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A Divided Kingdom?
Reflections on Multi-Ethnic Britain in the New Millennium

On 11 October 2000, a Commission sponsored by the Runnymede Trust, an 'independent and voluntary funded' think tank founded in 1968 and dedicated to promoting 'a successful multi-ethnic Britain',[1] published a report on 'the future of multi-ethnic Britain'.[2] Some thirty years after the earlier Rose Report on *Colour and Citizenship* (1969),[3] the Parekh Report provided an up-to-date survey of the ongoing debates in this contested area. However, it must also be seen as a reaction to sobering events and assessments of the 1990s, the most prominent being the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, which brought the phenomenon of institutional racism to widespread attention.[4] Nevertheless, the report's opening move was to position itself at a turning point in British history which called for a new 'Vision for Britain' and a 'Rethinking [of] the National Story', and it ended with some fifty pages of suggestions for 'Strategies of Change'. Though there was, at the time, some hostility from conservative circles, creating a slight media uproar even before the report was officially launched, the reception was mostly equable if not enthusiastic. Writing in response to a *Daily Telegraph* front-page headline on 10 October ('[Home Secretary Jack] Straw Wants to Rewrite Our History'), Gary Younge observed in the *Guardian*:

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1 Cf. The Runnymede Trust, 'About Runnymede', <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/about.html> (accessed 1 February 2008).

2 *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain,* ed. by Bhikhu Parekh (London: Profile, 2000). Areas mentioned in the Parekh report are 'Issues and Institutions' such as 'Police and Policing', 'The Wider Criminal Justice System', 'Education', 'Arts, Media and Sport', 'Health and Welfare', 'Employment', 'Immigration and Asylum', 'Politics and Representation' and, finally, 'Religion and Belief'.

3 *Colour and Citizenship: A Report on British Race Relations*, ed. by E.J.B. Rose and Associates (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

4 18-year-old Stephen Lawrence was stabbed to death by a gang of white youth in South London in 1993. The perpetrators were never brought to justice due to flawed police investigations. Upon a media campaign initiated by the Lawrence family, Sir William Macpherson of Cluny was commissioned by Home Secretary Jack Straw to carry out a public inquiry into the 'matters arising from the death of Stephen Lawrence'. Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*, http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm42/4262/4262.htm. The continuing topicality of the Stephen Lawrence case is indicated by the fact that in February 2008, the Stephen Lawrence Centre in Deptford was vandalised.

> If you really want to take the racial temperature in Britain, you would be better off examining the reactions to the report on multi-ethnic Britain rather than the report itself. Not that the report is not engaging [...]. But the reactions [...] suggest that we may be no closer to having a mature and open debate about race in this country than we are about cannabis [...]. The 'our' the Telegraph refers to is essentially white, English and nationalistic. For huge members of Scots, Welsh and Irish, not to mention those of Caribbean, Asian, African and Chinese descent the idea [programmatically introduced in the Parekh report] that 'the description of British will never do on its own' is not news [...]. The Indian restaurants on 'our' high streets, the music on 'our' stereos and the Olympians on 'our' television screen are all powerful indications that while Britain will always be a majority white country, Britishness and whiteness are no longer synonymous [...]. So if people stop using the term 'Britishness' it will not be because Bhikhu Parekh tells them so, but because the word has lost its meaning. That is truly what the right is afraid of. It is no accident that the Telegraph refers to the past while the report refers to the future [...]. That does not mean there are no problems with the report [...]. The Future of Multi-ethnic Britain is a report with valuable signposts about where we have to go to become a country built on equality and mutual respect; the initial reactions provide valuable indications of the kind of barriers that will have to be overcome to get there.[5]

Less than a year later, however, in the wake of 9/11, the critical but well-meaning attitude discernible in the quoted extract had vanished even from the pages of the liberal *Guardian.* Writing on 6 November 2001, columnist Hugo Young claimed that, while earlier debates were centred around the question of 'whether, and if so how, non-white migrants would be allowed to become full members of this society', the new situation called for an altogether different approach:

> [The Parekh report] does not read well in the light of post-September Islamic outpourings. It made reasonable recommendations for enhancing the old remedies, and needed at the time some defence against the Powellite ranting that greeted it from the hard right. But its ideology can now be seen as a useful bible for any Muslim who insists that its religio-cultural priorities, including the defence of jihad against America, overrides his civic duties of loyalty, tolerance, justice and respect for democracy [...]. Perhaps the trouble for British Muslims as a community is that not enough of these uncomfortable questions have been asked of them. 'Multi-culturalism' gives them shelter from decisions about allegiance that the events of 11/9 [sic] can no longer allow to be postponed.[6]

In its extremes (and mostly by chance and unrepresentatively), this sea-change in attitudes towards multiculturalism can also be found in reader responses to

[5] Gary Younge, 'Celebrate, Don't Tolerate Minorities', *Guardian*, 11 October 2000 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/britain/article/0,,380485,00.html (1 February 2008)>.

[6] Hugo Young, 'A Corrosive National Danger in Our Multicultural Model: British Muslims Must Answer Some Uncomfortable Questions', *Guardian*, 6 November 2001 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Columnists/Column/0,,588553,00.html> (1 February 2008). Young identifies the following crucial question: '[D]o all citizens of migrant stock, particularly Muslims, actually want to be full members of the society in which they live? A shocking and unexpected reversal. September 11 threw up many crises for the world. For Britain, none could be more profound than this one'.

the Parekh report on Amazon's UK website, which move rather provocatively from 'A must-read for all those who want to improve the future!' (16 November 2000) and 'A waste of a great topic to produce a report about' (4 February 2001) to 'Politically biased and deeply skewed' (20 January 2006) and 'Disgraceful, post-modern, antinational, deconstructive drivel' (14 April 2006).

Somewhere between these extremes the earliest re-negotiations of cultural identities in multi-ethnic Britain after the year 2000 took place against the backdrop of the 9/11 attacks and the renewed shock of the London bombings on 7 July 2005 which alerted the public to a possible threat from 'within'. Perhaps the most scathing satirical assessment of the new situation can be found in Rupert Thomson's novel *Divided Kingdom* (2005). Writing as a (white) British expatriate in Barcelona, Thomson envisages a bleak dystopian landscape germinating in a 'Britain that looks precisely like a scaremonger's version of the present day'.[7] Many reviews struck a similar note:

> In a week when political leaders have been unveiling their parties' general election manifestos, Rupert Thomson's new novel [...] can make for uncomfortable reading. If the scaremongers are to be believed, we are inundated by immigrants, awash with petty crime and violence, racial abuse is rife, our police are overstretched and underfunded. There are travelling bands of communities disrupting the bucolic life of our country folk and morality is crumbling. It's a short hop from here to the dystopian nightmare Thomson has created in Divided Kingdom, where the grinning faces of leaders such as Michael Song leer down on the benighted population.[8]

In the face of mounting social tension and ever-increasing violence, the administration of Thomson's fictional version of the United Kingdom hits upon a radical solution which sheds an uneasy light on the multiculturalism debate of recent years. Bypassing matters of race and class altogether, the 'Rearrangement' (p.5)[9] of the populace is organised according to psychological disposition as suggested by a resurrected version of the medieval theory of humours. After years of secret monitoring, the formerly United Kingdom is drawn and quartered, as it were, and its inhabitants are violently relocated to the quarter which fits their psychological disposition according to government findings: those who are categorised as sanguine are confined to the Red Quarter. The melancholics must reside in the Green Quarter, the

[7] Alex Clark, 'Child, Interrupted', review of *Divided Kingdom*, *Daily Telegraph*, 10 April 2005, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/arts/main.jhtml?xml=/arts/2005/04/10/botho10.xml> (1 February 2008).

[8] Carl Wilkinson, 'Good Sense of Humour Essential', review of *Divided Kingdom*, *The Observer*, 17 April 2005 <http://books.guardian.co.uk/reviews/generalfiction/0,,1461545,00.html> (1 February 2008).

[9] Rupert Thomson, *Divided Kingdom* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006 [2005]). All further references appear parenthetically in the text.

phlegmatics in the Blue Quarter, and finally the cholerics in the Yellow Quarter. Their respective capitals cover parts of the former London.[10]

The narrator-protagonist Parry, who lives in the Red Quarter and rises through the ranks of its influential civil service, breaks away from his fully controlled life in the wake of a terrorist bomb attack (which in itself indicates that there is opposition to this brave new world). He finds himself on a picaresque od(d)yssey through all quarters, exposing and realising the full absurdity and suffering imposed by the system, which nevertheless can be read as a satirical take on the present:

> One way of understanding [the novel] is to suggest that all four of its zones represent contemporary Britain as seen through a different satirical scrim: The Yellow Quarter is violent, vulgar America-lite, while the Blue Quarter is a brooding, mystical nation of witches and pagans, and the Red Quarter belongs to sensible, upper-middle class Labour Party voters. (And the Green Quarter is very clearly the bleak and shabby Britain of the postwar years.)[11]

Finally, Parry makes his way back to the Red Quarter by adopting the identity of one of the White (!) People, a strange and gypsy-like group of unclassifiables abused in the Yellow Quarter, venerated in the Blue Quarter, and mostly ignored in the remaining ones. Disturbingly, he seems to do so with the connivance of the Red Quarter government, and while it is quite clear that he will persist in subverting the system in his private life with a girl smuggled in from a different quarter, there is a strong sense that the Red Quarter administration appropriates personalities of Thomas Parry's kind in order to secure its hegemonic status in the Divided Kingdom.

The novel comes closest to spelling out this unsettling convergence of fatalism and critique in the words of a clandestine resistance fighter called Fernandez whom Thomas Parry meets in the Yellow Quarter. Just in case the reader misses the implications for the present, they are spelled out explicitly by Fernandez:

> It's like racism, really, if you think about it [...]. I don't mean the old racism. That's dead and gone. I'm not interested in the colour of someone's skin. It's their thoughts that bother me. The new racism is psychological. What's strange is, we seem to need it – to thrive on it. If we don't have someone to despise, we feel uncomfortable, we feel we haven't properly defined ourselves. Hate gives us hard edges. And the authorities knew that, of course. In fact, they were banking on it. They force-fed us our own weakness – our intolerance, our bigotry. They rammed it down our throats [...]. They took the worst part of us and built a system out of it. And it worked – (pp.195-96)

[10] A map of the Divided Kingdom as well as information about its basic contours can be found under www.dividedkingdom.co.uk (5 February 2008).

[11] Andrew O'Hehir, review of *Divided Kingdom* on salon.com at <http://dir.salon.som/story/books/review/2005/06/24/thomson/> (5 February 2008).

Again, as in many of the quotes cited earlier in this introduction, the main question is: how inclusive is the 'we' that is persistently used in so many contributions to the debate? This question will have to be answered in each and every case: while Fernandez's 'we' refers clearly to humanity at large in its critical intent, it is also quite clear that this realisation of an oppositional minority in the world of the novel is not necessarily (or only in theory) shared by the population of the Divided Kingdom, some (many?) of whom profit from the new scheme of things. This, of course, implies a second fundamental question: who is speaking for whom by employing the seemingly inclusive 'we'? After all, politicians and governments are doing it all the time, as the slogan 'Michael Song. Voice of the People' (p.24) implies.

Caught between outright indignation and an acknowledgement that it will never be easy, a novel like *Divided Kingdom* testifies to the viability of fictional reflections on multi-ethnic Britain after the year 2000. Not everything has tipped to the worse after 9/11 – the refashioning of the national story seems to be unremittingly on its way with ground-breaking and high-profile histories of immigration and literature published in 2004,[12] in the wake of earlier decentring moves.[13] However, the nitty-gritty of everyday life and political processes has certainly become more difficult. The present collection of papers is a selection of contributions (all revised for this volume) to a conference held at Freiburg in February 2007. The aim of the conference was to provide a forum for readings, largely from a non-British perspective, of recent engagements with one of the most challenging multi-ethnic societies in Europe. Given the topicality of the issues at stake and the products in which they are represented, the readings offer varying and sometimes contradictory perspectives. However, certain *leitmotifs* transpire through all sections of the collection: a concern with identities and their construction, the question of a 'burden of representation', evaluations of the current situation in Britain, as well as the issue of space and belonging.

The volume aims at a first survey of the varied reactions to and interventions in this situation as it can be observed in novels, films and other fields of cultural practice in the first years of the new millennium. It is framed by the views of two British writers (one white, one of South Indian descent) whose opening statements (one fictional, one essayistic manifesto) introduce some

[12] Cf. Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* (London: Little, Brown, 2004) and the two final volumes of the Oxford English Literary History, vol. 12 (1960-2000): Randall Stevenson, *The Last of England?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and vol. 13 (1948-2000): Bruce King, *The Internationalization of English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[13] Cf., for example, Norman Davies, *The Isles: A History* (London: Macmillan, 1999).

of the most pressing thematic and institutional concerns of cultural production in *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+*. They provide insight into their own fictional work in two interviews conducted by Violeta Topalova and Angela Kurtz at the end of this volume. Patrick Neate gave us permission to print his short story 'The Little Book of Tommy: Another Tommy Akhtar Investigation', a spin-off from his novel *City of Tiny Lights* published in late June 2005, and thus very shortly before the 7/7 bombings. In *City of Tiny Lights*, Neate not only uncannily anticipated the terrorist attacks on the metropolitan subway system through the prism of hardboiled genre fiction centred around private eye Tommy Akhtar, a London-based second generation Ugandan-Indian ex-mujaheddin cricket lover; he also provides a sharp critique of the post-9/11 climate in Britain which also pervades 'The Little Book of Tommy'. Rajeev Balasubramanyam, author of the novel *In Beautiful Disguises* (2000), follows with a critique of 'The Rhetoric of Multiculturalism' under New Labour and its reverberations in multi-ethnic Britain in the new millennium. Balasumbramanyam takes a scathingly critical stance on what he perceives as a state-sponsored, corporate 'multiculturalist propaganda' which merely covers up a history of continuing racism in an unprecedented national image campaign; what is most problematic for Balasubramanyam, however, is that this propaganda has managed to successfully co-opt the mainstream of especially Asian-British cultural production for its own ends, which he demonstrates in readings of films such as Gurinder Chadha's *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002).

The opening statements raise a number of issues which merit careful consideration within the larger artistic and academic discourse, and which are tackled in the subsequent articles in this collection. To have set out this project with a brief reading of Rupert Thomson's *Divided Kingdom* is in many ways programmatic since after the turn of the millennium, it is no longer sufficient to consider the work of 'ethnic' or 'minority' artists separately in order to gain a composite and more or less representative picture of the state of the art; the contested field of race, religion and representation has long entered not only black and Asian representational practice, but also the white mainstream – examples discussed in this volume include, for instance, films by white filmmakers such as *Ae Fond Kiss* (2004), *Yasmin* (2004), *In this World* (2003), or *Children of Men* (2006) and *28 Days Later* (2003), as well as novels by writers such as Graham Swift, Ian McEwan and, not least, Patrick Neate. Similarly, black and Asian artists have long ceased to be exclusively occupied with 'minority' subjects matters. In this volume, this is exemplified by Zadie Smith's novels and the work of a range of visual artists like Sutapa Biswas and Ingrid Pollard.

The undisputed arrival of diversity in the mainstream of cultural production across ethnic barriers may be hailed as a first step towards the 'Vision for

Britain' outlined in the final pages of the Parekh report; but Rajeev Balasubramanyam's essay may equally make us suspicious of such utopian rhetoric in the aftermath of 9/11 and 7/7 when the politics of religious, ethnic and national affiliation have been pitched to the forefront of popular debates again. Are we beyond what Kobena Mercer has famously styled 'the burden of representation'[14] in black and Asian British art, or are the ethics of ethnic and religious speaking positions in fact becoming ever more pronounced and contested? Who is speaking for whom, and with what authority, in a kingdom divided or whole? Do filmmakers, novelists, visual artists and musicians tend to perpetuate the 'Vision' of the Parekh Report, or do dystopian scenarios along the lines of Rupert Thomson's novel set the tone? How do artists conceive of the contested borders of the kingdom in an increasingly globalised world of voluntary and forced mass migrations? Is the post-millennial metropolis represented as the site of what Paul Gilroy anticipates as peaceful multi-ethnic 'conviviality', or do 'post-colonial melancholia' and visions of violence prevail?[15] It is these and similar questions our contributors try to address. The articles to this volume are in this sense generically and thematically organised in five sections: two sections deal with recent film, another two are concerned with fiction and related prose, and one section deals with visual art and music.

The first section on recent film goes under the headline *Beyond the Burden of Representation?* (with a deliberate question mark). While this title would have fitted many contributions, it comprises three essays in which problems of ethnic identification and concomitant artistic overdetermination are exemplarily discussed with regard to Asian British film which, according to a recent overview, had successfully 'bidd[en] for the mainstream' over the course of the 1990s and largely moved beyond the 'burden of representation' by the turn of the millennium.[16] Ellen Dengel-Janic and Lars Eckstein's take in 'Bridehood Revisited: Disarming Concepts of Gender and Culture in Recent Asian British Film' starts from Rajeev Balasubramanyam's assessment in 'The Rhetoric of Multiculturalism' and questions the liberating potential of such mainstream success by highlighting the nostalgic and inherently reductive views on gender and transcultural exchange in films like Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) and *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002), Neil Biswas's *Second Generation* (2003), and Pratibha Parmar's *Nina's Heavenly Delights* (2006). Sandra Heinen ('Multi-Ethnic Britain on Screen: South Asian Diasporic Experience in Recent Feature Films'), in contrast,

14 Kobena Mercer, 'Black Art and the Burden of Representation', *Third Text* 10 (1990), 61-78.

15 Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London: Routledge 2004).

16 Barbara Korte and Claudia Sternberg, *Bidding for the Mainstream? Black and Asian British Film Since the 1990s* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004).

tends to view things more positively in a nuanced comparative reading of Karan Johar's Bollywood blockbuster *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham...* (2002), Ken Loach's *Ae Fond Kiss* (2004) and Gurinder Chadha's *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002), where at least the latter two are seen to successfully promote 'intercultural understanding and multiculturalism'. Claudia Sternberg, finally, presents a close reading of Kenny Glenaan's *Yasmin* (2004) ('Babylon North: British Muslims after 9/11 in *Yasmin*') in which, ironically, a white Scottish director tackles racist policing and social exclusion in an ethnographic approach more in line 'with Black British cinema of the 1970s and 1980s than with Asian British films of the 1990s and 2000s'.

The second section on film, placed later in the volume, is entitled *Borderlines and Contested Spaces*; it collects three essays which share an interest in legal and illegal border crossing and territorial contest in relation to questions of ethnicity. The section opens with Sissy Helff's investigation of 'Scapes of Refuge in Multicultural Britain: Representing Refugees in Digital Docudrama and Mockumentary'. Helff compares the discursive strategies of Michael Winterbottom's mockumentary of the odyssey of two Afghan refugees in *In This World* (2003) with two digital docudramas produced by actual (approved) refugees in a BBC workshop, and problematises them in the context of current debates about the status of multicultural Britain. Kathy-Anne Tan ('"If you're not on paper, you don't exist": Depictions of Illegal Immigration and Asylum in Film') complements this perspective by reading *In This World* against Winterbottom's next movie *Code 46* (2003), also revolving around refuge and 'illegality', albeit in the context of a 'science-fiction futuristic love story'. Analysing the widely different modes of representation, Tan concludes that both films really operate as companion pieces which mutually compensate some of their respective ideological shortcomings. Barbara Korte's 'Envisioning a Black Tomorrow? Black Mother Figures and the Issue of Representation in *28 Days Later* and *Children of Men*' continues Tan's interest in the dystopian vision of *Code 46* by looking at the latest post-millennial apocalyptic scenarios painted by two further white filmmakers, Danny Boyle (2003) and Alfonso Cuarón (2006). Both films place their characters in larger negotiations of Englishness against an iconography of territorial conflict, migration and refuge in their envisioning of a British future, which ties in with the focus of this section.

Thematically, films like *Children of Men* and *Code 46* would also fit the rubric *Multi-Ethnic Utopias and Dystopias*, which headlines the first section on prose fiction in this volume. Utopia and dystopia are not meant to be understood in the strict generic sense here, but refer to representational ideologies of contemporary multi-ethnic affairs more generally, ranging from relative optimism to bleak pessimism in a post-9/11 climate. Lucy Gillet's readings in

'Representations of Multicultural Society in Contemporary British Novels' make a beginning in this vein by juxtaposing the 'cosy' multiculturalism of Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) with the much more sombre vision of Caryl Phillips's *A Distant Shore* (2003); yet Gillet also intriguingly highlights how white writers like Ian McEwan and Graham Swift work against notions of a monolithic Englishness alongside the likes of Smith and Phillips. Sabine Nunius then investigates '"Sameness" in Contemporary British Fiction: (Metaphorical) Families in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*'. Nunius explores how Smith works against ideas of postmodern fragmentation and difference by (re)emphasising alternative 'family' relationships (among which 'ethnic families' seem to be the least stable) all of which are 'constructed', yet nevertheless provide pragmatic cohesion. Nunius's focus on communities subsequently gives way to a focus on individual isolation in Ulrike Zimmermann's 'Out of the Ordinary – and Back? Jackie Kay's Recent Short Fiction', in which Zimmermann explores the problematic identity construction of black female outsiders in stories from Jackie Kay's most recent volumes of short fiction, *Why Don't You Stop Talking* (2002) and *Wish I Was Here* (2006). Daniel Schäbler ('Teenage Transformations in Multi-Ethnic Britain: Rehana Ahmed's *Walking a Tightrope*') continues the focus on short fiction and individual identity construction, this time looking at two exemplary stories from the collection *Walking a Tightrope: New Writing from Asian Britain* (2004). Schäbler shows how the collection politically subscribes to the utopia of a 'postethnic future', even while emphasising the continuity of racism on all sides and the force of ethnic determination in processes of (teenage) identity formation. The section closes with two very different essays on one of the bleakest fictional takes on multi-ethnic relations in Britain published in the new millennium so far. Nadia Butt ('Between Orthodoxy and Modernity: Mapping the Transcultural Predicaments of Pakistani Immigrants in Multi-Ethnic Britain in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*') reads Aslam's 2004 novel as a faithful and sincere rendition of Pakistani communities in Britain which refute 'modernity' in favour of 'orthodox Islam', practising 'inhuman and irrational social practices such as "honour killing" and "forced marriages"', and passionately calls for the translation of 'traditional concepts of Islam into the global landscape of modernity'. Cordula Lemke provides a contrastive view to such a reading in 'Racism in the Disapora: Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*' by investigating the discourses on racial and cultural purity in the novel more closely; doing so, she extracts a racist and 'deeply misogynist undercurrent' not only on the level of narrated content, but also in the narrator and narrative discourse itself which undercuts the seemingly dominant assimilationist moral of 'get rid of everything Pakistani'.

The second section dealing with prose continues the discussion of many of the 'utopian' or 'dystopian' concerns of the first section; yet all essays collected here do so with a specific focus on the metropolitan setting of London; the section is accordingly titled *Reading and Writing the Metropolis*. The beginning of five essays discussing urban formations of multi-ethnic division or conviviality is made by Michael Mitchell's 'Escaping the Matrix: Illusions and Disillusions of Identity in Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani*'. Through the lens of this novel, published in 2006, Mitchell explores the social dynamics of (transcultural) impersonation and imposture in urban multi-ethnic 'bling' youth culture and beyond, and associates this with a larger transversal cultural dynamics which increasingly eludes the explanatory power of older 'ethnic and geopolitical concepts of identity'. Ellen Dengel-Janic ('"East is East and West is West": A Reading of Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's *Tourism*') then takes stock of the 'rather uncompromising and bleak account of contemporary London and its diverse communities' in Dhaliwal's first novel, only to argue that his very clichéd take on race and gender is part of a biting satirical attack on the fashionable multiculturalism of the liberal bourgeoisie which only covers up *de facto* 'racial segregation in the media and literary world'. Yvonne Rosenberg's reading of *City of Tiny Lights* (2005) in '"Stop Thinking like an Englishman" or: Writing Against a Fixed Lexicon of Terrorism in Patrick Neate's *City of Tiny Lights*' then presents a different critique of the media which for Rosenberg repressively 'fix' the contested meaning of terms such as 'alterity' or 'terrorism'; by attending to the 'linguistic games' in *City of Tiny Lights*, Rosenberg shows how Neate's novel undermines imposing taxonomies of otherness. The section closes, finally, with two perspectives on urban architecture and fiction in multi-ethnic contexts. The first essay by Stephan Laqué, '"A Deconstructed Shrine": Locating Absence and Relocating Identity in *Rodinsky's Room*', again presents a Derridean reading, this time investigating London's Museum of Immigration and Diversity at 19 Princelet Street in Spitalfields, consisting of a single attic room from which its inhabitant David Rodinski, an orthodox Jew, disappeared without a trace sometime in the 1960s. Laqué discusses the relevance of the room which was only unlocked in the 1980s and has since been preserved in its original state through 'the post-Freudian concept of the crypt as a spatial frame for the construction of hybrid identities'. He argues how Iain Sinclair and Rachel Lichtenstein do or do not do justice to this concept in their prose exploration *Rodinski's Room* (2000). Susanne Cuevas closes with an investigation of '"Societies Within": Council Estates as Cultural Enclaves in Recent Urban Fiction' by particularly focussing on Courttia Newland's *The Scholar* (1998), which she compares to Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003). Cuevas not only explores the different ideological

outlooks of both novels – the one more in the pessimistic tradition of Zola's naturalism, the other more optimistic about the emancipating powers of human agency – but she also addresses how Newland and Ali saw themselves confronted with voices questioning the 'authenticity' of their speaking positions.

The last section of essays, placed in the very middle of this volume, is entitled *Picturing and Sounding Identity* and devoted to visual art and music. Eva Ulrike Pirker's essay 'Images of Muslim Britain Go Global: A Reading of the British Council's Touring Exhibition *Common Ground*' retraces the genesis of the exhibition (2001-2003) and its ambivalent reception in different parts of the world. It also inquires into the medial and generic predispositions of such a project before offering interpretations of selected photographs (reprinted in this volume with the generous permission of the British Council). Ingrid von Rosenberg ('Female Views: Cultural Identity as a Key Issue in the Work of Black and Asian Women Artists') offers a diachronic perspective, tracing the evolution of the work of black and Asian British women artists from the 1980s and 1990s into the 'tenser political and social climate after 9/11'. Exemplarily focussing on exhibits by Sonia Boyce, Lubaina Himid, Joy Gregory, Ingrid Pollard, Chila Burman and others (many of which are reprinted in this volume with permission), von Rosenberg assesses a development 'from militant feminist beginnings in the 1980s to a sometimes serious, sometimes playful exploration of female identity construction in the 1990s to a growing occupation with more general and more public issues in the 2000s'. Christoph Härter's 'The Dub Renaissance – Reflections on the Aesthetics of Dub in Contemporary British Music' finally presents an informed investigation of the metropolitan dubstep scene, not least in its ambivalent positioning against post-9/11 angst, by analysing the performative modes and historical trajectories of dub, its formal aspects and narrative strategies.

A cultural area which this volume largely leaves aside is television – a medium of significant impact not only in black and Asian Britons' struggle for representation, but also for presenting blacks and Asians as an integral part of Britain. Since the turn of the new century, television has reflected all the trends otherwise discussed in the following pages: from celebrating a multi-ethnic Britain, e.g. in the four-part miniseries adapted from Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* (Channel 4, 2002), to ongoing racism and the new Islamophobia. As satirically envisaged in Rupert Thomson's *Divided Kingdom*, some of the most recent programmes on British primetime television in late 2007 suggest that 'division' is on the rise again in mainstream programming. On the one hand, the BBC and Channel 4 joined the celebratory spirit around the Abolition Bicentenary and black history in general. On the other, the 2007

Autumn season also featured, among others, the controversially received Channel 4 television drama *Britz*, in which an Asian British man working for MI5 has to trace down his own sister who plans a suicide bomb attack. Other programmes such as BBC Two's *White Season* (Winter/Spring 2008) helped to re-establish 'whiteness' in current political discourse: a whiteness re-affirmed *against* a multi-ethnic Britain in which the white underclass feels marginalised.[17] Less than a decade after the Parekh report's 'Vision for Britain', the debates on multi-ethnic Britain are more heated than ever.

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