

WRITING A BRASIAN CITY

'RACE', CULTURE AND RELIGION IN ACCOUNTS OF POSTCOLONIAL BRADFORD

Seán McLoughlin

'But then Asians happened.... Not that a huge horde of them swamped the place overnight. Took decades. Little by little, house by house, the Asians moved in and the whites moved out. The trouble with Asians, especially pakis, is they're different. Different clothes, different language, food, skin, and, of course, we got a different God. That's why the whites move out.... After that, the only ones who'll move in are more pakis because whites don't want to know, not once the place has become polluted. And on and on it goes until you get these little enclaves, some would say ghettos, sprawling up all over town. And then when the young punks start kicking up a fuss for whatever reason, in comes some smart ***** who tells the world that a place like Bradford suffers from self segregation. No *****ing shit Einstein. The whole world is segregated in a million different ways so why should Bradford be any different?' (Alam, 2002: 300–1)

The organic 'Asianisation' of geographical, social, economic and political spaces within postcolonial Britain has been described and analysed most often in terms of a shifting but dominant discourse of ethnic, 'racial', cultural and religious difference. This chapter explores a case study of how Asianised Britain has been 'written' in this way, with reference to just one city, Bradford, in West Yorkshire. Whether for its *mela* (fair), said to be 'Europe's biggest Asian event', or for the burning of Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988), the story of 'Brad-istan', as it is sometimes dubbed locally, has been consistently documented, perhaps more than any other centre of the South Asian diaspora worldwide. Over a period of forty or more years the iconic status of Bradford has been very publicly inscribed: 'a miniature Lahore' (*Bradford Telegraph and Argus*, 9 July 1964); a 'Black Coronation Street' (*Sunday Mirror*, 4 June 1978); and 'the Mecca of the North' with Ayatollahs of its own (Ruthven, 1991: 82). The argument here is that, beyond the headlines, a body of writing about Bradford now exists that is worthy of a new sort of reflection.

Considered individually, works some will have read many years ago, and perhaps forgotten, provide only 'snapshots' of a 'BrAsian' city from particular viewpoints at particular moments in time. However, considered together, such 'snapshots' can also begin to map, in broad outline,

the emergence and changing shape of 'Brad-istan'. The intention here is to present a historical retrospective of sorts, based upon a close reading of a small selection of the many writings about the city, dwelling on the detail of these accounts and allowing them to speak more on their own terms, and of their own contexts, than would normally be the case. Moreover, it will become apparent that many of the authors that have written about Bradford, as well as pioneering the study of 'BrAsian' cities in the diaspora per se, have made definitive contributions to their own academic disciplines or genres of literature.

This chapter, then, first re-examines the pioneering work of two anthropologists, Badr Dahya (1974) and Verity Saifullah Khan (1977). Taken together their writing represents some of the earliest accounts of the social, economic and political functions of Pakistani 'ethnicity' as migrants settled in Britain during the 1960s and early 1970s. The second snapshot revisits Tariq Mehmood's political novel, *Hand on the Sun* (1983), which is a unique account of resistance to the realities of racism in the 1970s. Set against actual events in Bradford, it provides much of the context for the emergence of a militant and politically 'black' Asian Youth Movement in 1978. Snapshot three focuses on Bradford Council's trailblazing, but ill-fated, experiment in multicultural policy-making during the early 1980s. The main interest here is the insightful assessment of these new policies advanced by travel writer Dervla Murphy (1987). A monograph by Philip Lewis (1994/2002), interfaith adviser and scholar of religious studies, provides the fourth and final snapshot. Set against the impact of local-global events such as the Rushdie affair, recent 'race riots' and 9/11, more than a decade after its first publication *Islamic Britain* remains one of the pre-eminent studies of the contemporary valency of religious identity amongst South Asian Muslim diasporas.

As the narrative unfolds here, section by section, account by account, the particular significance of each of these snapshots is further contextualised, culminating in an extended analysis of the sum of their parts by way of conclusion. However, one of the overall arguments, worth anticipating here, is that unless we have a better understanding of social and historical change in 'BrAsian' cities like Bradford, we can not properly evaluate the reality of their contemporary dilemmas. While Bradford has, for example, often been represented, and presented itself, as an icon of 'the multicultural society', former chief of the Commission for Racial Equality, Herman Ouseley, has identified the city as representing, 'a unique challenge to race relations' (Ouseley, 2001: 1). The publication of *Community Pride Not Prejudice: Making Diversity Work in Bradford* is an overdue admission of the failure of 'multicultural' policies in the city. However, set against the political context of a revived government emphasis on 'integration' under the banner of 'community cohesion' and 'citizenship', Ouseley's report, read alone, is in danger of decontextu-

alising the emergence of Bradford as a particular sort of postcolonial, trans-national, 'BrAsian' city that has been in the making for at least half a century now.

Finally, Bradford may well be seen by some as a 'microcosm' of BrAsian (Asianised) postcolonial Britain. However, the effects of globalisation and cultural pluralism have been writ especially large in the city. Uniquely (trans)local dynamics are at work, dynamics which increasingly make 'Brad-istan' look like the (often quoted) exception rather than the rule. The following factors begin to explain its particularity. First, the *size* of the BrAsian heritage population of Bradford has made its presence especially visible; in 2001 there were 85,465 people of Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi heritage living in a city of 467,665 people.¹ Second, the Census also suggests that the overall *dominance and concentration of a single minority 'ethnic' group* in the inner city—that is, the Pakistanis—is especially marked. Bradford is home to Britain's highest proportion of Pakistanis (67,994) relative to overall population (15 per cent), and other groupings—such as Indians (12,504) and Bangladeshis (4,967)—are relatively small.² Third, the *ethnic category 'Pakistani' is reinforced by religion* with the vast majority of Pakistanis being Muslim. In 2001 there were 75,188 Muslims living in Bradford compared to just 4,748 Sikhs and 4,457 Hindus.

Fourth, since the 1970s Bradford has been a city beset by *economic problems*, in particular the almost terminal decline of its, once world famous, woollen-textiles industry. Nearby Leeds, as well as Manchester and others, have all managed to regenerate in the post-industrial age to a greater or lesser extent. However, for smaller former mill towns in the north of England like Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, this has proven more difficult.³ Fifth, against this context, Pakistani Muslim ethnicity is also reinforced by a shared position in terms of social class. While there are plenty of examples of BrAsian Muslims in Bradford having achieved 'success', both in their own terms and those of wider society, many have not yet accumulated the *social and cultural capital* necessary for upward mobility in a knowledge-based economy. There are many 'structural-cultural' reasons for this including the failure of the education system to tackle 'underachievement' and the continuing consequences of the con-

¹ For all 2001 Census statistics on Bradford cited here see: www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/00cx.asp

² Projections for the Pakistani population of Bradford in 2011 are 102,350 or 21 per cent of the district's numbers with the figures for 2021 being 132,950 or 26 per cent (*Bradford Population Forecasts Information Bulletin*, 2000: 2).

³ Attempts have been made to re-package Bradford as the home of art, culture and tourism. In the 1980s the 'institutional completeness' of South Asian communities in the city was commodified in the 'Flavours of Asia' tourist campaign. More recently Bradford bid unsuccessfully to become European Capital of Culture 2008.

text of migration. For example, the majority of Pakistanis that migrated to Bradford post-war were actually unskilled and illiterate farmers, most especially from Mirpur district in Pakistani administered 'Azad' (Free) Kashmir. Sixth and finally, the size, concentration and predominance of the now largely 'working-class', Pakistani and Kashmiri heritage, Muslim population in Bradford has seen this constituency able to exert levels of political pressure, and achieve *levels of political mobilisation*, rarely seen amongst Asians elsewhere in Britain. It is selected versions of this story of a 'BrAsian' city that we turn to now, beginning with anthropological accounts of the earliest period of settlement.

URBAN ETHNICITY: ANTHROPOLOGY AT HOME AND PAKISTANIS IN BRITAIN DURING THE 1960s AND 1970s

'Many of the earlier sociological studies of ethnic minorities and "race" relations in Britain stressed objective conditions of the host society and discussed the response of various cultures in terms of the ways, and degrees to which, they "assimilated" or "integrated". The significance of the actor's perception of his [*sic*] situation, his orientation and resources were underplayed. More recent anthropological work incorporating studies of the home society ... have attempted to balance that perspective without disclaiming its significance.' (Saifullah Khan, 1977: 58–9)

One way in which anthropology managed to extend its traditional object of study in a postcolonial world was to 'write' non-European immigration to the post-war West. In Britain studies of 'West Indian' settlement were conducted from the late 1940s into the 1950s and 1960s. However, as Benson (1996) has observed, overall anthropologists have tended to produce many more studies of 'Asian' as opposed to 'African-Caribbean' migrants. Her explanation is that, ultimately, anthropologists much preferred to study what they supposed to be the 'strong' cultural systems of South Asia, based on institutions and practices such as caste, kinship and religion. While this may be true, the definitive early collection of anthropological writing about 'ethnic minorities' in contemporary Britain, *Between Two Cultures* (Watson, 1977), included chapters on migrants from a variety of countries, including China and Greek Cyprus as well as Pakistan and India. Moreover, as the editor of the collection, James Watson, and the quotation above make clear, a critique of the prevalent assumption that assimilation might be a priority for minorities was at the heart of this new anthropological project.

Watson's theoretical inspiration in this respect was Abner Cohen's conceptualisation of 'ethnicity'. In a key edited volume, developing his own work on custom and politics in urban Africa, Cohen (1974) argues that ethnicity can be best seen as a manifestation of informal interest groups in a formal political system where there is competition for scarce

resources. In contexts of dynamic social change such as those involving migration, groups often adapt to their new context by situationally ‘re-organising’ traditional customs, or ‘re-inventing’ new ones under traditional symbols. So ‘ethnicity’ represents not a conservative reproduction of culture, but rather an enhancement of ‘cultural distinctiveness’ which can be ‘manipulated’ to express political and economic interests. Unfortunately the sophistication of this theorising is not always reflected in *Between Two Cultures* and, like *Urban Ethnicity* itself, the volume sometimes overstates the unhindered agency of ordinary people. However, today the collection is remembered most for its title, which was thought to essentialise the relationship between ‘cultures’ and ‘roots’, tending to assume that people are unable to improvise multiple and more hybrid ‘routes’ in new directions.

In his contribution to *Urban Ethnicity* Badr Dahya (1974) examines the single male Pakistani presence in industrial Bradford and the various ways in which ethnicity was at work during the 1960s and early 1970s. Emphasising why the ‘definition of the situation’ was different for Pakistanis compared to the white working class, Dahya dissented from the generally accepted view of sociologists Rex and Moore (1967) that migrant housing patterns were determined primarily by racial discrimination. However, while this remains an important contribution, as suggested above, Dahya underestimated the extent to which Pakistani ‘choices’ were already made within the limits of deeply structured constraints.

While Dahya illuminated traditionally ‘male’ spheres of activity, it is only in the work of another anthropologist, Verity Saifullah Khan, that the experiences of Pakistani women and children, reunited with their husbands and fathers in Britain, begins to receive attention. Having conducted research in both Bradford and the villages of Mirpur during 1972 and 1973, she contributed the chapter on ‘Pakistanis’ to *Between Two Cultures* (1977). Saifullah Khan’s is perhaps a more nuanced account of Pakistani ‘ethnicity’ than Dahya’s, clearly showing it to be a socially constructed and contextual process, capable of producing social ‘stress’ as well as ‘support’. However, she refers to very few contemporary events, a characteristic which effectively de-politicises the experiences of Mirpuris in 1970s Bradford.⁴ Therefore, for all the nuance in her account, she was criticised for failing to question all but the most common-sense racism or challenge the ways in which colonialism continues to shape contemporary Britain (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies [CCCS], 1982).

Both Badr Dahya and Verity Saifullah Khan were pioneers in the study of the ‘BrAsian’ city. They played a pivotal role in establishing

⁴ For example, there is no explicit discussion of the Yorkshire Campaign to Stop Immigration or the National Front.

the main tropes of the 'urban ethnicity' genre: 'chain migration', 'fusion and fission', 'institutional completeness', 'community leadership' and so on.⁵ While their work continues to be cited nationally and internationally, back in the 1970s the authorities would seem to have thought anthropologists' observations about insider accounts of 'encapsulation' unimportant or, more likely, unpalatable.⁶ Indeed, in the context of a dominant discourse about 'integration' and 'segregation', a retrospective on the work of Dahya and Saifullah Khan highlights the relative lack of research on social actors' perceptions of ethnic clustering today.⁷

Custom and politics in urban Britain

By 1964 there were already 12,000 Pakistanis in Bradford: 5,400 originating from Mirpur; 3,000 from Chhachh in Campbellpore District on the Punjab/North West Frontier Province border; 1,800 from Punjab itself; and 1,500 from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). As Dahya explains, the origins of this presence can be traced back to the economic success of some thirty or so former Mirpuri and Chhachhi *lascars* (seamen) in 1944–5 (1974: 84). It was they who first provided the draw to other seamen who had jumped ship and then, after 1950, to kinsmen who were sponsored to travel from the subcontinent. Eventually the Pakistanis sealed their predominance in Bradford with the rush to 'beat the ban' imposed by the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962. The Act reinforced the process of highly selective 'chain migration' with established migrants seizing the opportunity to obtain employment vouchers for their kin.

Perhaps surprisingly Dahya has little to say about the working lives of Pakistanis in Bradford.⁸ His focus instead is on early settlement patterns, businesses and community politics. For example, Dahya explains that when the pioneers of Pakistani labour migration first came to the city, they lodged in houses owned by Poles in an area already marginal to local people and containing the 'ethnic' institutions of these earlier migrants: a Roman Catholic Church, a social club and a delicatessen.⁹ In these early days single male migrants from the subcontinent boarded

⁵ This work continued in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s with anthropologists such as Anwar, Ballard, Bhachu, Shaw and Werbner.

⁶ Dahya was recently quoted in *The Observer* (15 July 2001) and reference to Saifullah Khan can be found on the websites of UNESCO and the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office amongst others.

⁷ One important exception is the work of my colleague at the University of Leeds, Deborah Phillips (2003).

⁸ A glimpse of this is presented by Rajput, 'a leading Karachi journalist', in *Bradford Telegraph and Argus*, 8–9 July 1964.

⁹ Even in the 1960s it was argued that one of the reasons 'race' had not become a political issue in Bradford was 'the long history of invasion by outsiders' (*New Society*, 19 November 1964).

together in Bradford, but with the violent partition of India in 1947, and the arrival of a new wave of immigrants, workers began to organise themselves along lines of region, religion and denomination. 'Fusion' gave way to 'fission' and segmentation so that, as immigrants bought their own houses, distinct patterns of settlement amongst Gujaratis, Sikhs, Pathans, Chhachhis, Punjabis, Shi'as, Bangladeshis and Mirpuris all became discernable within the 'inner ring' of the city. Dahya argues that residing within the inner-city of Bradford was a 'rational choice' for the Pakistanis because housing was cheap and freely available; it was close to work, shops and transport links. Moreover, given that, at this stage, the majority of immigrants were transients committed to remitting a significant portion of their wages back home, they

...voluntarily segregated themselves because they realized their economic goals were more likely to be achieved through conformity to group norms, by means of mutual aid and under austere living conditions than through dispersal into the wider society. (Dahya, 1974: 112 [my emphasis])

One of the tropes of the literature on diasporas worldwide, is the description of the range of 'ethnic' services available to immigrants as 'communities' become established. Dahya, for example, documents the phenomenal expansion and diversification of Pakistani enterprise in Bradford between the late 1950s and early 1970s:

In 1959 the only Pakistani-owned economic concerns were 2 grocery/butchery businesses and 3 cafés. By 1966 the number of Pakistani concerns had grown to 133, which included 51 grocers/butchers and 16 cafés. In 1970 there were over 260 immigrant-owned and -operated businesses, all of which were located in the areas of immigrant settlement. The number of food businesses has risen to over 180, which includes 11 wholesale premises, 1 canning factory, 112 grocery and butchery businesses, 25 cafés, 15 private clubs and 2 confectioners and bakers. (Dahya, 1974: 91)

However, moving beyond mere description of this 'institutional completeness', Dahya offers an analysis of the way in which early Pakistani businesses became a vehicle for 'ethnicity'. Apart from catering for everyday needs they emphasised a sense of 'Pakistani-ness' in a number of ways: by displaying Urdu signage, posters depicting the Holy Places at Mecca and pictures of Pakistan's national poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal; by disseminating information about Islamic festivals; and by selling Pakistani newspapers. Dahya maintains that these 'extra economic functions' (1974: 94) helped to reinforce the idea of a distinctive group-belonging amongst Pakistanis, both for themselves and for others, resulting in the relative encapsulation of migrants. However, crucially Dahya tends to present 'ethnicity' as a simple reproduction of culture, rather than in terms of Cohen's (1974) more sophisticated theorising.

During the 1960s and 1970s most Pakistanis seemed to judge that their interests in Bradford were best served by the relative self-sufficiency of the communities they had built. In this regard Dahya does describe how this evolving 'ecological' base could become transformed into a 'political' base, especially at election time or as emergent leaders gradually began to make the case for limited public recognition. Pivotal in this respect was a religious institution, the local 'Mosque Committee', which was made up of both religious functionaries and influential Pakistani entrepreneurs. No doubt with their own vested religious and business interests in reinforcing 'ethnicity' amongst Pakistanis, the committee sought 'to mobilise public opinion ... and influence ... political behaviour' (Dahya, 1974: 93). For example, representatives spoke out against a 'policy of dispersal' from the slums of Bradford and lobbied the local education authority with regard to female dress and physical education in schools. During the 1971 elections the committee also exhorted Pakistanis to vote against a Bangladeshi who contested the Manningham ward.¹⁰ At the time, Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) had recently been at war with (West) Pakistan and the 'effectiveness' of this campaign, at least from a (West) Pakistani point of view, was underlined when a Conservative was returned in the context of an anti-Tory swing in the rest of Britain. In this context, then, religion, in the institutionalised form of the 'Mosque Committee', did not transcend, but rather became a resource for, Pakistani ethnicity, although Dahya does not draw out the significance of these events, or the role of 'community leaders' thus.

A tale of two pinds: Mirpuris in Bradford

In her contribution to *Between Two Cultures* Saifullah Khan underlines the heterogeneity of the Pakistani population of Britain and is one of the first authors to focus on the particular experiences of Mirpuris in Bradford. At the time she estimated that of around 30,000 Pakistanis 60 to 70 per cent came from Mirpur in 'Azad' Kashmir (1977: 57). She examines how some of the main institutions of village life in 'Azad' Kashmir were being variously 'strengthened, modified and altered' in Bradford (1977: 76). In this respect she comes much closer than Dahya to an understanding of ethnicity as a vehicle for situational 'innovation' to advance interests under the banner of 'tradition' (Cohen, 1974). For example, she identifies the continuing strength of village-kin networks in Bradford and reports a continuing preference for solidarity with *biraderi* (patrilineal descent group) members. But she also notes that given the contingencies of the new setting, 'many families have incorporated neighbours from the same region of origin into their social network' (1977: 77).

¹⁰ As early as 1963 three Pakistani candidates stood as 'independents' at the local elections in Bradford (Singh, 1994: 17).

Like Dahya, Saifullah Khan presents Bradford's Mirpuris as a relatively 'segregated' minority. However, in an extremely detailed explanation of this clustering, she is more careful than Dahya to maintain a judicious balance between the different structural and cultural forces which together, even by the early 1970s, had left 'the individual arrival with an ever-decreasing series of limited options' (1977: 73). There is reference to several structural factors constraining Mirpuris in Bradford, including enforced segregation and 'differential treatment' at work (1977: 72), a pathological white prejudice against 'dark skinned colonials', the more blatant examples of 'permissiveness' in wider society and 'insecurity due to immigration controls' (1977: 73). However, Saifullah Khan also acknowledges that, against this context, the Mirpuris of Bradford had already established their own strategy for survival which maintained 'an independence from the host society', and that they increasingly exerted a 'pressure to conform' to such an extent that, even relatively early, 'the skills required for communication and participation [in wider society] could not be acquired so easily' (1977: 80). It is precisely this sort of detailed contextualisation that is so often missing from contemporary accounts of 'segregation' in Bradford.

While Dahya was able to speak of lower than average unemployment and strong competition for labour during the 1960s, in the 1970s Bradford was a city of low incomes with Pakistanis, in particular, dependent on 'declining industries' (1977: 75–6). With an increase in prejudice and stereotyping too, Saifullah Khan argues that, 'Returning home or organising resistance to such pressures in Britain are not easy options' (1977: 73). Of course Dahya (1974) identified an emerging political 'leadership' amongst immigrants in Bradford, however Saifullah Khan (1977) maintains that despite this there was still a general lack of Pakistani 'grass-roots' organisations in the city. For example, unlike Sikh women who could go to the 'temple', there was no tradition of Pakistani women attending the local mosque and there were no community centres (1977: 81).¹¹ Indeed, Saifullah Khan makes some very insightful observations about the nature of the relationships between the Pakistani 'community', 'ethnic' leaderships and the perceptions of the state and wider society:¹²

The leaders known to British authorities are frequently of the urban middle class whose values and life-style differ markedly from the majority of their countrymen. Many villagers have no contact with or knowledge of these individuals and their organisations nor of the bodies such as the local Community Relations Councils.... The English are generally unaware of the internal differentiation of

¹¹ According to Singh (1994: 13) Bradford's first Sikh *gurdwara* was established in 1964 and a Hindu Cultural Society was established in 1968; the latter took charge of a *mandir* on Leeds Road in 1974.

¹² These debates were taken up in earnest only a decade or more later. See Werbner and Anwar (1991).

the Pakistani population and through their unquestioned use and reification of the notions regarding 'the Pakistani community' and 'Pakistani leaders' they presuppose a cohesion which rarely exists. (Saifullah Khan, 1977: 74)¹³

Saifullah Khan suggests that, in the 1970s at least, for most Mirpuris in Bradford their priority was not formal political organising against racism or unemployment but simple day-to-day survival. This usually meant maintaining 'an unobtrusive life-style, aimed at minimal disruption of the host [*sic*] society' (1977: 74). Indeed, life in Britain was still 'perceived as an extension of life back home and both must be seen as one system of socio-economic relations' (1977: 58). However, while Saifullah Khan is clear that the second generation of British-Mirpuris are likely to maintain 'a distinctive identity and life-style' (1977: 87), and 'remain encapsulated enough to accept arranged marriages' (1977: 86), she acknowledges that, for them, there is a 'difference of orientation ... resulting from time of birth, background and subsequent experience' (1977: 85). In short, Bradford will be their main reference point and not Mirpur. 'Mono-lingual' and 'mono-cultural' schools, where minority languages and cultures are 'not acknowledged or recognised' (1977: 83), at once expose BrAsians in Bradford to levels and forms of acculturation and institutional racism that differed markedly from the experiences of their parents. Without giving much of a feel for the energy and anger of this generation, Saifullah Khan does at least hint at the moment of 'pan-Asian' identity in Bradford that we must consider next:

These younger people will not accept the prejudices internal to the Pakistani population and between Asians of different regional or religious origin. Nor will they ignore the external definitions, myths and stereotypes circulating in the majority society. (Saifullah Khan, 1977: 74)

THE 'EMPIRE' WRITES 'BLACK': 'RACE', A SUBALTERN NOVEL AND ASIAN YOUTH IN THE 1970s – 1980s

In the 1960s and 1970s, Hiro (1991) argues, Asians were generally seen as a 'soft touch' by so-called 'Paki bashers'. However, by the end of the 1970s, in response to racist murders and an increase in profile for the National Front (NF) and British National Party (BNP), Asian Youth Movements (AYMs) emerged around the country in Birmingham, Bradford, London, Manchester and Sheffield. With an anti-fascist analysis that began by identifying the roots of racism in colonialism, the AYM's focus was very much on a secular and politically 'black' identification coupled with working-class solidarity born of common experiences of life in Britain. However, as Kalra *et al.* (1996) argue, while there were

¹³ Community Relations Councils, established after the 1966 Race Relations Act, often acted as early advocates for minority ethnic organisations. See Singh (2002).

always attempts at co-ordination between AYMs, a formal sense of national organisation was missing until things came to a head in Bradford during 1981. The so-called 'Bradford 12', led by a splinter group of the local AYM, were arrested having been found in possession of a crate of petrol bombs. The '12' maintained they had been prompted in their actions by the widely broadcast threat of National Front skinheads marching through Bradford and attacking Asian areas. Eventually, in 1982, a Crown Court accepted their plea of 'self-defence is no offence'. Soon after these events one of the acquitted, Tariq Mehmood, wrote a semi-autobiographical novel, *Hand on the Sun*, which describes the politicisation of a group of Asian youth in 1970s Bradford.¹⁴ At a time, today, when religiously defined identity politics would seem to have overtaken the 'black' and 'Asian' project, the novel provides a reminder of other histories and other forms of solidarity.

Somewhat overlooked, and now out of print, *Hand on the Sun* was significant enough to find a top ranking publisher in Penguin during the early 1980s. Indeed it represents one of the earliest accounts to emerge out of the experience of childhood immigration from the rural Indian subcontinent and a subsequent adolescence and schooling in urban Britain. Perhaps it is for this reason that *Hand on the Sun* has been read as a 'set text' for literature examinations in English schools and colleges. Many of the 'diasporic' themes dealt with in later, more explicitly hybridising, 'Asian Cool' novels are present, including a sense of loss, the negotiation of identity, issues of gender and generation, conflict and social change. However, although, like Hanif Kureishi, Mehmood speaks from the margins of any putative 'Asian community', he is more the Gramscian 'organic intellectual' than the cosmopolitan Londoner and is positioned very differently in both literary and epistemological terms. Interestingly, when Kureishi visited an 'Asian' bar during his brief visit to Bradford during the 1980s, he reports that he was introduced to a local 'political star', one of the 'Bradford 12'. While Kureishi greeted the man 'enthusiastically', when it was confirmed that the former was the author of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, Kureishi was attacked as 'a fascist, a reactionary' (1986: 156).

Where *Hand on the Sun* receives a mention today, for example on some of the more scholarly pages of the internet, it is rightly located in terms of 'postcolonial', 'world' and 'third-world' literatures. As the title of this section suggests, Mehmood writes '*black*' from an 'empire' now relocated inside postcolonial Britain. At a time when few 'Asian' interventions in the debate about the politics of 'race', culture and nation

¹⁴ Mehmood's new novel, *While There is Light* (2003), revisits the experiences of the 'Bradford 12'. See www.tandana.org/aym.html for an online archive of images which tell the story of the AYMs.

were being made—and more than a decade before they emerged in cultural studies (for example, Sharma *et al.*, 1996)—Mehmood's narrative establishes clear relationships between the lives of his characters and the social, economic and political structures of capitalism and colonialism. While *Hand on the Sun* is often polemical, it is sufficiently well crafted to give agency and voice to the complex dilemmas and contradictions of 'real people'. In this respect Mehmood achieves what so little of 1970s and 1980s sociology of 'race' and ethnicity was able to. The final political analysis of the activists in the book is unlikely to have been representative of most Asian youth at the time. Nevertheless, many of the experiences described in the novel undoubtedly were.

'Here to stay, here to fight'

'To hold a people down forever is like putting a hand on the sun.' (graffiti, El Salvador)

Mehmood's is a generation, often born in South Asia, for whom the discrepancies between the image and reality of life in 'Wallait' (Britain) were particularly stark. Having listened to the tales of the returnee migrants, when he arrived as a child in Bradford, the main character of *Hand on the Sun*, Jalib, is shocked that the streets are home to beggars rather than 'paved with gold' (1983: 19–20). There are wistful diasporic moments of reflection, too, on the village childhood spent swimming, smoking and talking, all this to be exchanged for 'a system which told him that he was a wog and that he must assimilate into a new way of life and forget his backward ways' (1983: 24). At school in Bradford children are segregated into 'girls', 'boys' and 'blacks' (1983: 9). There is racial abuse and graffiti; staff are totally indifferent to the culture and history of the 'black' and Asian children. However, there are also small acts of resistance. One teacher who is disliked, Mr Ramsey, becomes Mr 'Rami' ('bastard' in Punjabi) (1983: 11). While the power of the *goras* (whites) was writ large for Jalib when he entered Britain, and an immigration officer spoke to him in his own language (1983: 24), all 'fear and wonder' disappears when he hits a white kid at junior school, and the latter bleeds red blood the same as his own (1983: 25). At high school Jalib gets into a fight with Jim, the 'cock of the school', and individual impotence turns to communal empowerment as the 'black' and Asian youth secure victory with a combination of knives and chilli powder. Mehmood uses all these incidents to prefigure later conflicts in the novel and establish the principle that 'self defence is no offence'.

In many unobtrusive ways Mehmood's account subtly values and affirms the integrity of South Asian cultural practices including male friends holding hands in public (1983: 26), something ridiculed by the

goras (whites). However, Mehmood is not uncritical of power relations and social divisions within ‘communities’. Indeed, while the ‘issues’ rarely feel ‘forced’, most of the individual stories, of both major and minor characters, tend to perform a didactic function. Shaheen, the heroine, is just as politicised as Jalib by racial attacks on her community and is frustrated by the attitudes of those that restrict her to domestic chores or present her with an unwelcome marriage proposal (1983: 70). *Hand on the Sun* also documents the many hidden costs of the migration process for the first generation. Mehmood tells of mothers who rarely go out and compares their existence in Bradford to the laughing, joking and singing songs in praise of Allah that takes place in the villages of Pakistan (1983: 56–9). Husbands are distanced from their wives and fathers rarely see their children. Work in the mills has made them joyless and brutalised; they have ‘melted into the machines’ (1983: 54).

Seeing their parents so crushed begins to anger Jalib and his friends as they themselves find only ‘shit jobs’ available when they leave school. However, there is frustration too at the first generation’s seeming resignation when illegal immigrants are kicked out of Britain, or when one third of the workforce at a local mill is threatened with redundancy: ‘It is as Allah would have it’ (1983: 77).¹⁵ At this stage in the novel Jalib’s political education really begins. In the mill a radical, Hussain, tries to organise the men and compares union officials in Bradford to corrupt government employees back home in Pakistan. Echoing events in 1970s Britain, he tells Jalib and the others about racist murders in Southall and argues for the need to fight back against imperialism with capitalism in crisis (1983: 62). However, no doubt reflecting the political journey of many radicals, perhaps even Mehmood himself, when Hussain is challenged he eventually accepts that organisations such as the International Socialists and Socialist Workers’ Party ‘had achieved nothing’ for ‘black’ people; too often they have glossed the realities of racism with empty slogans about unity (1983: 93). With the feeling that what is happening in London will most likely soon find its way to Bradford, Jalib commits himself to countering skinhead attacks on ‘his people’ by any means necessary.

To illustrate the continuities of colonial and postcolonial contexts, and that the generations need not be divided over politics, Mehmood continues the education of Jalib and his friends in an encounter with Dalair Singh, a veteran freedom fighter from the days of the Raj (1983:

¹⁵ The Indian Workers’ Association was one of the more politicised organisations among the first generation (Kalra *et al.*, 1996). Together with the Kashmir Welfare Association and the ‘white left’ it organised against racist groups in Bradford during the 1960s and 1970s. It also took a leading role in the campaign against the ‘bussing’ of Asian children (1964–80) and protested against discrimination in the promotions policy of West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive. It was closely associated with the *gurdwaras* (Singh, 2002).

86). He lived through the Second World War and recounts stories of guerrilla raids against the British. In contrast to many of their parents, Dalair's advice to the youth is 'never give up'. He tells them of things that official histories do not remember, citing the example of Udham Singh who bided his time and travelled to England to assassinate General O'Dwyer, the British officer responsible for the massacre of Indians in Amritsar in 1919 (1983: 88). Mehmood is also very careful to remind us that Singh symbolically signed his name 'Ram Mohammed Singh', suggesting an easily forgotten heritage of political unity amongst Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the wake of Partition. Accordingly, the novel depicts friendships across religious, ethnic and racial boundaries as a matter of routine, making a deliberate intervention against the pervasiveness of communalism.

The climax of *A Hand on the Sun* draws very closely on the real events surrounding the so-called 'Battle of Bradford' in 1976.¹⁶ The National Front, having organised a large 'anti-immigration' march through the city, were eventually chased out of town by an angry crowd of West Indian and Asian youth. Mehmood begins his account when an Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism and Fascism is formed, but in a passage describing a public meeting it becomes clear that the youth, and Mehmood himself, disdain the usual 'community' leaders as *chamchas* (lackeys) who beg the police not to allow the NF to come to Bradford. Echoing an attitude central to the AYMs, Jalib and his friends protest, 'Let them come—we must smash them!' (1983: 113). On the day of the NF march an 'anti-fascist' counter-demonstration supported by a temporary alliance of the mosques, *gurdwaras* and *mandirs*, the trades unions and left-wing organisations rallies in the city centre. However, foreshadowing more recent events in Bradford, a youth suddenly grabs a microphone at the rally, shouting, 'The fascists are marching on Lumb Lane. What are we all doing here? If you want to defend your community, go to Lumb Lane!' (1983: 121). Jalib and the other youths break through the ranks of stewards and police heading for Manningham Middle School where the NF have been moved under police escort. A 'pitched battle' ensues with mounted police charging the youths, while the NF and their Union Jacks—the symbol of the enemy—are 'shepherded away' to waiting coaches under a 'hail of missiles' (1983: 119).

For the young Asians in the novel the 'Battle of Bradford' represents a 'victory' that they feel moved to consolidate; the activists all agree on the need for a dedicated AYM (actually formed 1978), an organisation that is independent, secular and cuts across their different communities and political affiliations. The possibility of an Afro-Asian organisation is

¹⁶ A brief description and analysis of these events is given by Ballard in 'Up Against the Front', *New Society*, 6 May 1976, pp. 285–6.

considered but, reflecting on religious communalism evident even on the march, it is felt that 'our own house is in such a mess we'd better start by sorting it out' (1983: 128). As time passes and the novel draws to a close there are reports from Southall of the AYM there securing government funds to open its own centre and similar offers eventually emerge in Bradford. At a party celebrating the victory of a campaign against the deportation of one of the workers at Hussain's mill, two uninvited guests, the chief Community Relations Officer and someone from the Commission for Racial Equality, are busy buying drinks for the AYM's leaders. They offer grants and the chance to meet Prince Charles on his forthcoming visit to Bradford. Some are against such co-operation with the system but others think it will bring the influence that comes of respectability. Fittingly, it is Mehmood himself who has the last say. At once he echoes the analysis of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS, 1982) that public recognition can be a form of state incorporation and control, and anticipates the dissipation of the AYM by the late 1980s as many members took up jobs within the emerging 'race' relations industry:

Only years later did these young Asians understand that, even if the state was pouring huge amounts of money into the emerging movement, it was a small price to pay to buy off the militancy of a people's struggle. (Mehmood, 1983: 156)

It is to the limits and possibilities of this public recognition of BrAsians in 1980s Bradford that we shift our attention now.

TURNING POINT? MULTICULTURAL POLICY-MAKING AND TRAVELOGUE IN THE 1980s

'My attitude is that we must become part of the community. At present we are looking from the outside. We are being discussed and governed by whites although they know little of our problems.' (Mahamid [*sic*] Ajeeb, Chair of Bradford Community Relations Council, *Sunday Mirror*, 4 June 1978)¹⁷

In the late 1970s Bradford and other city councils in Britain came under pressure from the newly formed Commission for Racial Equality to demonstrate how they were seeking to comply with Section 71 of the Race Relations Act (1976). They were charged with both eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting good race relations. However, the expansion of multiculturalism and anti-racism in Britain hinted at by Mehmood, which eventually saw central government finance high profile grants for the inner-cities, was only really catalysed by the widespread uprisings of disaffected youth from Brixton to Toxteth during the early

¹⁷ Ajeeb was to become the first Asian Lord Mayor of Bradford in the 1980s. See Kureishi (1986) and Lewis (1994).

1980s. Of course in Bradford the case of the 'Bradford 12' had been a very close call and, based on a mapping of demographic and economic trends in the district, the council became one of the first in the country to develop a fully-fledged 'race-relations' policy.¹⁸ This was announced in 1981 with the publication of *Turning Point: A Review of Race Relations in Bradford*.

Turning Point is a bold, urgent but still somewhat belated attempt to confront the challenges facing Bradford at the beginning of a new decade. In the knowledge that the inner-city would eventually become more or less 'Asianised',¹⁹ it marks a moment of transition in the balance of power between 'ethnic' majority and minorities. In a postcolonial moment, perhaps with echoes of Indian independence in 1947, BrAsians are finally recognised, more or less on their own terms, and promised a degree of respect, representation and self-determination. On the defensive after two decades of largely ignoring this presence, half expecting 'them' to 'fit in' and half wondering whether 'they' would even stay, *Turning Point's* starting point is that, compared to Bradford's many white European migrants, those from the 'New Commonwealth' are challenging 'many of the more simplistic ideals of "integration" or "assimilation"' (*Turning Point*, 1981: 5).²⁰

However, despite being home to the third largest 'immigrant community' in Britain during 1981, the report revealingly admits that 'as a counter to the claim often made of Bradford having good race relations ... rather ... it has no race relations at all' (1981: 7). *Turning Point* forecasts that in the coming decade, due to industrial decline and an expanding Asian population, any previous 'slack' in the system is likely to be replaced with growing levels of competition for jobs and housing. Therefore, it is the report's worried conclusion that, without intervention to tackle racial prejudice and afford all cultures 'parity of esteem', a second generation of young Asians, with greater skills and higher expectations than their parents, could form 'an economic sub class, structurally disadvantaged, and increasingly difficult to accommodate' (1981: 15). The time for 'benign neglect' ('the Asians will help themselves') is past (1981: 44).

In the early to mid 1980s Bradford's leading role, nationally and internationally, in the development of 'multicultural' policy drew a wide range of authors to the city, including Hanif Kureishi and Dervla Mur-

¹⁸ *Sunday Mirror*, 4 June 1978, describes Bradford as 'one of the country's liveliest and most progressive authorities'.

¹⁹ Today, South Asian heritage children are projected to make up 40 per cent of the city's school population by 2011 (Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 2000: 2)

²⁰ *Turning Point* tends to present the assimilation and integration of white Europeans as 'natural' and uncontested. However, during 1852 and 1862, for example, there were anti-Catholic riots in Bradford, a 10 per cent Irish city at the time.

phy. In 1986 Kureishi contributed a piece entitled simply 'Bradford' to a special issue of travel writing for *Granta*, Penguin's paperback magazine of new writing. One of the things that interests Kureishi about Bradford is the so-called Honeyford affair, a detailed and 'generally accurate' (Halstead, 1988: 81) account of which is provided by Dervla Murphy (1987). When Honeyford, the headmaster of a predominantly BrAsian school in Bradford, made various ethnocentric asides in his public criticisms of council policy, a multi-ethnic alliance mobilised to have him removed from his post. Murphy, who spent much longer in the city than Kureishi, taking a flat in inner-city Manningham for several months, has also written about her travels to India, Nepal, Tibet, Pakistan and many other countries. Nevertheless, for both Kureishi, the cosmopolitan Londoner and Karachi-ite, and for Murphy, a white, bourgeois, middle-aged, Irish woman, postcolonial Bradford proved just as much an encounter with 'difference' as these other, more far-flung destinations. Moreover they discovered that the white working classes of Thatcherite Britain, just as much as the Mirpuris of Manningham, inhabited worlds far away from their own.

Kureishi and Murphy both begin by rehearsing a familiar trope, the 'institutional completeness' of Asian Bradford. Kureishi stays in a working-class Pakistani area with an Islamic Library, Asian video shops and the Ambala Sweet House. Somewhat predictably, he remarks, 'If I ignored the dark Victorian buildings around me, I could imagine that everyone was back in their village in Pakistan' (1986: 152). However, it soon becomes clear that things have changed radically since Dahya and Saifullah Khan were writing in the 1970s. The focus then was on Pakistani 'insider' accounts and the transformation of discrete neighbourhoods. Into the 1980s, for 'ethnic' majorities and minorities alike, the 'Asianisation' of Bradford starts to become a far more public and civic, as opposed to simply 'communal', matter. Moreover, as the controversy surrounding Honeyford illustrates, local events were also becoming national affairs. Murphy's detailed descriptions and analyses are often especially reflective in this respect, situating 1980s Bradford in the context of much wider debates about social change and 'race' relations, liberal universalism and cultural relativism.

Travels of a different sort: racists, anti-racists and a liberal travel-writer

'These policies seem at first glance humane and responsible.... But there was a fatal flaw in the Council's thinking—its emphasis was on the effects of racism rather than its causes.... Its attempt to take the bull of British racialism by the horns merely set that bull loose in the china-shop of local race relations.' (Murphy, 1987: 94)

As her account unfolds it becomes clear that Murphy is extremely critical of the implementation of *Turning Point* in Bradford, suggesting the local council has been ‘brave but foolish’ (1987: 94). ‘Moderate’ ‘race-relations’ workers she speaks to maintain that it moved ‘too far too fast, having apparently been unaware (inexplicably!) of the virulence of local racialism’ (1987: 95). Murphy is surprised at the ignorance of racism in the city because in pubs, out shopping, waiting for buses or on the street, her ears are filled with hate speech about ‘their filthy habits’, ‘their drug pushing’, ‘their wife beating’ and ‘their Paki religion’ [*sic*]. It is amongst the city’s white ‘have-nots’, then, that Murphy most meets ‘resentment of Bradford’s take-over’, the feeling that ‘there’s no one left to stand up for us, all they care about is them Pakis [*sic*]—making life easier for them’ (1987: 73). In developing a ‘race’ policy Bradford Council had failed to take account of how altered relations of power and access to scarce resources in the city would impact on ‘relations’ with disenfranchised whites. Murphy reflects:

I was soon to become familiar with these half-truths, suspicions, exaggerations and distortions: symptoms of fear, ignorance and angry frustration. If something has gone dreadfully wrong with the management of your own society, it’s comforting to feel that ‘They’ are really to blame. (Murphy, 1987: 6)

While Murphy was resident in Manningham the so-called Honeyford affair of 1984–5 came to a head. In a series of articles in the *Times Educational Supplement*, *Yorkshire Post* and *Salisbury Review* (a New Right journal committed to repatriation), Ray Honeyford, the recently-appointed head teacher of a predominantly ‘Muslim’ school, Drummond Middle, argued that the Council’s ‘anti-racist-cum-multi-cultural’ initiatives were prioritising cultural identity over social integration. While in hindsight this reflects the tone of much current debate in the 2000s, it was his stereotyping of ‘black’ and Asian parents and their cultural practices that ‘inflamed racial prejudice’ (1987: 104). Honeyford was responding to the issue of BrAsian parents taking children on extended holidays to the subcontinent during term-time. However, his criticisms strayed from purely educational matters:

He referred to the Mirpuris’ motherland as a country which is corrupt at every level, which cannot cope with democracy and which since 1977 has been ruled by a military tyrant who, in the opinion of at least half his countrymen, had his predecessor judicially murdered. He dwelt on the Pakistani ill-treatment not only of criminals but of those who dare to question Islamic orthodoxy as interpreted by a despot. Also, he condemned Pakistan as ‘the heroin capital of the world’ and alleged this ‘fact’ is now reflected in the drug problems of English cities with Asian populations. (Murphy, 1987: 111)

Translations of Honeyford’s work proved enough for more than half

of the Drummond parents to sign a letter calling for his dismissal. A pro-Honeyford faction also emerged which presented the ‘Honeyford Out!’ campaign as ‘an alliance of reactionary Muslims and rabid Lefties’ (1987: 109). Certainly, Murphy maintains that most parents were ‘not remotely interested in debates about multi-cultural and or anti-racist education’ (1987: 115). Nevertheless, presaging the Rushdie affair, what was undoubtedly key was that Honeyford had insulted Islam, Pakistan and the local Asian community. Eventually, in December 1985, Honeyford was forced to retire on an enhanced pension, but not before 10,000 Bradfordians had signed a petition backing him, and Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had invited him to 10 Downing Street for consultations.

The Honeyford affair was the culmination of a series of controversies played out in Bradford as the Council sought to turn the theory of *Turning Point* into reality. For example, having decided that it would consult with the ‘credible representatives’ of ethnic minorities (1981: 49), in 1982 the Council agreed to various ‘concessions’ put forward by the newly formed Bradford Council for Mosques (BCM), a latter day incarnation of the ‘Mosque Committee’ (Dahya, 1974). At Drummond these included: the serving of *halal* meat; separate-sex physical education and swimming lessons; the adoption of a multi-faith syllabus for religious education (1987: 116–17). However, in the wake of this decision in early 1983, pressure from Animal Rights activists, rumoured to have NF support, forced a full Council debate on the commitment to serve *halal* meat (1987: 109). With one of their hard won concessions under threat, BCM was successful in having up to 10,000 children boycott their lessons on the day of the debate and demonstrate outside Bradford Town Hall. In any event, the Council voted to retain *halal* meat in Bradford schools but, as Murphy argues, this and other conflicts over the redistribution of power and resources, ‘had left a lot of diffuse hatred in the atmosphere’ (1987: 109).

Murphy’s argument is that Bradford Council’s new policies hardened opinion amongst whites and so made ‘life more difficult for Browns and Blacks’ (1987: 87).²¹ Indeed, she seems to approve or advocate a response to racism which does not move beyond the largely ‘internalised’ survival strategies of the 1960s and 1970s described by Saifullah Khan, where minorities ‘keep in the shadows, keep their heads down’ (1987: 70) or adopt ‘a heads-below-the-parapet choice’ (1987: 129). Murphy acknowledges that compared to the ‘flaccid non-racialism’ of the ‘ineffectual’ ‘race’ relations industry and the ‘two-faced’ trades unions, vigorous anti-racism suggested a means of ‘blacks’ and Asians securing racial

²¹ One discomfoting aspect of Murphy’s account is that she appears fascinated with ‘race’ as a physical characteristic, so much so that she insists on calling ‘Asians’ ‘Browns’.

justice ‘through tough positive action’ (1987: 89–90). However, she is particularly critical of the ‘Race Awareness Training’ which saw ‘truculent zealots’ facilitate ‘unlearning and dismantling racism’ amongst resentful Council staff. For Murphy, it is naïve to think that such an aggressive approach, so often identified with the ‘Far Left’, can be the only way to cultivate ‘race awareness’ in Britain. Finally, perhaps in the same way that Gilroy (1992) is ‘anti’ the anti-racism which reproduces an ethnic absolutism of its own, she remarks:

Yet in Britain now it seems that whites (anti-racists no less than racists) are so ‘Race Aware’ that they relate to ethnic minorities almost as though they belonged to a different species who deserve better or worse treatment (depending on which camp you are in) because ‘they’re not like us’. (Murphy, 1987: 101–2)

Murphy raises questions too about *Turning Point’s* notion of ‘parity of esteem’ for all cultures and describes friends’ ‘howls of protest about racist interference’ when she personally involves herself in the ‘domestic dramas’ of young BrAsian women (1987: 26). Not alone amongst feminist and liberal universalists then or now, she wonders where the limits of ‘cultural self-determination’ might be.²² However, in a position on arranged marriages, which foreshadowed that of Keighley MP, Ann Cryer, in the 2000s, Murphy goes so far as to suggest that ‘there is a strong case to be made for legal interference in their [British-Mirpuri] domestic affairs’ (1987: 24). Nevertheless, she acknowledges that ‘this will mean confronting the wrath of British Muslim males’ (1987: 24), one of the constituencies that Murphy does not venture to talk to.²³

Despite her unrestrained liberal frankness, Murphy is sympathetic to the way in which, for rural to urban international migrants especially, a ‘disconcerting’ pluralistic environment such as modern Britain ‘has the potential for strengthening rather than eroding hard line attitudes’ (1987: 27). For Murphy, Islam has had a positive impact on ‘citizenship’ in Manningham—in the mid 1980s the area is ‘safe’ and ‘lacks its fair share of crime, by British standards, because as yet its Muslims are an uncommonly law-abiding lot’ (1987:29). However, after she meets up with a group of chauvinistic young ‘Mirpuri drop-outs’ over a ‘strong brew’ in a ‘Sikh pub’, she does not feel that the increasingly acculturated and ‘jobless young Muslims’ will remain ‘tamed’ by Islamic traditions and authorities for that much longer: ‘my forecast is Big Trouble Ahead’ (1987: 29).

²² See Saghal and Yuval-Davis’ (1992) critique of state-sponsored multiculturalism as lending legitimacy to the patriarchy of religious leaders.

²³ Kureishi does talk to the President of BCM who wants single sex, not Islamic or racially segregated, schools: ‘No, no, no! No apartheid!’ (1986: 160).

TRANS-NATIONAL TRADITIONS: 'ISLAMIC BRITAIN' AND
RELIGIOUS STUDIES TO THE PRESENT

'Muslim communities from South Asia have largely dictated public perceptions about Islam in Britain. In this regard no city has featured so centrally and consistently in shaping such attitudes as Bradford.' (Lewis, 1994: 24)

In 1994 Lewis published *Islamic Britain* which is the product of the most sustained period of engagement with the city of Bradford of all the work considered in this chapter. It reflects the author's ten years experience as Advisor to the Bishop of Bradford on inter-faith issues and six years research in Pakistan. As the title of Lewis' monograph suggests, his account writes religion back into the account of 'Brad-istan', underlining its current salience as perhaps the most significant marker of identity amongst BrAsians today. Lewis argues that both the *halal* meat and Honeyford affairs signalled that many Muslims in Bradford, and certainly 'community leaders', wanted specific public recognition for their religious identifications (1994: 4). However, during the 1980s discussions of 'Islam' and 'Muslims' in Britain were often subsumed under the categories of ethnicity, 'race' or culture. All that began to change of course when on 14 January 1989 members of the Bradford Council for Mosques burned a copy of Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988).

Although he does not explicitly acknowledge it himself, Lewis can be seen as writing in the tradition of religious studies associated with the Community Religions Project (CRP) at the University of Leeds. As Knott (1986; 1992) suggests, during the mid to late 1980s religious studies was only just beginning to respond to the more longstanding interest of the social sciences in migration and ethnicity. Compared to sociologists, anthropologists had shown more concern with the 'cultural stuff' of 'migrant religion'; however, as Knott argues, 'with a few notable exceptions, they ... failed to provide plausible accounts of the role and significance of religions in the lives of the groups they ... described' (1992: 4-5). In terms of setting a religious studies agenda, Knott firstly submits that, in the social scientific literature on religion and ethnicity, religion is too often seen 'as the passive instrument of ethnic identity' (1992: 12). While there is little doubt that religion can operate in this way, she cites the Rushdie affair, reasoning: 'there are times when religion plays a more active role in the definition of an ethnic group's identity and behaviour than many of these accounts suggest' (1992: 12). Secondly, Knott (1986) argues that religious studies scholars should investigate the empirical dynamics of what happens to the 'content' of religion under conditions of contemporary migration: 'How does a religion and the religiousness of its people change in an *alien* milieu? How are they different from their parent traditions in the homeland?' (Knott, 1986: 8).

Reflecting on Knott's work now, it is fair to say that the empirical project of mapping transformations of religion has been more significantly advanced than the theoretical project of exploring the relationship between religion, ethnicity and identity (McLoughlin, 2005). The CRP has published a number of monographs documenting various dimensions of the religions of South Asian and other minority ethnic communities.²⁴ However, despite the detailed ethnography produced, an interest in conceptualising the particular salience of religion—the specific 'work' it seems to do—has not been taken up with the same vigour in the literature. It is against this context that *Islamic Britain* must be understood.

Reading the book it is easy to be drawn towards accounts of community politics and public recognition, Lewis' major contribution here being the documentation of BCM's leadership during the Rushdie affair and after. However, while this remains important, it is not Lewis' only, or perhaps even his main, concern. As a historian much more than a theorist of religion or ethnicity, Lewis' key focus is a mapping of the various Islamic 'traditions' re-located in Britain. Thus his study includes an assessment of Islam's institutionalisation in Bradford and the authority of its scholars ('*ulama*'), as well as problems of transmission and the need for 'intellectual and imaginative resources ... to engage with the religious, intellectual and cultural traditions of the West' (Lewis, 1994: 208).

Scholars of other disciplines do not always appreciate the significance of such issues, not least for Muslims themselves. For this reason religious studies has an important role to play in taking such matters seriously and engaging other disciplines in producing more sophisticated accounts of religion. However, for this to be at all possible, religious studies scholars must return to, and develop, Knott's more theoretical agenda. Indeed, given the current prominence of religion in Britain's public life, there is now a special need for scholars to be better able to identify the relative 'agency' and 'explanatory power' of 'religion', 'tradition' and their cognates, within the intricate webs of culture and structure that comprise any given context. Lewis' (2002) updated commentary on BrAsian Muslims in Bradford after the 'northern' riots and 9/11 can perhaps be seen as just one example of why this might be necessary.

Movements, mosques and mobilisation: from the institutionalisation of Islam to the Rushdie affair

While Lewis follows Dahya (1974) and Saifullah Khan (1977) in documenting the role of 'ethnic' businesses and community organisations in sustaining distinctive 'cultural worlds' in Bradford, he leads the way in exploring the role of religious institutions in this process. Certainly

²⁴ The CRP monograph series includes accounts of Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in Britain.

earlier ethnographers had relatively little to say in this respect, partly because they were working within the paradigm of social anthropology criticised by Knott (1986; 1992). However, it is also fair to say that the institutionalisation of Islam in Bradford accelerated only with the reuniting of families, a process which continued into the 1980s amongst Mirpuris and Bengalis. Indeed, Lewis concurs with Barton (1986), arguing that the first single male migrants almost entirely lapsed in their practice of religion. It was only with the arrival of wives and children from the late 1960s onwards, that the need for mosques and religious teachers to reproduce Islam for a new generation was obviated.²⁵ While the first mosque in the city was established in Howard Street during 1959, as 'fusion' gave way to 'fission' (Dahya, 1974), different ethnic and sectarian groupings founded their own separate institutions. For example, the small, but still very influential, Gujarati Muslim community reunited quickly and its two mosques were both established by 1962 (Lewis, 1994: 58). In contrast, while the first mosque of the majority Mirpuris was founded as early as 1966, the relatively late reuniting of their families meant that fourteen out of eighteen centres were not opened until the 1980s (1994: 60).

As noted above, BCM was formed in 1981, against the context of Bradford Council's experiment in 'multiculturalism' and in order to provide a platform for issues of common concern to Muslims regardless of ethnic or sectarian differences.²⁶ A 'credible' channel of communication with the authorities, BCM also played a significant role in mobilising Muslims in defence of this hard won recognition during the *halal* meat and Honeyford affairs. However, as Lewis' account demonstrates, it was the Rushdie affair that gave BCM a national and international profile. The organisation was first informed of the content of *The Satanic Verses*, said blasphemously to defame the Prophet of Islam and his family, by a network of co-religionists in India via an organisation of largely Gujarati Deobandi scholars based in Blackburn. Lewis suggests that 'it is hard to exaggerate the veneration of the Prophet which informs Islamic piety and practice in South Asia in all traditions, but especially amongst the Barelwis' (1994: 154).²⁷ Indeed, while outrage at Rushdie's novel united the various Islamic movements in Britain temporarily, the book burn-

²⁵ In 1991 there were thirty mosques and nine supplementary schools in Bradford, all 'located within a radius of 1½ miles from the city centre, within seven inner city wards' (Lewis, 1994: 62). In 2004 there were around fifty mosques.

²⁶ Similar organisations were established by Sikhs and Hindus in 1984, but, given the size of their constituencies, they have not had the same impact as BCM (Singh, 2002).

²⁷ Lewis makes a distinction between those Islamic movements which seek to 'defend' (the Barelwis), 'reform' (the Deobandis), or 'reject' (Ahl-i Hadis, Jama'at-i Islami) the traditional paradigm of South Asian Islam, exemplified by Sufi *pirs* (mystical guides, saints) and their shrines (1994: 28).

ing of 14 January 1989 was no spontaneous reaction. Instead, against the general context of a backlash against 'multiculturalism' in Bradford since the Honeyford affair, it can perhaps best be seen as a desperate attempt by BCM to 'draw attention to their continued anguish and anger when confronted by [the] incomprehension of politicians and media alike' (1994: 156).²⁸

The book-burning put Bradford centre stage amongst Britain's Muslims. However, Lewis considers that BCM quickly lost control of the debate as Muslims were portrayed by liberals and conservatives alike as 'Nazis': 'For the national media Bradford had become the epicentre of the shock waves convulsing the Muslim communities across Britain' (1994: 158). In Bradford itself Muslims retained only a few allies including the Anglican Bishop. The Community Relations Council, despite a history of long collaboration with BCM, decided to adopt 'no position on the book' (1994: 160). Things took a graver turn when, on 14 February 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran intervened in the affair with a *fatwa* (legal opinion) calling for the death of Rushdie for blasphemy (1994: 158). Disastrously, argues Lewis, two members of BCM were alleged to have supported the Iranian cleric. However, the Bradford-based Muslim Parliament activist, Mohammed Siddique, challenges this, suggesting that, 'The *fatwa*, remarkably, elevated Muslims from the position of hopeless despair to a position of strength and power' (Siddique, 1993: 72). Empowering fables of a united global Muslim *umma* (community) notwithstanding, Lewis reports that BCM soon realised that local investments in Bradford were at stake as the world's press descended on the city. The organisation quickly made a public statement disassociating itself from Khomeini, insisting that Muslims should stay within the law of the land (1994: 159).

While it is always likely that 'minority' groups will have to rely on a range of political strategies from violence to reform, Lewis argues that the BCM learned important lessons from the events of the Rushdie affair. He contrasts the shift from 'book-burning to vigil' (1994: 163), maintaining that the latter form of protest began to earn BCM a more sympathetic hearing, as did its involvement with a national lobby, the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA), which did not approve of the book-burning.²⁹ However, as we shall see, the experiences of the Rushdie affair did not put an end to violent conflicts in the city although the events do seem to have marked the height of the BCM's powers. The solidarity achieved in response to *The Satanic Verses* tended to obscure

²⁸ BCM wrote to the Prime Minister, Rushdie's publishers, MPs, local Councillors and even the United Nations, all to no avail. As Muslims, no protection under Britain's legislation on 'race' relations or blasphemy was open to them.

²⁹ Interestingly, UKACIA paved the way for a new national umbrella organisation, the Muslim Council of Britain (inaugurated 1997). However, BCM has not, as yet, affiliated.

divisions within the organisation. For example, during the first Gulf War of 1990–1, Lewis notes that Sufi-oriented Barelwi members of the BCM showed themselves ready to unilaterally criticise the British government and their ‘anti-Sufi’ allies in Saudi Arabia but not the regime in Iraq where some of Islam’s holiest Sufi shrines are located (1994: 166–8). In this context some ‘Muslim’ councillors, who between 1981 and 1992 had increased from just three to eleven in number, publicly distanced themselves from BCM. Perhaps recalling Saifullah Khan’s (1977) remarks about leadership cited earlier, one local candidate for the Tories suggested at the time:

The views, actions and emotional statement by any individual or Muslim organisation does not do justice to the city’s 60,000 Muslims since no individual nor organisation has ever been given the mandate by ... the Muslims of Bradford to act as their representative or spokesman. (Lewis, 1994: 168)

The worst of times

In the 1990s and 2000s Bradford has continued to be a focus for national and international attention, mainly because of ‘riots’ involving youth of Pakistani (and especially Kashmiri) heritage. In a new ‘Postscript’ to a second edition of *Islamic Britain* Lewis provides a brief summary of the most recent report on ‘what’s wrong’ in the city (Ouseley, 2001). He suggests that the findings largely confirm those of the earlier 1996 Bradford Commission report published after the first disorders in 1995. In many ways both reports also realise the fears expressed in *Turning Point* (1981), although neither Ouseley nor Lewis mention this fact:

There was evidence of rising mistrust and polarisation of Muslim and non-Muslim communities, a rapid increase in the numbers of disaffected Muslim youth, the emergence of exclusionary clan politics, the failure of traditional imams to connect with the world of British Muslim youth and the cumulative impact of such issues on educational underachievement. The city was judged to be ‘in the grip of fear’ unable to talk honestly and openly of problems within and between communities: fear of being racist; fear of confronting a gang culture and the illegal drugs trade. (Lewis, 2002: 216)

Lewis reports that in such ‘official’ accounts, ‘There has been a recognition that ethnicity is a key factor’ (2002: 216). Indeed, he reflects that ‘community consolidation and separation ... is more not less marked’ in Bradford than a decade ago (2002: 220). In Ouseley’s (2001) terms, what were once ‘comfort zones’ (as described by anthropologists in the 1970s) have now become ‘closed zones’. However, significantly there is no suggestion here that ethnicity might be theorised, as it was by Cohen (1974) and Watson (1977), in terms of the reorganisation of cultural distinctiveness to advance minority economic and political interests. Ethnicity is not seen as a *situationally functional* strategy of ‘survival’. Rather,

like Ouseley and others (for example, Macey, 1999), Lewis is mainly interested in the way in which in the 1990s 'ethnicity' has become (situationally) *dysfunctional*, perhaps for BrAsian Muslims themselves, but especially for the city of Bradford as a whole.

One continuity between 1970s anthropology and 1990s public policy, however, is that all argue, in effect, that structural explanations which invoke 'deprivation' and 'racism' tell only part of the story of 'Bradistan'. For Lewis and Ouseley such paradigms have encouraged a 'political correctness', perpetuated by both local government and community leaders, that has inhibited the development of open debate and critical dialogue about tensions and conflicts of the city (see especially Mahony, 2001). Against this context there is a renewed interest in the significance of cultural (and religious) traditions in reproducing patterns of 'self-segregation' in inner-city Bradford, something which increasingly sets Muslims apart from many Hindus and Sikhs. Lewis, for example, argues that for 'significant sections of traditional Muslims from South Asian backgrounds cultural and religious norms do render socialising in conformity with British norms problematic' (2002: 217). The 'norms' that Lewis mentions in this respect include *izzat* (family honour) and (trans-continental) cousin marriages. He also describes how an 'ethnic' media can reinforce encapsulation and the sheer size of the Pakistani Muslim constituency in Bradford supports the maintenance of 'separate' sports leagues and 'parallel' professional and business sectors (2002: 217).

While this language of 'conformity' and 'norms' may appear somewhat loaded, it does underline the persistence of religious and ethnic 'boundaries' in Bradford. Lewis' intervention also represents a novel, if not very self-conscious, revisiting of difficult structural-cultural questions about how, in particular social contexts, cultural and religious 'traditions' can become *resources* for the reproduction of a 'self contained social world' (2002: 217). In particular he argues that, 'The difficulties for a majoritarian religious tradition [such as Islam] to develop the social and intellectual skills to live comfortably as a religious minority are exacerbated in a social context of relative encapsulation' (2002: 18). Committed anti-essentialists might protest that no tradition, even one with the history of political power associated with Islam, is necessarily or inherently 'majoritarian'. However, what Lewis is apparently inviting us to reconsider here, although he does not articulate it explicitly, is the idea that Islam (or Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism or Christianity) might be more than some sort of 'empty' signifier, capable of legitimating an endless variation of interpretations and strategies. Contrary to the thrust of most contemporary social science, does not Islam actually comprise a complex of symbols, discourses and practices, in Bourdieu's (1992) terms, a *habitus*, a repertoire of dispositions, that has some sort of real and structuring 'content' and 'agency' in the world?

In this regard Lewis' emphasis on social context is certainly important. However, a discussion of another of Bourdieu's notions, the idea of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), is also essential here. The particular 'cultural capital' of any individual or community structures the extent to which the 'resources' of any given 'tradition' can be (i) 'accessed' and/or (ii) 'reproduced' and 'practised' in a given context. Any discussion of the explanatory power of religious traditions needs to take more account of the dialectical relationship between 'culture' and 'structure' as enmeshed formations, something suggested by Cohen (1974), Werbner and Anwar (1991) and others. Lewis, for example, considers that while some Muslim movements, notably Jama'at-i Islami heritage 'moderate Islamists', are creatively re-making tradition through 'engagement' with wider society, others have followed strategies more suggestive of 'isolation' or 'resistance' (2002: 219). What is crucial to draw out here, however, is that the new, articulate and 'engaged' British-born Muslim leadership, which proved effective interlocutors with the state and wider society in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, is increasingly composed of an élite of young educated professionals with a great deal personally invested in Britain. Indeed, for all its 'engagement', Lewis himself maintains that to date such a leadership has been perceived as 'neither able nor interested in connecting with Muslim street culture' (2002: 216) at the grassroots level.

By contrast, Lewis sees 'sections of the traditional political and religious leadership', usually associated with Barelwi and Deobandi mosques in Bradford, as 'isolationists' who have failed 'to connect with the world of British Muslim youth' (2002: 220). By continuing to appoint *imams* from South Asia rather than British-born and English-speaking graduates with a knowledge of British custom and practice, elders have contributed to the creation of an 'intellectual vacuum' (2002: 223) with the 'unfocused resentment' of some young Muslims producing the 'worrying growth of an assertive Muslim identity' (2002: 218). In Bradford this is manifest in a macho culture, which 'can impact negatively on women and minorities deemed to be outsiders living within "their" territory' (2002: 218). Against the context of gangs, drugs, prison and especially educational underachievement, 'Islam becomes a cultural resource' for the sort of defiance and rebellion signalled by real and imagined affiliation to 'rejectionist' anti-Western utopianists such as Hizb al-Tahrir. Lewis' 'dispiriting picture of traditional religious leadership' (2002: 224) finds many echoes in the accounts of BrAsian Muslims in Bradford. Nevertheless, even after thirty to forty years of settlement, neither the ongoing predicament of diaspora for many first generation migrants, nor the importance of continuity of religious and cultural 'norms' to their sense of self, can be ignored. Against the context of changing structural circumstances there is thus a need to understand

the limits and possibilities of their repertoire of adaptation strategies, past and present, as suggested by their individual and collective ‘cultural capitals’. As Phillips (2003) argues, ‘preference’—whether for ‘isolation’ from, ‘engagement’ with, or ‘rejection’ of, wider British society—is always a ‘bounded’ choice.

THE EMERGENCE OF A ‘BRASIAN’ CITY: A CONCLUDING ANALYSIS

‘The whole world is segregated in a million different ways so why should Bradford be any different?’ (Alam, 2002: 300–1)

As stated at the outset, this chapter contends that by considering together various ‘snapshots’ of ‘BrAsian’ Bradford, from the 1960s through to the 2000s, it should be possible to glimpse something of how the city has come to be the way it is. Indeed, to Lewis it would appear that the ‘self-contained world’ (Lewis, 2002: 217) of Bradford’s Muslims today must be understood as the product of the long-term interactions with wider society outlined here. Similarly, part of the problem with Ouseley’s (2001) account is that he does not sufficiently contextualise the structural constraints within which Pakistani Muslims have been able to make culturally and religiously constructed choices over a period of more than forty years in the city. This concluding section, then, summarises and elaborates some of the main themes introduced above, in the hope that such a discussion might encourage more deeply contextualised accounts of ‘Brad-istan’—and other such postcolonial translocalities—in the future.

The ethnographies of Dahya (1974) and Saifullah Khan (1977) illustrate that the evolution of various ‘self-sufficient’ Asian ‘communities’ in Bradford is best seen as an organic response to the ongoing uncertainties and risks of living as a ‘minority’ of largely rural origins in an urban setting characterised by racism, immigration controls and a permissive majority culture. The often-cited absence of racial and ethnic conflict in 1960s and early-1970s Bradford was due mainly to the cautious adaptation strategies of the first generation. Moreover, even by the early 1970s, the social reproduction of such ‘communities’ had established real momentum, exerting a ‘pressure to conform’ which made it difficult for many new arrivals to acquire ‘the skills necessary for communication and participation’ in wider society (Saifullah Khan, 1977: 80). This dynamic encapsulation of ‘Pakistanis’ also served the vested interests of ‘community’ business and religious élites (Dahya, 1974), who actively manipulated ‘traditional’ cultural symbols to their own particular political and economic ends. Indeed, at least a decade before the expansion of state multiculturalism in the 1980s these same élites were authenticating

fictions of ethnic unity in transactions with government and wider society (Saifullah Khan, 1977).

While more acculturated than their parents, Bradford-born and educated generations of BrAsians have also periodically adopted more confrontational political strategies than the first generation. For example, the initial militancy of the AYM during the late 1970s was born of a lack of recognition and the experience of institutional/popular racism. However, significant mobilisation was catalysed mainly by the physical threat posed by racist organisations to the safe 'Asianised' spaces of Bradford such as Manningham. Indeed, the 1976 'Battle of Bradford', described by Mehmood (1983), has one important characteristic in common with the later events of the Honeyford and Rushdie affairs, as well as mobilisations in the name of the Muslim *umma* and the riots of 1995 and 2001 (Murphy, 1987; Lewis, 1994/2002). To a greater or lesser extent, each and every mobilisation can be seen as a reaction to actual or perceived attacks on the 'sacredness' of *apna* (our) 'community', variously identified, both territorial and imagined.

Of course it was only against the context of economic decline and urban unrest in Britain that the local state finally introduced a race-relations policy in 1981. However, as Murphy (1987) suggests, this probably came too late for Bradford and, ultimately, the politicians were unable to control the powerful forces that their decision-making had unleashed. This was true both in terms of the vehemence of hitherto suppressed 'BrAsian' claims and a white backlash against the redistribution of power and resources. The local state subsequently retreated into tokenism, and eventually institutional racism by the early 1990s (Samad, 1997). This destroyed any possibility of a multicultural policy based on cross-cutting 'critical' dialogue (Mahony, 2001), entrenching instead an essentialised 'difference' multiculturalism. Indeed, more than a decade before Ouseley (2001), Halstead (1988) spoke of political acquiescence with *de facto* separatism in the city.

The valency of a 'pan-Asian' political project did not survive the 1980s. By the end of the decade social divisions between Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage Muslims on the one hand, and Hindus/Sikhs of Indian and especially African-Asian heritage on the other, were becoming more marked, most especially in terms of class, education and upward mobility. The *laissez-faire* approach of British governments to global economic restructuring left large numbers of unskilled migrant workers from peasant families in 'Azad' Kashmir with little prospect of working again and, despite a reliance on state benefits, this has reinforced a perceived sense of, and need for, self-sufficiency and encapsulation.

Against this context BrAsian Muslims in Bradford today represent an economic underclass. 'They' also remain racially and ethnically marked as 'Pakistanis', 'Bangladeshis' and so on, but amongst the British-born

there is a deep ambivalence about 'back home'. Therefore, the salience of Islam as a diasporic badge of religious, but also of ethnic and class, pride, something reinforced by one geo-political crisis after another since 1989 (Werbner, 2002), is not difficult to comprehend. While the state, concerned commentators (Murphy, 1987; Lewis, 1994/2002), and many *babas* see Islam as a way of 'taming' the youth and instilling in them the values of good citizenship, there is evidence that Islam too is a vehicle for genuine working-class anger and protest. However, one negative by-product of this can be the aggressive 'masculinity' confronted by Mehmood's (1983) character, Shaheen, and criticised more recently by Macey (1999).

Something else is striking about the contemporary situation. For all the history of political mobilisation amongst BrAsians in Bradford, in *their* moments of protest, the current working-class youth of Pakistani and Kashmiri Muslim heritage do not obviously have a political project around which to organise. Indeed, perhaps quite unremarkably, just as 'pan-Asian' identity politics deconstructed (but never displaced) 'Pakistani' identity politics in the late 1970s, and just as 'Muslim' identity politics deconstructed 'Asian' identity politics in the 1980s, so the 1995 and 2001 'riots' can be seen as deconstructing the seeming hegemony of a 'Muslim' identity politics in contemporary Britain.³⁰ In the wake of the Rushdie affair Modood rightly suggested that 'the new strength among Muslim youth in not tolerating racial harassment, owes no less to Islamic re-assertion than to metropolitan anti-racism' (Modood, 1992a: 272). However, in the decade or so since Rushdie, Muslim identity politics has often become the preserve of the upwardly mobile and educated middle classes, focused as much (if not more) on relations with the British state and wider society than on social uplift amongst the Muslim grassroots.

Despite the increasing evidence of its particular dynamics, four decades after Badr Dahya first began his fieldwork amongst single Pakistani male migrants, there is no sign of a waning in contributions to the literature produced about Bradford. However, rather than the 'insider' critique of a prevailing 'assimilationism' which typified 1970s anthropology, much of the contemporary literature too often fails to challenge the 'outsider' emphasis of the nation-state on 'citizenship' and 'community cohesion', a discourse which has (re)emerged in the context of New Labour's communitarianism and new moral panics about immigration and trans-national terrorism. One of the few authors publicly intervening in this debate, interestingly, is a relatively new BrAsian novelist, perhaps the only one of any note to have emerged in Bradford since Tariq

³⁰ By 'identity politics' I mean the sort of political recognition, respect and equality that has been sought by groups that 'identify' themselves in terms of 'ways of life' that are somehow 'different' from the dominant culture. See Parekh, 2000.

Mehmood. Mohammed Yunas Alam, British-born of Pakistani heritage, has recently published two novels (1998; 2002) which illuminate that, beyond the dominant discourse of ethnicity, 'race', culture and religion, 'Brad-istan' today continues to be a city of highly differentiated, pluralised and competing interests.³¹

Kilo (2002), for example, is the account of how Khalil Khan, the son of an inner-city shop-keeper, is attracted to the much discussed but little researched career of drug-dealing after his hard-working father is broken (and ultimately dies) as a result of the intimidation of a multi-ethnic gang of protection racketeers. As Khalil, whose nickname is 'Kilo', in turn, seeks independence, revenge and peace with himself, the novel touches upon a wide range of complex issues: everyday acculturation and segregation; gangsters, drug smuggling and street violence; families, marriage and Pakistan; good cops and bad cops; religiosity, transgression, hypocrisy and morality; racism and the 'fantasy world' of community relations. Indeed, anyone writing about Bradford in the future would do well to ponder the following retort from Kilo to a local policeman who accuses him of 'killing your *own people* [my emphasis added]'. Here, there appears to be a defiant challenge to all that would too easily ascribe an ethnicised, racialised, culturalist or religious identification in contexts where none necessarily exist:

Me killing people? My people? ... Had someone just made me non-elected leader of Asian and black people without having the decency to have asked first? I had no people. I didn't claim to be a politician, nor did I push myself as one of those selfish bastards who claimed to lead the community. (Alam, 2002: 118)

³¹ Thanks to Philip Lewis for alerting me to Alam's work.