betweens that sustain desire through the construction of a distance between them. This is an unconscious, unplanned way of desire being sustained.

Finally, Jay consciously engineers a distance between objects or creates a space where he is able to perpetuate desire in the form of keeping desire alive and not wanting to desire as well. He attempts to navigate desire: “At the same time, you have to find the right distance between people. Too close, and they overwhelm you; too far and they abandon you. How to hold them in the right relation?” (Kureishi, 1998). This becomes the fundamental question. He seeks to find or construct a perfect distance from the objects of his desire in order to keep them as objects of desire perpetually. He knows, “perhaps only the unsought is worthwhile—like Nina’s face and the caresses of her long fingers” (Kureishi, 1998). The object not chased after, is worth it. We can see in the word “unsought” a lack of effort, this too is a manoeuvre. Nina becomes a paradoxical object of desire insofar as she is both sought and unsought at the same time. Throughout the novel Jay seeks her and wants to abandon his family for her, but when he abandons his family he delays calling her and perhaps never calls her. This is a manoeuvre to perpetuate desire by construction of distance. This paradoxical state of affairs is constructed by Jay.

Jay says he used the women in his life to guard him from others. If he had a woman around him who desired him, he could “keep the world outside [his] skin.” This move would prevent him from desiring other women and so manipulate desire as he wished. However, he still wanted the liberty of choice: wanting other women protected him from the vulnerability to loving only one (Kureishi, 1998). This is a unique way of looking at the object of desire. Not only does pursuing the object in this way perpetuate desire but it also provides this unique space for not desiring other objects—for ridding oneself of not only desire but being the object of desire as well, which subjects usually do not find a pleasant situation to be in. It is a space of freedom—a negotiated space founded by a complex manoeuvre. At the same time, in this ideal (as regards desire) space a niche is to be kept for desire to keep going as well, in some way. This space is a double-edged sword against both love and desire at the

same time, which are apparently diametrically opposed here but are essentially the same. Love translates into desiring one object in order not to desire a multiplicity of objects; yet, leaving an open space, paradoxically, for precisely other objects of desire as well.

Moreover, he thinks that in India and Lahore, men and women in partnerships have a certain distance: like his uncle and aunt in Lahore live in different parts of the same house (Kureishi, 1998). This space of separation is incidental in Lahore, but he calls it “a fine idea” that “the women [are] close but not too close.” He assumes that in India/Lahore, desire is suppressed but for his generation in the west, satisfaction seems necessary (Kureishi, 1998). This necessity is not necessarily hailed; it could be lamented since he wants to find that unique space allowed by the so-called “fine idea.” The distantiation, incidental in Lahore/India, is something he would transplant into his own life—engineer it. Sense, for him, is in not following all impulses and not chasing every other woman that one wants. However, one could seek some women (Kureishi, 1998). This, too, is a conscious selectivity. Hence, he learns to detach himself from women—that is exactly the same place where he mentions how he wouldn’t call women back to explain why he had turned away from them. Moreover, he thinks of their passions as repellent and amusing and dubs letting oneself feel too much as stupidity (Kureishi, 1998), for the lack of being able to negotiate the same distantiation. Ergo, symbolically, in a scene, he sees Susan, looks at her and looks away; then looks at her again (Kureishi, 1998). This is a simulation of how he negotiates this distance. Looking at her becomes chasing the object of desire and attaining it. Looking away again becomes the manoeuvre of constructing distance to be able to desire the same object again which causes him to look at her a second time. In this way desire is perpetuated.

Jay feels guilty for wanting to “reduce her [Nina] in [his] mind”—that is, if he could render her as far from a special object of love in his mind, he would be able to protect himself from feeling intensely about her (Kureishi, 1998). This is why (though he claims it was in a

“spiteful mood”) he once asks Victor if the latter wanted to be with Nina (Kureishi, 1998). To reduce the object of desire to something that would only function as an object of desire rather than a special object of love, one requires first to *have* the object of desire. Moreover, he understands he cannot forget her because he hadn’t been able to reduce her. Forgetting Nina is made somehow impossible by the presence of another Other (whether that is Susan or Nina). Since he asks Victor to go out with Nina, in his absence, and when they no longer saw each other, he continued his friendship with Victor. He wished he could forget her but he clearly couldn’t (Kureishi, 1998). The reduction of the Other occurs here by meeting the Other as an object of desire either unconsciously or strategically manoeuvring to reduce the Other into *not* a special object of desire anymore. “I looked at her, naked on the bed, as white as a grain of rice” (Kureishi, 1998); reducing Nina to a grain of rice is precisely this attempt at reduction. Repeatedly refusing to name Nina, in addition, at more than one occasion in the narrative and calling her a girl or a woman achieves this reduction and is a consequence of it. Moreover, this holds true in the case of Susan as well, since he thinks that if he would not see Susan (to forget her) he would be able to clearly see her as an entity separate from him (Kureishi, 1998), because then she is the reduced Other and he would forget her and she would once again be his object of desire. This would render Susan into an object of desire like any other, rather than seen as a partner with whom he had spent years. The reduction of the Other is to reduce the Other from the status of a somewhat special object of love to an object of desire far from containing any “special significance.” This is a manoeuvre on his part. He says he would like to be with middle-aged women after levelling out (Kureishi, 1998) implying that he could only be with middle-aged women only after he meets the object of desire—Nina or any other young woman. This levelling out is a process within reduction of the Other by meeting the Other as object of desire. It is only after the Other is reduced that

one could move on to a higher cause, insofar as being with middle-aged women presents to him a “larger cause” (Kureishi, 1998).

For Jay, feeling the desolation of betrayal could only be prevented by an absence of feeling altogether for the other person. He feels free to encourage Nina to be with other men. The more she relates her intimate encounters to him, the more he feels detached from her and increasingly hopes she would desire him. On the one hand, he is desirous of her to move towards him as he moves away. At the same time, he fears discouraging her entirely (Kureishi, 1998). He picks this same game of balancing distantiation with intimacy partially from Nina. She too, for Jay, wanted more than any other woman to be the object of desire, and right there and then in the next sentence he mentions her constant comings and goings (Kureishi, 1998). This manoeuvre, then, is not only essential to keep desire afloat but also to keep oneself as a constant object of desire of the Other that has been reduced itself to merely an object of desire. Moreover, this holds true for love as well—which in this book functions the same way as desire—since, the more she loves him the more she feels the need to retell herself that she is separate from him (Kureishi, 1998). Love becomes inextricably attached to distance, rather distance becomes an essential component of love. Distance is as essential for love to maintain itself as it is for desire to be perpetuated. Jay frequently negotiates distance with the object of desire by maintaining, containing and controlling his desire. This to him seems like an achievement; since at times he “wish[es] to be wishless” (Kureishi, 1998) which for Lacan is desiring not to desire that essentially translates into desiring (Lacan, 1981).

CHAPTER 4

ATTEMPTED SUBVERSION

This chapter deals with the different ways in which Jay attempts to resist and subvert ideology and the big Other's cultural and social impositions or norms. The Zizekian big Other is "the communal network of social institutions, customs and laws" (Myers, 2003); as for Lacan, it is the equivalent of "language and law" (the Symbolic), which can also be seen as another subject (Evans, 1996).

'Ideology' can designate anything from a contemplative attitude that misrecognises its dependence on social reality to an action-orientated set of beliefs, from the indispensable medium through which individuals live out their relations to a social structure to false ideas which legitimate a dominant political power (Zizek, 1994, pp 3-4).

Moreover, it is important to understand as well that "the Big Other [is] this basic element of every ideological edifice" (Zizek, 2012). The big Other, in this thesis, is understood in all of its various functions and forms stated. In the novel, it seems that Jay thinks that he is in the business of critique of ideology, of subverting wherever he finds ideology. Critique of ideology occurs where "the naïve ideological consciousness" is made to see how its view is distorted by the way reality comes to be represented for it—from its perspective—and it views the truth of social reality. Through this process such a consciousness would "dissolve itself" (Zizek, 1994). Knowledge, for Jay, is "lifting up the skirt of the world" (Kureishi, 1998) which is symbolic of lifting up the façade of ideology in order to see what is real underneath it.

The nature of the departure in the novel is not only understood as moving away from what seems an ideological compulsion of conformity imposed by the big Other but also a

departure from the subject's position of this very same subversion. The nature of this departure is highly compromised.

4.1 SUBVERSION

Jay is a character who is portrayed as someone who apparently rebels against the social structure and social norms. He certainly sees himself as a rebel who needs to move away from his partner who stands for social convention and the familial structure from his standpoint.

4.1.1 Jay "the rebel."

Kureishi's *Intimacy*'s protagonist-narrator describes himself as "recalcitrant" (Kureishi, 1998). Apparently, this seems to be one of Jay's dominant personality traits. His relationship with the big Other is central to an understanding of the novel. Jay has always been the subject who has felt oppressed under the thumb of the big Other's demands and becomes reactionary to it. For instance, restlessness is normalized in his life, which is why his partner Susan pays little attention to his agitation. He has learned to recognize this fear since childhood, which was filled with the fear of punishment and castigation. He has experienced the "fear of parents, aunts, uncles, of vicars, police and teachers"; as well as the threat of abuse and insult. For him, whatever one attempted had this inevitable element of receiving some form of harm from an authority. One was not only afraid of others but of his/her self, desire and anger. Living under "convention" and "morality" it is little surprise that one habitually does what is expected, all the while creating an inner place of safety and "living a secret life" (Kureishi, 1998). Punishment lies everywhere, or at least the fear of it which is worse. Every attempt at expression of subjective agency is "castigated" by the Other. Hence, this big Other's authority is what he has always set out to challenge. Even when studying at university, whenever he was not compelled to read, his mind functioned best and he read

philosophers properly (Kureishi, 1998). Learning, for Jay, happens at a point of relative freedom from the big Other's compulsions. Generally for him, not only learning but the whole of wellbeing happens under a lack of compulsion from a big Other. The parents and teachers etc. come to represent figures of authority—as big Others—functioning under the larger big Others of morality and convention. He has always had a certain animosity against this structure.

The day he moved out of his parents' home and departed to live with his girlfriend, he thought that his parents had nothing else left to do and had been rendered irrelevant by his act of departure (Kureishi, 1998). That was his first attempt at subversion of the family structure and its ideology by abandonment. It is important for him to render his parents irrelevant because they had come to stand-in for the ideology that he sought to bring down. Since it is very commonly said that the family is maintained *for* the children, hence you stick to a structure and a belief for the children, which to him is ideology and he attempted to fracture it by taking the child out and leaving the structure out to dry by taking out what sustained it.

Jay feels he has always been some kind of a rebel and remembers how he was a Marxist of sorts at a time. He also remembers how the different varieties of Marxism: the Gramsci, Lenin, Hegel, Mao and Althusser “varieties” were different in ways that used to matter. He critiques these differences as mere hair splitting just as the difference between killing someone by shooting them or hanging them (Kureishi, 1998). What he seems to mean is that the current phase of his life is post-ideological and he critiques the Marxist ideologies mentioned by the last difference, which is no difference at all. He's in the general business of critique. For instance, he values the fact that Nina thinks he is kind and considers kindness as the best virtue specifically because it is not thought of as “a moral attribute, but as a gift” (Kureishi, 1998). There's no particular line of thinking here that excludes kindness from

moral attributes. This only goes to show his need to disentangle kindness from any ideological moral structure because he sees himself as someone who subverts such structures.

Moreover, as he describes the part of the city he lives in an unsafe almost intolerable place to be—where the shops have less food in them than his refrigerator—he remarks, “You wonder why people put up with it. But they’ve got used to it; they can’t see that things could be different. It is not how much people demand which surprises me, but how little” (Kureishi, 1998). This is ideology critique, since thinking that a particular set of social variables cannot be changed because that is how things are is an ideological attitude that hides the fact that things are not necessarily the way they are perceived to be. Ideology hides the fact that what we view is merely social reality, rather than reality itself.

Jay reminisces how ten years before the time of narration, Susan would come to his flat and he would “pull her” up from the window, not the door (Kureishi, 1998). This pulling up is a gesture of disobedience to the conventionality of coming through the door. Though his relationship with Susan lies more or less within convention, this memory serves as a tiny simulation of unconventionality. In addition, Asif remembers how once Jay described Nina as “one of the uneducated educated ones” (Kureishi, 1998). This liminality of being uneducated and educated at the same time, translates into being educated outside the control-realm of the big Other. This is one of the things that make Nina attractive to him. It is less Nina the person and more what she comes to represent that is attractive to him. At the same time, Nina feels she cannot tolerate any longer the fact that Jay cannot always be there, that he can’t stay forever nor even for a night (Kureishi, 1998). For him she, too, is caught up in the conventionality of “forever”, which is why he keeps oscillating: he comes towards her and goes away at the same time. He approaches what is unconventional about Nina, and departs from what is not. This can only be practical if he keeps coming and going, which he does.

It is no surprise then that at the point of narration, he contemplates a rupture with the structure of the family. The contemplation of and the act of abandoning the family for not only Nina the mistress, but to find some kind of a renewal of life appears to him as a radical act subverting the familial monogamous structure.

4.1.2 Susan the symbol of conformity.

From Jay's perspective, his "monogamous" partner Susan becomes a symbol of conformity, conventionality and stands-in for the family ideology—the belief, rooted in social reality, that the structure of the family is necessary. This is indicated by the fact that Susan bathes Jay even after he tells her that he wants someone else (Kureishi, 1998). She is swallowed by the family ideology. No matter what, one must keep the family intact even if it has already fallen apart. Susan absorbedly watches a soap opera as she eats. Jay remarks, "You'd think, if she wanted domestic drama, she could look across the table" (Kureishi, 1998). The function of the soap opera is to somehow cover up and disguise the domestic drama at home and in a perverse way the soap opera performs this ideological function of making the domestic drama at home seem as "the way things are." It becomes easier to accept the drama at home with all its failures; it becomes easier to go on complacently with the way things are. Even though there is tension and arguments around the dinner table, Susan insists they always have a family dinner (Kureishi, 1998), even though this family dinner is a sham. She buys different things for the home (Kureishi, 1998) to wrap the four people living there into the discourse of the family ideology, although what remains is the ideology only and a hollow idea of family, particularly because one of the partners (Jay) is contemplating a departure with this structure perpetually. Jay being the narrator subtly expresses his scepticism of the family by mentioning the silence and argumentation surrounding the dinner table. Susan is a manifestation of the ideology of the family that he is

out to subvert. He needs to leave the representation, what comes to symbolize the ideology—Susan.

Moreover, Susan believes in “duty, sacrifice, obligation to others, self-discipline” and is opposed to her contemporary selfish age that no longer believes in the interdependence of people in society. She is opposed to how love takes a form free of any social security. For Jay, these are “unpleasant values” (Kureishi, 1998). In terms of beliefs, hers are diametrically opposed to Jay’s who believes that one is not bound to others in the garb of social responsibility and acting on one’s desire is paramount.

He sees Susan as an orderly figure: she is hard working and used to wake up earlier than her parents to prepare for school when she was younger. She is someone who even consciously chooses people that she is friends with or connected to. Susan is an organized woman: the refrigerator at home is always filled with various kinds of foods with proper labels. Newspapers, alcohol etc. are all delivered to their home, besides hiring baby-sitters, decorators, financial advisors etc. When things at home stop working she hires fixers. The weekly schedule is properly laid out on a board at home. Jay believes that this orderliness and “sealed world” that she inhabits is the result of her belonging to a lower-middle class background. She is, moreover, afraid of revealing herself to the world for the fear of what the world might think (Kureishi, 1998). He sees her as assimilated into the big Other of conformity and he must run to the disorder outside the family. As a self-proclaimed rebel, the one thing he would properly miss is “the disorder of the family life”, the chaos of the children (Kureishi, 1998). He is attracted to disorder and Susan is all order. It is strange that he would leave for disorder from a place where he has enough chaos to live with, but it is the symbolic figure of Susan and family life that he nevertheless feels compelled to flee from. In addition, Susan keeps counteracting the disorder of the family. She is the one who represents the stability of family life, a stabilizing manifestation of a value that he wants to subvert. From

the perspective of the rebel, Susan represents an enemy of sorts. This is why she refers to how he doesn't want any photographs of her (Kureishi, 1998). Interestingly, dressing and changing clothes is becoming increasingly a tiresome, laborious drudgery for Jay; so much so that getting dressed he terms "an accomplishment." Even the slightest movement requires one to assume "unnatural positions." When he goes to bed he only removes his trousers and thinks that this could be the cause of becoming less appealing for Susan than before (Kureishi, 1998). And since Susan to him represents the Other of conventionality, she would obviously find his non-conformist leaning disconcertingly unattractive. Moreover, "She does, too, have a curious attachment to the minor and, the major aristocracy" (Kureishi, 1998). If she represents the aristocracy, breaking her heart seems like the rebel breaking the aristocracy.

More importantly, Susan becomes an Other of authority for Jay. When he asks her why she wants him to get his diary she angrily tells him to just do as she tells him. Jay then remarks that she is harsh (Kureishi, 1998). When he is made to go for couples' counselling he feels like a child being forced to the doctor's under "an impatient mother" (Kureishi, 1998). The choice of the word "mother" is significant since Susan is a figure like the (m)Other of authority for him. Jay has to prepare topics of conversations to have with Susan, which appear similar to examinations (Kureishi, 1998). Examinations are where one's performance is observed and evaluated by a "superior" Other. That is Susan to say the least; it is also the big Other of the family ideology that he feels hard to breathe under. This is why he feels Susan is thrusting him against the wall and battering him (Kureishi, 1998).

He thinks of Susan as one of the "disapproving generation of women" who think they are feminists but are actually only cantankerous (Kureishi, 1998). After he tells her that "when parents go mad, they send their children to psychiatrists" and derides Susan's suggestion that the youngest child should "see someone", she calls him and his "theories"

insane. His internal response, thinking about the event in the past is “Cheerio, bitch” (Kureishi, 1998). The misogynistic insult is precisely because it’s an ideological warfare where Susan represents the enemy. This sheer dislike, not even giving her credit enough to stand for something (feminism), is because she stands-in for everything he dislikes: Susan here symbolizes the ideology of the family and monogamy. Perhaps the reason she wanted to be with Jay was because he was a “catch”, since he was successful and financially stable (Kureishi, 1998). A catch is an eligible bachelor being with whom is an achievement according to the big Other and a lot of that has to do with status and appearances; it has a lot to do with the big Other’s approval.

As Jay and Susan lay in bed, he pushes her to see if she would wake up. This makes her move a bit, but she keeps sleeping, unaware. This is a symbolic attempt to rouse Susan from the slumber of ideology but she sleeps on. Jay says later, “I raise myself quietly and tiptoe away from the sleeping woman” (Kureishi, 1998). From Jay’s perspective, Susan is a woman who is sleeping in the state of ideology that functions like a drug.

The reason that he *did* at first like Susan was, besides the offer of an experience of enjoyment, the fact that she is totally the opposite of him. He likes her dexterity and the fact that, unlike him, she isn’t a helpless victim of the world; she is a straightforward and a strong go-getter. Besides, she isn’t moody like him and is status conscious (Kureishi, 1998). In his subjective hippie universe, she represented everything that he is not. In this particular sense, being with her for him was a radical act of rebellion: doing the opposite of what he would be expected to do (to be with someone more like him—a dictate of the big Other); then his act of leaving her would also be the opposite of what is expected by the big Other.

4.1.3 Attempting to subvert the big Other and ideology.

The home represents the family ideology to Jay that he wants to subvert by his departure. He refers to his act of leaving as “absconding” (Kureishi, 1998), since it is an escape from the rules of a perceived big Other that demands responsibility to family. He perceives his act of departure as transgression. “Much more interesting is the big Other as the order of appearances. Many things which are prohibited are not simply prohibited but they should not happen for the big Other” (Zizek, 2012). This departure is a transgression for Jay and should not happen under the big Other. In ideology, we tend to misrecognize social reality and think that the way we see is the way things are (Zizek, 1994). For Jay, people wrongly believe that monogamy is the only way to live without alternative (Kureishi, 1998). This is the ideology Jay seeks to fracture by leaving his family. The night of the contemplation of abandoning the family, he thinks of setting “the record crooked” (Kureishi, 1998), rather than setting it straight. Setting the record straight would mean to perform the conventional in line with the dictates of the big Other of social convention. He seeks to subvert the big Other and its family ideology, its ideology of monogamy and of commitment and loyalty. The ideology that he wants to subvert is laid out by his friend Asif accurately thus: “ ‘But marriage is a battle, a terrible journey, a season in hell and a reason for living. You need to be equipped in all areas, not just the sexual’ ” (Kureishi, 1998). Jay attempts to subvert it by not believing in participating in the battle or traversing the journey, since it is “terrible”, choosing not to be in the “season in hell” and does not accept it as a reason for living. For Jay, if “marriage is a terrible journey” and one nevertheless feels the need to continue travelling it, societal norms dictate that the monogamous family structure needs to be kept intact, which is then an ideological construct.

One acquires feelings from others: Jay claims to have picked feelings from his mother who wanted to leave but stayed since in those times women neither had the financial

resources to leave, nor a place to leave for. What they, however, had were TVs and refrigerators. But on the inside, psychologically, she had already been in the process of abandoning her family. What her misery taught Jay was that one stopped living for/because of one's children. He guesses that this is precisely what she would have to say about his act of abandonment as well: it is detrimental to the children. He finds it odd that there is a parallel between the views of parents and the children's supposed needs (Kureishi, 1998). Keeping the monogamous bond intact for the children is a discourse that Jay rejects insofar as it seems ideological to him. This beautification of the domestic (TVs and refrigerators) comes from the big Other to support its family ideology and make the women stay even though inside they were in a constant state of departure—inside lied critique of ideology. Susan also uses television to numb herself to the fact that the family structure had in actuality fallen apart. In the fifties, a lower middle class couple couldn't separate; consequently, Jay's parents spent their lives under the same roof even though his mother was psychologically outside—away. She would often cry and not move from her chair nor speak unless she wanted to dispute. Moreover, she didn't touch anyone and hated everyone including herself. She was always at the threshold—about to dive into panic as if things were going to break down. Jay thinks that she reminded him of someone that he used to know and imagines that she recognized this fact (Kureishi, 1998). Ideology is when one mistakes social reality for reality itself, when one thinks a condition is normal—the way it is supposed to be, and people complacently agree to go on with it assuming no change could ever be possible. It is ideology that forced dead relationships in dead families to move forward anyway. Ideology covered up all the failure of family life. And who his mother reminded him of was every other woman within old family ideology. Jay's statement that his mother reminded him of someone he knew is a memory that he understands in terms of the way he understands the present. He sees it as a memory interpreted and distorted by the way present conditions are understood.

Hence, the memory serves as a forecast. Perhaps this woman is the Susan type that he has always known, since his own family to him is a replication of the same structure. This could be true since Susan claims that she has always tried her best to make their relationship work (Kureishi, 1998) even if there was nothing left in the relationship. It is some larger universal figure: the figure suffering under ideology but not willing to give it up since no path had ever been laid out towards an alternative route. Rebellion never occurs to this universal figure, since through ideological spectacles the subject fails to recognize that the predicament is far from the way things are or supposed to be. She reminds him of the archetypal woman submitting to the family ideology, or himself in a predictive way.

Jay wonders if he could have tried to do more in his relationship with Susan but thinks that there is little that one could “will into being.” He was never one who would be compelled to do things and the memory of compulsion—of things forced onto him by his teachers and parents is a memory of hatred. As he grew, he stood firmer against being forced to do things. He believes that rebelling is a sign of life: one could defend the most precious things in life like sexual desire, creativity and love but one could never force them to occur. One could only wonder why love has been side-lined temporarily but not will it (Kureishi, 1998). To will, here, is to be independent of ideology. All that he cherishes must either lie outside the approval of the Other or be subversive to it. Sustaining the family structure seems to him as an oppressive mode of compulsion thrust down the subject’s throat by the big Other. Susan’s friend recommended couples counselling for their relationship problems, but Jay refuses to go for therapy, since he claims he “need[ed] [his] turmoil.” He says that he knew he “didn’t want to love Susan”; however, inexplicably he did not want the fact to destroy them both (Kureishi, 1998). And so it is precisely Zizekian ideology that he wants to subvert by abandoning the family structure, since society demands that one *needs* to keep the family structure going. If there is turmoil in the relationship, the turmoil needs to be fixed through

any means necessary, such as couples counselling. Jay thinks he needs “turmoil” because he needs to understand that the family structure is a failure and any amount of covering this “reality” up meant being constrained by looking at the world from ideological spectacles. When the therapist tells him that leaving Susan meant abandoning the children as well, Jay exclaims internally that it was only Susan that he was leaving: having had kids with her was taken as an assumption of “trust and security”—something he sets out to break (Kureishi, 1998). He repudiates the assumption that leaving a person was an act of composite abandonment—a belief that leaving one meant always leaving more than one. Hence, the bedtime story that he reads to his kids is dubbed as the story of a “conventional family from which the father has not fled”; a story that they are familiar with. The moment they stop asking questions, he assumes they are asleep and goes out—even if they aren’t actually asleep (Kureishi, 1998). This is the narrative from the ideology that he is out to subvert in all its conventionality. The boys know the story well and they function as the big Other’s check on him so that he doesn’t find any space to modify the story, which he intends to do in real life. After performing what the traditional father is expected to do, creep out, switch the lights off and kiss them, he declares it as “Old wives; old story” (Kureishi, 1998). Their sleep is the result of a halt to questioning: a barricade placed in front of questioning conventional ideology that means they are asleep and are symbolically not awake enough to question the normative narrative of the traditional family which has not been abandoned by the father figure. This is why he is in eager anticipation of the time when he won’t care what Susan (as the big Other) says, that is “when the spell will be broken” (Kureishi, 1998). In conventional parlance this spell might seem like love, but it is the spell of ideology—the family ideology: the one that forces the idea that the spouse is loved even when s/he is not, which then transforms such love into ideology.

A big question in the novel is whether or not Jay and Susan are actually married. All the evidences for, are indirect and the protagonist-narrator's way of circumventing the symbolic enunciation of their marriage is his resistance to Symbolic Efficiency and the family ideology. For Žižek, for a fact to be known as truth, it is not sufficient for us that it is merely seen as truth until it is ratified and recognized by the big Other as well. This operation is termed as Symbolic Efficiency (Myers 2003). It is then worth noticing that Susan finds it horrible that Jay, unlike Susan, doesn't have a single photograph of Susan on his work desk. Jay tells her that he has no interest in photography, rather than telling her that he has little interest in her (Kureishi, 1998). To have a photograph of her on his desk gives his partnership with Susan Symbolic Efficiency, and since he wants to resist the Efficiency, he refuses to put a photographic ratification of their bond on his desk. He does not care if the big Other recognizes their relationship or not, he barely does himself. Jay, in fact, never marries Susan because of his general dislike of weddings and wedding cards, even though she had asked him several times to tie the knot. He enjoys the fact that because of him she is the only unmarried among her friends. Susan considers not having been married to him as a sacrifice for love (Kureishi, 1998). For Jay, this is a revolutionary operation of subverting the big Other.

Anyhow, I still took it for granted that not marrying was a necessary rebellion. The family seemed no more than a machine for the suppression and distortion of free individuals. We could make our own original and flexible arrangements. I have been told the reasons for the institution of permanent marriage—its being a sacrament, an oath, a promise, all that. Or a profound and irrevocable commitment to the principle as much as to the person. But I can't quite remember the force and the detail of the argument. Does anyone? (Kureishi, 1998, p.72)

The fact that he thinks no one really remembers why they get married and partake of the family discourse is because he sees it as ideological insofar as it is a distorted perception of human relationships, with its roots in social reality. He resists this Symbolic Efficiency and the ratification by the big Other. Institutionalized marriage is old ideology for him, since no

one remembers the argument behind the belief. Since Susan believes in duty and sacrifice (Kureishi, 1998), she easily assimilates his subversion into her ideological scheme. Susan would prefer to have a broken, flimsy relationship than have no relationship at all. Jay comments that for her, having someone to take the garbage out is better than having no one (Kureishi, 1998), because the marriage-family ideology demands it, society demands it. Jay's theory is that marriage happens when people are at the point of utmost desperation and this "need for a certificate" undoubtedly symbolizes "an attenuated affection" (Kureishi, 1998). He quotes Joe Orton to support the claim that marriage is an institution that "excludes no one" (Kureishi, 1998) because it lies in the net of almost a universal ideology.

4.2 IDEOLOGY OF ENJOYMENT AND ITS COVERS

"It [ideology] seems to pop up precisely when we attempt to avoid it, while it fails to appear where one would clearly expect it to dwell" (Zizek, 1994). In addition, for Althusser, that which appears to operate "outside ideology" actually lies within it and the vice-versa. Those who are "in ideology" think they are ipso facto outside it. "One of the effects of ideology is the practical *degeneration* of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, 'I am ideological.' [...] [T]he accusation of being in ideology only applies to others, never to oneself" (Zizek, 1994). This is the deceptive manner in which ideology functions and so Jay's position of subversion is compromised in several ways. Things that qualify as subversion and rebellion against the socio-cultural structure, for Jay and others, are compromised and this position—the position of the social rebel—is compromised as well, since it functions inside ideology in the garb of functioning out of it. In the whole length of the novel Jay attempts to grasp at the radical act but this same radical act is compromised, fractured and at times rendered unintelligent by ideological complications.

Firstly, Jay's position as the one who attempts to break the façade of ideological mystification is compromised by the very fact that Jay functions within ideology. The motive behind his departure from the family structure may appear as anti-ideological, but it is purely ideological, insofar as he is not ambiguous. The way Slavoj Žižek (2008) understands the super-ego is that which compels the subject to enjoy. Enjoyment is a "superego injunction." Enjoyment, then, becomes a command rather than an option. Enjoyment which takes the form a transgression is an imposition, a command which is not performed "spontaneously" but is acted in accordance with an injunction which is the super-ego. This injunction that demands sexual pleasure, for Žižek, "has been elevated to the status of an official ideology" in the western "so-called permissive society" (Myers, 2003). Enjoyment, in this case, is precisely something like "do not, *not* enjoy"—a double negation contrary to "do not enjoy" as a prohibition of enjoyment against which Jay thinks he is acting. Hanif Kureishi's Jay, living in postmodern permissive London, functions under the same ideology. Jay feels the need to keep moving, not merely after the Lacanian object of desire but to fulfil the demands of the ideology of the "injunction to enjoy." This injunction translates into Hedonism which is a cultural demand of the big Other that gives him identity. What he learnt from the marriage of his own parents is that there is no enjoyment in marriage (Kureishi, 1998). The corollary to the enjoyment injunction is that there is an absence of pleasure in married life, which is why for pleasure departure from the family structure seems necessitated. This thesis posits that the search for "the new" and the belief that there is no enjoyment in monogamy is subsumed under the same ideology.

Jay functions under the ideology of enjoyment: he feels he must leave his family within this ideology. He acts in accordance with what he believes in and his beliefs are "action-orientated." Jay tells Asif that he can no longer stay at home because "there is no movement" there (Kureishi, 1998). But this movement basically translates into enjoyment.

When Asif asks him whether or not he believes in anything, Jay's response is that he believes "in the possibilities of intimacy[,] [i]n love" and sensualism among other things (Kureishi, 1998). The restlessness that Jay feels, being stuck in the standstill of the family is a recurrent contemporary conventional form, since his contemporaries believe/feel the same (Kureishi, 1998). This is, evidently, deeply enmeshed with a belief in sexual enjoyment since Jay understands his generation as one which believes sexual satisfaction as a necessity (Kureishi, 1998). Hence, enjoyment functions as the Zizekian "official ideology" here for Jay and his contemporaries. Moreover, it is worth noting that he does not believe in lies. He considers telling the truth as an "ultimate value" but he would prefer not to tell Susan of seeking pleasure elsewhere, since pleasure is "another ultimate value." He merely states how when these two so-called ultimate values collide, an obvious conflict arises (Kureishi, 1998); he does not say how for him pleasure is the dominant and superior "ultimate value" since he prefers not telling her the truth for a long time, for pleasure. Pleasure occupies a privileged position in Jay's list of beliefs. Consequently, he equates patience with incarceration since through the struggles of a middle class life, he and Susan had to restrict indulging in frivolities. He *enjoyed* relinquishing the enjoyment that he let go of or restrained. And whenever he would panic, he would begin to chase pleasure only to give it up (Kureishi, 1998), in a manoeuvred attempt to find enjoyment in depriving himself of enjoyment (Kureishi, 1998). He went through the lack of enjoyment within the family structure only *through* enjoying precisely the lack of enjoyment. Nonetheless, at the time of narration, he feels the need to move out of the order and the constraints of middle class life in order to find enjoyment instantly (Kureishi, 1998). Relinquishing things one finds enjoyable could be termed as "sacrifices," for instance; nevertheless, he uses the word "fun" since enjoyment is what defines him within ideology.

In addition, Jay says he belongs to a generation that “believes in the necessity of satisfying oneself” (Kureishi, 1998) which is the ideology he subscribes to, under which his departure functions. For this reason, “another friend” of Jay’s (the accountant) sets out to break his marriage to pursue the enjoyment he could not have in teenage (Kureishi, 1998), as if it is a residue that remains, a score that must be settled. At this point it is clear that this is ideology, a belief which he shares with the rest of his generation. It is their “ruling ideology.” This is the socio-cultural Other where he gets the ideology from. Victor tells him, in the context of enjoyment, that he is “too self-depriving” (Kureishi, 1998). And Victor is part of this Other, as well as an Other as subject within ideology. The very night prior to Victor’s own abandonment, he persuades his wife for a sexual experience that she is reluctant to experience (Kureishi, 1998). The next morning, he leaves not merely because he has attained the object of desire or come close to it but also because he sees how access to enjoyment is hurdled, if not blocked, in his marriage and under the ideology of enjoyment he leaves henceforth. Enjoyment is clearly privileged and it is ideological.

It is also interesting why Jay does not want to admit to Asif as to how many real liaisons he has had with women because he doesn’t want to “disillusion him” with the way he leads his life. Asif thinks Jay has many “fabulous liaisons” (Kureishi, 1998). Jay does not want to disillusion Asif because “[y]ou should enjoy sex; if you don’t it’s your fault!” (Zizek, 2000). This is the guilt that the postmodern man feels over not having enough fun and not having unbridled enjoyment. He doesn’t want to be found out, since it is a “crime” not to have excessive enjoyment under the ideology of enjoyment he subscribes to. In this case too, Jay is maintaining appearances for the big Other; and the big Other is one for which such appearances are maintained (Zizek, 2012).

Jay says on that very night he decided to leave Susan the next morning, that if Susan lets him have sex with her “now, on the floor” that night, he wouldn’t leave for one more year

(Kureishi, 1998). This is complex since the ideology basically dictates sexual desire—and instant (“now”) enjoyment. The mistress for whom he thinks he is abandoning Susan, Nina had “her bed on the floor” (Kureishi, 1998). The enjoyment injunction would be executed if he has sex with Susan instantly “on the floor” and a radical act would be simulated: not in bed but on the floor just as with Nina—being with whom to Jay seems like a radical rupture with the family ideology. If he has sex in the same manner with Susan, somehow he would feel he has subverted conventionality as well as having experienced enjoyment and would not feel the need to leave. This is also a strong indicator that the whole idea of leaving the family structure because it is an ideology is a cover under which lies the enjoyment injunction which has primacy. If the latter is paid homage to, leaving would be rendered useless.

Moreover, when he takes his sons to school, he loathes the smell of the playground which is either from Victorian times or is designed in a Victorian way, as well as the teacher’s look, voice and the way she speaks to the children. He thinks that if she had spoken to him the same way, he would have struck her. He considers himself weak since if he had had real courage he would have taken his kids home but he drops them off anyway and goes to a nearby pub to drink some Guinness, read the newspaper and smoke, all the while glad that he’s not the one suffering instead of his kids (Kureishi, 1998). He gives voice to the futility of the product of the education system that he walks his children to and the maltreatment his children are subjected to by their teacher but since he isn’t brave enough to take the children back, he indulges in drink and a cigarette—countering an actual radical move with pleasure (even if it is not sexual pleasure). His abhorrence toward the Victorian playground is rebellion against the older traditional ideology, that which to him stands for the big Other. And the teacher stands-in for this big Other. Since, he cannot do anything and isn’t brave enough to outright rebel, he does whatever the teacher would have prohibited (as the big Other’s prohibition): going to the pub, drinking alcohol and smoking. But under the

rebellion against the big Other, there is an element of submission to the Other, which is an element benumbed by the pub, the Guinness, the paper and the cigarette. What causes this numbness is precisely part of what is expected of him: enjoyment. The support that the big Other needs against subversion is derived by the elements of consumerism that benumbs potential rebellion.

Jay follows similar patterns of acting under the ideological enjoyment compulsion. Even when he recalls the time that he met Susan when he didn't know her, "her face was full of *pleasure* [emphasis added]" (Kureishi, 1998), which was a factor for him in being attracted to her. Even though he knew she was not his type, yet he is sure there is something in her he is able to "enjoy" (Kureishi, 1998). Enjoyment is precisely the reason behind him being with Susan in the first place, and then leaving her as well. Susan and Nina are exchanged but enjoyment remains a constant factor.

4.2.1 "Make the new": to keep moving is to enjoy

Change also seems to be one of the central motives behind Jay's actions. It is also part of his "action-orientated beliefs." For Djahazi (2005), *Intimacy*'s protagonist feels that the domestic is the stagnant. This contributes to the idea in Kureishi's novels that "change and movement" are essential facets of life. This is why leaving home becomes important in the novel. For Jay, life's whole aim is change and moving on to newer things. This is one of the motives he cites causing his departure from home and Susan. But his slogan, "make the new" is also compromised in the sense that it is essentially nothing but another illusory cover that hides under it the super-egoic injunction of chasing pleasure, particularly sexual pleasure. Jay tells Asif that he doesn't hold any particular belief since they keep altering perpetually, yet when it comes to intimacy and love, he terms himself as someone who believes rather too much. Asif quickly interprets this, obviously, as Jay's excessive liking for women. It is here,

moreover that Jay expresses his view that both love and “women’s bodies” are worth living for (Kureishi, 1998). This alteration of beliefs is meaningless as long as he thinks of himself as anchored in believing in intimacy and love, both of which become one and the same, since in the name of change all he does is seek sexual pleasure.

Jay as the first-person narrator begins a section of the book by a disconnected almost non-sequitur: “Come on. Forward” (Kureishi, 1998)—like a flagbearer’s forward march, a motivational note to self and others towards some kind of a mission, a goal. This is his slogan—to keep moving forward towards the new. For him, a comfortable home, good food, fascinating work that one produces or encounters, and sons is all not sufficient to be satisfied with. Nothing could be done about this, Jay claims.

The world is made from our imagination; our eyes enliven it, as our hands give it shape. Wanting makes it thrive; meaning is what you put in, not what you extract. You can see what you are inclined to see, and no more. We have to make the new (Kureishi, 1998, p. 41).

One internal evidence that his move is ideological is the fact that he himself is aware that one sees that which one is inclined to see. This has nothing to do with reality but his particular ideological world-view. In addition, the notion that once love/passion goes out of a relationship it could never be rekindled is something Victor and Jay believe but is actually an ideological cover that helps them abandon their families in order to seek enjoyment elsewhere. However, Jay remembers when he and his brother left their parents, the parents experienced a newfound interest in one another (Kureishi, 1998). But when he actually leaves and takes the central child out of the family to disintegrate its discourse, the results are far from the intent of the exposé. The newfound romance that existed within the familial structure of his parents and that which exists between Najma and Asif prove that Jay’s anti-family notion is ideological. This must be true since the basis of his critique of familial monogamy is the hollowness, lack of excitement and lack of desire inside monogamous relationships. The other internal evidence for the fact that “we have to make the new” is

ideology is the evidence that for Asif—Jay admits—all of what Jay has is, in fact, enough. Ideology is precisely what makes us mistake that our beliefs are rooted in some real world-view. He chooses not to see Asif's life but to adhere to the belief that is a corollary to the enjoyment injunction, that what he has must not be enough. It is implied by Jay as narrator himself that Asif's marriage contains the element of sexual enjoyment (Kureishi, 1998) which compromises his own position that there can be no enjoyment in marriage. His position, then, begins to be ideologically distorted. "Wanting makes [the world] thrive" (Kureishi, 1998) for Jay. Wanting, translates into leaving his home and moving to Victor's place which is a move towards "the new" and "the better." But to "thrive" is far from the description of Victor's place or Victor's life with the "panicky dances" (Kureishi, 1998). Hence, here it is only to want per se. What we are left with is an altogether different understanding of the statement "we have to make the new" (Kureishi, 1998). It only remains as an injunction: We *have* to make the new becomes a dictate of ideology rather than a mere breakage of the status quo.

When Jay thinks about how well he knows Susan, he notices that she has a particular look on her face that he assumes she must have had since she was eleven and that she would have the same look when she will be seventy (Kureishi, 1998). He imagines her as a static being and the static is what he thinks he needs to run from. She has not altered at all over the years, from his perspective (Kureishi, 1998). She is a character of inertia and so represented as an antagonist on his ideological map. In addition, "to keep everything going she can be bullying and strict, with a hard, charmless carapace" (Kureishi, 1998). She resists change as if it is some alternative ideology. When Jay feels he needs novelty, it is obvious for him that he would want to leave Susan who comes to represent the opposite of novelty.

Moreover, he is such a child of change that even a mortgage represents being pinned down and unable to move again (Kureishi, 1998): it becomes a manifestation of how the

family ideology doesn't want you to move. He sees motion central to him and so thinks departure from what comes to represent the static is necessary. He meets his friends by making appointments like visiting the dentist (Kureishi, 1998). The element of contingency—the unexpected, the unpredictable, the new—that his universe has lost is what he seeks again. He remembers how he lived with his parents in stringent conditions since his father would not seek another job nor move to some other place, since no change was permitted until his father either approved of the change or the latter changed the conditions himself (Kureishi, 1998). Jay feels that it wasn't necessarily the condition that should have been, and he must rebel against that social order, the status quo, old ideologies and the conditions necessitated by society. The new structure that he brings to the table, however, is this compulsive seeking after enjoyment. Consequently, he went to London to leave those miserable conditions and move in with his girlfriend, thinking, falsely, that that would be the only time he would ever leave home. However, he made "a habit of it" (Kureishi, 1998). Constant departure becomes the dominant feature of his life. Victor comes to represent precisely this for him. The latter keeps his stuff in suitcases and at his place could be found jam jars stolen from hotels (Kureishi, 1998). Victor's place represents perpetual movement. Nina too, keeps departing constantly and "make[s] for the door as if pursued" (Kureishi, 1998). This compulsive seeking after novelty is what makes her run as well. Jay attempts to move to Victor's place, supposedly to be with Nina. Both Victor and Nina represent to him this element of movement. Hence moving towards Victor and Nina is in the name of novelty.

Jay thinks experimentation is necessary but one should not play with the lives of others. Then he narrates how he loves walking his children to the play-ground. As his ambivalence rises, he gets cold feet. But he remembers the women from the yoga class he used to accompany Susan to and his sexual pleasure, hence he swiftly says, "I will leave everything here. My sons, wandering in this forsaken room, will discover, perhaps by

mistake, the treasures they need” (Kureishi, 1998). It is significant how the thought that counters his uncertainty as regards leaving is the thought of sexual gratification which is what primarily impels him to leave. The so-called treasure of books that he leaves for his children becomes a consolatory homage paid to the Other that expects him to care for his children. Hence, his experimentation solely translates into sexual experimentation which is in line with ideology.

Sombre it may be [abandonment] but it doesn't have to be a tragedy. If you never left anything or anyone there would be no room for the new. Naturally, to move on is an infidelity—to others, to the past, to old notions of oneself. Perhaps every day should contain at least one essential infidelity or necessary betrayal. It would be an optimistic, hopeful act, guaranteeing belief in the future—a declaration that things can be not only different but better (Kureishi, 1998, Pg 6).

An infidelity to others who are contained within old ideologies and one's own beliefs about the world which are mentally obsolete even on a personal level is necessary for Jay. This betrayal is glorified here as a subversion of the big Other and of ideology itself. But what is problematic here is the fact that this itself establishes ideology. It, in a way, preaches quite didactically that the new is better. It is an infidelity which is “essential” since it is part of the *injunction* of Hedonism, since the only action that he takes aligned with such a line of thinking is following sexual pleasure. It is then only an *attempt* at subversion as an infidelity to others perhaps but not the big Other. Jay finds it deeply essential to rebel against the past. This past is not just the individual's past but the human past. However, this only translates into “subverting” the family structure and seeking pleasure outside it. It is worth remarking here that this attitude is far from new and is in no way, anymore, subverting “old notions” since infidelity to the family structure is nothing new.

Moreover, there must be something else or something better for Jay to find in life (Kureishi, 1998): this is the route taken by desire but this path of desire is covered up by a layer of ideology—the new; the better. He turns this into wisdom. By that very fact it

becomes far from radical. “Wisdom is the most conformist thing you can imagine”; whatever occurs, wisdom is presented as an excuse, a justification (Zizek, 2014). An extension of this new ruling Hedonistic ideology is that if you feel happy with a family life or a wife or a monogamous partner, your happiness must be a lie. The subject is not left to explore this by being subjected to the old and the tedious; he is commandeered into believing that things must change. This change then becomes ideology. What is fundamental here is that this novelty that he claims to believe in translates into purely seeking sexual pleasure which is a dictate of the “official ideology” of the age he lives in. Ergo, his idea of change is ideological. His idea of seeking change is nothing but seeking sexual pleasure, which is supposedly barred within the monogamous family structure, since that is the only novelty he is seen to pursue in the novel. Consequently, this belief in the necessity of novelty only becomes a cover that hides the truth of the ideological compulsion of enjoyment that he is in. He already has numerous affairs with women (Kureishi, 1998). Hence, he seeks to get out of the family structure to find something that he already more or less has. He himself recognizes this, in the words of John Lennon, “Nothing’s gonna change my world” (Kureishi, 1998). He claims to believe in novelty but in practice only moves from woman to woman. His final move from Susan to Nina has no special significance other than seeking sexual pleasure. The whole idea of being with Nina for him is sexual, since as the therapist speaks to both Jay and Susan, he fantasizes about having sex with Nina, all the while insisting that the family structure is what he wants to get out of because he believes in novelty (Kureishi, 1998). The enjoyment ideology in many cases is subtextual under this particular explicit discourse of novelty.

4.2.2 Desire, love and happiness as covers.

Desire, love and happiness in the novel all become ideological constructions that have the imperative of enjoyment hidden under them as well. People, for Jay, don’t want others to have excessive pleasure since they believe it isn’t good for them—they might begin to desire

it continually. He calls desire unsettling: a devil that is perpetually awake and never still. “Desire is naughty and doesn’t conform to our ideals, which is why we have such a need of them” and it “is the original anarchist and undercover agent—no wonder people want it arrested and kept in a safe place. And just when we think we’ve got desire under control it lets us down or fills us with hope. Desire makes me laugh because it makes fools of us all. Still, rather a fool than a fascist” (Kureishi, 1998). Why I mention desire in the section of the thesis dedicated to understanding ideology is this ideological nature of Jay’s desire. What Jay thinks of desire becomes a belief as well. For Jay, desire is subversive and controls what people do in life but clearly it is also a belief as part of a set of beliefs. Moreover, he knows desire will get him nowhere, he’ll indulge nevertheless. He knows very well that following desire will make a fool of him and that it will not lead anywhere in particular. However, that is the reality of the “ideological illusion” for Zizek: it is evident in this particular “act” in spite of knowing what people act on is false (Myers, 2003). Desire here, is not merely Lacanian desire. It is also a cover where the injunction of sexual enjoyment is hidden. This is also “ideological illusion”—the enslavement to desire which he himself mentions. What is clear is that this desire seems to lead towards sexual pleasure and Jay would follow, since in the garb of following said desire, throughout the narrative, Jay only follows sexual pleasure which is an ideological dictate.

Jay prefers fear of things over being bored with them (Kureishi, 1998). This is an extension of the ideology of enjoyment, where all else is background and enjoyment, fun and Hedonism occupy the central position. He goes on to equate love with a counter for boredom (Kureishi, 1998). If love counteracts boredom then it logically functions in the same way as pleasure. Love, then, acts as a cover; it becomes an ideological cover which hides the injunction of enjoyment. Under this ideology, then, the worst thing is neither fear nor depression but boredom. Apparently everyone is looking for love that they think they had

before but had lost; love is considered as the one thing that one could live for (Kureishi, 1998). It functions not merely as desire but is integrated into the ideology of enjoyment—something that one believes in, something integrated into the dominant ideology. When Jay is hit by the husband of the woman that he approaches at the bar he went into to look for Nina, Susan enquires about the incident and he claims that he tells her “the truth” that he is interested in someone else (Kureishi, 1998). This “truth” becomes a cover since he could very well have gone with that other woman and the hidden message behind his so-called love for Nina is sexual enjoyment. Jay “loving” Nina is ideological mystification. Ideological mystification, at its simplest, is a “mask [...] hiding the real state of things” (Zizek, 1994). The reality behind this mask is the fact that under ideology he would move only towards enjoyment rather than anything else. It is, then, worth noticing that while Jay speaks of how it had been only a few months that he had actually begun to love his three year old son, he equates the love he has for him with the one he feels for Nina. When his son imitates various kinds of facial expressions it is a source of *delight* for him. He remarks that when his son was a child he did not “enjoy” him much (Kureishi, 1998). What is remarkable here is the fact that Jay seems unable to speak another language except that of pleasure as an ideological being. After he leaves his family and meets Victor, Victor tells him that Nina had called asking about him. he says, “[w]hat grief two people can give one another! And what pleasure!” (Kureishi, 1998). Relationships are organized for Jay in terms of enjoyment and pleasure. His journey after pleasure seems complete at the end of the novel but he doesn’t call Nina and postpones doing so. The novel ends with Jay imagining that Nina (though the name is not mentioned) walked with him, held his hand and touched his hair. He felt that things were as they were supposed to be and there could have been no happiness or satisfaction beyond that. This had to be the inevitable effect of “love” (Kureishi, 1998). Nevertheless, this is a “happy ending” in fantasy only if the central motive of Jay’s abandonment had been love.

But if so, he would have desired union with the object of love and approached it, which he does not. Love only served as a cover hiding the enjoyment injunction. Jay places love and “women’s bodies” side by side where he tells Asif that these are things he considers worth living for (Kureishi, 1998). This makes it obvious that love functions as sexual pleasure.

Moreover, it is surprising that Victor believes in a love that leads to monogamy as well (Kureishi, 1998) because Victor symbolizes the idea of desire and a perpetual “on-the-go” attitude—the “ruling ideology”, rather than stable monogamous “love.” Jay describes Victor as a radical except for the fact that he has always wanted an ideal marriage rooted in love. This is how he sees it as done right. And this is what he thinks everyone wants—nothing more or less. Jay feels that Victor needs to know that this ideal is not beyond his reach since many people have what he wants (Kureishi, 1998) but soon we find out that for Victor it is the unending chain of desire—one woman after another and him not knowing who to settle on (Kureishi, 1998) rather than anything else. We see love here as something that appears to stand-in for rebellion but at the same time is something conformist that compromises their recalcitrance, since the love they seek results finally in replicating the same family structure that they think love is not possible in; or it presents itself as a cover under which the dominant ideology lies hidden. It is not only that the Jay-Victor rebellion doesn’t work because it is within ideology, but this is an attempt on their part to discover if the family could be maintained without the entanglement of ideology: to do it free of the impositions of the big Other. This is to subvert the big Other ingeniously: by doing precisely what it dictates, yet to be free of it. Nevertheless, it does not break the structure of the family/monogamy altogether, something that Kim (2011) claims it does.

“Standing up, I scribble a note. ‘Dear Susan, I have left this house and won’t be coming back. I’m sorry to say that I don’t think we can make one another happy. I will speak to you tomorrow.’ That is it” (Kureishi, 1998). Happiness is the ideological category Jay

moreover appeals to in his farewell note to Susan, to hide the injunction. Happiness becomes synonymous with enjoyment, then, to say the least. Happiness is the ultimate unquestionable apotheosis of extreme ideological mystification the appeal to which cannot be turned down so the note is powerful and hides the enjoyment injunction: “I must run away to enjoy myself and bow to the dominant hedonistic ideology.” It is this moment that he tells the worst lie: “I will speak to you tomorrow”, (Kureishi, 1998) to dilute the rupture as well as to formulate a separation that functions in perpetuity. The dilution is also done under a fear, the fear of the big Other’s disapproval. Happiness itself, for Zizek, “is [...] a conformist category” (Zizek, 2012). Hence, happiness as motivation is far from radical.

4.2.3 The injunction and coercion.

Jay attempts to find his way out of the coercions of ideology but ideology, as it were, strikes back “with a bang”: upon analysis, *Jay* is found to be a character subjected to the compulsory demands of the big Other while he is supposedly attempting to subvert it. Jay functions under the command/exhortation of the big Other which is where ideology lies. Jay thinks that though the life he has with Susan is “ideal” and “complete” and they share the kids which is a happiness unique to them (Kureishi, 1998); nevertheless, he feels he must abandon Susan and the family. There are a number of instances in the novel where Jay seems somehow coerced into departure. He attempts to persuade himself that abandoning someone is not the worst thing one could do to them (Kureishi, 1998). The injunction is precisely what it is because he has to *convince* himself. If it was a spontaneous move, rather than an imposed injunction, he wouldn’t feel the need to convince himself to depart. Moreover, Jay encourages himself to contemplate “the pleasures of being a single man in London” (Kureishi, 1998). The fact that he feels the need to encourage himself makes abandonment an Other-imposed cause, in line with performing dictates of ideological statutes. Even though he doesn’t have the time to meet Victor (his friend who has left his wife), the latter insists on

meeting him and telling him all the descriptive details of the pleasures he has as a single man in London (Kureishi, 1998). This is how the Other imposes its mandate of pleasure on him almost like ideological propaganda.

Jay is afraid of finding contentment at his own home since, once too comfortable, he may not want change (Kureishi, 1998). The *fear* of finding contentment and comfort at home signal something compulsory needs to be done otherwise—something that is Other-imposed. He thinks it absurd that this abandonment is something a person could anticipate and hence be prepared for; yet he says he will leave anyway: “It will be done and I will be away. Yes!” (Kureishi, 1998). In his language his unpreparedness and anxiety are revealed: this is an unanticipated anticipation. He has to come to terms with his abandonment. One needs to come to terms with things that are other-imposed predicaments out of one’s locus of control. He turns himself into a hopeless object under ideology. This exuberant, almost ecstatic “yes!” is the prospect of pleasure and perpetuation of desire that fantasy sets forth for him. This is the answer to the super-ego ideological command “enjoy!”

He is, moreover, conflicted because of contradictory demands of the big Other. On the one hand, he is compelled to enjoy and on the other he is morally bound not to treat people as if they were objects designed for his pleasure. As if to seek permission, he asks whether he could treat people like toys, discarding them whenever he liked and thinks “that would be considered shallow” (Kureishi, 1998). This is why Jay is a split character. He wavers, and wonders if the night of the contemplation of abandonment was his last night at home, he should have packed by then. He thinks about talking to Susan so that she might talk him out of his confusion as she had done before. If that could be possible, he would be happy to have gone through such an “instructive and heavy discontent but will have done nothing excessive” (Kureishi, 1998). The key to understanding that it is, in fact, a demand of the big Other that presses down on him as its ideological compulsion is the word “instructive.” This

is why, during the act of self-gratification he says, “now this act requires concentration and considerable labour” as opposed to before (Kureishi, 1998); because at the moment of the narrative taking place, enjoyment is a structural compulsion. Moreover, when he returns from the club where he went looking for Nina, he tells Susan that he didn’t know why he went into the club but that it seemed like something he would have enjoyed in the past (Kureishi, 1998). This is compulsive: you don’t enjoy it anymore but you do it anyways in the name of enjoyment as ideology, like some kind of compulsory worship.

We see the same “instructive” ideological injunction led to Victor leaving his wife as well. After Victor had left his home, the younger son threw Victor’s stuff out and later attempted to harm himself with a broken bottle. He neither allowed Victor to see him at the hospital nor did he respond to his father’s letters. Victor’s wife also leaves and the other son lives alone where Victor finds him one night in a sleeping bag. He used to live in one room, and ate canned beans. He neither bathed, nor cleaned his clothes, and did not replace the lights that had stopped working but ate using candlelight. It was not that he was *totally* incapable of doing so but his universe had been shattered (Kureishi, 1998). At this particular point, the “on-the-go” attitude of the adults escalates to madness. Nothing of the age of the second boy is mentioned, but it is clear the boy isn’t *really* capable of living independently. Yet both the parents leave. The cause of the mother’s absence is not specified either. We know of Victor’s abandonment elaborately but his ex-wife’s is not mentioned before or after this point in the narrative. She simply moves “away.” Hence the boy does the opposite, the opposite of whatever in his comprehension ruled his parents so compulsively. The compulsion is even more evidently close to madness since Jay sees all of this, yet decides to abandon his family anyway (Kureishi, 1998). The characters seem to act like some kind of drones under ideology. Moreover, the acquaintance Jay meets at a dinner party had also left his wife and his girlfriend is to leave him (Kureishi, 1998). This becomes some sort of an

archetype for them. When the family ideology and the enjoyment injunction collide, it results in fiascos; nevertheless, the characters seem to be moving apparently under some external force. We can see in the particular male type in the novel (the acquaintance and other men), this as a dominant ideological pattern. Jay had yet another warning, but he cannot act otherwise since he is somewhat of a slave. We also see the word “love” repeatedly being used for a way of seeing relationships from illusory spectacles. Jay critiques love, ironically, by claiming that the acquaintance blundered into a fiasco only for a sexual encounter (Kureishi, 1998). Jay further thinks that for a sexual experience “a person would have their partner and children drown in a freezing sea” (Kureishi, 1998). All of this ideological compulsion of enjoyment is much more than the power of sexual desire but an ideology of desire.

Jay remembers, moreover, how when he and Susan had separated for one year, that was a time that he could find excitement in strangers and knew the bars, the jewellery selling girls, players in music bands and kids who travelled, and “had time for the unexpected” (Kureishi, 1998). But his reasons for leaving at the point of narration are still the same: new people, desire for the new, going away, seeking the unexpected. What we see here is evidence that he’s not so much excited by strangers anymore but compelled by ideology. His excitement is no longer spontaneous, it is structural. This is where “you can” becomes “you must.” “Permitted enjoyment” becomes “ordained enjoyment” and this particular “obscene reversal” is the super-ego (Zizek, 2000).

In addition, Jay’s reluctance as regards abandonment is evident in his tone and other cues but because of the injunction which, ipso facto, is a command he feels coerced to leave. Describing the conditions in which he would live at Victor’s place post-departure, the unpleasantness of the prospect of leaving and being at Victor’s place is depicted, such as sleeping on the floor in a “tiny room” instead of in a bed in a proper bedroom that he has at home. He will choose the damp-smelling duvet (Kureishi, 1998) over the comfort he has at

the moment of speaking. The word “stuff” as well as the fact that every day he would have to “replace the cushions on the sofa” (Kureishi, 1998) makes it all seem laborious. This seems like a situation one wouldn’t choose but one would have to be forced into. “I will not be returning to this life. I *cannot* [emphasis added]”, claims Jay (Kureishi, 1998). Saying that he “cannot”, could obviously be interpreted as he cannot afford to, or he does not want to go back to his family and the choice of returning is so undesirable that it doesn’t present itself as an option at all, hence he “cannot.” But given the context, he would rather choose to live in worse conditions than the ones he finds himself in, he “cannot” return makes it look like some kind of an irresistible command. As if he *may* want to return but he would find himself unable to. His current condition could also be viewed as in a family that is “complete” and “ideal”; he knows virtually everything about Susan but “want[s] no more of” her (Kureishi, 1998). Hence, the act of leaving her and his sons seems to make little sense: to leave something which is not only supposedly complete and ideal (his words) but a partner he knows everything about and so it would be undesirable to start over. Then “I want no more of” (Kureishi, 1998) becomes “I *must* want no more of.” Moreover, he laments the fact that that was the last evening he had with his family (Kureishi, 1998). He knows his abandonment will traumatize Susan (Kureishi, 1998), which obviously is something he would want to avoid but he must bow to the “ruling ideology.” It is little surprise, then, that the structure he chooses to use is: “I *must* [emphasis added] be going” (Kureishi, 1998). “At home” Jay says, “I don’t feel at home. In the morning I will let go of it. Definitely. Bye-bye” (Kureishi, 1998). This “definitely” and the reiteration of the forced callousness in the “bye-bye” both indicate an Other-imposed condition. “Definitely” is also the indicator of doubt here because it functions as a redundant repetition of the idea of leaving already expressed: it serves the purpose of reassurance which is required in a state of doubt. The idea that he is leaving his family purely because he wants to—as a reaction to the family ideology—is thus fractured.

4.3 THE FAILURE OF UNDERMINING IDEOLOGY: THE “RETURN OF THE BIG OTHER” AND CONFORMITY

Not only does Jay fail to compromise the lenses of ideology by being a person whose motives are highly ideological, but his overall attempt at fracturing the big Other remains only an attempt because of several other reasons.

4.3.1 “Disintegration of the Other and its return.”

When Jay was a boy, he went away for a while on an excursion without the consent of his parents which earned him a good reputation among the hippies who had derided him hitherto. These hippies then invited him to teenage psychedelic parties. The teenagers used to take drugs even in their classes and used to have free-sex parties at houses when the parents used to be away. He describes these children as children who were in a constant state of running away from their homes. It was there that he picked up the idea that it was possible to leave. He remembers how one of his teachers showed him the Thom Gunn poem ‘On the Move’ that Jay used to recite during the mentioned parties (Kureishi, 1998). He realized that one could get out, staying was seen as ideology: as the way things were perceived to be. The lines from Thom Gunn’s poem became like a constitution, a mandate. The mandate basically was to enjoy, to keep moving, to keep fleeing. It functions perfectly like ideology and not just as an ideology-fracturing attempt, since basically these parties were more like conventions of those who subscribed to the ideology of rebellion fracturing the parental Other’s authority but nevertheless had an essential element of the drug-induced orgy in them. For Žižek, the big Other, being a fictive entity, never really existed and the fact is foregrounded in the postmodern. This big Other is seen in the postmodern era as for what it is—a lie. This is termed as “the disintegration of the big Other.” However, paradoxically, in the postmodern era, this “demise of the big Other” is a freedom that turns out to be a “burden.” Hence, new

regulatory modes necessarily appear in the form of Others to “relieve” the mentioned burden entailed by such a freedom leading to the “construction of little big Others” (Myers, 2003). Kureishi’s *Intimacy*, being a postmodern novel, contains the same idea. This thesis avers that the Other of old social conventions seems to have “disintegrated” in the novel, in the sense that it seemed to be subverted and no longer operational. But interestingly, the Other returns in precisely this form of an ideological compulsion of enjoyment—a fact portrayed in the parties that Jay used to attend as a teenager. These parties broke the big Other’s prohibition of enjoyment and seemed to function under a “disintegration of the big Other.” Nevertheless, the Other returns precisely in a new mode, as a regulatory authority that commands enjoyment and pleasure.

The teenage Jay found out that he could leave the family—an act of rebelling against social norm through the discovery of drug induced hippie free-sex parties where the kids used to be high even in classes. This is obviously seen as a rebellious world for the teenage Jay (Kureishi, 1998). At the point of narration, when Jay is contemplating both abandonment and the happiness of the family (particularly the happiness he finds in his son) he goes outside and the wind fills him with life and energy. He thinks that he *must* leave. It is possible that he could leave in the dark and be afraid of never being found—in the hour of the night he terms as “the death hour.” The leaves on the trees move as a multitude of tongues while he feels that the branches are knocking at him. He thinks of smoking a marijuana cigarette which he and Susan think smells horrible especially if smoked without tobacco. When he gets back home and knows that he has to remain in the same house, as if he were on “house arrest”, he likes going out to the garden. He has a number of various drugs in his refrigerator such as LSDs, Amyl Nitrate and Ecstasy. Even though consuming Ecstasy made him feel awful, he continued to take it anyway and did drugs at the most normal situations such as parent-teacher meetings and meals with parents, enjoying the fact that being on a drug on such

occasions was a “challenge.” For Nina, his relationship with drugs belonged to another age: Jay admits this to be true, since it connects him to people such as Huxley, De Quincey and Baudelaire, insofar as it connected him to a world defiant, dangerous and literary (Kureishi, 1998). To escape the law of the Other, he attempts to “roll a joint.” That is part of the drug experience: to escape the big Other. His drug garden represents this escape. He would use drugs “in the straightest situations” in order to rebel against societal norms. But Susan’s lukewarm objection means precisely that it is assimilated into the normal, since Susan is the big Other. What further problematizes this so-called rebellion is this element of “the fridge.” The drug use has been normalized and is no longer radical, since it is kept in the fridge in plain sight of the Other. Jay, moreover, once ran away from home in order to do drugs. This teenage rebellion has become incorporated into his life with such a normalcy that it becomes merely a simulation of rebellion. The one thing that remains constant is enjoyment—the form in which the Other returns and the rebellion is compromised.

Jay thinks he is free, but he doesn’t know what he is free for exactly. He thinks that his great achievement is that he feels free to leave his family, yet believes that the greatest freedom is to do away with freedom itself and choose to have obligations that connect one to life (Kureishi, 1998). This is the postmodern man’s dilemma about freedom because there is an implicit understanding here that this so-called freedom from the family is freedom that is regulated by the big Other which is represented by “life.” He performs a strange Orwellian doublethink (Orwell, 2000) here. He knows very well that he would perform an act of freedom. Ironically, he breaks commitment and calls it a performance of the freedom he thinks he has (he believes he could very well walk away and considers this a manifestation of his freedom). However, he knows that this act of freedom is problematic and the opposite, commitment, is true freedom. That is precisely the nature of Zizekian ideology: “they know that in their activity they are following an illusion, but still, they are doing it” (Zizek, 1989).

Likewise, Jay thinks he knows that actually some form of commitment is freedom but he nevertheless seeks a commitment-free variety of freedom. This contradiction shows that either one or the other belief is an illusion. However, whichever one is actually the illusion is of little consequence, since what is at issue here is the fact that he thinks he knows he is following an illusion with respect to the kind of freedom he seeks, he follows nevertheless. Furthermore, the Other seems to have disintegrated insofar as freedom from commitment is concerned. Freedom from commitment, however, seems like the “return of the Other.”

Moreover, Nina is the opposite of Susan. She doesn't have anything particular to do and envies Jay for the latter's career. She has a hippie lifestyle and even wears hippie clothes (Kureishi, 1998). This almost supposed non-conformist element about her—this “freedom” from the grip of the big Other—is why Jay has an affinity towards her. She likes making love out in the open, something that Jay doesn't particularly like but is okay with and wonders how it was possible for him to have developed such strong feelings for someone he hardly knew (Kureishi, 1998), precisely because the big Other censures it. She supposedly “reclaims the public space” from the grip of the big Other but all kinds of supposed subversion takes place inside the domain of enjoyment here, which is compromised.

4.3.2 Promiscuity as convention and ideology.

Jay thinks after he leaves, his kids will shift the affection they had for him to some other person that Susan might be with after him. He says the children will do so because they hadn't yet learned the ways of the adult world (Kureishi, 1998). For him promiscuity is some kind of state of nature while monogamy is ideological. But any statement which purports that a social behaviour is rooted in nature is usually to be put under the lens of scepticism, especially if one is in the business of critique of ideology. His belief that promiscuity, in whatever form—shifting of love from object to object—is natural means it takes place

outside the Other's discourse. Having understood what Althusser and Zizek (Zizek, 1994) say about ideology, this is indicative of ideology precisely because he believes that it is *not* ideological. This line of thinking *seems* out of ideology and is then, ipso facto, precisely within it. This is why Jay leaves the hospital with the champagne that Susan's father had bought on the occasion of their son's birth to go and drink it in the bed of a woman named Karen (Kureishi, 1998). This is a mini abandonment at the moment when the family bond is supposed to be the strongest and its ideology fervently active, the drinking of champagne with another woman right at that time is his ultimate so-called act of rebellion where he pays immense homage to his promiscuity ideology because it functions under the ideological injunction of sexual enjoyment. While believing that promiscuity is the way things are, he covers up the fact that under his understanding of how things are, lies hidden the "official ideology" that one should have as much sexual pleasure as one can.

In Jay's brief description of the time he lived with a woman—when he was a student at university—lies the description of this ideology. This was an open relationship where once in a month they used to sleep together; back in the late seventies when relationships were more casual "as if it had been agreed that confinement of regularity made people mentally sick" (Kureishi, 1998). The tool that Jay employed to critique the family ideology was the fact that it was a social agreement whose argument was forgotten (Kureishi, 1998). However, no one really remembers the argument behind the promiscuous structure either. Remarkably so, he says "as if," in the late seventies, people had agreed that the monogamous structure's captivity and monotony sickened them. This "as if" is a structure that "disintegrates" the big Other, for Zizek. The "as if" reveals the fact that the subject knows very well that the big Other is based on a lie, nevertheless it is subscribed to. This awareness, that what we subscribe to is essentially a lie, causes the disintegration of this big Other (Myers, 2003). What is significant here is, if Jay thinks monogamy/the family is a lie, so is promiscuity—

precisely because of this “as if.” He describes his university love as true and unmourned (Kureishi, 1998) because he thought his relationship with this woman redefined and rebelled against what the big Other taught or what society or culture thought about love as a monogamous enterprise filled with passion: they used to sleep only once a month and saw other people (Kureishi, 1998). Jay doesn’t name her because the big Other’s language fails to accommodate to him what he had with her—the Symbolic Efficiency is not complete for him. But given the social conditions of the time Jay lives in, promiscuity is elevated to an “official discourse.”

Moreover, Jay wrote a film about a couple getting old. This couple when goes to visit their grown up children find out that the marriages of their children are falling apart. Jay is excited about writing this film and discusses it with Nina so that she would know what he was going through (Kureishi, 1998). But the content of this film becomes a normative ideological construct regarding family because the first time Jay met Nina, the latter asked him about his “situation”, and he tells her the truth about having a family. She agrees nevertheless to kiss him after thinking about it. It wasn’t impulsive, nor a mistake made in the heat of the moment but a contemplated act (Kureishi, 1998). Being Nina, she had to “break” the big Other’s prohibition being with a “married” man—or a person with a partner to be precise—to escape Symbolic Efficiency. Yet, the extra-marital affair is so assimilated into dominant culture that it is precisely the norm, the socio-cultural dictate. Ergo, after leaving his family, Jay goes to find Nina at the place where she used to live and encounters a young man who opens the door for him and lets him know that she had been away for some time but had come back and gone to a nearby club with a friend. When Jay enquires about the whereabouts of the club, the young man sighs, implying that Jay must be the one who should be informed about Nina’s whereabouts rather than himself (Kureishi, 1998), because in the “society of enjoyment” an affair enjoys Symbolic Efficiency. Hence, promiscuity is far from

unconventional and is ideological. When Susan tells him that she had seen a nightmare where Jay wasn't there anymore and he questions the obvious by asking "what makes you say that?" to which she responds "I don't know, I don't know" (Kureishi, 1998). That's because her universe would collapse if the family structure collapses. But it's written on the cards: abandonment is no longer radical as it is assimilated into what is very normal, in day to day discourse and dreams. This is the second time in the book she alludes to him leaving, once before when she tells him that he would go away but upon his inquiry modified the statement (Kureishi, 1998). The fact that Susan, who is seen as conventional, has this constant awareness of promiscuity or abandonment precisely raises doubts about promiscuity and abandonment as radical.

4.3.3 Compromised subversion of the family ideology and monogamy:

a fractured act of disbelief.

Even though *Intimacy* is hailed as a work where the protagonist fractures the idea of the socio-cultural structure of marriage/monogamy (Kim, 2011). Nevertheless the same act of fracturing is fractured itself.

Zizek (2008) thinks that people believe *through* the big Other: others believe in our stead and through this move, individuals maintain sanity, since they have a certain distance from this big Other "of official discourse." Jay thinks that the men are under the compulsion to leave and take the blame for doing so. The same will be true of him. He claims to understand that such blame is necessary to sustain the idea that somewhere someone would be brave enough or dutiful enough not to leave (Kureishi, 1998). By thinking that someone else must have the courage to maintain the family structure, Jay thinking that he does not believe in the monogamous structure believes *through* these imagined Others whom he considers brave enough to suffer through monogamy. Yet, for Jay, someone must breach the

code consciously so that “meaning” and “justice” rather than anarchy would prevail. Once he would have left his family, Asif would consider him a dead friend and it would be considered a thing that one wouldn’t want for oneself (Kureishi, 1998) but would expect someone else to have done. Jay, aware of this, considers his “deliberate moral infringement” a sacrifice of great moral worth. The fact that this is “deliberate” means that rather than it being a departure merely under the operations of desire, it is a route taken precisely as subversion. It is like an ideological battle with its own idea of suffering rather than existing merely as a critique of monogamy. Nevertheless, Jay, himself is so immersed into the idea of monogamy that a complete breakdown of the whole structure itself is viewed as “anarchy.” To him, a “deliberate moral infringement” opens a space where it is possible to subvert the system, in the sense of reform rather than a chaotic revolution. However, he still believes in monogamy *through* the Other. Somewhere, someone *needs* to believe in monogamy on his behalf. This move maintains his sanity. But it renders him far from radical. He is not someone who doesn’t *fully* believe that monogamy is ideological and should not exist. Thus, he addresses Susan in absentia saying that if she truly knew him she would have spat in his face since he has betrayed her every day. However, if he had not betrayed her by being with other women, he would have left her long ago. He thinks that lying is a mode of protecting ourselves: “it keeps the important going” (Kureishi, 1998). This is a perfect example of how his subversion is only a deluded attempt since he lies to keep the family ideology afloat. His position of being “recalcitrant” is highly compromised, since he protects what he claims to break.

When Asif tries to talk Jay out of leaving his family, the former tells the latter that everyone desires for more and more but wisdom lies in cherishing what one has. When Jay probes into Asif by asking him whether he had ever contemplated leaving Najma, his wife, Asif retorts by saying that Jay should stop asking him question in the hope that he would ever have a different answer which would confirm Jay’s view that one is exonerated from having

any responsibilities whatsoever, that one could quit the family whenever one wanted which “is the modern way.” Jay admits that his “restlessness” is indeed the new way. Asif claims that their zeitgeist made him feel, ironically, unique—precisely by being monogamous. Asif, attempting to convince Jay not to leave his family, appeals to Jay’s sense of morality by asking him if there was anything the latter believed in, such as virtue. Jay claims that though he has beliefs, they keep altering every day and it is better not to have opinions at all about cultural and political issues but as regards what is at issue, he claims to have an excess of belief—in “the possibilities of intimacy” and “love.” Asif laughs this off by telling him that Jay always had an excessive liking for women and suggests to him to have an affair instead of leaving his family which could take care of his “need.” Jay, moreover, repudiates moral categories altogether, which is why he even refuses to see kindness as a moral category. As such, Jay does not want to subscribe to beliefs at all. But what we find true is that, instead of believing, it was an alteration of beliefs that he thinks he subscribes to. However, “the possibilities of intimacy” and their almost equal, “love”, is what he firmly believes in, besides thinking that “women’s bodies” are central to life (Kureishi, 1998). In the guise of not subscribing to a particular belief system, Jay believes intensely in enjoyment which is the dominant ideology of his age. Asif, ironically, becomes radical precisely for the traditional act of keeping monogamy alive. Ironically, Asif suggests that Jay sacrifice the monogamous family structure to save the same—have an affair. Thereafter, Jay counters Asif’s critique with more critique—with Victor’s discourse. Jay narrates how Victor says that abandoning one’s family is the paradoxical best and worst thing he had done. Victor lived two years thinking that he had done something unforgivable. But he is convinced that the unforgivable act is the right one since—he suggests—whoever had done it, would repeat it if they could go back in time (Kureishi, 1998). What is it in Victor’s discourse, besides following the pathway of desire, that appeals to Jay, since after weighing Asif’s and Victor’s arguments his mind

sways towards Victor's? It is this "unforgivable" action that he thinks is radical and the ideology of happiness, since Victor claims nobody would want to go back even if they regretted their decision. Nevertheless, both Victor and Jay are far from rebels who subvert the family structure altogether. They would complacently enter into another family arrangement if there is guarantee of the element of "love" in it, love that translates easily into sexual enjoyment—the dictate of the dominant ideology. As such, there is little distantiation from the "official discourse of the big Other", since the fundamental error of Jay's mentality is thinking the family discourse is the official one. But Jay admits that the way he thinks is contemporary "restlessness" which is almost a confession of following the dominant discourse. Ergo, strangely, an attempt to maintain a monogamous relationship in a social environment like that could be termed as rebellious.

Jay is fully aware of the fact that his friend Asif hates the city with all its rush and noise. Jay deliberately arranges lunches with him at the centre of the city and takes him to the most loud places with "fashionable young women" (Kureishi, 1998)—everything Asif claims to dislike. This is Jay's way of punishing the man who believes in monogamy. Asif remarks that Jay had brought him to a picture gallery and enquires if that was how Jay spent his life. Jay, with a sense of joy that excludes the other person, responds in the affirmative. He tells him that the young women Asif could see preferred being with men of Asif and Jay's age, which Asif is sceptical of. Jay says that he has forced Asif to confess that he, like Jay, is curious what it might be like to be with a woman other than his wife Najma. But then Asif thinks about his wife Najma before refusing to enjoy champagne that Jay is about to order (Kureishi, 1998). Jay attempts to disturb Asif's family life and make him see other women or at least to want them, to deprive him of his enjoyment and to make him suffer what Jay himself is going through; to make him a disbeliever of monogamy as well as to make him subvert what Jay is attempting himself to subvert. Asif resists this and calls it a mere picture

gallery which is equivalent of calling it unreal. This is also another attempt by Jay to obtain Symbolic Efficiency, a ratification from Asif for his departure from the family because “that’s the tragedy of our predicament. In order to fully exist as individuals, we need the fiction of a big Other. There must be an agency which, as it were, registers our predicament, an agency where the truth of ourselves will be inscribed, accepted. An agency to which to confess” (Žižek, 2012). Jay is also the flagbearer of the ideology that he subscribes to and is enlisting at this point. The more people he could see feeling the same as himself, the more Symbolic Efficiency his feelings gain, and the more he pays homage to the ideology of anti-monogamy and anti-family Hedonism. His attempt to sabotage the big Other fails because he appeals to the big Other, as a category from which approval is required. Once, when Jay went to pick his children up from Asif’s place, he found them playing outside while Najma drew something using crayons. He claims that the peacefulness of the moment made him uncomfortable—inexplicably. He desired pushing her into the bedroom and thus destroying everything or to test whether there was any secret to happiness in the monogamous relationship she had with Asif. He goes on to remark that Asif’s happiness was something in which he had no part (Kureishi, 1998). Since, he clearly fails to make Asif seriously consider any other woman than Najma, he imagines breaking the marital structure forcefully. At the same time, he so vehemently believes in enjoyment outside the marital structure that he could do anything for it and resents Asif for being happy or having some “secret enjoyment” that he cannot partake of. Moreover, apparently, he claims to want to have sex with Najma as a “test” to find out what is there. But what has primacy here is the fact that this test is precisely an enjoyment test. On the one hand, he wants to find out if there really is enjoyment inside the monogamous structure—for which the Najma-Asif relationship stands-in. On the other hand, he wants to blow up the specific Najma-Asif structure, since it excludes him in terms of enjoyment. Being excluded from the Najma-Asif enjoyment seems to him like his own

enjoyment had been stolen. This theoretically functions similar to the way Žižek describes the way those subjected to racism are seen to have “stolen” enjoyment from those that are racist (Homer, 2005). He needs to destroy any Other that somehow seems to usurp or hurdle his enjoyment, whether it is Susan or Asif. Enjoyment, nevertheless, has primacy and is ideological so there’s no real question of breaking a structure of the big Other since the Other has returned in the form of another Other—the dominant discourse of enjoyment. Asif’s marital happiness is the enemy, from Jay’s perspective, being the flagbearer of his own anti-monogamy ideology. Again, Asif is a disturbance in his world-view and he wants to destroy what the latter has so the world makes more sense to him. He *needs* Asif to feel like him, to be disloyal, so that disloyalty begins to obtain Symbolic Efficiency. This is highly anti-rebellious because of its particular dependence on the big Other.

Jay regards Asif as an opinionated, honest man of principles who repudiated the cynicism of the eighties (which Jay bought). What Asif believes in, makes him stable with a centre. However, he feels that such people like Asif are self-righteous and think that their way of life is the only one. Such people as Asif blame others for promiscuity since they believe monogamy is the only way to live. Jay questions, “Why can’t they be blamed for being bad at promiscuity?” (Kureishi, 1998) rather than others being blamed at being bad at monogamy. Here lies the war of the two ideologies. The ideology that claims that those who make families work are bad at promiscuity and not necessarily because they are good at maintaining monogamous families. This is the alternative ideology that Jay subscribes to, and apparently, since the eighties the dominant ideology as well. But what is all the more disturbing, as regards Asif for Jay, is not only that he represents the counter ideology, it is that Asif represents the older ideology in its stable workable form. The Najma-Asif bond becomes a good manifestation whereas the one between himself and Susan for him is the manifestation of the same ideology with the difference that Susan has to *try* to make family

life work, while for Asif it works—despite the fact that it nevertheless is a struggle. He wants to explain to Asif that he, too, has integrity and principles. He wants to be loyal but to something new now—someone new. Though he claims that the person he wants to be loyal to is himself but right away he asks as to when did he precisely realize he didn't want to be with Susan, which means that it is loyalty to someone other than Susan that he wants now. He claims that it began to go wrong with Susan when he opened his eyes (Kureishi, 1998), when he began to see things clearly, when the façade of ideology began to fade and when he began to critique ideology. It would seem that he wants to pull down the older ideology and is subversive for the sake of it. It would also seem that he believes in disloyalty to counter the discourse of loyalty. But he uses the same paradigm as the older ideology, as the ideology he is out to destroy. He too lives by a code located within the ideology of the big Other—the code is just different. It's not loyalty he is against, it is simply loyalty to something else that he is after, this something else is another object, obviously, but it is also the “official ideology” of Hedonism. He repeatedly wants Asif to understand his particular brand of honesty; and this too is seeking Symbolic Efficiency from the Other. It is worth remarking then that Nina—though like him—is a woman of perpetual comings and goings, as well, which not only occur daily but in every hour she arrives and departs (Kureishi, 1998). Hence, the constant departure and arrival is symbolic not only of an ideological compulsion but a belief in constant departure. Her apparent belief is compromised by the fact that she wants Jay to stay (Kureishi, 1998). Jay's is compromised by the fact that he calls her departures an infidelity (Kureishi, 1998) which fractures his attempted subversion further.

A few lines after Asif asks him Nina's age and disapproves, declaring the affair as only serving physical gratification, Jay says that beyond a specific age there are only specific people in specific situations that we allow to be together or to love. Recently his mother has begun to joke about desiring men younger than her and she has also begun to look at younger

men in the street. When she praises their beauty Jay shudders. His grandmother is also with a younger lover. Jay thinks that one may think people would be happy that she is not alone anymore but that is clearly untrue (Kureishi, 1998). He is aware that he himself opposes what he subscribes to: "How eagerly even the most seditious of us require strict convention! But Asif's favourite opera is Don Giovanni, and Anna Karenina and Madame Bovary his favourite novels. Testaments of fire and betrayal, all!" (Kureishi, 1998). Asif with respect to him symbolizes the big Other's prohibition, the belief in family and loyalty as well as the conventional belief of "an appropriate match" being the one ratified by society—in other words, one enjoying Symbolic Efficiency. Yet, things are much more complex than that. Asif represents prohibition for Jay. But Jay represents the same for his mother and grandmother. The Other that the rebel sets out to subvert is ironically within and *is* him with respect to another subject. Moreover, Jay thinks it is ironic that Asif's favourite opera and novels are ones that break the ideology of loyalty but the cultural productions that Asif appreciates provide a fantasy frame for him where he could exercise his desire without having to go into explosive experimentation in real life. Asif, too, pays homage to the ideology of promiscuity and disloyalty there. Furthermore, Asif enjoys a distance from the operas and the books that stand for betrayal: the cultural productions stand-in for the Other that we need to believe on our behalf. He transposes his belief through the books and operas which could indicate that his idea of monogamy is somewhat compromised as well. Moreover, he advises Jay to have an affair to keep the family intact and get what he desires as well (Kureishi, 1998). We see both Asif and Jay immersed within ideology, but what is more is that we see compromises being made everywhere, on both ends of the spectrum. Nobody's stance or position seems genuine or simple, to say the least. Everything and everyone is so complex in *Intimacy* that nobody's beliefs/motives could be unequivocally seen in a straightforward way.

The difference between the notes that Jay and Susan leave each other is stark, obviously. He leaves Susan a note saying there was no happiness in being together anymore (Kureishi, 1998). This is part of his attempted subversion of the idea of monogamous partnership. But she left him a note asking him to pick the dry cleaning up. Annoyed, he does it anyway (Kureishi, 1998). Remarkably so, even at the time of abandoning the family, he pays final homage to the family ideology. Jay's picking up his son's things and taking the clothes of Susan to the cleaners is the "activity" that Jay performs. "They know that in their activity they are following an illusion, but still, they are doing it" (Zizek, 1989), as far as ideological illusion is concerned. Right at the point of "radical" departure, Jay's activity shows not only how tied he is to the family ideology and no matter what he says regarding change, novelty and pleasure as the purposes of life, it is his activity that subverts his supposed radical subversion of the family traditional values that he sees as ideology.

Even though he considers it a rebellion that he never marries Susan but nonetheless asks Nina to marry him, however, half hoping she would refuse, since he says that he wouldn't ask her a second time (Kureishi 1998) which compromises his position as rebel. This compromise, could be assuaged by the fact that Nina refuses and he tells her that he would not ask again (being overtly against marriage in the first place) but she wants him to ask anyway. She does not want to marry him because she does not like to become "one of those well-fed women" yet (Kureishi, 1998). Jay thinks that no one remembers really why people marry; he thinks Asif must remember, since he is an intellectual (Kureishi, 1998). He clearly sees the institution of marriage as ideological because no one really remembers why they are doing it, they do it anyway. Nevertheless, his belief in monogamy is transposed to Asif: Asif is seen to believe in what Jay apparently does not, in his stead. Someone out there must believe if we do not. It is noteworthy that Jay wanted to tie himself within ideology and have Symbolic Efficiency with Nina, since Nina represents to him what resists the big Other.

Consequently, his belief in promiscuity is simpler. He at the same time believes in monogamy in a complex way. That particular belief is transposed—Asif believes in his stead. But more so, that belief is seen more in his “activity” rather than in what he overtly believes. It is perhaps that he asked her precisely because he knew she would say no. But that is hard to tell. Nina resists marriage, patriarchy and the androcentric family. But his self-contradiction is what fractures his ideological rebellion. He wouldn’t ask her again so some semblance of subversion may remain even if he has reached a compromise.

Moreover, Jay goes through Susan’s desk and wallet in the hope of finding some indication of betrayal which could then make his abandonment seem natural but all he could find is a photograph of himself with her in each other’s arms (Kureishi, 1998). He reads her journal where, for Jay, she writes things that she wants him to read. He goes through the passage where, three years prior to narration, she wrote about contemplating visiting her lover in Rome. Jay doesn’t believe this to be true and had told her that it would make him glad if she acted on what she allegedly wanted to do, since he always looked for a justified opening to leave her (Kureishi, 1998). We can see from the wallet and this other breach of privacy on Jay’s part, what he must find very unattractive about Susan is her self as façade. From his perspective, she has no private underground self—nothing subversive to the conventional. She is open. Society doesn’t find anything radical/subversive in her since she *is* society, from his view point. She knows he will read this and so the lover is a threat, a threat by the Other of social convention and monogamy that feels threatened in her. Moreover, interestingly, this becomes another evidence that the contemplation of an affair or abandonment is mainstream and normalized since it is part of the “dominant discourse.” Even Susan is not “safe” from the ideology he subscribes to. Looking for some evidence to justify leaving her becomes important to him so that his act of abandonment could be somehow ratified by any form of a big Other—to find Symbolic Efficiency, which only goes on to

show is dependence on the big Other, again. But he should have known better since she represents the monogamous family ideology, she is nowhere near acting on the fantasy. In addition, it is important for him to find that Susan fantasizes the same way that he does as recognition from the Other.

Jay comments that it is not often that we are actually disillusioned. He leaves the paradoxical familial “unhappy Eden” not particularly because he hates it, but because he wants to change. Whether the idea of the “happy family” is a dream or a nightmare (that everyone is haunted by), but we seldom wake up from its utopianism. Hence, instead of the family he claims to believe in love (he tells Asif), since that is what brings out the best in humans and he is sure that in the unpleasantness of the city outside, there is someone who will love him. However, Victor believes in the same and had a three-year long affair with a woman in the hope that she would choose him over her husband. She, however, chose unhappiness over Victor. Jay doesn’t really believe this to be a failure precisely since love happened, no matter for how long (Kureishi, 1998). But he is caught within the net of ideology himself: the ideology of the illusion of becoming someone else. He sets out to shatter the ideology of the happy family utopia; at this point love *appears* as a form of critique of ideology—the highest form of love; since, love compels one to see that there is life possible outside the family structure. But the entanglement with ideology follows soon enough. Someone must, out there in the city, love him; someone who is another distant, imaginary object of desire and so him viewing the city thus is fantasy and ideology. Under the garb of such love he only wants to follow the path of desire laid out by the ideological enjoyment injunction. His weapon of fracturing ideology, moreover, is compromised once he appeals to Asif for ratification as well. His need to not being able to function without an approval of some form of big Other (Asif in this case) renders his critical tool (love) compromised, since Asif believes in the family ideology that he wants to subvert, this

becomes some form of selling his soul to the devil as regards loyalty to his self-proclaimed “recalcitrant” identity is concerned by this apologetic appeal for Symbolic Efficiency.

Out of spite, once, Jay asked Victor to be with Nina if he were absent; Jay believes they saw each other for a few weeks but then soon she didn’t want to see Victor any longer. Jay didn’t ask anything or speak to Victor about this and after that point they continued their friendship again (Kureishi, 1998). He does this to break the monogamous cultural structure. But what compromises this attempt is him resuming his friendship with Victor only *after* the latter doesn’t see Nina anymore. Even if this is basic chronology, it raises doubts. And the fact that they avoid speaking about it shows encapsulation in the ideology of monogamy. This is the act that is done to subvert the big Other’s monogamous dictate. But the awkward silence and the suspension of friendship precisely establishes the agreement with monogamy that they exhibit.

4.3.4 The big Other at Victor’s Place.

For Jay, Victor’s residence represents a place free of the influence of the big Other. Victor is Jay’s comrade when it comes to subverting the family structure, since the former had left his wife and children as well. It is Victor’s place that Jay seeks to move to after leaving Susan and his kids. Jay narrates Victor’s words followed by a hope of his own:

‘When I think of how my wife and I stayed together all those barren and arduous nights and years, I cannot understand it at all. Perhaps it was a kind of mad idealism. I had made a promise that I had to fulfil at all costs. But why? The world couldn’t possibly recover from the end of my marriage. My faith in everything would be shattered. I believed in it without knowing how much I believed in it. It was blind, foolish obedience and submission. Probably it was the only kind of religious faith I’ve had. I used to think I had some radicalism in me, but I couldn’t smash the thing that bound me the most. Smash it? I couldn’t even see it!’
Dear God, teach me to be careless. (Kureishi, 1998, p. 64)

Marriage is clearly seen as ideology from Victor's perspective and this is how ideology functions. We act even though we seem to know that our action is a lie (Zizek, 1989): Victor thinks he couldn't even see the illusion. Victor thought that he was made to believe that if the marriage structure collapses, the universe would collapse. He thought he had to fulfil a promise which was blind compliance to something that was not necessary. It was seen as the way things were, when it clearly wasn't. This is why Jay thinks that his departure, like Victor's, lies on the side of subversion of the authority and dictates of the big Other. Jay knows very well how a certain callous carelessness is required of him to go out. This is why Victor's place is the place to go in order to be free of the family ideology. Consequently, it is *Victor* who attempts to set him up with an optician (Kureishi, 1998) while Jay is already in a "monogamous" relationship. He is the one who eagerly waits for Jay to leave his wife and is glad once the latter departs from the family structure (Kureishi, 1998).

However, "Eight years ago Victor left his wife. Since then— [...] he has had only unsatisfactory loves. If the phone rings he does a kind of panicky dance, wondering what opprobrium may be on the way, and from which direction. Victor, you see, can give women hope, if not satisfaction" (Kureishi, 1998). "Since" Victor left his wife he has had "unsatisfactory loves." The word "since" fractures the idea that Victor was dissatisfied with his wife; which establishes that he, too, experienced a forced departure under the same ideology that dictates that you are not, and cannot be happy with your spouse. This "panicky dance" is the force of the big Other of monogamy and convention: it reduces those that disobey it to the ridiculous and symbolizes how the chains of the big Other are forever upon. The rebel is rendered paranoiac. Paranoia is how the big Other "returns": this panicky dance becomes a kind of a ritual homage to the big Other of old morality that is absolutely necessary at the underside of each rebellion. The "disintegration of the big Other" functions in a way that it brings about a state where behind the curtain, the big Other must be paid

homage to for the rebellion to be sustained—a compromise has to be made. This disintegration, homage and compromise is dialectical, in the sense of the term popularly attributed to Hegel and is called the “Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis Model” (Schnitker & Emmons, 2013). The ideology of the family, in the form of old ideology is the thesis. The subversion of that ideology—the belief that family is not necessary, rather is necessitated by a big Other is the antithesis (“disintegration of the big Other”). The synthesis that follows is one where the Other returns as “partial Other” in a state where ritual homage is paid to the big Other pertaining to old ideology as well as the paradox of contradictory beliefs held at the same time: Victor and Jay believe in monogamy and don’t believe in it at the same time—which is crucial here. But this is different from Orwellian doublethink. It is the dialectic of the rebellion against the big Other, since rituals are themselves within the Other. At the place, supposedly free of the influence of the big Other, Victor receives phone calls in the form of “opprobriums” causing panic. These are virtual phone calls from the big Other of prohibition that haunts them precisely at the point of relative freedom from the big Other—the place where contradictory beliefs are held both in and out of the Other. Victor dances in clubs, copying youngsters who think of him as “an AWOL policeman” (Kureishi, 1998). He is absent without leave, absent from taking part of what is conventionally expected of him as a middle aged man, absent from the family structure without the permission of the big Other. They live in an era of enjoyment but the same enjoyment is “regulated” and we see this regulation functioning in the form of the phone calls. Moreover, when Susan sleeps, Jay doesn’t turn on the lights even if he is awake and strangely, he wears sunglasses in the darkness as well as hoping that he would fall over (Kureishi, 1998). This is Jay’s ritualistic homage to the big Other and the paranoia of always being seen by it, as its disapproval is ubiquitously felt since Jay, too, recognizes that authority is what causes constant paranoid fear (Kureishi, 1998). It is significant also that the pursuit of desire is seen as a “redundant

and fearful *dance* [emphasis added]” by Jay (Kureishi, 1998) under the Other. This dance is precisely the recognition of how one is never free of the big Other.

Victor has one book at his place that no one reads: the Bible (Kureishi, 1998). No one ever reads it because Victor’s place is where old ideology supposedly goes to sleep. But the Bible was kept anyways, as a reminder, as a remainder, as homage to the old ideology like his panicky ritualistic paranoiac dance. The Bible maintains appearances for the big Other and so Victor’s place is never fully outside the Other of old ideology. Victor’s rebellion is always only an *attempted* subversion. Much like the suit he buys, which “shocks but does not outrage” (Kureishi, 1998). Victor seems like a botheration to the big Other rather than someone who is able to actually subvert it. It is worth noting also that Victor tints his hair and wears an earring (Kureishi, 1998). Since this is not expected of a middle aged man like Victor, it becomes an attempt at rebelling against the Other’s expectations. At this point Jay comments: “any advance in wisdom requires a good dose of shamelessness” (Kureishi, 1998). “This precisely is the function of the big Other. We need for our stability, a figure of big Other for whom we maintain appearances” (Zizek, 2012). This is why Jay needs to go out unseen. But it is significant to see how appearances are maintained for two Others. The Bible at Victor’s place is the appearance that is maintained for the Other of old ideology. His hair is the appearance maintained for the new Other that says that youth lasts forever and dictates enjoyment. When Jay goes after Nina to the club, he stands in the queue afraid that they would not let him in. Hence, he takes off his shirt in order to appear in a T-shirt and his jacket, hoping this would make him “seem more contemporary” (Kureishi, 1998): this is the postmodern attempt at opposing the old Other as a rites of passage into the club of the new Other. The club then symbolizes the place where the enjoyment injunction is located, which is why this is precisely the place where he looks for Nina.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis fundamentally takes on understanding Kureishi's *Intimacy*'s characters' minds, actions, influences and motives—with primary focus on the protagonist—as its identified research objective. It investigates the reasons behind why characters such as Jay and Victor want to flee people and the familial structure, and why characters such as Susan and Asif want to do precisely the contrary. Two essential factors are recognized as driving/motivating forces in the lives of the characters: desire and ideology.

One of the research questions for this thesis is an investigation of the nature of Jay's desire in relation to its objects. This thesis analyses the act and the contemplation of fleeing of characters such as Jay and Victor as driven by their desire—understood in Lacanian terms. For the protagonist, desire functions and relates to its objects in multiple ways. Jay's desire is fundamentally and obviously seen as for objects of desire that he has a lack of proximity to. However, Jay is a character who perpetually wants to desire, therefore, once he has proximity to an object of desire, he either inadvertently distances himself from the object(s) of desire or engineers distance from the object of desire in order to desire continually. Jay does not want to be with his partner Susan, since he is near her, and desires Nina who lies outside the familial structure. But once the object of desire, whether Nina or any other woman he has desired, is near, he distances himself from them (Kureishi, 1998). This condition ensures that desire is perpetuated. Therefore, it makes sense that Jay desires that object which lies away, and is basically inaccessible. This is why he desires Nina when he is with Susan, since Nina becomes remote at that point. However, the moment the object of desire becomes accessible or nearby, it no longer acts like an object of desire. In such a case, the object of desire is either encircled, or the subject is deflected away from it onto another object of desire in a

substitutional manner. Hence, Jay desires Susan/home at the moment he contemplates being distant from Susan/home, since Susan becomes psychologically distant or remote when he contemplates being with Nina after leaving Susan. Once, he has left home permanently, immediately following departure, he wants to return (Kureishi, 1998). Moreover, whenever he has been able to be with Nina, he has prevented union with her one way or another. It makes sense, therefore, that both Jay and Victor move from “woman to woman” and from bed to bed (Kureishi, 1998) because they both exclusively desire only that which they do not/cannot have. It is, consequently, little surprise that since distance is fundamental to desire, Jay would manoeuvre it. Jay is analysed as a character that consciously engineers distance from his objects of desire in order to desire perpetually.

What this thesis terms as “the reduction of the Other” is a process whereby an object of love—from the perspective of the desiring subject—is mentally reduced (such as by meeting the object) and thereby it is transformed from a special object of love to an object of desire without any “special significance.” This move also generates the possibility of desiring an object rather than treating it as a loved one (a condition where loyalty may become necessary). It also helps maintain the constancy of the substitutional character of desire in which, as regards objects of desire, distance is maintained from each object of desire by quickly moving onto another perpetually. Nonetheless, such a reduction makes it possible to desire per se, rather than have the social category of love enter into it, since this social category demands proximity which becomes the end of desire.

The other important question for this thesis is an investigation of the role of ideology (as understood by Slavoj Žižek) as influence in the lives of these characters. This study sees the lives of the characters in the novel as deeply ideological. Ideology is a way of seeing things as if they were meant to be that way or as if they are that way in nature, all the while not realizing the dependence of attitudes on social reality (Žižek, 1994). Jay’s partner Susan

is seen as a manifestation of the family ideology, from Jay's perspective. Susan attempts to maintain the familial status quo, even if family life is empty inside, because of the belief that human beings must exist within families. This is a belief that both Jay and Victor see as ideological. Hence, both Jay and Victor attempt to flee the familial structure. However, this move is complicated by the fact that they depart from the family structure under another ideological construct: enjoyment. Jay thinks that escaping the familial monogamous structure is an act of rebellion (Kureishi, 1998) but his escape is fundamentally a seeking after sexual enjoyment. The pursuit of enjoyment itself is analysed in this thesis as an ideological construct. This is precisely the way Zizek understands enjoyment—as an “official ideology” (Myers, 2003). Hence, in conclusion, the characters such as Jay and Victor who think they lie outside ideology by making a move that they think runs contrary to ideology, are themselves deeply inscribed within ideology. The jump is from ideology to ideology where one is forever stuck in its quagmire.

While meeting the research objectives, this thesis makes some observations that add to theory in two ways. Firstly, Jay is seen as a subject that not only desires objects once they are at a distance, but if this distance is taken away, Jay as subject would manoeuvre to *create* distance in order to perpetuate desire, consciously. The subject that understands desire is able to engineer such a move. Hence, Jay says that he used women that he was with, to keep other women away (Kureishi, 1998), not only to shield himself from desire but also to keep desiring other women, since they would have been placed at a distance. It is noted, as well, that “not wanting to desire”, in a Lacanian way, is also understood as desire (Lacan, 1981). Moreover, he continually desires Nina, since she is distant from him, but the moment he is able to be with Nina, he keeps her away. This is how subjects that understand desire may perpetuate it by keeping the object of desire “at arm's length.” Secondly, Slavoj Zizek (2012) claims that in the affair structure, the mistress exists at a distance and if this distance is

removed, the mistress no longer occupies the place of being the object of desire. This study proposes the “partner-mistress continuum” structure as an explanation of how Jay not only keeps Nina as a distant object of desire but negotiates distance between both the partner (Susan) and the mistress (Nina) in order to desire both at the same time. When he is close to Susan, he desires Nina and attempts to be close to Nina. Nevertheless, when he comes close to Nina, he goes away from her, since he desires to return home to Susan. This creates a situation where he is able to desire both Nina and Susan as objects of desire at the same time. If, however, this structure collapses, then Žižek’s (2012) end result of losing both the partner and mistress applies.

5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further work may be carried out on Hanif Kureishi’s *Intimacy* within the domain of Lacanian Psychoanalysis by locating how Lacan’s concept of *jouissance* relates to the novel. For Lacan, “the pleasure principle” appears as “law” that limits pleasure. However, human beings attempt to go beyond such restrictions. In such an effort of going “beyond the pleasure principle”, humans do not encounter increased pleasure but suffer pain. This kind of suffering, in Lacan, is *jouissance*. This variety of suffering is a resultant of encountering satisfaction (Evans, 1996). *Intimacy*’s protagonist, Jay, feels that his pleasure is barred and attempts to have more pleasure than he has access to (Kureishi, 1998). In so doing, he encounters sadness and suffering, especially the suffering of meeting what he wants: satisfaction. Therefore, Jay attempts to prevent satisfaction through desire. Research may be carried out in elaborately tracing how Jay does this.

As regards critique of ideology, Jay employs attempts to fracture ideology. In the present work, his attempt at critique of ideology is to subvert ideology by doing the opposite of what he perceives as ideological: by moving out of the monogamous familial structure.

This is a failure, since he does so only under the influence of another ideological construct: enjoyment. Moreover, further research could explore how he uses one ideology to strategically critique another. For instance, in order to critique the ideology of promiscuity and enjoyment, he uses his friend Asif's discourse of monogamy. He further counters the same discourse of monogamy through his friend Victor's anti-monogamy belief (Kureishi, 1998). Furthermore, for Jay, critique of ideology takes place only in being able to repudiate a figure of an ideological father. He disagrees with the discourse of his father and Victor's sons disagree with the discourse of their father. Thereby, both categories of off-springs critique the discourse of their fathers and hence critique ideology. Such techniques of critiquing ideology may be explored by further research.

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