

Reconstructing Self in Diasporic Narratives: A Transnational Identity Reading of Aamer Hussain’s “The Girl From Seoul”

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Abstract

In the modern globalized society, the issue of identity and belonging has been of central concern in literary and cultural studies. However, there is a lack of studies that consider the short story by Aamer Hussain, as an act of identity in the form of a fluid and transnational identity. In this paper, Transnational Identity Theory is used to observe the re-construction of identity in *The Girl from Seoul* by Hussain. The research explores the manner in which the identity of the protagonist is formed in the context of cultural displacement, emotional negotiation, and creativity in a variety of spaces with the help of Thematic Analysis. The study seeks to demonstrate how identity is defined and redefined through adaptation, memory and self-reinvention in the context of transnational settings. The results imply that Hussain renders identity as being elastic, multifaceted and psychologically complex -that goes beyond geographic boundaries and into emotional and imagination domains.

Keywords: Cross-cultural adaptation; Cultural displacement; Diaspora, Thematic analysis; Transnational identity

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In a world that is becoming more globalized, the formation of an individual identity occurs due to the presence of a multi-cultural, multi-linguistic, and multi-geographical experience. Migration, displacement, and cross-cultural experiences force individuals to strike a bargain between familiarity and foreignness as they give in to their new environments without losing sight of their roots. *The Girl from Seoul* by Aamer Hussain involves this tension with the help of the life of a young South Asian man living in London whose attempt to find his place goes

between his native roots and the cultural terrain of his new land. His communication especially with Kim, a South Korean woman bring out the feelings of estrangement that they all have and how people can experience foreignness in the same environment.

This paper understands the experience of the protagonist within the context of Transnational Identity Theory (Anthias, 2018) that looks at identity as multi-sited, fluid, and constantly redefined across borders. This perspective focuses on how people maintain emotional and cultural attachments to more than one place as they traverse the psychological intricacies of transnational life, as opposed to emphasizing culturally only the process of cultural assimilation or hybridity. In this light, *The Girl from Seoul* shows how the process of self-reconstruction keeps on taking place in the changing cultural landscapes and how notions of belonging, displacement, and self-discovery collide in a world in which identities are no longer territorialized.

1.2 Background

In modern times of universal mobility, identity can be described as a multiplex, and discursive formation defined by movement within and across various cultural and geographical borders. People who cross boundaries or reside beyond their home countries have to keep on balancing the culture of their home countries and the standards of the new societies. This process usually leads to a tension zone where membership is not guaranteed and identity is no longer a situation of stability, but of a continual negotiation. Here, the Transnational Identity Theory (Anthias, 2018) is a suitable framework to interpret how people can maintain cultural and emotional connections across the borders and be adjusted to new surroundings.

The Girl from Seoul by Aamer Hussain deals with these complications by describing the life of a young South Asian man in London whose identity is being constantly misconstrued by cross-cultural experiences. His experience is an example of what Anthias (2018) calls translocational belonging as the state of identity formation due to changing roles in the cross-cultural and cross-social space. His interactions with people, especially with Kim, a South Korean woman, show the similarity in the status of being a stranger as well as the dissimilarity in the ways people adapt to changes according to their individual and cultural backgrounds.

The story describes London as a transnational place in which identities meet, crash and change. The language difficulties, the issue of belonging, and emotional detachment of the

main character present the wider picture of migrants existing in the world between cultures that lead to belonging to many worlds and being wholly unbelonging to any particular world. It is through this that *The Girl from Seoul* is not merely a displacement narrative but a trial of identity being remade over and again in motion, through memory and a cross-cultural encounter in a globalized society.

1.3 Cultural Belonging and Identity

In the context of Transnational Identity Theory (Anthias, 2018), cultural identity is not the static rule but a process that is constantly developing due to movement, memory, and emotional affiliation to various places. Instead of living in one cultural system, transnational people in constructing their sense of self-transnational by crossing boundaries, have a symbolic and emotional connection with their home countries, but they adjust to the reality of their new locations. In this context, identity is not a determination of belonging but a continual negotiation between the past and the present encountered.

The Girl from Seoul by Aamer Hussain accounts for this type of transnational struggle to belong to one place while being psychologically attached to a different one as the protagonist leads his life in London but at the same time holds on to his South Asian origins. London to him is transnational space a place of opportunity, contradiction and cultural negotiation in which identities are being redefined by social interaction and personal reflection. His sense of familiarity and foreignness is an example of the concept of multi-sited belonging by Anthias (2018), whereby oneself is spread across multiple areas of culture, instead of being based in one particular homeland.

The friendship between the main character and a South Korean Woman Kim also reveals the complex aspect of transnational belonging. The relationship between them is an indication of common displacement as well as different experiences of assimilation that shows that emotions and cultural closeness are not always the basis of understanding one another. According to Anthias (2018), transnational identity is determined by translocational positionality through which people identify themselves differently based on their social, cultural, and historical backgrounds. The protagonist Kim, through the use of Kim introduces both familiarity and alienation to the reader on the issue of the emotional ambiguity of constructing identity amidst a multicultural space.

Finally, *The Girl from Seoul* does not show belonging as a state of arrival but a constant process of rebuilding. The changing affections that the protagonist has to people, places and

memories show that in the transnational spaces identity is constructed through movement, dialogue and emotional negotiation. The transnational experience is vivid in his journey as he can exist between cultures, being related to several of them, but never truly at home in any of them.

1.4 Problem Statement

Identity in the globalization world is dynamic and fluid due to the movement across cultural and geographical space. Despite the theme of fixed and hybrid identity that has been seen in diaspora literature, very little has been done on transnational identity as a form of belonging rooted on emotional and cultural attachments across national borders. This paper explicates this gap by examining the Aamer Hussain work *The Girl from Seoul* through the Transnational Identity Theory to understand how transnational contextual identities are recreated in the process of continuous adjustment, negotiation, and reinvention of identity.

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To explore how *The Girl from Seoul* tell us about the transnational identity construction process, experienced through mobility and displacement
2. To identify the themes of the cultural displacement, cross-border belonging and self-reconstruction in the story
3. To analyse the psychological and cultural consequences of existing within more than one cultural world as revealed in *The Girl from Seoul* by Aamer Hussain.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What does *The Girl from Seoul* tell us about the transnational identity construction process, experienced through mobility and displacement?
2. How are the themes of belonging, adaptation and emotional negotiation used to form or create the sense of self in the protagonist?
3. What does the story reveal as to the psychological and cultural consequences of existing in more than one cultural world?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The current paper provides a modern understanding of migration and identity by using Transnational Identity Theory to *The Girl from Seoul* by Aamer Hussain. It builds on the

body of literature by highlighting the concept of identity as multi-sited, fluid and negotiable across the cultural boundaries. Thematic analysis enables the study to uncover the ways in which transnational experiences transform the meanings of belonging and selfhood that go beyond the conventional diaspora paradigms. The results make a contribution to South Asian literary research and add to the general debate on the identity formation in global movement. In general, the study reveals how transnational self-reconstruction is an ongoing process.

Literature Review

The current literature on migration and identity highlights the fact that the globalization process has transformed the processes of identity formation into a transnational and multi-sited process, as opposed to a single-place phenomenon (Anthias, 2018). Scholars have come to believe that identity is a dynamic phenomenon influenced by movement across borders, online communication and affective attachment to more than one place. The most current studies emphasize that in the process of changing social environments, people preserve cultural and psychological affiliations to their native countries and show identity as a continuous negotiation between spaces of belonging (Park & Gerrits, 2021).

2.1 Transnational Belonging and the Formation of an Internet Identity

Park and Gerrits (2021) discovered that migrants in Germany anticipated their identities through online networks to express and manage their identities in various contexts. The research on Korean migrants proved that through the use of digital platforms it is possible to act with many cultural selves simultaneously, depending on the audience and aim. This is in line with the idea of multi-local belonging by Vertovec (2009) who says that multi-local identity exists within overlapping spheres and not between definite limits. Equally, Nicolson (2024) considered the aspects of how migrant groups in Glasgow negotiate their identity, using transnational relationships that indicate that the concept of belonging today is not rooted in the geographical sense of location but instead in connection and movement. The results confirm the interpretation of the protagonist in *The Girl from Seoul* by Hussain as a transnational subject that negotiates the identity of both the memory and situational adjustment.

2.2 Young Mobility and Multi-Sited Identity

The issues of identity are also demonstrated in the studies of youth mobility. As Mazzucato et al. (2022) have shown, transnational youth mobility creates new identity categories that are

not purely host, but home oriented, transnational but situational. They claim that young migrants construct elastic identities, which are defined by aspirations, social networks and institutional frameworks. This is echoed in the changing definition of the protagonist, Indian amidst Indians, Pakistani amidst Pakistanis, which can be interpreted as a sort of strategy positioning within a transnational manner. The study stresses on the fact that identity in mobility is dynamic, circumstances-specific, and has to be redefined and re-defined by interaction with other individuals.

2.3 Geographies of Migration: Emotional

The more recent academic literature has received an interest in the emotional aspects of migration and belonging. The author further discussed emotional geographies of irregular migrants and discovered that fear, nostalgia and hope are not the residual effects of the process but constitute the main ingredients of identity construction (Campos-Delgado, 2021). Migration experiences, then, entail a re-structuring of emotional place attachments. This hero in the story by Hussain also undergoes the issue of identity which is based on affective experiences of comfort, alienation and desire that are transnational emotional attachments. Such experiences demonstrate the feeling of belonging even in the context of physical space, affirming the notion of translocational belonging provided by Anthias (2018), that is, the feeling of emotions and connections across territorial boundaries.

2.4 Digital Mediation and Identity Work

The digital platforms are becoming a place of identity building among transnational people. Binah-Pollak (2022) also found out that Chinese international students were able to negotiate cultural identity and adjust to the pandemic in online discussions that helped them to cope. The paper identifies virtual communication as a source of emotional and social continuity that allows migrants to exist in a number of cultural identities. This view offers a contemporary way to comprehend the inner speech of the protagonist and his attempts at preserving the cultural integrity as he is physically far away, being in the country of his origin.

2.5 Transcultural Capital and Adaptation Creativity

Other recent reports also bring about the concept of transcultural capital, which is the accumulated skills, tastes, and knowledge of migrants to cope with the different cultures. According to Cubas (2023), this kind of capital allows people to adjust strategically and

become more acculturated but not assimilated, making cultural hybridity a resource and not a conflict. This model is applicable to *The Girl from Seoul* in which the change of the protagonist is described as a classical musician who becomes a pop singer, which symbolizes the identity not as a loss but as the redefinition of cultural capital in a transnational context.

2.6 Narrative and Memory as Techniques of Self-Making

Ernstberger (2023) notes the importance of the use of stories and memory to preserve transnational identity. Migrants fill the gaps that exist between the past and the present through narrative practices. This process is reflected in the creative self-expression of the protagonist in writing because when he writes poetry, he is engaged in self-recognition and survival in dislocation. In the same vein, Popescu (2024) has also discovered that cross-cultural adaptation is better when a person does not lose national symbols and language, implying that linguistic and artistic tradition makes transnational identity even more consistent.

2.7 Generalization and Application to the Present Research

Together, these new researches lead to a few major conclusions. First, migration identity is first and foremost a multi-sited and dynamic process that occurs in the context of interactions in geographical, digital, and emotional dimensions (Nicolson, 2024). Second, the emotional aspect of belonging, and a sense of belonging and a sense of estrangement are present and constitute the experience of transnationalism, as they are interconnected (Campos-Delgado, 2021). Third, cultural adaptation is creative and agency-based since people manipulate cultural materials in order to build new meanings (Cubas, 2023). These insights offer the theoretical framework of the study of *The Girl from Seoul* by Aamer Hussain by the Transnational Identity Theory because this story reveals the identity of the main character as one that is fluid, negotiated, and constantly reconstituted across the boundaries.

2.8 Theory Formation of The Transnational Identity Theory

The identity concept has been greatly changed in the postcolonial and migration studies through the essentialist concept into fluid and relational concepts. The theorists like Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, and Edward Said that came before offered the guidelines to the concept of identity in the circumstances of displacement, diaspora, and cultural mixes. Nevertheless, in the modern era of international mobility and digital interconnectedness, the scholars such as Vertovec (2009) and Anthias (2018) redefine identity as transnational, that is, as the

creation of trans-boundary practices, multi-sited belonging, and sentimental attachments that transcend the dichotomy of home and host culture. This theoretical paradigm gives the conceptual foundation into the study of *The Girl from Seoul* by Aamer Hussain, a story that is located in the interlacing cultural geographies and emotional worlds.

2.9 Cultural Identity to Hybridity.

The landmark piece of Stuart Hall (1990) on cultural identity was a leap in that it dismissed essentialist perspectives of a definite, singular self. The identity of Hall is both becoming and being and is something shaped by the experience of the past and the constant cultural exchange. He says that the diasporic identities are produced as a result of a continuous formation of change that represents the memory of the origin and experience of displacement. Although this framework sheds light on the dynamics of hybridity and cultural negotiation, it is, to some extent, confined to the dichotomy of homeland and diaspora and is concerned with the conflict between the influences of the old and new cultures.

This debate is further mentioned by Homi Bhabha (1994) in his opinion of cultural hybridity and the Third Space, where new identities are created due to translation and negotiation between colonizer and colonized. The Bhabha model focuses on instability and productiveness of identity formation in the postcolonial environment, with ambiguity as a resistance site. However, his theory focuses mainly on colonial relations of power and symbolic cultural exposures unlike the content of material and emotional experiences of transnational migrants who sustain more than one attachment to a foreign country.

Equally, in the case of Said (1978) *Orientalism*, the pre-destined power-knowledge formations that shape the West to project the East as its cultural Other is predetermined. Although Said work is still a core of the postcolonial criticism, the binary nature of the work; West and East is likely to limit identity formation in terms of opposites. Modern identities of diasporas, though, tend to resist such binary location, and entail their concomitant membership in several worlds and relationships that are not necessarily oppositional but mobile, networked, and affective.

2.10 The development of Transnational Identity

To address both globalization and the rise of mobility, other scholars like Vertovec (2009) came out with the concept of transnationalism to refer to the multidimensional relationships, including economic, political, cultural, and familial links among migrants that bind them to

other than a single nation-state. The framework proposed by Vertovec focuses on the fact of multi-sited belonging and the presence of multiple social worlds and their simultaneous involvement without the necessity of viewing the process of migration as resulting in assimilation or the disappearance of culture. This repositioning place identity as a negotiation that occurs between two cultures but rather as a process of networking that occurs across borders and conditions.

Anthias (2018) develops the idea of translocational positionality by building on the sociological framework by Vertovec focusing specifically on defining the concept of belonging and identity based on the location, social hierarchy, and intersectional experience interaction. Anthias states that identity should be perceived as positional and processual that changes with the movement of people in space, social categories, and relations. Her orientation prefigures the emotional, gendered, and classed aspects of belonging, which presents a more detailed and comprehensive picture of transnational experience.

These theories build on previous theories by removing mobility, emotion, and digital connectivity as core to identity making. In contrast with Hall and his emphasis on the idea of diaspora as a place of roots and routes, the transnational identity theory understands the notion of identity as a chain of affections, a system of links that persons maintain despite geographical separation by way of communications, memory, and cultural practice. This framework is especially proficient in the analysis of such narratives as *The Girl from Seoul*, the identity of a main character is not formed due to assimilation or loss but due to continuous emotional bargaining in many areas of cultures.

2.11 The development of Beyond Hybridity and Postcolonial Binaries

Transnational identity theory has a number of ways in which it breaks the previous paradigms. To begin with, it transcends the dualistic framework of home and foreign culture that defines the description of Hall (1990) and Bhabha (1994). The transnational approach views identity as a multi-layered, multi-networked place between two poles, as opposed to the concept of identity as a space. Second, it predicts the affective and routine aspects of identity how feelings, connection, and conducted practice reinforce transnational belonging (Anthias, 2018). Third, it is focused on agency and fluidity that emphasize the strategic positioning of individuals to reorganize their cultural connection, as opposed to being receptive to outside forces (Cubas, 2023).

This theoretical change allows more complex accounts of migrant stories in literary studies. The protagonist in *The Girl from Seoul* demonstrates what is referred to by Anthias (2018) as translocational belonging, as she is identified through positional changes between the South Asian, Asian, and Western subjectivities, based on the situation. Her affective relationship to music, language, and memory reflects the concept of simultaneity by Vertovec (2009): that of living many cultural lives at a time. The protagonist of Hussain, in contrast to the hybrid subject in the Third Space of Bhabha, is not merely a combination of cultures, but constantly re-creates the subjectivity by engaging in affective, creative and social practices that transcend physical and cultural boundaries.

2.12 Theoretical Synthesis and Application

In the case of *The Girl from Seoul*, transnational identity theory can be used to offer a dynamic approach to the understanding of the emotional and psychological bargaining of belonging on the part of the protagonist. Her fluid self-assimilation - Indian among Indians, Oriental among East Asians - is a manifestation of transnational multiplicity and not hybrid fixity. The nostalgic and adaptive attachments of the protagonist show that the identity of the globalized world is not reconciling between one culture and the other but rather the continual reconstruction of the identity through movement, emotion, and creativity.

In this way, transnational identity theory is a synthesis and a continuation of the previous knowledge of Hall, Bhabha, and Said. It keeps their focus on the processes of cultural negotiation and power relations but moves them to a global, fluid, and affective environment where identity is continuously moving. This methodology is more attuned to the realities of modern-day diasporic experience and, as such, the present study can focus not only on the narrative of the protagonist as one of displacement but upon the transnational identity and the emotional self-construction.

2.13 The Transnational Identity Theory in the Modern Literary Analysis

In recent research in the field of postcolonial and diasporic literary studies, Transnational Identity Theory has become a popular method of understanding how literary subjects are formed through the process of global mobility, digital connectivity and cross-cultural attachments. This theoretical lens builds on previous postcolonial theories by locating the identity in the flows of emotion, culture, and transnational space instead of national borders (Anthias, 2018). Writers such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Mohsin Hamid, and Aamer Hussain

in South Asian literature are able to document this stream of belonging and psychological ambiguity of living between worlds.

The author Jhumpa Lahiri has explored many of her narratives, including *The Namesake* (2003) and *Earth* (2008), in transnational terms of emotional and linguistic bargaining, as opposed to mere generational opposition. Banerjee (2022) articulates that the characters of Lahiri live in transnational emotional space, which is generated by the ongoing translation process between language and homeland. In the same way, *Exit West* (2017) by Hamid depicts translocal belonging, a type of attachment that is not grounded in place but a collective experience, which reflects the concept of migration as both physical movement and experience (Chambers, 2021). The readings emphasize the way in which transnational identity theory prefigures the mobility, feeling, and agency in the diasporic narratives.

The short stories of Aamer Hussain, such as *The Girl from Seoul*, are additional examples of this paradigm with their silent, reflective descriptions of migrants who fend their belonging. According to Khan (2020), the protagonists of Hussain are transnational drifting people, who are neither in no language, nor in no emotional geographies, and where it is possible to see that selfhood is a chain of shifting affiliations. Similarly, other authors, including Nayar (2021) and Singh (2023) also state that South Asian diasporic fiction is no longer founded on the previous paradigms of exile or hybridity but rather on a sense of transnational fluidity, in which characters maintain multiple cultural affiliations at the same time. This is a pivotal twist to literary identity as a conceptualization, no longer of cultural conflict, but of continuity, emotion and mobility.

2.14 Research Gap

Whereas the topic of hybridity, diasporic longing, and postcolonial displacement has been extensively discussed in the past, little has been done on transnational reconstruction of identity in South Asian short fiction, particularly in the works of Aamer Hussain. Available literature tends to interpret hybridity or alienation using the terms of Hall or Bhabda but seldom focusses on translocational belonging (Anthias 2018) or multi-sited identity when such intimate emotional landscapes are concerned as Hussain describes. This work hence occupies a very important gap by analysing *The Girl from Seoul* based on the Transnational Identity Theory which shows how identity construction takes place in accordance with cross-border affect, cultural memory, and emotional negotiation instead of assimilation or resistance.

Research Methodology

The proposed study uses the qualitative research design that incorporates the Transnational Identity Theory (Anthias, 2018) and the thematic analysis introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006) to discuss the process of identity construction in *The Girl from Seoul* by Amer Hussain. The qualitative methodology allows the depth analysis of the experienced life of the main character in transnational cultural spaces and the dynamics of interaction of emotional, social, and psychological aspects of identity construction across the boundaries.

The study procedure is in the six-step model of thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) familiarization with the reading matter, (2) coming up with the first codes, (3) finding the themes, (4) going through the themes, (5) defining and naming the themes, and (6) writing the report. This is a systematic approach that enables the detection and explanation of common trends in regards to cultural displacement, belonging, adaptation, and self-reconstruction. The themes were discussed in relation to the transnational identity formation, in reference to the way in which the selfhood of the protagonist is formed as a result of his ongoing process of negotiation between his transnational origins in South Asia and his London surroundings.

The transnational theory combined with thematic analysis gives a loose but strict model of studying the notion of identity as a psychological and sociocultural process. The purpose of the methodology is not to positively correct meaning, but to follow the way the identity is expressed, destabilized, and redefined due to cultural contacts, emotional memory, and transcultural positioning. This paper explores the ideas of how the transformation of the protagonist is a reflection of the larger processes of transnational belonging in modern diasporic writings, through close textual analysis.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on Transnational Identity Theory and mostly enlightened by the writings of Steven Vertovec (2009) and Floya Anthias (2018), who define identity as multi-sited, fluid, and relational in the globalized transnational world. In a broader departure with the previous cultural identity model that was put forward by Stuart Hall (1990), this model has treated identity not as a negotiation between the home culture and the host culture but as a continuous construction process taking place in many places as well as social situations. Transnational environments keep defining belonging by ever-shifting employing mobility,

memory, emotional attachments, and routine practices that bind people to both the homeland and the hostland at the same time.

According to Vertovec (2009), transnational identity is a multi-local identity in which people have cultural, familial, and symbolic connections with national boundaries. Equally, Anthias (2018) presents the notion of translocational belonging whereby identity is constructed by displaced positionalities in the transpiring systems of power, culture, and history.

Collectively, these viewpoints offer a vibrant theoretical framework of the analysis of the main character in *The Girl from Seoul* who experiences her identity rebuilt through cross-cultural adjustment, emotional alienation, creative outlet in London.

Through this theoretical framework, the paper understands the struggles of the protagonist as not merely indicative of cultural hybridity, but rather indicative of transnational negotiation of the self-identity, the process of which is characterized by both incorporation and dislocation. The way transnational subjects lead lives in between but continuously reform themselves through connection and difference is portrayed in his changing sense of belonging, emotional attachments and re-creations through artwork. In such a way, Transnational Identity Theory provides a more modernized and sophisticated approach to the identity-making process in diasporic texts, which explains the psychological, emotional, and cultural supply changes of migration in the globalized world.

Data Analysis

This paper attempts to interpret *The Girl from Seoul* by Aamer Hussain according to the rules of the Transnational Identity Theory (Anthias, 2018) through thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). It is about the way in which the experiences of displacement, belonging, and self-reconstruction of the protagonist can be considered to be the manifestation of the complicated identity formation process that takes place on the cultural boundaries. The analysis can be used to understand the way identity in transnational situations is dynamic and constantly reworked by movement, relations, and memory by following the recurrent themes of tension between cultures, emotional negotiation, and adaptation. Every theme below displays how the narrative of Hussain is able to reflect the psychological and emotional truth regarding the existence of existing between worlds belonging to none, but never fully belonging to any.

4.1 Negotiating Between Native and Adopted Worlds: A Transnational Tension

In the context of the Transnational Identity Theory (Anthias, 2018) experiences of the protagonist in *The Girl from Seoul* demonstrate the multifaceted identity formation process being conducted in cross-cultural environments and not inside of the specific cultural one. According to transnational identity, migrants and diasporic people operate in the “multi-sited social fields”; their identity is constantly constructed by their native and their destination. This condition of in-betweenness, which consists of belonging and alienation at the same time, is illustrative of the protagonist in London on his journey.

The initial sense of transnationality comes at the initial stages of the story when the protagonist reveals that he feels “notable in his multiracial community”, distinguished in his multiracial society. He lives in an international world where dialects, ethnicities, and cultures blend, but he knows that he is “the outsider”. Instead of merely experiencing displacement, this moment shows what Anthias (2018) refers to as translocational positionality as a state in which people establish themselves in respect to certain cultural situations that shape their identity. His “outsiderness” is not just isolation as such but also a kind of cross-border self-consciousness which determines his status in the diasporic terrain of London.

The negotiation of transnational belonging of the protagonist is also apparent in the relationship with Kim, a South Korean woman. Their first interaction “our being Asian being Oriental”, which makes them have a temporary friendship of being other in the West. However, their differences such as the rapid assimilation of Kim as compared to his reluctance depict the degree to which transnational identities are distorted and dynamic. According to Anthias (2018), belonging is not the same; it is defined by overlapping elements like gender, ethnicity, and personal flexibility. The protagonist of Kim feels both at home and alien through Kim, who is experiencing both the familiarity with the culture and the alienation of his inability to assimilate, a fact that supports the multi-layered outlook of transnational identity.

His efforts on assimilation “I was learning to dress, talk and look like a Londoner” symbolize an effort to fit in the host culture whilst preserving some aspects of himself. This bilateral location reflects the concept presented by Anthias (2018) of multi-local belonging, in which people belong in more than one cultural location but are not entirely engulfed by any of them. The external accommodation of the protagonist into the norm of the British society is in

opposition to his internal commitment to the South Asian values and establishes a tension that is typical of the transnational identity formation.

The interpersonal cultural clashes that he notices the affliction of public intimacy, strange social customs only bring out further the moral and conductive measurements between his internalized ancestry and his outer world. These are not the signs and symptoms of a cultural shock, but those of his transnational consciousness, in the light of which, he is continuously negotiating what he is ready to accept, reject, or alter. His response to such actions highlights the adherence to home culture values in his changing identity in the foreign land.

Lastly, this theme is further developed in the scene when Kim ridicules his virginity and indicates what extent cultural attitudes towards sexuality and modesty are entrenched in his character even in a new environment. In terms of transnationalism, these are moments of the survival of moral regimes that transcend the territorial boundaries. The pain that he experiences is symbolic of the fact that he does not want to assimilate completely and is still grappling with his own cultural demands of the two worlds: the native world and his own adopted world.

Through this the experiences that the protagonist in *The Girl from Seoul* has gone through can be viewed as a representation of the transnational tension of identity the struggle to reconcile various cultural rationales and remain emotionally and ethically tied to their roots. His existence in London does not only comprise a displacement journey but a permanent act of cross-border self-construction, in which being part belongs to the negotiating process instead of being a goal.

4.2 Cultural Dislocation and the Re-creation of Self: Transnational Belonging and Emotional Geography

In the context of the Transnational Identity Theory, the events of dislocation experienced by the protagonist in *The Girl from Seoul* explain how identity is always created and recreated across borders, cultures, and emotions. His experience depicts more than a mere loss of home, and his trip is a sign of what Anthias (2018) terms translocational belonging as an experience of people bargaining their identities in various cultural sites. Migration does not break the sense of self of the protagonist but on the contrary reconstructs it using the means of memory, language and new bonds linking him as a part to his native land and the host country at the same time.

A major manifestation of this transnational status is the loss of home and language, “I had lost two countries, I had lost two languages; I knew that there is no place to come back to”. It is not just a mere indication of absence; in a way changing psychological geography where belonging is extended across nations. Anthias (2018) states that in a transnational setting, “home” is a dynamic phenomenon an emotional and symbolical environment and not a definite geographic place. To the main character, the event of losing language and homeland is not the end but it is the start of a new form of identity that dwells between places and not within them.

The earliest snowfall is “a kind of homecoming”, which indicates the very frail establishment of a new belonging in a new land. As a transnational, this scene can be seen as the protagonist trying to establish himself emotionally in a new setting. The snow is the symbol of temporary belonging temporary feeling of comfort which does not eliminate the displacement but mollify it. According to Anthias (2018), identity in mobility is not a complete integration but rather a strategic positioning during the moments of being there amid unfamiliarity.

His assertion of flexible identities; “Indian among Indians, Pakistani among Pakistanis, Oriental among East Asians” shows his capability to transform identity depending on the social situation. Such flexibility is what makes transnational subjectivity: people can move between various cultural scripts based on location and people they are interacting with. Anthias (2018) refers to this multi-sited belonging, in which the subject of the multi-sited belonging is the creation of an overlaying identity by the diasporic people, which functions across cultural and geographic borders. Chameleone-like behavior of the main character is not a sign of cultural confusion, but rather cultural competence in moving through various transnational space.

This scene when Kim becomes foreign even to herself after she refuses to embrace his culture and his heritage was uninteresting, which indicates that even similarity with her in terms of displacement does not mean similarity with his belonging. This is consistent with the concept of Anthias that transnational identity does not exist as homogenous; people have different experiences of belonging depending on their positionalities, past experiences and personal preference. The fact that the protagonist even in his environment of fellow migrants cannot find his place also contributes to the fact that the life of a transnational is complex: one can be related and unrelated at the same time.

Lastly, the cultural memory across the borders is manifested in the emotional attachment of the protagonist to the home-based songs and his wish to sing in his native language. The local and global being transnational is represented by his interest in the art forms of his motherland and his desire to mix it with Western music. This artistic urge portrays the concept of transnational cultural production by Anthias (2018) which is the production of hybrid identities in transnational spaces. He creates a self through music that unites his two worlds as opposed to picking one over the other.

Combined, all these experiences demonstrate that cultural dislocation in *The Girl from Seoul* is not only about loss but also about a re-creation of the self in the transnational space as an ongoing process. The identity of the protagonist is created by memory, adaptation and emotional negotiation as opposed to geographical belonging. The alienation to partial acceptance he has experienced depicts the dynamism, fluidity, and cross-boundary, as well as identity in the globalized world confirming the statement made by Anthias (2018) that belonging is not static, but it is constantly redefined by social location and mobility.

4.3 Cross-Cultural Adaptation and the Reconstruction of Self -Transnational transformation and inner negotiation

The acculturation process of the main character of the *Girl from Seoul* to London reflects how identity is transformed during transnational situations, in which the self is reformulated in the ongoing process of conversation between the familiar and the foreign. In the prism of Transnational Identity Theory, such adaptations do not mark a linear process of assimilation but rather a complex process of reconstruction of selfhood due to cultural mobility, emotional displacement, and translocational positioning (Anthias, 2018). The identities of people working across various cultural spaces tend to be malleable and discontinuous, and this is a manifestation of the psychological bargaining of belonging, which follows the migration.

The instability defining transnational subjectivity is reflected in the self-reflection and self-deception of the protagonist who refers to himself as “protean” and alters his voice to fit the people around him (“Indian among Indians and Pakistani among Pakistanis, Oriental with East Asians”). Instead of interpreting this as conflict or disingenuity, this may be seen as a survival technique in multi-sited belonging (Anthias, 2018). His identity changing every moment is more of a comment upon the fact that, to address the new cultural demands one must change, but it also shows that one is anxious because of losing the sense of a coherent self. This malleable fluidity is not only empowerment but also psychological price: on the

one hand, he is able to survive in most cultural areas, but on the other, he is not a complete member of any.

His goals are changed, as he no longer wants to study classical music, he wants to become a Western pop singer, another aspect of transnational change. His change can be described as positional dislocation defined by Anthias (2018) as a situation when people redefine their aspirations and identities following the host culture-based hierarchies of power and symbolic capital. The protagonist makes this particular decision, which is to embrace pop instead of classical music, internalizing the Western ideals of modernity and success, showing that in many cases the transnational identity implies negotiating between authenticity and social acceptance. Such transformation is not some mere loss of cultural integrity but rather a practical maneuver which reveals the role of global cultural flows on the process of self-formation.

This feeling of being displaced in spite of his new talents, his talents of “dress and talk as a Londoner” without feeling like home, are the manifestations of the emotional contradiction of transnational belonging. Anthias (2018) observes that despite being a successful integrator at face value, there is likelihood that the migrants could feel as “disembedded belonging” where emotion rootedness does not accompany social adjustment. The fact that the protagonist still experiences that sense of not belonging in the transnational context implies that one can never become fully adapted in that environment; he can still only belong but conditionally. Such an emotional dissonance is a good illustration of how exterior conformity frequently conceals an interior disintegration - a major conflict in the formation of transnational identity.

The fact that he is isolated in romantic relationships, especially the comment that Kim makes, which is: “To leave you, you are too young”, is just a symbolic representation of the boundaries of relations in the cultural adaptation. Although he tries to find intimacy as a mediating world, his emotional and cultural location cannot be translated. The problem as to ethnicity, gender, and speed of assimilation is not wiped out by the even shared diasporic experiences. This is in line with the concept of belonging that Anthias (2018) introduces: it is not only cultural but also the way power, privilege, and perception interact in transnational locations that inform identity. His unsuccessful marriages accentuate the marital weaknesses inherent in cross-cultural adjustment complete incorporation that keeps him in the middle between attachment and alienation.

Writing as a form of self-recognition is an important point of agency and self-construction. In his poetry filled with loneliness and desire, he makes it a transnational act of self-production, in which art serves as a medium connecting broken worlds. His artistic expression restores to him the control of his fragmented identity as a narrator. This makes it the process which is transnational cultural production, the production of hybrid meanings beyond national borders as Anthias (2018) describes it. This expression of his emotional displacement helps the protagonist to make loss literary and psychological survival by showing how migrants can create the identity by continuing the narrative despite the discontinuity.

More importantly, the mental tension of eternal adjustment can also be discovered in the path that the protagonist takes. The transnational space requires one to negotiate continually who they are, and this results in what Anthias calls identity fatigue: the weariness of living in between two systems of values in search of coherence. His protean self is a survival strategy, as well as an indication of being out of place. So, not just describing the personal process of evolution, the story also criticizes the emotional price of international mobility, how the feeling of belongingness across borders can be as disintegrating as it can be enriching.

In a nutshell, *The Girl from Seoul* depicts the process of cross-cultural adaptation as a dialectic of loss and creation, and the experience of the protagonist is redefined via movement, memory, and adjusting to it. His identity, according to the transnational perspective, becomes mobile, negotiated and emotionally layered, not situated between two poles, but constantly reconstituted in a global environment of belonging. His encounters indicate that identity in the transnational world is neither a destination nor a resolution, but a continuous process involving becoming on the other side.

Conclusion, Findings, and Discussion

This paper examined how the notion of identity formation in transnational spaces is expressed by *The Girl from Seoul* by Aamer Hussain through the theoretical perspective of the Transnational Identity Theory (Anthias, 2018) and the usage of a thematic analysis of the novel by Braun and Clarke (2006). It was found that the selfhood of the protagonist is not characterized by a mere negotiation between the native and the host cultures but is rather formed as a result of the continuous process of mobility, adaptation, and emotional restructuring at the cross of the cultural boundaries. His life in London reflects a sense of translocational belonging stated by Anthias (2018) is an identity that is continuously renegotiated in between the overlapping cultural, social, and emotional spaces.

The results suggest that the cultural dislocation in the text is not only a loss but also a place of imaginative re-creation. The back and forth familiarity and estrangement, the actor-network of his performances of self, and his entrapment in both the home country and the host country reflects the concept of multi-sited belonging as developed by Vertovec (2009). His identity appears as a synthesis of traditions of birth and practises of adoption that is a dynamic one and demonstrates that transnational subjects build a sense of belonging in terms of mobility, memory and cultural translation instead of territorial rootedness. This once again confirms that identity in the transnational condition is malleable and troubled an open-ended becoming as opposed to a fixed being.

Furthermore, the thematic investigation of the self-reflection, adjustment and artistic production showed how transnational identity bears psychological implications. The protean self of the main character who is always adapting, monitoring, reconstructing and reinventing- reveals the fatigue and strength of cross-border living. His poems and emotional investigation are transnational self making, uniting his divided worlds with creativity and memory. In this respect, the *Girl from Seoul* depicts identity as an emotional geography in which the belongingness is defined not so much by the geographic place, but by the affective and imaginative bonds that cross the borders.

Finally, the research can add to modern debates on the subject of diaspora and migration by pointing out that the identity in the globalized world can no longer be explained in terms of binary concepts of home and host. Rather, according to Hussain narrative, belonging should be considered to be trans-national, multi-layered and constantly in a state of renegotiation. The adventure of the main character summarizes the irony of contemporary mobility in which assimilation goes hand in hand with estrangement, and affiliation can never be separated with displacement. In this reading, *The Girl from Seoul* is an example of how migration literature enlightens the reality in the life of migrants: people who are always on the move and make sense and identity in the cultural spaces that are constantly changing.

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