



Diasporas,  
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**From Diasporas to Multi-Locality:  
Writing British Asian Cities**

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**From Miniature Lahore to Mecca of the North:**  
**Contested Stories of Brad-istan's Making**

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Bradford, I felt, was a place I had to see for myself, because it seemed that so many important issues, of race, culture, nationalism and education, were evident in an extremely concentrated way in this medium-sized city...These were issues that related to the whole notion of what it was to be British and what that would mean in the future. Bradford seemed to be a microcosm of a larger British society that was struggling to find a sense of itself, even as it was undergoing radical change. (Kureishi, 1986: 149-50)

Perhaps more than anywhere else in Britain, the contemporary image of Bradford in West Yorkshire is dominated by its association with the South Asian and especially the Pakistani-Muslim diaspora. Indeed, over a period of nearly half a century, a succession of journalists, academics, travel writers and policy-makers, have all contributed to the public inscription of Bradford as a - now much tarnished - icon of Asian Britain. This, then, is a narrative about how the exotic curiosity of a 'Black Coronation Street' (*The Sunday Mirror*, 4 June 1978), seemingly contained and safely encircled by the ethnically diverse but white majority, has given way to fear of a more evidently transformed 'Mecca of the North', now with Ayatollahs of its own (Ruthven, 1991: 82). As Procter remarks, and television documentaries such as *The Last White Kids* (30 October 2003, Channel 4) and *Last Orders* (7 March 2008, BBC2) suggest, Bradford's more recent South Asian settlers have produced names [such as Bradistan or Pakiford (Murphy 1987: 6)] that lexically carry the sense of been overtaken or subsumed'. However, while in the 1980s Kureishi was able to invoke Bradford as a 'microcosm of a larger British society...undergoing radical change' (Kureishi, 1986: 149-50), the argument here is that particular dynamics have been at work in the configuration of this British-Asian city. Ultimately, such dynamics make 'Brad-istan' begin to look like the (often-quoted) exception rather than the rule.

The industrial revolution saw a massive explosion in Bradford's population from just 13,000 in 1801 to 280,000 a century later (Priestly, 1934: 157). A former minor market town, and truly a 'back-water' - being ringed like most West Riding towns by Pennine countryside - it nevertheless gained a reputation as the global leader in worsted wool production. The 'Worstedopolis' profited immensely from the export of its manufactured goods to overseas markets, including British India (Jowitt and Taylor, 1979, 1980; Wright, 1982). Speaking of

his hometown's international connections, J.B. Priestly, novelist and playwright, remarks that despite never having its 'hard provincial angles' knocked off Bradford - much more so than nearby Leeds - was 'a city of travellers' whose suburbs 'reached as far as Frankfurt and Leipzig' (1934: 160). A small numbers of wealthy (often Jewish) European merchants sold Bradford cloth world-wide, leaving the extravagant warehouse architecture of 'Little Germany' as their legacy (BHRU, 1987). However, this 'leavening' influence did not survive the First World War. Moreover, until the arrival of the first Indo-Pakistanis' in Bradford, the most numerically significant international movement of labour into the city was actually impoverished migrants from Ireland (Richardson, 1968), while by the 1950s, significant numbers of Southern, Eastern and Central Europeans also made Bradford their home.

About this time the North of England was beginning to occupy more positive locations in the national imagination (Russell, 2004), most especially in terms of popular culture. However, in contrast to the increasingly cosmopolitan Manchester and Leeds, the factory towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire - of which Bradford is the largest without quite being an industrial city (Joyce, 1980: 26) - have struggled to regenerate in the post-industrial age. This North, as depicted in *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1982), a cult film about the coming of age of two teenage baby-sitters from a Bradford council estate, is still typically poor, working class and full of desperation, if at times highly comic and within reach of wild, beautiful countryside. Against the context of massive redundancies in textiles - 73,000 employees in 1961 became fewer than 20,000 twenty years later (Greenhalf, 2003: 41) – urban regeneration strategists sought to challenge dominant perceptions of the city as a 'grim up north', 'cloth cap and clogs' sort of place. Thus the economic development unit of what was by then the fourth largest metropolitan district in England sought to promote Bradford as a 'heritage' tourism destination, both in terms of its industrial legacy and as 'gateway' to Bronte Country and the Yorkshire Dales.<sup>1</sup> Proctor argues that this focus on the countryside was a 'means of forgetting the racial disturbances that have come to characterise the present... [and to] recuperate a [white] past before Asian settlement' (2003: 172). While an award-winning 'Flavours of Asia' holiday tour was also launched in 1988 promising visitors 'a feast of foods, fabrics, festivals and faith' - the exotic otherness of Asian colonies in the inner city are routinely 'segregated' from other imaginings of the metropolitan district which during re-organisation in the 1970s was extended.

The relatively small *size* of the city of Bradford and the relatively large size of the Asian population there 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.<sup>2</sup> 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%) and other groupings - such as Indians (12,504) and Bangladeshis (4,967) – are relatively small.<sup>3</sup> 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. Pakistani Muslim ethnicity is also reinforced by a shared position in terms of social class. While there are plenty of examples of Pakistani Muslims in Bradford having achieved 'success' – for example the Mumtaz restaurant which hosted our event in the city - 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 context of migration. For example, the majority of 'Pakistanis' that migrated to Bradford post-war were actually unskilled and illiterate farmers, most especially from 'Azad' Kashmir.

My argument here, however, is that, beyond the headlines and marketing discourses, 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 British-Asian city from particular perspectives 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'. My intention is to present a historical retrospective of sorts, based upon a close reading of a small selection of the many writings about the city. I want to dwell on the detail of these accounts and allow them to speak more on their own terms, and of their own contexts, than would normally be the case. Moreover, as we shall see, as well as pioneering the study of British-Asian cities in the diaspora per se, many of the authors that have written about Bradford have made definitive contributions to their own academic disciplines or genres of literature.

I begin by re-examining the pioneering work of two anthropologists, Badr Dahya (1974) and Verity Saifullah Khan (1977), bringing their ethnographies of Pakistani 'ethnicity'

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<sup>1</sup> In 1980, so the story goes, Bradford played host its first ever tourist (Russell, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> For all 2001 Census statistics on Bradford cited here see: [www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/00cx.asp](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/00cx.asp)

<sup>3</sup> Projections for the Pakistani population of Bradford in 2011 are 102,350 or 21% of the district's numbers with the figures for 2021 being 132,950 or 26% (Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 2000: 2).

during the 1960s and 1970s, into critical dialogue with the overlapping but contrasting concerns of press reports and oral history of this period. I argue that Bradford was initially held up as a model of racial coexistence by the media and while anthropologists' concern with agency sought to move beyond the dominant discourse of assimilationism, their scholarly concerns did not engage wider political events or, indeed, first hand accounts of people's everyday struggles. Demotic voices begin to emerge in a highly personalised and even democratised - if too often decontextualised - fashion in the oral history projects of the multicultural state. However, despite being an elite literary form, creative writing does have the potential to deliver narratives which entwine both texture and analysis in ways still uncommon in scholarship, even after the post-modernist turn in writing culture (Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Fischer, 1986).

This is certainly true of Tariq Mehmood's novel, *Hand on the Sun* (1983), a unique account of the emergence of a militant and politically 'black' Asian Youth Movement. In my second cluster of texts concerned with events of the 1970s and 1980s, Mehmood's insider perspective is invoked to more critically foreground *Turning Point* (1981), Bradford Council's belated attempt to come to terms with governing the Asian inner-city of the future. However, travel writer, Dervla Murphy's (1987), descriptions and reflections on the white backlash against the multicultural and anti-racist policies which ensued, are also juxtaposed with these other narratives, reflecting a growing perception amongst liberals and conservatives alike that the balance of race relations in what could now be called Bradistan had shifted from coexistence to conflict.

Finally, set against the impact of local-global events such as the Rushdie Affair, as well as recent 'race riots', 9/11 and 7/7, this same dynamic tension is maintained in the final section concerning the contemporary valency of religious identity amongst South Asian diasporas and Muslims especially. The work of Philip Lewis (1994 / 2002), interfaith adviser and scholar of Religious Studies, is once again brought into conversation with, former chief of the Commission for Racial Equality, Herman Ouseley's report *Community Pride Not Prejudice*. This, I argue, is in danger of decontextualising the emergence of Bradistan as a particular sort of post-colonial, transnational city, that has been in the making for at least half a century now. Thus, one of my overall arguments, worth anticipating here, is that unless we have a better understanding of social and historical change in cities like Bradford, we can not properly evaluate the reality of their contemporary dilemmas.

## Sojourning and Coexistence in Miniature Lahore: News, Ethnography and Oral History of the 1960s-70s

At the Bradford meeting one participant spoke about reporting of South Asian, and especially Pakistani, settlement in the city by the local and national press. Cuttings from the 1960s and 1970s archived in the Local Studies Library - part of Bradford Central Library - revealed outsiders' interest in the physical and social exotica of institutional completeness in Manningham, as well as establishing what became a dominant narrative concerning the relative absence of racial and ethnic conflict in Bradford when compared to other cities. However, the most detailed accounts of this period were by anthropologists Badr Dahya and Verity Saifullah-Khan who illuminated the experiences of men and women respectively. Another participant pointed to the later publications of Bradford Heritage Recording Unit (established 1983), which drew upon a unique combination of oral history and photography, and gave more voice to insider accounts of this period. These, it was argued, began to reveal more of the struggles involved in re-making a sense of home in Bradford, although, inevitably, silences still remained. Finally, the existence of a local history literature - written in South Asian languages and usually published overseas – was also identified as something that few academics are aware of.

Amongst the very first accounts of the growing Pakistani presence in Bradford during the 1960s are two mainly factual articles for *The Bradford Telegraph and Argus* (8-9 July 1964). Despite having the interesting distinction of being penned by Mr. A.B. Rajput, 'a leading Karachi journalist', they trade on an outsider's curiosity and are not marked by any special affinity for the experience of his countrymen. In a trope of writing migrant settlements worldwide, Rajput enumerates the increasingly conspicuous and concentrated ethnic services available around Lumb Lane even in the early 1960s: 'Restaurants and cafes, grocery and meat shops, barbers and tailors, drapers and launderers, bookshops and banks, and even Pakistani photographers and film distributors'. While signs in Urdu are beginning to transform the urban landscape of Manningham, Rajput notes that the 'Azad' Kashmiris are mostly 'illiterate peasants' who can not themselves read Urdu, let alone English. Instructions for even unskilled work such as combing and scouring wool had first to be taped in Panjabi and then replayed over loudspeakers. The dormitory houses of Bradford's slums provided 'far from satisfactory living conditions' for such workers, given that few had the time or inclination to worry about diet, health or hygiene. Indeed, public health was one of the few areas in which Bradford City Council showed any interest in the welfare of the city's Pakistanis.<sup>4</sup> However, Rajput does not hide the fact that discrimination as well as a desire for

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<sup>4</sup> Two Pakistani liaison officers, one from East Pakistan and one from West Pakistan, were employed and one Mr. M.F. Hussain was co-opted as a member of the Bradford Welfare Committee. Having come to the city in 1937, and as a founder president of the Pakistan Social Club, he was clearly one of the most influential 'leadership' figures at this time.

cohesion is responsible for Pakistanis' residential encapsulation in the inner city: 'The prices are immediately raised by the owners as soon as they come to know that the party interested is a Pakistani or coloured [sic] man'.

Writing in *New Society* (19 November 1964), John Barr contended that, 'while social integration may be little more than a social worker's dream, racial coexistence is a fact of Bradford life. It is...perhaps the best any English city with a large immigrant population can hope for in this generation'. Like Rajput, he discovered 'subterranean resentments' amongst Pakistani youth and often anonymous letters to the *Telegraph and Argus* reflecting the prejudices of some white Bradfordians: 'The filthiest slum house here is better than they live in back home (signed Ex Far East Land Forces)'. Why, though, had 'race' not become politicised in Bradford as in other British towns and cities? Barr identifies 'the long history of invasion [sic] by outsiders' as a key reason for Bradford's toleration. For a century or more, Flemish weavers, German wool merchants, Irish navvies and Eastern European refugees had made their mark on the city. However, Barr was also careful to examine the particular socio-economic context of Bradford in 1964, understanding that, should this change, peaceful coexistence could be threatened. The mid-1960s in the city was a period of almost full employment and there was a widespread recognition that new Commonwealth immigrants kept the mills and transport running. Moreover, should unemployment be threatened, the mainly single male immigrants were still mobile enough to move on somewhere else and Bradford was not yet experiencing the pressure on its housing that was beginning to precipitate racial tension in the Midlands. Finally, Barr reported that the *Telegraph and Argus* had been 'widely praised' by 'moderates' for refusing to run the inflammatory headlines characteristic of some other newspapers such as the *Yorkshire Post*.<sup>5</sup>

A more scholarly analysis of this early Pakistani presence is presented by Badr Dahya (1974), an anthropologist, who examined the various ways in which ethnicity was at work in Bradford during the 1960s and early 1970s. Dahya's research was published in a key volume, *Urban Ethnicity*, which developed the work of the editor, Abner Cohen, 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-organizing'

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<sup>5</sup> Greenhalf (2003: 145) suggests that there was a contempt for bigotry at the newspaper until a more tabloid editorial line emerged in the late 1980s which has been accompanied by a high turnover in staff who have little deep knowledge of the city.

traditional customs, or 're-inventing' new ones under traditional symbols. Thus, 'ethnicity' represents no conservative reproduction of culture but rather an enhancement of 'cultural distinctiveness' which can be 'manipulated' to express political and economic interests.

Perhaps surprisingly, Dahya has little to say about the working lives of Pakistanis in Bradford.<sup>6</sup> His focus instead is on early settlement patterns, businesses and community politics.<sup>7</sup> In the early days single male migrants from the sub-continent boarded 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'. 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. Dahya argued that voluntary segregation within the inner-city of Bradford was a 'rational choice' for the Pakistanis because '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). Housing was also cheap and freely available; it was close to work, shops and transport links.

Dahya also documents the phenomenal expansion and diversification of Pakistani enterprise in Bradford with over 260 businesses established by 1970. However, moving beyond mere description of this 'institutional completeness', Dahya offers an analysis of the way in which such 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 discussed earlier.

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<sup>6</sup> A glimpse of this is presented by Rajput, 'a leading Karachi journalist', in *The Bradford Telegraph and Argus*, 8-9 July 1964.

<sup>7</sup> 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).

What Dahya does describe is 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 mobilize 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.

While Dahya illuminated traditionally ‘male’ spheres of activity, it is only in the work of another anthropologist, Verity Saifullah Khan, that the early experiences of Pakistani women and children, reunited with their husbands and fathers in Britain, begins to receive attention. Having conducted multi-sited research in both Bradford and the villages of Mirpur during 1972 and 1973, she contributed the chapter on Pakistanis to *Between Two Cultures* (1977), the definitive early collection of anthropological writing about ethnic minorities in contemporary Britain. 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’. Saifullah Khan examines the way in which some of the main institutions of Mirpuri village life 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, Saifullah Khan identifies the continuing strength of village-kin networks in Bradford and reports that there is still a preference for solidarity with *biradari* (patri-lineal descent group) members. Nevertheless, 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).

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<sup>8</sup> 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, she is more careful to maintain a judicious balance between the different structural and cultural forces. While Dahya, like Barr, was able to speak of lower than average unemployment and strong competition for labour during the 1960s, in the 1970s Bradford is a city of low incomes with Pakistanis, in particular, dependent on 'declining industries' (1977: 75-6). There is reference to several factors constraining Mirpuris, including enforced segregation and 'differential treatment' at work (1977: 72), white prejudice against 'dark skinned colonials', the more blatant examples of 'permissiveness' and 'insecurity due to immigration controls' (1977: 73). However, Saifullah Khan is also clear that, Mirpuris had already established their own strategy for survival, exerting 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). Moreover, of the relationship between the Pakistani 'community', ethnic leaderships and the perceptions of the state and wider society, Saifullah Khan observes:<sup>9</sup>

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...The English are generally unaware of the internal differentiation of 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. (1977: 74)<sup>10</sup>

Saifullah Khan suggests that, 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, crucially, 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, Saifullah Khan acknowledges that 'mono-lingual' and 'mono-cultural' schools, where minority languages and cultures are 'not acknowledged or recognised' (1977: 83), at once expose all Asians in Bradford to levels and forms of acculturation and institutional racism that differed markedly from the experiences of their parents. Yet, Saifullah Khan refers to very few contemporary events, a characteristic which effectively depoliticises the experiences of Mirpuris in 1970s Bradford.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, for all the nuance in

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<sup>9</sup> These debates were taken up in earnest only a decade or more later. See Werbner and Anwar (1991).

<sup>10</sup> Community Relations Councils, established after the 1966 Race Relations Act, often acted as early advocates for minority ethnic organisations. See Singh (2002).

<sup>11</sup> For example, there is no explicit discussion of the Yorkshire Campaign to Stop Immigration or the National

her analysis, 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, 1982).

*Here to Stay* (1994) is a collection of oral history and photographs produced by Bradford Heritage Recording Unit. Based on more than 100 open-ended 'life-story interviews' including those men who began to arrive in the city from the 1930s onwards, Smith reports the initial suspicion confronting researchers: 'Very often the only time people from outside ... show any interest in these close-knit communities is when there is a real or perceived problem ... to be reported upon in an often partial, distorted and sensationalist way by the media' (1994: 7). However, he argues that 'what this project recorded has, in many cases, never been published before...Along the way many people's stories have been lost...Photography and oral history are ways of rescuing these stories, giving voice to the personality, emotions, warmth and humour of individual people' (Smith, 1994: 7). While there is material from the 1980s and 1990s, it is the accounts of expectations and everyday realities in terms of working conditions and a sense of community that remain the focus here.

At first glance it is perhaps some of the non-literary texts in *Here to Stay* that are most unique and revealing. While photographs in the volume from the 1980s onwards are Smith's own commissions (1994: 3), formal portraits of early migrants taken at The Belle Vue Studio on Manningham Lane are also included. At a time in the 1950s when the emergence of amateur cameras caused a slump in mainstream business, South Asian immigration produced 'a new, enthusiastic and faithful clientele' (1994: 25). Attracting customers throughout Yorkshire, Lancashire and as far a field as Birmingham, the studio reinforced Bradford's early reputation as a regional hub for consumption amongst South Asians. However, Belle Vue was distinguished by its friendliness as many other studios in the city refused black and Asian clients (1994: 31). Reflecting a Victorian heritage in common with the subcontinent, the 'stiff and formal poses' (1994: 25) of the portraits provide a fascinating record of how hundreds of individuals and family groups chose to creatively re-present life in Bradford to relatives overseas. Dressed for the most part in new suits - or sometimes in the smart uniform of Bradford City Transport - the portraits reveal a status-conscious concern to display material success.<sup>12</sup> Given the image of prosperity conveyed by regular remittances and conspicuous

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Front.

<sup>12</sup> This was achieved with the help of various expensive 'props' including watches, cameras and radios, or 'signs of sophistication' such as cigarettes and sunglasses, or education, such as books, briefcases, umbrellas and pens in top pockets (1994: 27). There were also backdrops, not to mention a retouching service which allowed the lightening of skin tone (1994: 29) or the reuniting of displaced family members (1994: 43).

consumption during visits home, accounts of the conditions and indignities of everyday life in Britain went unreported to, or repressed by, families in South Asia (Singh, 1994: 10). In these early days, too, couples appear only rarely but when they do ‘the women are always white, their relationship to the men unknown ... Stories are told of such pictures surfacing among the personal effects of men who have recently died, and they have at times caused upset’ (1994: 31). Notably, no such pictures are included in the volume, the BHRU team choosing - perhaps not surprisingly - to censor the public memory of sexual transgression which is remembered, nevertheless, in Ayub Khan-Din's Salford-based 1997 play and 1999 film, *East is East*.

Before arriving in Bradford, migrants from mainly rural economies where seasonal work was still paid in kind by the squire, tell of imagining England as a uniformly modern, clean and wealthy place. Even with long-established regional traditions of emigration, including work as *lascars* (seamen) in the engine room of coal fired ships moving between Karachi and London via Bombay, Sri Lanka and Australia, images of the former colonial motherland were still dominated by the Queen and the memory of the pageantry surrounding her coronation. England was also idealised as a land where all had servants and the streets were truly paved with gold. Migrants recalled their excited anticipation of an aeroplane journey and the urban life that awaited them. However, despite the cars and electric lights, the cold, dark, smoky reality of the North of England was a rude awakening, as was the sheer number of white people, their impenetrable accents, shameful public displays of affection and a depressing amount of time spent indoors.

A key trope of first generation discourse is the sacrifice made for extended families and later generations, not least in terms of working long, hard, dirty shifts in the mills. While ‘regardless of education you could go in and get a job...you didn’t need to be able to read or write’ (1994: 62), the workplace was seen by many as a site of oppressive conformity: ‘otherwise they didn’t like you...the only thing they like is the work they’re getting’ (1994: 63). One man spoke of being ‘frightened to death of even going for a proper meal break’, while another recalled being ‘treated like a slave. For the sake of my dignity and self-respect I had to leave that job’ (1994: 67). His images of England shattered, he recounted weeping with regret that he had ever come to Bradford. Others spoke of racism and employers’ suspicious about Asians’ ability to work. Even relatively well-educated people, employed on the buses, were affronted by comments about ‘not driving a cart’.

The early migrants lived in multiple occupancy houses, with double figures not unusual in ‘two-up, two-downs’. Anyone without work would pay neither for food nor rent. While few were actually concerned with formal religious practice during this period, those of

Muslim heritage – even those who frequented pubs - would still not eat meat or poultry from English shops. Spices could be improvised from the stock available in Jewish, Polish and Latvian shops but, without the *halal* butchers of later years, some pioneers bought sheep and chickens from local farms, having them ritually slaughtered on the spot or sometimes waiting until the animal had been conveyed home. Of course, such cultural practices were a potential source of conflict given such close proximity to English neighbours. One man reported how frightened he had been when, during Ramadan, he had received a visit from the police after neighbours complained about him playing his radio in the middle of the night. At the same time, another recalled how his brother-in-law ‘never let his wife do washing on Sundays...because it’s their sabbath...because they don’t do washing themselves on Sundays’.

Before migration, few had actually ventured beyond their villages and because they were illiterate and could not read road names, they navigated entirely by landmarks, both significant and mundane. In the early days, there was a village atmosphere which one man recalled quite wistfully: ‘If you saw an Asian face you crossed the road and met them and asked them who they were, where they were from... people...clung to one another and helped each other out’ (1994: \*\*). Homes had an open door policy, another recalling how, as a child of twelve, ‘my house would be full of people at weekends, people wanting me to fill their forms in, insurance forms, taxation forms, because I was one of the few who could read and write’ (1994: 72). However, the weekend was also an opportunity to escape for tea, kabab, cards and discussion in one’s own language at the Sweet Centre or Azad Club along Lumb Lane. Three or four cinemas with all day double-bills of Asian films and the prospect of visiting relatives, all made Bradford a *desh pardesh* of the North of England: ‘Bradford was the place. I thought it was great, it was like going back home...Lumb Lane used to be fantastic...all weekend you got the feeling you were in a bazaar’ (1994: 77).

### **Becoming Brad-istan: Asian Youth and Anti-Racism in fiction, policy and travelogue of the 1980s**

Bradford-raised writer and film-maker, Tariq Mehmood, spoke of how his narrative visualisation of space sits at the intersection of multiple locations. His writing has to be positioned in terms of wider South Asian traditions, internationalist conflicts and a concern for de-colonisation of the mind. Thinking that he was going to jail on a charge of terrorism in the early 1980s, Mehmood spoke about how in *Hand on the Sun* (1983), his first novel, he had wanted to leave some record of the strength of anti-racist and women's movements in Bradford. However, by the time of his second novel about this

period, *Where There is Light* (2003), some of these had been destroyed and lost their impetus.

A former officer of the Community Relations Council and Race Equality Council spoke about how the emergence of local state recognition in Bradford was ultimately a response to the nation-wide urban disturbances of the early 1980s. Despite gaining a national and international reputation for good community relations in the 1960s and 1970s, Bradford council had never had an official policy. By 1981, however, multiculturalism was viewed as a means of trying to manage the radicalism of Asian youth. New funding streams led to the mushrooming of ethnic and religious organisations laying claim to representation and their share of resources.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Hiro (1992) argues that ‘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. 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, Ramamurthy (2008) desire for national narratives / privileging of Southall proximity to London.<sup>13</sup> As Kalra et al. (1996) argue, while there were always attempts at co-ordination between AYM’s, a formal sense of nation-wide 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 that they had been prompted in their actions by the widely broadcast threat of NF 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.

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

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<sup>13</sup> See [www.tandaiia.org/AYM.html](http://www.tandaiia.org/AYM.html) for an online archive of images which tell the story of the AYM’s.

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.

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

*Hand on the Sun* documents the many hidden costs of the migration process for the first generation. Mehmood tells of mothers who rarely go out and fathers brutalised by work in the mills. 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).<sup>14</sup> It is at this stage in the novel that 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). With the feeling that what is happening in London will soon find its way to Bradford, Jalib commits himself to countering skinhead attacks on ‘his people’ by any means

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<sup>14</sup> The Indian Workers’ Association was one of the more politicised organisations amongst 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 (1964-1980) and protested against discrimination in the promotions policy of West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive. It was closely associated with the *gurdwaras* (Singh 2002).

necessary.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the climax of *A Hand on the Sun* draws very closely on the real events surrounding the so-called ‘Battle of Bradford’ in 1976.<sup>16</sup>

The NF, having organised a large anti-immigration march through the city, was eventually chased out of town by an angry crowd of West Indian and Asian youth. 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. There are reports from Southall of the AYM there securing government funds to open its own centre and similar offers eventually emerge in Bradford. Echoing the analysis of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (1982), that public recognition can be a form of state incorporation and control, Mehmood (1983: 156) anticipates the dissipation of the AYM by the late 1980s as many members took up jobs within the emerging ‘race’ relations industry.

In the late 1970s, Bradford and other city councils in the UK 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 1980s. 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.<sup>17</sup> 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’,<sup>18</sup> it marks a moment of transition in the balance of power between ethnic majority and minorities. In a post-colonial moment,

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<sup>15</sup> However, Mehmood is not uncritical of power relations and social divisions within ‘communities’. 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).

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> *The Sunday Mirror*, 4 June 1978, describes Bradford as, ‘one of the country’s liveliest and most progressive authorities’.

<sup>18</sup> Today, South Asian heritage children are projected to make up 40% of the city’s school population by 2011 (Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 2000: 2)

perhaps with echoes of Indian independence in 1947, Bradford's Asians 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"' (1981: 5).<sup>19</sup>

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 Murphy. 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 British-Asian 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, post-colonial Bradford

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<sup>19</sup> *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% Irish city at the time.

proved just as much an encounter with the 'other' 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.

As her account unfolds it becomes clear that Murphy is extremely critical of the implementation of *Turning Point* in Bradford, suggesting that 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 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 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. 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 'British-Asian' women (1987: 26). 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).

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 ‘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 much longer: ‘my forecast is Big Trouble Ahead’ (1987: 29). As we shall see next, these are issues taken up in my final snapshot.

### **Mecca of the North? ‘Islamic Britain’ in the 1990s and 2000s**

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 discussed in Chapter \*. 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 an 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. Therefore his study

includes an assessment of Islam's institutionalisation in Bradford, 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).

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. The institutionalisation of Islam in Bradford accelerated only with the reuniting of families, a process which continued into the 1980s amongst Mirpuris and Bengalis. 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.<sup>20</sup> 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 to blasphemously 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.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, while outrage at Rushdie's novel united the various Islamic movements in Britain temporarily, the book burning 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).<sup>22</sup>

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

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<sup>20</sup> 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).

<sup>21</sup> 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).

<sup>22</sup> 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 the UK's legislation on 'race' relations or blasphemy was open to them.

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’ (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.<sup>23</sup> 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 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 3 to 11 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 organization does not do justice to the city’s 60,000 Muslims since no individual nor organization has ever been given the mandate by...the Muslims of Bradford to act as their representative or spokesman. (Lewis, 1994: 168)

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)

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<sup>23</sup> 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.

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 polarization 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. (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 that, 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 'Brad-istan'. 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 socializing in conformity with British norms problematic' (2002: 217). The 'norms' that Lewis mentions in this respect include *izzat* (family honour) and (transcontinental) 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, I think what Lewis is 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 elite 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 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 UK 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.

## **Conclusion**

As stated at the outset of this chapter, my contention has been that, by considering together various ‘snapshots’ of ‘BrAsian’ Bradford, from the 1960s through the 2000s, it should be possible to glimpse something of how the city has come to be the way it is today. Indeed, to Lewis, I would say that the ‘self contained world’ (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. In this concluding section, then, I want to summarise and elaborate 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 in large part 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 elites (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 elites 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), as well as 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 also 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, what I want to suggest is that, 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.<sup>24</sup> 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' (1992: 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 Mehmood. Mohammed Yunis 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.<sup>25</sup>

*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:

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<sup>24</sup> 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).

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)

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<sup>25</sup> Thanks to Philip Lewis for alerting me to Alam's work.