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Immigration to London: Hard Facts – Literary Solutions?

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1 Introduction

Immigration is a condition of the modern world. It also looms large for contemporary British society. As a former colonial power Britain has had a longer history of non-white immigration than many other countries, which makes it a particularly interesting object of study. In today's Britain labour and skills shortages as well as the demographic development are unlikely to make immigration redundant in the coming years. Asylum applications have soared in recent decades, and low recognition rates still do not guarantee the successful deportation of failed applicants. The accumulated backlog of asylum seekers and illegal immigration continue to add to the number of immigrants resident in Britain.[1] All in all Bhikhu Parekh therefore correctly observes that "contemporary cultural diversity […] has an air of inexorability and unpredictability about it and confronts us with our shared universal predicament."[2]

Immigration has led to clashes in British society and will continue to do so. More recent events such as the London July bombings in 2005 have turned immigrant communities into a more pressing concern for the government. The issue has also become more complicated and confusing for public opinion. However, ignoring this "universal predicament" which puts us at difficulty is not a solution, as this will not alleviate the related problems but deepen them. Parekh explains the challenge of "contemporary multicultural societies":

> Thanks to the dynamics of the modern economy, their constituent communities cannot lead isolated lives and are caught up in a complex pattern of interaction with each other and the wider society. And thanks to the spread of liberal and democratic ideas, they refuse to accept inferior political status and demand equal political rights including the right to participate in and shape the cultural life of the wider society.[3]

But the side effects of large-scale immigration and the (lack of adequate) policies addressing it are dramatic: racist harassment, ghettoisation, riots, discrimination, exclusion, ideological clashes. They urgently need to be addressed by government, as "these are issues which can be influenced in the political arena."[4]

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[1] Simon Green, Immigration, Asylum and Citizenship: Britain and Germany Compared (London: Anglo-German Foundation, 2002) 11.
[2] Bhikhu Parekh, Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory (London: Macmillan, 2000) 8.
[3] Parekh, 7.
[4] Zig Layton-Henry and Czarina Wilpert, "Introduction." Challenging Racism in Britain and Germany (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 1.

This thesis argues that the usual tools employed in the making of policies regarding immigrants in Britain – interview samples in migrant communities, statistics based on Census data and resulting academic theories, assumptions about human beings' natural behaviour in the circumstances of migration – may not always yield the best policy results. The forces driving immigrants in an 'alien' host society are not always rational, and the psychological complexity of their situation may be more adequately explained through the medium of literature written by immigrants or their children about life in Britain. Novels depicting from an inside perspective how immigrants are, and would like to be, treated and what is at the heart of their concerns can give indications for a successful approach to immigration and immigrants. Between the lines of their narrative they can give ideas for policy and attitudinal changes which would bring about a more successful and equal integration of immigrants into the host society. This thesis is aware of the limitations of using fiction as a resource for policy-making. It does not imply that thorough and diligent empirical research should be substituted by fiction. Rather, its suggestion is that it should be supplemented by looking at certain aspects of a particular type of fiction.

The premise of this thesis is that literature dealing with immigrant experience, which is written by first or second-generation immigrants, could usefully inform immigration and integration policies. Generally, this thesis takes its approach from the discipline of Cultural Studies which posits that a society's cultural production can yield important information about that society itself. Accordingly, novels written by members of immigrant communities can offer information about immigrant communities themselves. More specifically, this thesis wants to challenge the notion that literature is a poor resource for sociological enquiry. According to this view literature is universal and thereby has to transcend social specificity. Conversely, this thesis demonstrates that novels can exhibit a high degree of social specificity, as they always draw on lived experience and try to make sense of it. In this sense, novels can explain something about the society they were conceived in. What is more, if an ethnic minority author writes a novel with the subject matter of growing up or living in a British immigrant community it will have autobiographical traits.

Novelist Zadie Smith – whose book *White Teeth* will be considered as part of this thesis – has recently conceded this point, that in many ways literature is highly specific rather than universal, in her 15 tips on writing and reading in *The Guardian*. She is convinced that "[a] great novel is the intimation of a metaphysical event you can never know, […] the experience of the world through a consciousness other than

your own."[5] The consciousness the reader enters is the writer's who, writing a novel, attempts to "understand […] that-which-is-outside-ourselves using only what we have inside ourselves".[6] Adopting this position that novels present us with a view of the world through the writer's consciousness it follows that if the writer happens to be a first or second-generation immigrant we gain access to an immigrant's standpoint by reading his or her novel.

This has shown that there is reasonable ground for resorting to a certain type of literature when making policies in the area of immigration. But in which areas of policy-making can this type of fiction be useful? Literature cannot provide statistics about living standards, income or the ratio of racist harassment. It does not provide us with formulated policies. Nor will it explain how a policy measure can be carried out logistically. These areas must remain firmly in the realm of the social sciences. At the same time, it has to be conceded that as a resource for policy-making empirical research, such as sampling interviews in migrant communities, also has its limits. The individuals questioned might not always be the most articulate. They might moreover not tell the whole truth to the researchers for various reasons such as fear, distrust, embarrassment, privacy issues, language barriers or cultural differences. Ethnic minority novelists on the other hand are articulate. They want to speak out about their community in their own terms rather than in the framework imposed on community members by a researcher.

Moreover, policies related to immigration do not only concern issues such as how to improve ethnic minorities' access to better housing and jobs. They also include the question of how to enable immigrants to feel part of the society and the state they live in. Bhikhu Parekh explains that the "feeling of being full citizens and yet outsiders [which many immigrants confront] is difficult to analyse and explain, but it can be deep and real and seriously damage the quality of their citizenship and their commitment to the political community."[7] Literature might be second to none in explaining immigrants' identity conflicts, in sketching out attitudes held by different individuals across immigrant communities or the motivations guiding behaviour which may seem contradictory to the outsider. It might lead us to the root causes of their attitudes, perceptions and behaviour and thereby point to (policy) remedies

[5] Zadie Smith, "Fail better," *Guardian Unlimited*, 13 January 2007, http://www.guardian.co.uk. Last viewed 23 January 2007.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Parekh, 342.

which would improve the situation. Literature could step in where factual data, statistics, and rational arguments give insufficient information.

This thesis acknowledges the problem that an author is only ever one (and not necessarily the most representative) member of an immigrant community. While authors therefore cannot speak for the community as a whole they still have a significant advantage over an outsider. They speak from inside a community. Their consciousness was shaped by being an immigrant, and thus partly an outsider, in British society, and having that consciousness is – as Zadie Smith has called it – a "metaphysical event you can never know." Moreover, immigrant communities are never homogenous, and an individual perspective might have more truth to it than an attempt at taking an average of attitudes held within a community. This is the view taken up by Anthony D. King:

> I want to […] make a case for the disaggregation and deconstruction of the […] totalising category of 'migration'. And also as our emphasis is on movement and mobility, for movement out of what can sometimes be the static categories of representation generated by a discourse of sociology – with its focus on the collective, the social, the theoretically generalizable – into the more personalized and subjective space occupied by the humanities – cultural studies, literature, history, biography and the like.[8]

Furthermore, as the act of writing a novel about growing up or living in Britain as a first or second-generation immigrant is for the authors a way of coming to terms with their own experience, there is an authenticity in the novels' voices. Hanif Kureishi has explained that the writers who influenced him were

> Naipaul, Soyinka, Richard Wright, James Baldwin: 'I'd never had any notion that you could write about [racism]. There I was at school being kicked around and abused and put down and suddenly I realised that this wasn't just my own problem but that there were words for it.'[9]

This argues that Kureishi, whose novel *The Black Album* will be considered below, in writing draws strongly on his own experience. In addition Kureishi's statement reveals that there is an agenda in the types of novels considered here to speak out and tell the wider society what it is like to live in Britain and belong to an ethnic minority. This is underlined by Zadie Smith's view of art's purpose:

> It is, [Iris] Murdoch once said, incredibly hard to make oneself believe that *other people really exist in the same way that we do ourselves*. It is the *great challenge of art to convince ourselves of this fundamental truth* – but it's also the challenge of our lives. Writers, just like everyone, are prone to the belief that all the world's a movie, in which they are the star, and all the other people, merely extras, lingering on set. To live well, to write well, you must convince yourself of the inviolable reality of other people.[10]

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[8] Anthony D. King, "Global Cities, Local Spaces: Cultural Specificity in Global Representations" in *Migration: A European Journal of International Migration and Ethnic Relations* 33 (2002) 32.

[9] *Guardian Unlimited*, "Hanif Kureishi ", http://books.guardian.co.uk/authors/author/0,,-100,00.html. Last viewed 23 January 2007.

[10] Zadie Smith, "Read better," *Guardian Unlimited*, 20 January 2007, http://www.guardian.co.uk. Last viewed 23 January 2007.

And it is the argument of this thesis that *White Teeth*, *The Black Album* and the other novels that will be considered are written with (among others) this same purpose: "To convince" readers "of the inviolable reality" of immigrants as full human beings in Britain.

This thesis takes the city of London as its laboratory. It has been frequently proved that there is less prejudice and resentment against ethnic minorities in areas with a high percentage of ethnic minority residents. These areas have a longer history of interaction and experience with immigrants and can therefore show how multi-racial societies can, and are likely to, develop in the long run. They are more useful research objects when looking for a solution to how a country can best deal with large-scale migration. London is uniquely suited to an exploration of this question. Sarah Spencer pointed out in 2003 that "[a]round 8 per cent of the UK's residents are now from ethnic minorities, including 29 per cent of Londoners".[11] In the words of *The Guardian*'s 2005 study on London's ethnic communities "London in 2005 is uncharted territory. Never have so many different kinds of people tried living in the same place before. What some people see as the great experiment of multiculturalism will triumph or fail here."[12] In order to limit its scope and to be able to draw better parallels between the novels, which are set in varied immigrant groups, this thesis deals only with works set in disproportionately multicultural London.

The thesis wants to focus on how immigrants live and cope and would like to live and cope in Britain. It wants to address recent issues around immigration. Therefore, it has considered only very recent novels, published roughly over the last decade. What it does not focus on is immigrants' fates before immigration. The works considered are thus united by their setting in London immigrant communities and their recent publication. This is however not an in-depth study of one London area, one specific immigrant group, or one specific policy issue such as housing or employment. Fiction would not be the adequate resource for any such study. The immigrants considered in this thesis and in the novels, however, all fall within the category of "Black and Asian" or otherwise "visible ethnic minorities."[13] This thesis is interested in Britain's more established ethnic minorities because behavioural trends and policy successes or failures can be more clearly observed where there are

[11] Sarah Spencer, "Introduction." *The Politics of Migration: Managing Opportunity, Conflict and Change* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 1.
[12] Leo Benedictus, "Every race, colour, nation and religion on earth", *The Guardian*, 21 January 2005, http://www.guardian.co.uk/britain/article/0,,1395534,00.html. Last viewed 21 January 2007.
[13] Zig Layton-Henry et al, 9.

at least a few decades of immigration history for a particular group. Moreover, the groundbreaking novels of the last decades have largely emerged from these minority groups. Thus, the very topical debate around the new wave of 'invisible' immigrants from Eastern Europe does not fall within the scope of this thesis.

The thesis is structured according to topics. Rather than assessing each novel individually the treatment of certain topics is compared across novels. The method in each chapter is to first assess how the topics are laid out in the different novels and then try to find remedies for the most urgent problems with recourse to specialist literature. Briefly, these are the writers and novels which will be considered. Monica Ali is a young writer of English and Bangladeshi parents born in Dakha, Banglandesh who came to England at the age of three and lives in London. Her debut novel *Brick Lane*, published in 2003, is set in the London Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets and deals with the development of a young Bangladeshi woman after her arrival in Britain due to an arranged marriage.[14] The second young writer considered here is Zadie Smith who was born in north-west London in 1975 to an English father and a Jamaican mother. The novel considered by this thesis is also a debut. *White Teeth*, published in 2000, won a number of awards and prizes. The novel is largely set in and around Willesden in north-west London and deals with the lives and fates of three families which interweave in the course of the novel; the half-English, half-Jamaican Jones family, the Bangladeshi Iqbal family and later the half-Jewish English Chalfen family.[15] The third writer is Andrea Levy who was born to Jamaican parents in London in 1956 and grew up in north London. Her second novel *Never Far From Nowhere*, published in 1996, is set on a north London council estate in the 1970s and is told alternately from the angle of Olive and Vivien, two sisters with Jamaican parents.[16] The fourth and last writer Hanif Kureishi was born in Bromley, Kent, a southeastern suburb of London, in 1954 to a Pakistani father and an English mother. His second novel *The Black Album*, published in 1995, is set in

[14] "Monica Ali," http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth03B5N513312634963. Last viewed 23 January 2007. Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* (London: Black Swan, 2004 [2003]).
[15] "Zadie Smith," http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth257. Last viewed 23 January 2007. "Zadie Smith," http://books.guardian.co.uk/authors/author/0,,-186,00.html. Last viewed 23 January 2007. Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (London: Penguin, 2001 [2000]).
[16] James Procter et al, "Andrea Levy," http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth149. Last viewed 23 January 2007. Andrea Levy, *Never Far From Nowhere* (London: Review, 2004 [1996]).

London in 1989 and deals with a group of radical Muslim students around the time the Ayatollah Khomeini pronounced his "fatwa upon Salman Rushdie."[17]

The thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1, "Segregation: 'I hardly left these few streets,'" looks at the way in which immigrants tend to cluster in areas where people from the same ethnic minority or other immigrants live. It looks at the reasons the novels *White Teeth* and *Brick Lane* give for this phenomenon and tries to uncover which policies could counter extreme segregation and especially the feelings inducing immigrants to turn away from the wider host society. Chapter 2, "Scars of Racism: 'Everyone can see my crime,'" looks at the treatment of the experience of racism in the novels and its consequences for the characters' development. It looks at policies to counter racism and how the characters' traumatising experiences could be avoided and possibly remedied. The two novels this chapter draws on are *White Teeth* and *Never Far From Nowhere*. Finally, Chapter 3, "Muslims and Islamists: 'Insisting on their identity,'" assesses the novels' depiction of the thought processes and the motivations of fundamentalist Muslims. It examines the reasons provided for the characters' recourse to religious extremism in *The Black Album*, *Brick Lane* and *White Teeth*, and speculates how these factors could be eliminated or at least weakened by policies. In the light of current Islamophobia in Britain the chapter also looks at the views which the novels provide for moderate Muslims and seeks to find solutions to their grievances.

Finally, in its search for adequate policies to redress immigrant disadvantage in London and Britain, the thesis draws on a wide variety of sources, among them the journals *Ethnic and Racial Studies* and *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. But two works have contributed the lion's share to the policy suggestions made: The first one was the essay collection *Challenging Racism in Britain and Germany*, edited by Zig Layton-Henry and Czarina Wilpert, which originated in a study commissioned by the Anglo-German Foundation. The second inspiring book was *The Politics of Migration*, edited by Sarah Spencer for *The Political Quarterly*. Moreover, Bhikhu Parekh was influential in informing the basic premise of this thesis.

[17] Jules Smith et al, "Hanif Kureishi," http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth57. Last viewed 23 January 2007. Hanif Kureishi, *The Black Album* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003 [1995]).

2 The problems of literary and real immigrants and possible solutions

2.1 Chapter 1: Segregation: "I hardly left these few streets."[18]

> After we had moved from the village near Bolton where we were, literally, the local colour, to the East End suburb where, God, I still am, we acquired lots of new neighbours who, joy of joys, looked just like us.
> Meery Syal, *Life Isn't All ha ha hee hee*[19]

> The dialogically-constituted multicultural society […] cherishes not *static and ghettoized*, but interactive and dynamic, *multiculturalism*.
> Bhikhu Parekh[20]

It is not necessary to consult *The Guardian*'s 2005 report on London's ethnic communities to notice the tendency among immigrants to settle in distinct areas of the city and frequently in areas where other members of their ethnic community or at least a substantial number of other immigrants live. There are numerous reasons for this phenomenon. Financial constraints are not to be underestimated as a driving force though they cannot sufficiently explain "a pattern of segregated housing and schools on a par with the old American south."[21] *The Guardian* points out the upsides and downsides of the British situation. "A degree of 'clustering' is helpful in consolidating a community's culture. But communities which do not overlap and have meaningful interchanges, breed fear, distrust and division."[22]

The novels consulted for this thesis parallel reality in that for the most part they do not move significantly outside the protagonists' residential area and its immediate vicinity. The fictional overlap with real "patterns" of segregation in Britain and London makes a case for drawing from the novels the implied reasons for this "clustering" and "lack of meaningful interchanges" with other communities in the capital. While their neighbourhood gives a strong sense of identity and belonging to immigrants and their offspring, it is worrying that immigrants often do not feel safe, accepted, or at ease outside their neighbourhoods, however flawed those may be. Ideas for policy solutions to counter extreme segregation and its negative aspects will

[18] Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* (London: Black Swan, 2004 [2003]) 289. All further references are to this edition.
[19] Meera Syal, *Life isn't all ha ha hee hee* (London: Black Swan, 2000 [1999]) 73. The novel, which was read in the preparation of this thesis, boasts a set of interesting characters with their roots in the Punjabi community in the London suburb of Leyton.
[20] Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (London: Macmillan, 2000) 341.
[21] "Diversity not Segregation: Leader," *Guardian Unlimited*, 21 January 2005. http://www.guardian.co.uk/britain/article/0,,1395257,00.html. Last viewed 23 January 2007.
[22] Ibid.

be inspired by the novels and the suggestions of policy experts such as the Runnymede Trust, Varun Uberoi, Will Kymlicka and Bhikhu Parekh. To assess issues of segregation and ghettoisation this chapter examines the novels *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith and *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali. The two books are particularly suitable, as the contrasting areas (and communities) they are set in shape these works more distinctly than this is the case with the other novels. After an analysis of mainly mixed immigrant segregation with reference to *White Teeth* the chapter assesses "segregation along ethnic lines" as it is presented in *Brick Lane* before finally drawing up policy solutions for both types.[23]

2.2.1 Segregation in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*

At the beginning of *White Teeth* the three central immigrant characters, Clara Bowden and Samad and Alsana Iqbal live respectively in Lambeth and Whitechapel. The move from their original neighbourhoods to Willesden, where the bulk of the novel's action takes place, means a break with their past for all of them. The reader understands what kind of place Clara must come from when she moves to Willesden to

> a house somewhere between the trees and the shit[. …] Clara felt a tide of gratitude roll over her. It was *nice* […]; it had two small gardens front and back, a doormat, a doorbell, a toilet *inside* […], it was nice – not the promised land – but nice, nicer than anywhere she had ever been.[24]

This shows that Clara must have spent most of her time in Lambeth, south London without ever even setting eyes on the richer areas of the city. Lambeth and her living situation there are revealed by this passage as rather poor. Clara's marriage to a non-Jamaican white "heathen" (WT, 46) and her move out of the 'ghetto' necessarily entail that she breaks with the communities she came from, the Jamaicans and the Jehovah's Witnesses: "Hortense was fiercely opposed to the affair on grounds of colour rather than of age, and on hearing of it had promptly ostracized her daughter one morning on the doorstep." (WT, 46)

Similar to Clara, the Iqbal parent characters have experienced life in a bad area of London. *White Teeth* dramatises what it means for Bangladeshi immigrants 'off the boat' to attempt to move away from the Whitechapel area in the borough of Tower

[23] Ibid.
[24] Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (London: Penguin, 2001 [2000]) 47-48. Any further references are to this edition (WT).

Hamlets. *The Guardian* underlines how strongly their ethnic group is represented here:

> More than one in three Tower Hamlets residents now consider themselves an ethnic Bangladeshi, and in the ward of Spitalfields and Banglatown they make up more than 58 % of the population […] In 1991 there were 37,000 Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets, and very few anywhere else in London. But by 2001, the population had exceeded 67,000 in Tower Hamlets and established large new concentrations in King's Cross and West Ham.[25]

In Willesden upon leaving the house Alsana "avoid[s …] trees, where previously, *in Whitechapel, she avoided flung-out mattresses and the homeless*." (WT, 62, my emphasis) This circumstance prompts the reflection: "Not like Whitechapel, where [… they were] *forced* […] *into the basement while kids broke the windows with their steel-capped boots*." (WT, 62, my emphasis) But the escape from the racist violence in the poor Bangladeshi area and to "the wrong side" of a "nice" suburb simultaneously entails a certain loss of community for the Iqbals.[26] (WT, 55) This becomes clear when Alsana, upset about her husband sending her son Magid back to Bangladesh, visits the "houses of relatives" in Whitechapel: (WT, 212)

> her gut told her that though the curry was sound, the commiserations were not all they seemed. For there were those who were quietly pleased that Alsana Iqbal, with her big house and her blacky-white friends […] was now living in doubt and uncertainty like the rest of them, learning to wear misery like old familiar silk. There was a certain *satisfaction* in it […]. Alsana [also] sensed [this …] as the calls flooded in – 28 May 1985 – to inform her of, to offer *commiserations* for, the latest cyclone. (WT, 212)

The move to a nicer area gains them envy as well as a reputation for snobbery in the Bangladeshi community and costs them empathy within it.

However, though *White Teeth* begins with a move out of the 'ghetto' for Clara and the Iqbals the novel continues in a 'ghettoised' setting. The novel draws on the very real circumstances of life in "more liberal" Willesden. The area's street and park names, bus routes and tube stops exist in reality.[27] The fact that "Zadie Smith was born in north-west London in 1975, and continues to live in the area" suggests that she draws on her own childhood experience when she depicts Willesden between 1975 and 1992. (WT, ii)

The type of area Willesden represents is fictionally conveyed by Alsana's walk along Willesden's high road:

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[25] Leo Benedictus, "From Afghanistan to Australia, via Italy, Bangladesh, Colombia and Japan: Where some of London's other communities hang out," *Guardian Unlimited*, 21 January 2005. http://www.guardian.co.uk/britain/article/0,,1395551,00.html. Last viewed 23 January 2007.

[26] "Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in the UK have been and remain those most at risk from racist attacks." John Lloyd, "Closing the Gates of Europe? The New Populist Parties in Europe," *The Politics of Migration: Managing Opportunity, Conflict and Change*, ed. Sarah Spencer (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 95.

[27] By contrast, the Lambeth street names and bus routes cannot be found on real London maps.

> *Mali's Kebabs*, *Mr Cheungs*, *Raj's*, *Malkovich Bakeries* – she read the new unfamiliar signs as she passed. She was shrewd. She saw this for what it was. 'Liberal? Hosh-kosh nonsense!' No one was more liberal than anyone else anywhere anyway. It was only that in Willesden, there was just not enough of any one thing to gang up against any other thing and send it running to the cellars while the windows were smashed." (WT, 63)

On the fictional high road there is also the hairdresser "P.K.'s Afro Hair" specialising in "black hairdressing" (WT, 278), "Raakshan Dentists" (WT, 272), and "Rosh's Haircare" (WT, 279) selling fake as well as real (Pakistani or Chinese) hair to mainly black women. The schools in the borough of the Joneses and the Iqbals apparently include pupils from "67 different faiths" and "123 languages". (WT, 292) Accordingly, this fictive Willesden, probably paralleling the real Willesden, is an area where a substantial number of immigrants from all over the world have settled and established themselves. The protagonists of *White Teeth* have moved to a mixed neighbourhood rather than to a really upmarket white suburb. And they do not stray far beyond its bounds. Through the move out of the ethnic 'ghetto' the novel therefore does not open up into wider London.

Samad works in Central London, but he already did so before they moved to Willesden. Clara finds work down the road in Kilburn as a supervisor of a black youth group. (WT, 73) Alsana works from home at her "Singer" (WT, 55) and initially attends an Asian Women's pre-natal class in Kilburn. (WT, 73) Millat's *Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation* (KEVIN) are also based in Kilburn. (WT, 295, 470) The children's schools and Samad's affair remain in the vicinity of Willesden. (WT, 165) Even the local madwoman, the black voodoo woman Mad Mary lives in a "wheelie bin structure" in Fortune Green, (WT, 176) which is just east of Willesden. Samad's local, *O'Connell's Pool House* run by an Iraqi family, (WT, 12) is on Finchley Road, (WT, 246) which runs past the eastern side of Fortune Green. Movement outside this pocket of north-west London is always an uncertain adventure not easily embarked upon. The novel highlights this by the elaborate treatment of two expeditions to the Perret Institute for the final showdown of the novel: The Iqbals and Joneses go on the 98 bus, (WT, 510-517) while KEVIN take the tube. (WT, 498-503) It also takes Irie years to make up her mind to finally go and find her grandmother in south London, and her sojourn in Lambeth is given the air of a holiday in a faraway land.

But what reasons are implied for the characters' fixation in this mixed 'ghetto'? Firstly, despite heavy mortgages it is still in the bounds of the affordable for both Joneses and Iqbals, (WT, 46, 60) probably due to the fact that Willesden has "wrong sides" and "shit" as well as "trees". (WT, 55, 47) The lack of movement may have

the additional economic motivation of saving public transport and petrol expenses. Secondly, Samad says the area is liberal and therefore more welcoming of immigrants. (WT, 59) Alsana judges it to be only too diverse for the formation of violent gangs. But both seem to feel safe from racist violence in Willesden and might not feel so safe outside north-west London. Thirdly, for the children it is the area they know and where they have social contacts. This is exemplified by Millat's mythical status in the area:

> He was so big in Cricklewood, in Willesden, in West Hampstead, the summer of 1990, that nothing he did later in life could top it. From his first Raggastani crowd, he had expanded and developed tribes throughout the school, throughout North London. (WT, 269)

On the other hand it is observed that Millat "knew he had no face in this country, no voice in the country." (WT, 234) Hereby, the novel alludes to poor media representation and glass ceilings preventing ethnic minority members from pursuing certain careers. Discrimination and prejudice make it difficult for immigrants and their offspring to become "big" and meaningful in their host country. But they can more easily become "big" or mean something within the confines of a neighbourhood, especially when it has a mixed population.

Though the novel celebrates Willesden's diversity and thus ethnically diverse neighbourhoods the parent characters increasingly begin to resent the confusion such an area brings and the loss of their own native culture which will not be perpetuated by their children. This manifests itself in Samad's growing religious anxiety and his worry for his sons' spiritual future which prompts his sending Magid back to Bangladesh. Alsana and Clara are not free from this type of concern either:

> the immigrant fears […] dissolution, disappearance. Even the unflappable Alsana Iqbal would regularly wake up in a puddle of her own sweat after a night visited by visions of Millat marrying someone called Sarah[, … eventually] leaving Alsana with a set of unrecognizable great-grandchildren, their Bengali-ness thoroughly diluted[. … Likewise,] Hortense Bowden, half-white herself, […] hadn't put all that effort into marrying black, into dragging her genes back from the brink, just so her daughter could bring yet more high-coloured children into the world. […] Clara […] saw an ocean of pink skins surround her daughter and feared the tide that would take her away. (WT, 327-328)

A glimpse of such a future dissolution is provided by the indication that the butcher Mo's "pale skinned" children with a white wife are safe from racist attacks. (WT, 473)

Smith's humorous meditation on the issue alerts the reader to the fact that immigrants are not driven by cultural reasons to come to Britain but predominantly by economic ones. They do not come to lose their culture but to earn a decent living. This is echoed in the Guardian: "On the whole people come to London for the money […]. People do not come here to become English, in the way they go to New York to

become Americans. People come to London to be themselves."[28] Thus the question arises: to avoid their offspring losing their native culture would our immigrant protagonists have done better to stay within their original neighbourhoods? This takes us back to Whitechapel to where London's Bangladeshi community is concentrated. The second novel Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* is set in this British all-Bangladeshi environment.

2.2.2 Segregation in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*

Whereas *White Teeth* is populated with immigrant characters intermarrying and "meaningfully interacting" with whites and other ethnic groups,[29] *Brick Lane* completely excludes that option. The major characters are all exclusively ethnic Bangladeshi. In *Brick Lane* almost 100 per cent of the action takes place within an area of about one square mile around the council estate where the protagonist Nazneen lives. Apart from the first six pages set in her home village and regular flashbacks to the days of her childhood the bulk of the novel is set in Nazneen's respective flats.[30] This produces the claustrophobic atmosphere in the book. Other important parts take place on the estate, for example in Razia's flat and in the community hall. Only five times the action within London takes us away from this square mile in Tower Hamlets.[31]

Therefore, it is possible to assert that *Brick Lane* is set predominantly in the heart of the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets described above. (2.1.1) From the geographical indications given it is even likely that "Dogwood", (BL, 378) Nazneen's estate, is supposed to be situated within the "ward of Spitalfields and Banglatown."[32] Optically, this neighbourhood is described when Nazneen walks across the estate,

> past the cycle racks which no one was foolhardy enough to use, past the car park, […] each [car] with a yellow crook lock braced against the steering wheel, past […] the hall, the yellow brick shed with the metal shutters, set in a concrete valley at the edge of Dogwood. Skateboarders used the smooth planes for exercise and for spraying their messages to the world. (BL, 278)

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[28] Benedictus, "Every race, colour, nation and religion on earth", *Guardian Unlimited*, 21 January 2005, http://www.guardian.co.uk/britain/article/0,,1395534,00.html. Last viewed 21 January 2007. Julian Baggani, *Guardian Unlimited*, 23 January 2007.

[29] Mo, Clara, Samad, Alsana, Millat, Irie, Magid, Marcus Chalfen, Abdul Mickey, Shiva etc.

[30] Once in the time span of the novel the family move to a bigger flat on the same estate. (BL, 184)

[31] The five departures from Tower Hamlets are to the City (BL, 56-61), Dr Azad's house (BL, 99-102, 106-115), Buckingham Palace (BL, 289-299, 303-304) Covent Garden (BL, 449-455) and the ice rink (BL, 490-492).

[32] Benedictus, "From Afghanistan to Australia, via Italy, Bangladesh, Colombia and Japan: Where some of London's other communities hang out."

This is the picture of a poor neglected urban area.

That impression is confirmed by a number of narrative details. There are "drugs on the estate", which in the novel is dramatised through Razia's son Tariq's heroin addiction. (BL, 310) Dr Azad observes: "some of my patients have never so much as smoked a cigarette and heroin is the first drug they touch." (BL, 248-249) There is also high unemployment in the area if we listen to his evaluation. (BL, 249) Added to these social problems there is overcrowding in the flats: "It's a Tower Hamlets official statistic: three point five Bangladeshis to one room." (BL, 49) The novel also highlights that the area deteriorates between 1985 and 2002. In Nazneen's

> first few months in London […] it was still possible to look across the dead grass and concrete and see nothing but *jade-green fields, unable to imagine that the years would rub them away*. Now she saw only flats loaded one on top of the other, *a vast dump of people rotting away under a mean strip of sky*. (BL, 364, my emphasis)

Moreover, she observes unfamiliar youths with an "air of violence" on the estate. (BL, 364) There are even "disused flats where the addicts gathered." (BL, 485) In 2001 a "leaflet" war breaks out on the estate between white right-wing nationalists and Islamic radicals. (BL, 257) The tensions are aggravated by the events of 11 September 2001:

> A pinch of New York dust blew across the ocean and settled on Dogwood Estate. Sorupa's daughter was the first but not the only one. Walking in the street, on her way to college, she had her hijab pulled off. Razia wore her Union Jack sweatshirt and it was spat on. (BL, 368)

To sum up, *Brick Lane* confirms that the "Bangladeshis in inner London exist in a pocket of extreme poverty and unemployment."[33] Though meaningful interaction only takes place between ethnic Bangladeshis they are still not hermetically sealed off from all influences of the host society. Drugs and hostilities find their way into their middle.

But what makes the characters settle in this neighbourhood, remain within this community and never stray far from it? Nazneen, like most of the other mothers and wives in the novel presumably, has little hand in deciding on where to stay, as she comes to Britain by way of an arranged marriage and moves into her husband's flat. Coming from a village in Bangladesh she initially has no knowledge of how to negotiate this new place. Moreover, she does not speak English. This is how the Bangladeshi shops on nearby Bethnal Green Road and Brick Lane represent the only places she understands and where she is (linguistically) understood.[34] Any further movement is also discouraged by her husband who does not want her to go out, (BL,

[33] Zig Layton-Henry and Czarina Wilpert, "Introduction," *Challenging Racism in Britain and Germany* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 10.
[34] She even mentions that the non-Bengali shops she "entered" were only "few". (BL, 195)

45) to work, (BL, 184) or study English. (BL, 37, 77) She also misses the company of people, (BL, 24) and, as Bangladeshis are the only people she can talk to and they often live on the estate, she expands her network of Bangladeshi acquaintances. (BL, 46-47)

Nazneen learns English late on in the novel, mainly through her daughters. (BL, 194) But she uses the language only to speak to the occasional shop assistant, doctors and her daughters' teachers. (BL, 194) Later she also works from home. (BL, 206) As she works long hours and has a family to look after, she has little time to travel out of Tower Hamlets, but she clearly is not really interested in leaving the area. This tendency is shared by most of the other characters, even the educated Dr Azad who, despite living in a suburb, dedicates his life to looking after the poor Tower Hamlets Bangladeshi community. (BL, 106) Moving out of the 'ghetto' and looking elsewhere seems to be seen as a luxury they can ill afford in their struggle for existence. Chanu explains: "All this time I have been struggling and struggling, and I barely had time to lift my head and look around." (BL, 289) However, at the end of the novel Nazneen decides to become actively involved in helping the Bangladeshi community she lives in. She is going to join a "political organization. Local politics." She says she has realised what she can do now. (BL, 486)

Chanu is in a very different situation from Nazneen. He speaks English, has even studied English literature and could therefore be expected to have some interest in English culture. He came to England as a young man out of his own accord. (BL, 34) Moreover, he despises the uneducated Bangladeshis from the same villages in Sylhet who have too many children, move their whole clan onto the estate, and recreate the village there. (BL, 28, 32, 106) And yet he says: "I've spent half my life here, […] but I hardly left these few streets." (BL, 289) At the beginning of the novel he works for Tower Hamlets Council and does not even leave the area for work. Ultimately, his reason for coming to England was the wish to return to Bangladesh "a success." (BL, 34) Chanu, like most immigrants, came to London for the job opportunities. The culture of his heart is firmly seated in Bangladesh.[35] That is why he chooses a wife from Bangladesh and forbids his daughters to speak English at home. (BL, 193) It is possible that he only moved onto the estate because his employer the Council offered him a flat. It seems he only stays there for lack of financial resources. Most likely, he would rather live in Dr Azad's suburb where he presumes the residents

[35] "I don't want him [my son] to rot here with all the skinheads and drunks. I don't want him to grow up in this racist society. I don't want him to talk back to his mother. […] The only way is to take him back home." (BL, 111)

from South Asia to be more educated. (BL, 106) But moving really outside the Bengali community in London never seems to be an option for him.[36]

The character of Karim, Nazneen's lover and young Islamic radical, also feels obliged to his community and therefore stays and acts in the "village," his term for the neighbourhood. (BL, 450) He explains: "When I was a little kid […] if you wanted to be cool you had to be something else – a bit white, a bit black, a bit something. […] You couldn't just be yourself. Bangladeshi. […] There was no one to look up to." (BL, 263) He says he set up his group of Islamic radicals, the Bengal Tigers, for the "dissolute youth." (BL, 260) He wants the Bengali youth to be proud, to stand up against racism, (BL, 260) and to gain strength through their religion. He also calls upon them to unite and make a political stand against the West and the "Government." The latter, in his opinion, supplied the drugs on the estate to frustrate Bangladeshi business success and keep the youth in the "ghettoes" and "away from" Islam. (BL, 311) With the Bengal Tigers he wants to give them what he did not have when he was younger. However, all his hopes for the community are frustrated by the "mess" on Brick Lane in which his march against the right-wing Lion Hearts results. (BL, 475) Chanu and Karim are the only characters that eventually leave the neighbourhood. Karim, it is implied, goes to Bangladesh "for jihad." (BL, 486)

To sum up, the novel offers diverse reasons for the Bangladeshis to stick together in their neighbourhood. However, for all the characters mentioned the main reason seems to be that they do not see a future in wider England or in collaboration with the host society. They only feel a real debt to their own people and cannot muster up interest in the host society. Partly, this is because they feel it to be racist and hostile to outsiders, partly, because they never came to England out of interest in the country. Though the "Going Home Syndrome" and the community and the benefits of life in Bangladesh are discredited and questioned by characters as diverse as Dr Azad, Razia, Nazneen, Shahana, and Hasina, this generally fails to invoke an interest in Britain, its society, its values or its political system.[37] The British virtue of "minding their own business" is applauded and contrasted with the Bengali love for gossip and talking. (BL, 304) Razia's reaction to the intimation that the community might say she had been shamed if she took up paid employment because that

[36] Respect in the Bengali community is very important to him. He does not want people to talk about seeing his wife in the street: "Personally, I don't mind if you go out but these people are so ignorant. What can you do?" (BL, 45)

[37] "Every year they think, just one more year. […] But whatever they save it's never enough ["to go back home"]." (BL, 32)

allegedly would prove her husband's inability to provide for her family is: "Will the community feed me? […] Let the community say what it will" (BL, 97)

2.1.3 Consequences of segregation and possible policy answers

Moving on, what are the consequences of such extreme segregation, such a retreat of immigrants into mixed and ethnic community 'ghettoes', for the British state and society and what policies could counterbalance this deep geographical and social rift between the white citizens and the "visible ethnic minorities?"[38] Concentrated in socially disadvantaged urban areas with high unemployment the risk of falling into disillusion and apathy, of escaping into the world of drugs and violence, becomes much higher for immigrants. Surrounded by other immigrants the knowledge of the benefits of the British state and what it can offer its residents will be sketchy. Immigrants will not be as informed about how to make this state and society work for them. As racist incidents can be cumulative in areas with a high concentration of immigrants, an exaggerated impression of the degree of hostility and racism in the society surrounding the 'ghetto' will be formed and instil fear and paralysis.[39] If diversity were not as concentrated in particular areas, but somewhat dispersed around London, its positive features could broaden the horizons of more of the white British residents and counter preconceptions against immigrants. Generally, immigrants' retreat into certain areas too often results in social exclusion. Social exclusion is never good for a state as it means people require the help and the means of the state to survive rather than being self-sufficient. Furthermore, it is extremely costly to try to redress social exclusion once it has already occurred. Therefore, it should be prevented from happening.

As racism and discrimination are among the root causes of such continued segregation of immigrants in particular areas, they have to be countered by policies outlined more clearly in the subsequent chapter on racism. (2.2) But not all responsibility for continued segregation lies with the host society. As *White Teeth* outlines racism and the wish to keep one's family isolated from the host society is prominent among immigrants. (WT, 327-328) The Runnymede Trust admits that

[38] Zig Layton-Henry and Czarina Wilpert, "Introduction," *Challenging Racism in Britain and Germany* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 9.
[39] Marsha Prescod, "Dealing with Racial Harassment: the Development of Legal Strategies Amongst Local Authorities," *Challenging Racism in Britain and Germany*, eds. Zig Layton-Henry et al (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 110.

"important changes are also needed within Asian and black communities themselves if they are to overcome the obstacles which they face and take full advantage of the opportunities offered by wider society."[40] This view is voiced in *Brick Lane* by the character of the westernised "street fighter" Mrs Azad: (BL, 114)

> 'Some women spend ten, twenty years here and they sit in the kitchen grinding spices all day and learn only two words of English. […] They go around covered from head to toe, in their walking prisons, and when someone calls to them in the street they are upset. The society is racist. The society is all wrong. Everything should change for them. They don't have to change one thing. That,' she said, stabbing the air, 'is the tragedy.' (BL, 114)

If the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets is to survive and thrive it must stop ignoring the changes the host society brings to their lives and look outward into this society to look for means of dealing with these changes. This is implied by the ending of this all Bengali novel: "'This is England,' she [Razia] said. 'You can do whatever you like.'" (BL, 492) Rather than passively accepting your community's views on shame you can get a job. You can make money in this country with "Fusion Fashions." (BL, 481) Rather than looking away the elders can give "leadership" on the issue of the community's "heroin abuse" and parents can "spot" its "signs" in their children and seek advice and help at the local health centre. (BL, 247-248) Rather than accepting fate all her life Nazneen can get involved in local politics to change the circumstances around her. (BL, 15, 486) And the "Tower Hamlets Task Force […] established to look into Youth Deprivation and Social Cohesion" will probably be more successful with the help of locals such as Nazneen and the Questioner. (BL, 485) The Bangladeshi immigrant community has to enter into a "dialogue" with wider society in order for Britain to achieve Bhikhu Parekh's vision of "interactive and dynamic" as opposed to "static and ghettoized multiculturalism."[41]

The official term for immigrant communities retreating into ethnic enclaves is "self-segregating communities."[42] Varun Uberoi describes the mechanisms that are seen to be at work there:

> The minority cultural group come to accept that being seen to be equally important by the majority cultural group is unlikely to happen. Interaction is therefore minimised. Indeed, this is largely what happened in the 'self-segregating communities' in which the [2001 race] riots occurred. Years of racism and systematic impoverishment of these communities made them inward-looking and fearful of the majority community. In such circumstances little attachment could be developed to individuals and groups that lay outside of the cultural group. Equally, little attachment could be developed to the shared political life that all groups possess because,

[40] Runnymede Trust, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: The Parekh Report* (London: Profile Books, 2000) x.
[41] Parekh, 341.
[42] Varun Uberoi, "Social Unity in Britain," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, 1 (January 2007) 141.

> at least from the perspective of the minority cultural group, no shared political life exists. […] A detachment from the polity is likely to result in a detachment from the political process.[43]

This reads like the rationale behind *Brick Lane*. The novel leaves the reader with the above impression while at the same time uncovering the explosive potential that lies at the heart of such communities illustrated in Karim's conspiracy theories about the government, his radicalism, and the "riot" on Brick Lane resulting in the creation of the "Tower Hamlets Task Force". (BL, 484-485)

In addition to those policies tackling racism and discrimination outlined in Chapter 2, the government could follow Varun Uberoi's recommendation of creating a "Multicultural National Identity" to counter immigrants' self-segregation. This is his vision:

> The political class, through the institutions of socialisation, should aim to create a national identity in which multiculturalism is one of the myths, symbols and traditions that all nationals come to share. Such a national identity is called a multicultural national identity. A multicultural national identity can be defined as the *definition and redefinition of the nation as multicultural, such that one of the nation's values, symbols, memories, myths and traditions is multiculturalism and all the rest are consistent with valuing the cultural diversity of the nation positively*.[44]

Such a redefinition would make immigrants feel included in the nation and thus in the polity and give them the feelings of security and belonging Uberoi deems necessary for social unity. Only these feelings can make sure immigrants also identify with the "obligations" side of "citizenship."[45]

To illustrate that it is possible to institute such a multicultural national identity through policies and even in countries where previously "mono-cultural" ideas of national identity prevailed Uberoi, like Will Kymlicka and Randall Hansen, uses the example of Canada:[46] "Since the introduction of a multiculturalism policy in October 1971 the policy has been used by the Canadian Federal Government to nation-build."[47] The Canadian government have included multiculturalism in the law through the 1988 Multiculturalism Act as well as in "section 27 of the 1982 Constitution" and the "education curriculum," as Kymlicka points out.[48] Britain is lacking such legislation and should implant it. The Canadian case has proved that

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[43] Uberoi, 144-145. The ideas mentioned above in this chapter were arrived at independently. This text was only consulted after they had already been formulated.
[44] Uberoi, 152.
[45] Uberoi, 145.
[46] He observes: "What Britain has done historically is to seek to promote a mono-cultural vision of its nationhood. But […] Canadians used to see themselves as a 'Britain of the North'. Canada even possessed legislation stating the climactic unsuitability of certain races until the 1950s." Uberoi, 155.
[47] Uberoi, 153.
[48] Will Kymlicka, "Immigration, Citizenship, Multiculturalism: Exploring the Links," *The Politics of Migration: Managing Opportunity, Conflict and Change*, ed. Sarah Spencer (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 202.

such legislation results in a positive, celebratory approach of immigrants to "citizenship ceremonies."[49] Kymlicka also argues that the resentment of such ceremonies among immigrants to Britain, though complicated by Britain's role as former colonial master, is in many ways due to immigrants' feeling of insecurity about their status in the host society, which a more decided commitment by the state to multiculturalism could alleviate.[50] He encourages Britain to be bolder in its policies which are rather defensive and reactive.

> There is a fine line between honestly acknowledging the existence of public fears and unintentionally reinforcing them. The tone of the British approach suggests that a single false move on issues of immigrations, determination of refugee status or citizenship could be fatal. […] This tone can only heighten public anxiety about the issues. [… T]here is considerable room to undertake a variety of policy initiatives, some of which will work, others not, without endangering the fabric of society […], and we need […] to give citizens the confidence that the risks are manageable and worth taking.[51]

The government has to demonstrate more commitment to multiculturalism and the creation of a multicultural national identity in order to give confidence to immigrants and make them positive about fulfilling the "obligations of citizenship." Indeed, "84 per cent of immigrants who arrived in Canada since 1990" described their "sense of belonging to Canada" as strong.[52] Uberoi also points out that the legislative institution of such a national identity has with time filtered through to the Canadian people at large. By 2003 80 per cent of the population found that "multiculturalism has contributed positively to Canadian identity."[53] 85 per cent described their country as "a multicultural society."[54] Most importantly, 81 per cent "endorse mixed marriages by pointing out that 'ethnic enclaves', what we might call 'self-segregating communities' do not exist in Canada."[55] This has demonstrated that there is a case for Britain steering its policies in the direction indicated by Kymlicka and Uberoi.

[49] Kymlicka, 196.
[50] Kymlicka, 202-204.
[51] Kymlicka, 206.
[52] Uberoi, 153
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

2.1.4 Willesden as a model of the developing multicultural society

It is clear that the dialogue between the different communities necessary for "interactive and dynamic multiculturalism" essentially requires the "ability" to "live with unresolved differences."[56] This may often be difficult for the first-generation immigrants, as we have learnt from the parent characters in *White Teeth*. But for the children and their white playmates – which could be seen to symbolise the maturing multicultural society – this becomes easier and more natural. First-generation Samad resents the "devil's pact" immigrants make when coming to Britain:

> it drags you in and suddenly you're unsuitable to return, your children are unrecognisable, you belong nowhere. […] And then you begin to give up the very idea of belonging. [… A]nd I begin to believe that birthplaces are accidents, that everything is an *accident*. But if you believe that, where do you go? What do you do? What does anything matter? (WT, 407)

But second-generation Irie's reaction is not what he expected: "As Samad described this dystopia with a look of horror Irie was ashamed to find that the land of accidents sounded like *paradise* to her. Sounded like freedom." (WT, 408) The question of belonging becomes even more complicated for second-generation immigrants which is why many of them become creative, find dual or hybrid identities for themselves. They, like Irie, learn to "live with unresolved differences."

The Willesden of *White Teeth* is segregated, as even the narrator admits below, but this is possibly due to its being a step further in living the multicultural society. In several London areas, such as the predominantly Bangladeshi "ward of Spitalfields and Banglatown," communities 'self-segregate' whereas other areas, especially in the outer boroughs,[57] are "mono-culturally" white. Willesden is truly diverse and teaches lessons about multiculturalism. One of them is that to set up a multicultural society initially, tolerance of other ethnic groups is not the worst start even though the character of Samad, like many immigrants, may resent to be "never welcomed, only tolerated." (WT, 407)[58] The narrator meditates:

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[56] Parekh, 341, 340.

[57] "London by Ethnicity: Analysis," *Guardian Unlimited*, 21 January 2005, http://www.guardian.co.uk/britain/article/0,,1395536,00.html. Last viewed 23 January 2007.

[58] Leo Benedictus finds: "The picture that emerges is of a broadly tolerant city, but toleration is about as far as it goes. Indifference might be a better description. […] And we will not get there if we forget that thousands of Londoners persecuted immigrants enthusiastically throughout the 20th century. […] So when hostility is the usual alternative, perhaps indifference is not such a bad thing. Taxi-drivers do not become multiculturalists overnight, just as migrants do not magically turn into Englishmen at baggage reclaim." Benedictus, "Every race, colour, nation and religion on earth."

> It is only this late in the day, and possibly only in Willesden that you can find best friends Sita and Sharon constantly mistaken for each other because Sita is white (her mother liked the name) and Sharon is Pakistani (her mother thought it best – less trouble). Yet […] despite the fact that we have finally slipped into each other's lives with reasonable comfort […], it is still hard to imagine that there is no one more English than the Indian and no one more Indian than the English. There are still young white men who are angry about that. (WT, 327)

Willesden seems to be a relatively safe place for such "mixing up." (WT, 327)

What is worrying about immigrants' retreat to Willesden is that the area seems to be isolated from wider society, from the white areas as well as from the self-segregating communities. But what is positive is that it is truly diverse and that such areas can be seen as the mid-point in the development of a "dialogically-constituted multicultural society." Areas like Willesden are its breeding ground. And if Willesden were to find its way into mainstream society and a bit of Willesden's diversity were to infiltrate every London area, particularly those almost all-white suburbs such as the "ward of Cranham on the eastern edge of Havering,"[59] social unity and a multicultural national identity would cease to be mere visions. To move Britain in this direction and counteract the worrying levels of immigrant segregation in London, policies to institute a British multicultural national identity are required as well as policies to counter racism and discrimination which will be outlined in the ensuing chapter.

[59] "What the maps don't show," *Guardian Unlimited*, 21 January 2005, http://www.guardian.co.uk/britain/article/0,,1395548,00.html. Last viewed 23 January 2007.

2.2 Chapter 2: Scars of Racism: "Everyone can see my crime."[60]

> Shahid said, 'I wanted to be a racist. […] My mind was invaded by […] fantasies [… o]f going around abusing Pakis, niggers, Chinks, Irish, any foreign scum. I slagged them under my breath whenever I saw them. I wanted to kick them up the arse. The thought of sleeping with Asian girls made me sick. […]
>
> 'I argued . . . why can't I be racist like everyone else? Why do I have to miss out on that privilege? Why is it only me who has to be good? Why can't I swagger around pissing on others for being inferior? I began to turn into one of them. I was becoming a monster.'
>
> Hanif Kureishi, *The Black Album*[61]

The preceding chapter has mentioned that in order to combat its powerful extreme levels of immigrant segregation Britain needs to implant policies counteracting racism and discrimination. But racism and discrimination do not merely cause the geographical and social segregation of immigrants. They also harm the individuals experiencing them at the core and often scar them for a lifetime. The exposure to racist prejudice, stereotyping or violence can deeply affect people's self-esteem and life-chances. The illustration of what the experience of racism does to people is probably one of the strongest points of the novels consulted for this thesis. It provides a very powerful argument for consulting literature to find policy solutions in the area of immigration.

The novels consulted for this thesis mention and dramatise different ways in which characters are affected by racism, react to it, and change due to its experience. Racism is a spectre in all the novels. But the maybe most thorough assessment of the topic can be found in Andrea Levy's *Never Far From Nowhere*. In the lives of the women at the centre of the novel, fair-skinned Vivien, dark-skinned Olive and their Jamaican mother, racism is a constant presence and shapes their entire experience. Through their characters the novel shows different ways in which immigrants can process the experience of racism. By contrast, Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* offers a more humorous treatment of all kinds of more and less subtle racisms, thus making a stand against formulating racism as a preconception held only by the white majority against the ethnic and cultural minorities. Severe white racism, however, is also reflected in the book by the description of the butcher Mo's experience of regular violence suffered at the hands of white perpetrators in his shops over 18 years. As a

[60] Andrea Levy, *Never Far From Nowhere* (London: Review, 2004 [1996]) 272. All further references are to this edition. (NN)

[61] Hanif Kureishi, *The Black Album* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003 [1995]) 11. Racism and the contradictory reactions it can provoke in immigrants are glimpsed at in this novel. Its author has been quoted in the introduction mentioning the experience of racism as one of his reasons for writing. (1)

result Mo turns to Islamism despite being married to a white Irish woman. *Never Far From Nowhere* and *White Teeth* will serve to exemplify mechanisms triggered in immigrants by the experience of racism. This will bring out in which areas racism is most harmful and most severe and where policies have to be implanted to prevent it and counteract its consequences. The consultation of policy experts such as Sarah Spencer, Randall Hansen and Zig Layton-Henry will help to draw up realistic policy suggestions.

2.2.1 The treatment of racism in Andrea Levy's *Never Far From Nowhere*

Never Far From Nowhere is haunted by racism. In different guises, it creeps up in more than half the novel's 49 chapters. The novel shows three different ways of dealing with the existence and direct experience of racism. Being rendered alternately from the perspective of the sisters Vivien and Olive the novel offers two different tales about growing up non-white on a north London council estate and two sides to every story. The third major immigrant character, their mother, is not given a separate narrative voice but rendered through the descriptions of both her daughters. But with respect to their mother's self-perception and her reaction to a racist world Vivien and Olive's accounts overlap sufficiently for a characterisation of Mrs Charles.

As their mother, Rose Charles has a vital part in shaping her daughters' identity and self-perception. But this maternal responsibility is complicated by the fact that she herself has been affected by the experience of racism. Olive describes her:

> My mother […] tried to believe that she was not black. Although she knew that she and my dad were not the only people who came over here from Jamaica in the fifties, she liked to think that because they were fair-skinned they were the only decent people who came. The only ones with a 'bit of class'. And she believed that the English would recognize this. […]
>
> She used to talk to me about what she thought of the black people here, […] – nothing good of course. But she sat looking in my black face telling me. (NN, 7)

Mrs Charles reacts to the racism she confronts by joining in the discourse and turning racist against her own kind, by trying to identify as white or at least non-black. Such a reaction is explained by the psychologist Tajfel in a way which is topical for this entire chapter: "It is important for most of us to have and keep as much of a positive self-image as we can manage to scrape together; […] having to live with a contemptuous view of oneself […] constitutes a serious psychological problem."[62] To avoid existing with a "contemptuous view" of themselves Mrs Charles wants to convince her family that they are not the ones discriminated against. Thus, the south

[62] Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories* (Cambridge UP, 1981) 322.

London area of Brixton with its substantial Jamaican population becomes "her Sodom and Gomorrah."[63] (NN, 168) It is unclear how well this fabricated "positive self-image" works for Mrs Charles on the whole. But on one occasion the reader learns that confronted with a Jamaican-sounding man at the civic centre "complaining about his toilet overflow pipe" in public she "started rolling her eyes and muttering about him being embarrassing. Acting like she knew him." (NN, 83) Clearly, this is an instance in which her rejected identity and past come to haunt her.

But regardless of her own advantages from this strategy of warding off racism against her own person, what are its effects on her daughters? She succeeds in so far as Vivien never associates the term "black" with her family until she is 17. (NN, 172) There is a case for the mother's tendency of telling Olive, "you're not white, you're not black – you're you," (NN, 7) or: "All this black colour stuff. I tell her 'You're just you,' and she belong here where she was born. […] it's all you know. […] in Jamaica life is hard. You children don't know. And I thank God you don't." (NN, 281) It is beneficial if immigrant children are told to identify via their country of residence and not to think in categories too much but to see themselves and others as individuals. Ideally, this would stop them from 'self-segregating' and giving up on the host society as a whole.

However, these good points are entirely lost on her children, as they see through the lies on which the mother's self-made positive "image" is based. Dark-skinned Olive is personally injured by her mother's racism. Having to suffer her own mother talking badly about people of her skin colour would be enough to seriously damage the daughter's self-image. But this is made much worse when her mother starts taking sides with Olive's husband Peter who has left her: "Not many men would care if they saw their children. […] But *he's an English man, he's decent*. [… F]ix yourself up and I'm sure he'll change his mind and come back." (NN, 210, my emphasis) Her racism against her own daughter is starkest when policemen arrest Olive after they have smuggled marijuana into her bag. Mrs Charles does not believe in Olive's innocence and comments: "There is no smoke without fire." (NN, 269) Finally, with a certain class-bias against her own daughter, she blames Olive's lack of initiative in getting an education and a job for the racism the daughter is subject to. Presumably, this attitude stems from a fear of thinking that such a thing as prejudice against, and exclusion of, her family could exist. (NN, 281)

[63] Leo Benedictus and Jenny Ridley, "London: A guide to the ethnic communities," http://www.guardian.co.uk/flash/0,,1398066,00.html. Last viewed 23 January 2007.

At least, the very similar behaviour of another mother character in the novels consulted for this thesis is explained in this way: Shahid's mother in Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album* acts towards her son as follows:

> More than anything she hated any talk of race or racism. Probably because she had suffered some abuse and contempt. But her father had been a doctor […]. *The idea that anyone might treat her with disrespect was insupportable*. Even when Shahid vomited and defecated with fear before going to school, or when he returned with cuts, bruises and his bag slashed with knives, *she behaved as if so appalling an insult couldn't exist.* And so she turned away.[64]

The above shows clearly that many children of immigrants do not only have to bear the brunt of the host society's racism, but also suffer from their parents' inability to acknowledge its existence and support their children when they become its targets.

But their mother's is not the only racism Vivien and Olive fall victim to. It is clear that the novel's action takes place in the early days of immigration. Moreover, the novel is not set in a 'self-segregating community.' On their Finsbury Park council estate the sister characters lack a community enabling them to identify via an alternative 'black' culture. Andrea Levy explains her own childhood experience:

> I was educated to be English. Alongside me – learning, watching, eating and playing – were white children. But those white children would never have to grow up to question whether they were English or not. […] I just wanted to fit in and be part of everything that was around me, and these strange parents were holding me back.[65]

As Mrs Charles abhors black people and communities congregated in places such as Brixton, her children do not have any knowledge of Jamaican culture.[66] Levy is appalled at many people's simplification of this complex problem second-generation immigrants often face.[67] She also explains that later, with the arrival and visibility of more immigrants in London, her desire to identify as solely white English was moderated: "Along with this […] safety in numbers came a new interest for me in the country my parents had left."[68] However, Vivien and Olive's narrative is set before immigrants in Britain had accomplished this "safety in numbers."

The historically early setting of the novel manifests itself in different ways. The terms "wog", "coon", "darkie", "Paki", "wop", "black" and "coloured", used in an abusive or prejudiced manner against foreigners, seem to be omnipresent around the girls. In many cases, they are not used towards the sisters personally. But they are liable to creep up in any social situation the sisters find themselves in and thus make

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[64] Kureishi, 73, my emphasis.
[65] Andrea Levy, "This is my England," *Guardian Unlimited*, 19 February 2000, http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,3965021,00.html. Last viewed 23 January 2007.
[66] Even their grammar school Lady Stanhope is all-white as Olive recounts: "no black girls." (NN, 24)
[67] "Wouldn't it be simple if when some racist […] shouts at me to go back to where I came from, that I got an image of Jamaica in my head […]?" Levy, "This is my England."
[68] Ibid.

it difficult for them to claim their own "secure" place in society. This does not mean that racism has disappeared today. But many of the original abusive terms for immigrants have become taboo in today's Britain and especially in cosmopolitan and diverse London.[69] In Zadie Smith's novel set later in the century one of these words is used by the character of old Mr Hamilton, but not without alluding to the taboo around its use: "There were certainly no wogs as I remember – *though you're probably not allowed to say that these days* are you? But no . . . no Pakistanis."[70] The words are never used in such an inhibited way in *Never Far From Nowhere*. If Vivien and Olive are lucky, the speakers exempt them from the category. (NN, 26, 88)

More often, however, the sister characters are witness to uninhibited use of the terms in their presence or find them directly addressed to their person.[71] Ironically, Vivien starts "hanging round" with skinheads as is indicated by the clothes her friends wear such as "Ben Sherman check shirt, Levis rolled up at the ankles, big boots, braces." (NN, 27, 14)[72] Recognising the clothes she is aware of these friends' racist bias even prior to their first racist comment:

> She [Olive] told me, and I read in the *Daily Mirror*, how skinheads behave. Going round in gangs and beating people up. Leaving them for dead. How they love reggae but hate 'wogs' and wear steel-toe-capped boots so they can give a good kicking – even the girls.
>
> I saw skinheads round our flats […]. And Olive said that one day she met two on the stairs and they […] said 'Fucking wogs.' (NN, 14-15)

Once Vivien even dresses in her friend's "black and white Prince of Wales check skirt" for a dance and Olive is shocked: "'Oh my God, you getting Doc Martens, eh, Vivien, with steel toecaps . . .' 'No,' I screamed. 'Going beating up Pakis, Vivien, kicked any heads in?'" (NN, 45) This company she is keeping means that Vivien is witness to racist comments and jokes more often than she might otherwise have been. However, as they seem to accept her, she only breaks with these 'friends' when they beat up a black guy for talking to her. (NN, 92-94) One other time Vivien stands up to her friend Carol's boyfriend ridiculing an Indian man in the street. (NN, 106) But generally, she tries to pass through these situations unnoticed by staying silent

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[69] From a London perspective Julian Baggini, author of *Welcome to Everytown: A Journey into the English Mind*, writes in a *Guardian* article based on material from his book: "'Paki.' I can't honestly remember the last time I had heard that word outside of a news expose of the far right or a 'hard-hitting' drama about racism." *Guardian Unlimited*, 23 January 2007, http://books.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,1996559,00.html. Last viewed 23 January 2007.

[70] Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (London: Penguin, 2001[2000]) 172, my emphasis. Any further references are to this edition. (WT)

[71] NN, 15, 28, 81, 94, 106, 125, 131, 146, 155, 177, 178, 226, 258, 259.

[72] Cf. "Skinheads," *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skinheads. Last viewed 8 February 2007. 'Skinhead' clothes are described frequently in the novel: NN, 14, 19, 44, 53, 54, 106.

around her male skinhead friends or hiding from her sister at the market after one of these friends has commented the sight of Olive and Peter in the crowd with, "that wog with that white bloke, I hate that." (NN, 81)

Later, Vivien does not socialise with skinheads but mainly with middle-class pupils and students. However, she still tries to avoid mentioning that her parents are from Jamaica when she is asked.[73] At college in Canterbury, she refuses her sister's visit. (NN, 270-271) But it is not clear whether this is also on the grounds of colour, her sister being darker-skinned and therefore more recognisably black, or only of class. Generally, Vivien feels caught out whenever her sister dismantles her behaviour, and thus she admits to being ashamed of it. She admires Olive's assertive boldness. Vivien would love to make Olive proud of her little sister by being more daring. (NN, 106, 204) The final scene of the novel indicates that Vivien may have developed. In the future Vivien will be more assertive about her complex identity rather than continuing to hide it. She tells an unknown woman on the train: "My family are from Jamaica, […] But I am English."

It is the character of the older sister Olive who offers the commentary on the contradictory behaviour of Mrs Charles and Vivien. The regularity with which Olive experiences direct racist abuse or commentary makes it impossible for her to pretend that the society's racism were not aimed at her or to abhor black people as the 'other'.[74] She explains the situation people like her find themselves in:

> She didn't understand, the little white woman [solicitor …]. Her England is a nice place where people are polite to her, smile at her on buses and trains and comment about the weather. But *my England shakes underneath me with every step I take*. She didn't understand that I could be innocent [of possessing drugs]. Oh no. *I was born a criminal in this country and everyone can see my crime*. I can't hide it no matter what I do. *It turns heads and takes smiles from faces. I'm black*. (NN, 272, my emphasis)

With the portrait of Olive the novel convincingly shows how the continuous experience of racism can lead to social exclusion. Olive feels rejected by society and becomes apathetic. She loses the life-chances she may have had when she was born. The normal efforts life requires also from other individuals in society, such as getting dressed in the morning and looking after a baby on one's own, begin to feel impossible for her in the identity crisis she suffers. The novel does not imply that Olive's judgement is always right. Every gain in her life she attributes to her own strength and every loss she suffers to the racist society. When Peter before leaving her calls her a "stupid hysterical black cow" it is likely that he was only seeking out

[73] NN, 136, 150, 155, 171, 185.
[74] NN, 8, 15, 26, 85, 101, 125, 177, 178, 256, 258-259, 272, 281.

the most effective way of hurting her at the core, as people do in an argument, rather than revealing himself finally to be a racist. (NN, 125)

She observes life in black and white and gives up on many chances in life without really trying them out. This is obviously due to her "spoiled identity," to borrow a term form Erving Goffman,[75] damaged by the experience of racism. But the novel clearly reveals that Olive's vision of life and acceptance in Jamaica is as much a fairy tale as it is a projection: "Live in the sun and watch Amy playing on beaches. I'm going to live somewhere where being black doesn't make you different. Where being black means you belong. In Jamaica people will be proud of me." (NN, 272-273) Here, her mother's charge of ignorance is a real authority: "She doesn't know what it like in Jamaica. […] And I tell her, they don't want you there. […] I can go back but you children can't." (NN, 280-281) The novel is sympathetic to Olive's viewpoint and makes the reader understand the motivations behind her dream of 'going back' to Jamaica. Her opinion is even taken up in the title of the novel:

> *Vivien* thinks she's escaped, with all her exams and college and middle-class friends. She *thinks she'll be accepted in this country now*. One of them. […] She looks down her nose at me and thinks I've wasted my life. But I know more about life than her. Real life. Nothing can shock me now. But Vivien, one day she'll realize that *in England, people like her are never far from nowhere. Never.* (NN, 273, my emphasis)

This reflects an attitude many immigrants share. In England "nowhere" always looms around the next corner for them. "Nowhere" can be interpreted as a loss of their status, identity and acceptance in the host society. Immigrants in England are never far from being "nowhere" in that their feelings of "security and belonging", which Uberoi judges essential for their full citizenship, are never as stable as those of the members of the majority culture.[76] Still, as much as the novel appeals to the reader to sympathise with this standpoint, it advocates a joint effort by immigrants and host society to make it possible to have foreign parents and be "English" at the same time.

[75] Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Über Techniken der Bewältigung beschädigter Identität*, trans. Frigga Haug (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1967).
[76] Varun Uberoi, "Social Unity in Britain," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33,1 (January 2007) 148.

2.2.2 The treatment of racism in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*

In many ways, *White Teeth* portrays a society which has moved on from the days of *Never Far From Nowhere*. Immigrants in London have achieved "safety in numbers" by the early 1990s when the characters of Millat, Magid and Irie go to school in the in the borough of Brent, which boasts pupils of "67 faiths" and "123 languages." (WT, 292) The narrator also asserts that a development from earlier days has occurred:

> This has been the century of the great immigrant experiment. *It is only this late in the day* that you can walk into a playground and find Isaac Leung by the fish pond, Danny Rahman in the football cage, Quang O'Rourke bouncing a basketball, and Irie Jones humming a tune. (WT, 326, my emphasis)

The narrator further qualifies that, even today, some observations of this type can only be made in London areas like Willesden. (WT, 327) Yet whereas Vivien had to wait long and hard for a boyfriend, her difference stigmatising her in the same way as the "huge red birthmark down the side of her face" did Maureen, (NN, 87) dark-skinned Millat is surrounded by a swarm of potential girlfriends of all races. Apparently, "[a]t Glenard Oak Comprehensive, black, Pakistani, Greek, Irish – those were races. But those with sex appeal lapped the other runners. They were a species of their own." (WT, 269) Millat, despite his Bangladeshi background, can become role model and leader for white and immigrant "kids:"

> He had to please all the people all of the time. To the cockney wide-boys in the white jeans and the coloured shirts, he was the joker, the risk-taker, respected lady-killer. To the black kids he was fellow weed-smoker and valued customer. To the Asian kids, hero and spokesman. (WT, 269)

But even at this point in history the half-Jamaican character Irie feels the same need as Vivien and Olive to cover up the foreign origins betrayed by her hair in order to be accepted and desirable in England. Like the two sisters who have their hair "straightened" at the "hairdresser's," (NN, 43) Irie pays a visit to "P.K.'s Afro Hair" on the same errand. (WT, 272-282) Moreover, in her description of Millat Zadie Smith actually employs the same language as Levy: "there remained [in him] an ever present anger and hurt, the *feeling of belonging nowhere* that comes to people who belong everywhere." (WT, 269, my emphasis) Twenty years down the line immigrants can still be "never far from nowhere."

Millat's parents, though they come from distinguished backgrounds, do not move beyond their initial menial and low-paid jobs in the course of the novel. Alsana is from a "respected old Bengali family," but in England she sews for a living. (WT,

62) Samad went to Delhi University and has worked as a "scientist," (WT, 58) but on arrival found it "hard to get work in England" and thus reverted to his cousin's restaurant for a job as a waiter (WT, 93). Even after twenty years in England these jobs have failed to put the family financially at ease which is apparent from Alsana's remarks to Joyce Chalfen as for example: "I have three catsuits to do this morning come hell or high water," (WT, 440) Like the character Chanu in *Brick Lane*, Samad seems to have given up all attempts at social mobility in this country "where you are never welcomed, only tolerated." (WT, 407) Similar to Chanu, he has resorted to keeping his wisdom for his private circle, as well as his local pub O'Connell's. Therefore, it is shown that immigrants are still disproportionately the victims of a certain degree of social exclusion in the 1990s.

What makes the world of *White Teeth* different from that of *Never Far From Nowhere* is that with immigrants' "safety in numbers" achieved the situation has become more complex. The line between the discriminator (the host society) and the discriminated (the immigrants) has become more blurred. The character of Peter in Levy's novel holds the belief that immigrants are exploited by the society in the same way as the working class and propagates: "Workers of the world unite." (NN, 40) But this view which ignores people's racism and cultural differences is not only discredited by Chanu in *Brick Lane*:[77] "This theory fails to take account of culture clash, bourgeois immigrant aspirations, the hatred of the Hindu for the Muslim, the Bangladeshi for the Pakistani, and so on." (BL, 463) Virtually all of these hindrances to workers and immigrants' joint "overthrow of the state" and the subsequent "communal paradise" come up in *White Teeth*. Alsana and Samad's "bourgeois immigrant aspirations" alienate them from the poorer East End Bangladeshi community. Shiva is discriminated against as the only Hindu working in Ardashir's "Bengali Muslim" restaurant where Samad is the headwaiter. (WT, 502) It is indicated that Bangladeshis and Pakistanis do not like to be mistaken for one another. (WT, 231, 434) The different mother characters' racisms as well as Samad's have already been discussed in Chapter 1 (2.1.1).

On top of the items discussed the novel goes into some detail on Alsana's racism:

> From every minority she disliked, Alsana liked to single out one specimen for spiritual forgiveness. […] Mr Van, the Chinese chiropodist, Mr Segal, a Jewish carpenter, Rosie, a Dominican woman […] – all these lucky individuals were given Alsana's golden reprieve and magically extrapolated from their skins like Indian tigers. (WT, 65)

[77] Chanu says that the "white people from the Workers United Front" are "co-opting these immigrants into their grand political schemata in which all oppressed minorities combine in the overthrow of the state and live happily ever after in a communal paradise." Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* (London: Black Swan, 2004 [2003]) 463. All further references are to this edition. (BL)

Though this passage shows Alsana's racist disposition it also highlights her character's capacity to see beyond her prejudices and make exceptions. Moreover, the humour speaking out of the lines indicates that they are not to be taken too seriously. Generally, most characters mix with people from other ethnicities in *White Teeth*. But, importantly, this is not because they are disposed to do so, but because they are thrown together by fate, live in close vicinity having to tolerate each other, or simply because they have no alternative company to keep. Yet, a more ugly and severe racism is also described in the novel which drives characters in the arms of Muslim fundamentalism.

While this type of racism is partly responsible for Millat's fervour for the *Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation* (KEVIN), his more complicated case will be discussed in the subsequent chapter on "Muslims and Islamists." In the case of Mo, the butcher's resort to KEVIN experience of racist violence is his chief motivation. This "big man with attitude" over 18 years of running a halal butcher's and sweetshop "had been a victim of serious physical attacks and robbery without fail three times a year" resulting among other things in the loss of finger-tips. (WT, 472) The number excludes numerous smaller attacks "that failed to draw blood." (WT, 472) He only "reported" the first attack to the police, as it resulted in a violent "late-night visit from five policemen." (WT, 472) The narrator clarifies that the "culprits" of the attacks and robbery coming from diverse social backgrounds and both sexes "*were all white. And this simple fact had done more to politicise Mo* over the years than all the party broadcasts, rallies, and petitions the world could offer. (WT, 473, my emphasis) Despite the presence of humour and exaggerations the passage describing Mo's fate illustrates the sad reality that "Racially motivated incidents" "most often" target "ethnic minorities […] of Asian origin."[78] It shows the limits of the progress that has been made since the days of *Never Far From Nowhere*'s setting. It highlights the fact that the police have too often been found to have a racist bias in their judgement and activity. More than anything, this passage points to where policies have to be implemented and whom they should target.

[78] Zig Layton Henry and Czarina Wilpert, *Discrimination, racism and citizenship: inclusion and exclusion in Britain and Germany* (London: Anglo-German Foundation, 1994) 10.

2.2.3 Consequences of the experience of racism and resulting policy needs

To sum up, the analysis has shown that immigrant individuals exemplified by the characters in the novels can be scarred and changed by the experience of racism in roughly three different ways which point to where new policies are required. Firstly, immigrants can be moved to turn racist against their own kind, to the extent of becoming violent, in order to avoid a "contemptuous view" of themselves. This is the case with Shahid in *The Black Album* and Mrs Charles (NN). This shows an urgent need for the political class to communicate not only to the members of the majority culture but also to the ethnic minorities that immigrants are worthy and equal citizens of Britain.

Secondly, immigrants can become ashamed of their origins and seek to hide them through lies and attempts to assimilate into the majority culture externally (in terms of looks and clothes) as well as internally (in terms of attitudes and lifestyle). The character of Vivien falls into this category. Here, it is important to communicate to the British population that, as a result of immigration, Britishness has developed away from a mono-cultural definition and come to include individuals of hybrid and foreign backgrounds. Policies would include the "creation of a multicultural national identity" as it has been outlined in the previous chapter.

Thirdly, immigrants can become exasperated and apathetic, sometimes even violent against the host society, in reaction to the experience of racism. Olive falls into this category and possibly Samad in *White Teeth* and Chanu in *Brick Lane*. All three resign themselves to apathy in the face of what they perceive as an unjust host society and invest all their energy and positive feelings into the project of taking their offspring 'back home.' Despite having been "in no way humbled" by the regular racist attacks he suffered, Mo falls into this category, as the experience has "politicised" him against his host society and made him turn to KEVIN. The difference between him and the young Islamic radicals is that he only has racism as a reason for joining KEVIN. With his white wife who has only recently left him, his integrated and promising offspring, and his business success Mo was otherwise firmly rooted in the host society. (WT, 472-473) It becomes obvious that the mechanism which cause the social disintegration of the immigrants belonging to this category can only be countered by policies aiming to omit the actual occurrence of racist incidents. These include an extension of anti-discrimination legislation, tougher control of the police force as well as a commitment of at least the major

political parties to refraining from mobilising (mostly displaced) public resentment against foreigners to attract votes.

2.2.4 Policies to combat racist incidents and attitudes

Any consultation of recent literature on immigration policy reveals a consensus and a concern that immigration policy in Britain has always been reactive and negative as well as kept out of the public realm.[79] It has been very shortsighted, lacking any consideration of potential future developments, and there has been no commitment to ongoing research into the facts, effects and developments, as well as the benefits and costs, of immigration to Britain. Policies have been based on assumptions about public concerns about immigration as well as on problems that came up in relation to immigration. It is evident that immigration only ever came onto the political agenda when problems occurred. When the "level of demand for labour […] could no longer be satisfied domestically" from "the early to mid-1950s" colonial subjects were encouraged to migrate and fill the vacancies.[80] When those vacancies had been filled and the economy began to slow immigration was curtailed in various stages and by various acts. When public resentment and violence against ethnic minorities could no longer be ignored the government "adopted anti-discrimination legislation […], but its aims were purely 'negative' – keeping first public then private bodies from discriminating in employment, housing and services," as Randall Hansen has pointed out.[81] The government "did little positively to promote the integration of new migrants"[82] and refrained from researching the real social and economic effects immigrants have had on the state of modern Britain.[83] In addition, Labour and Conservative have, not always successfully, attempted to "maintain a fragile consensus" to keep the "immigration issue […] out of public debate."[84] Therefore, immigrants have only entered public perception in relation to problems such as 'race' riots, pressure on welfare services, discrimination and crime. This is how the public develop a negative perception of immigrants. This negative image comes to be

[79] Sarah Spencer, Randall Hansen, Will Kymlicka.
[80] Randall Hansen, "Migration to Europe since 1945: Its History and its Lessons," *The Politics of Migration: Managing Opportunity, Conflict and Change*, ed. Sarah Spencer (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 25-26.
[81] Hansen, 32.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Sarah Spencer, "Introduction," *Strangers & Citizens: A Positive Approach to Migrants and Refugees*, (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1994) 17.
[84] Sarah Spencer, "The Implications of Immigration Policy for Race Relations," *Strangers & Citizens: A Positive Approach to Migrants and Refugees*, 314.

shared by some immigrants who do not like to be associated with these problems. The characters of Shahid and Mrs Charles discussed above exemplify such immigrants.

The government's failure to act 'positively' led to a deterioration of the situation visible effects of which are self-segregating communities (BL) and disintegrated, apathetic, or even rebellious and violent, individuals among Britain's ethnic minorities. Such individuals are represented in the novels by the characters of Olive (NN) and Samad (WT) as well as Karim (BL) and Millat (WT). If governments only move in 'reactively' when prejudice and conflict in society are high – as is exemplified in *Brick Lane* by the creation of the "Tower Hamlets Task Force" in response to the "riot" – (BL, 484-485) the effects of this policy failure become all the more difficult to redress. Therefore, there is a case for positive, proactive, anticipatory measures to ensure immigrants never arrive at such levels of exclusion and public opinion never reaches such high levels of prejudice and concern about immigrants.

Several policies could help here. Firstly, Sarah Spencer and others highlight the need to initiate an "informed public debate" about the merits and costs of immigration to ensure comprehension of the case for immigration as well as to assure the public that their concerns are being addressed.[85]

> [G]overnment fears of public resentment at migrants being seen to receive assistance at taxpayers' expense, for which the payback is not always apparent nor explained. […]
>
> [But p]ublic attitudes now are more nuanced than in past decades, with opinion distinguishing between different categories of migrant. There is greater recognition of the benefits migrants bring and more acceptance of cultural difference, with some scope for redressing ignorance. Only a small hard core are implacably hostile.
>
> Crucially, changing attitudes depends on restoring public confidence that migration is well managed, and in the public interest. [… G]overnments should acknowledge public fears, but not reinforce them […]. The messages need careful thought.[86]

Such a debate can only be successful if the government refrains from the temptation to "present increased immigration not as a policy in which the benefits outweigh the costs, but as a policy in which there are no costs" which Will Kymlicka attests to the 2002 White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven*.[87]

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[85] Sarah Spencer, "The Implications of Immigration Policy for Race Relations," *Strangers & Citizens: A Positive Approach to Migrants and Refugees*, 311. "Introduction," *The Politics of Migration: Managing Opportunity, Conflict and Change* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 4-5.

[86] Spencer, "Introduction," *The Politics of Migration: Managing Opportunity, Conflict and Change*, 5-6.

[87] Will Kymlicka, "Immigration, Citizenship, Multiculturalism: Exploring the Links," *The Politics of Migration: Managing Opportunity, Conflict and Change*, ed. Sarah Spencer (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 205.

Secondly, the debate has to be preceded or at least accompanied by investment in the necessary research to make the case for immigration as a "net" gain and to review current policies.[88] Australia, realising that "community consensus in favour of immigration is at risk," established the *Bureau of Immigration Research* to pursue research and "foster public understanding and informed discussion on immigration."[89] Its "first national conference" was attended by 700 people.[90] Such apparent public interest should be satisfied by governments. The argument exists that National Front support surged in the 1970s in response to the absence of a debate on immigration.[91]

Thirdly, to reverse the negative attitudes towards immigrants the "public will need not only to be told that migration is not harmful of their interests but to see that in their daily encounters."[92] As Spencer remarked elsewhere,

> racism cannot be tackled without removing the structural causes that feed it: including the conflicts over resources in the deprived areas in which immigrants first settle, shortage of housing and jobs, hospital places and schools. The *source* of the problem is not public attitudes but the conflicts which give rise to these attitudes.[93]

The direct experience of racism will be more common in deprived places such as the type of council estate and the council offices described in *Never Far From Nowhere* or the poor East End neighbourhood depicted in *Brick Lane*. In these areas low-skilled white people and immigrants share an experience of disproportionate unemployment, poor housing, poor health, and low educational achievement and are likely to see the other as competitors for scarce resources. These areas need to be regenerated and revitalised, optimally in collaboration with the, white and immigrant, residents. The urgency to fight deprivation and exclusion is revealed by the *Commission for Racial Equality* remarking in 1991 that while "racial discrimination was decreasing" "racial violence" was on the rise:

> Is racial discrimination practised by those with economic power in society, and racial violence practised by those without it? Those with economic power would obviously feel more secure than those without it and have no need to find scapegoats for their situation.[94]

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[88] Hansen, 33.
[89] Spencer, "The Implications of Immigration Policy for Race Relations," *Strangers & Citizens: A Positive Approach to Migrants and Refugees*, 314.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Spencer, "Introduction," *The Politics of Migration: Managing Opportunity, Conflict and Change*, 6.
[93] Spencer, "The Implications of Immigration Policy for Race Relations," *Strangers & Citizens: A Positive Approach to Migrants and Refugees*, 316.
[94] CRE, 1991: 17 as quoted by Colin Munro, "Race Laws and Policy in the United Kingdom," *Challenging Racism in Britain and Germany*, eds. Zig Layton-Henry and Czarina Wilpert (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 181.

Malcolm Cross also finds evidence of "an interaction and an accumulative pattern between racism, social class and spatial segregation" and suggests policy redress "in the form of educational opportunities and favourable urban policies."[95]

Fourthly, in order to attach credibility to its belief in the equality of immigrant and British-born subjects, government should remove the racist bias inherent in British citizenship policy and immigration controls, as demonstrated by Zig Layton-Henry and Sarah Spencer respectively. Initially, after World War II all Commonwealth citizens enjoyed full citizenship rights in Britain. As a result of immigration control to ward off an ever-larger influx from the Commonwealth, Britain redefined the conditions of British citizenship. The 1981 British Nationality Act "has given people of British descent privileged access to the UK. Many citizens of independent Commonwealth countries (Canada, South Africa, Australia) have the right of access to the UK" whereas those from non-white Commonwealth countries have been deprived of this right.[96] This privileges white, Anglo-Saxon immigration over other seemingly second-class Commonwealth immigration. The same act even departed from the "automatic right to citizenship through *jus soli* for the children of foreign residents" if the child happened to leave the country before the completion of his or her eleventh year.[97] Layton-Henry therefore recommends the abolition of privileges for "people of British descent."[98] Furthermore, *jus soli* should be brought back "in its pure form."[99] Such symbolic policies would propagate the real commitment of the British state to the equal value of its ethnic minorities.[100]

The second current inconsistency is the contradictory message of the argument of "[s]uccessive British governments […] since the 1960s" that "[g]ood race relations are heavily dependent on strict immigration control."[101] Following this argument the UK's first anti-discrimination legislation was enacted in the shadow of the stop to

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[95] Zig Layton Henry and Czarina Wilpert, *Discrimination, racism and citizenship: inclusion and exclusion in Britain and Germany* (London: Anglo-German Foundation, 1994) 10.
[96] Layton-Henry et al, *Discrimination, racism and citizenship: inclusion and exclusion in Britain and Germany*, 5.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Layton-Henry et al, *Discrimination, racism and citizenship: inclusion and exclusion in Britain and Germany*, 26.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid. Layton-Henry et al. explain this in more detail below: "the acceptance of the notion of a republic founded on universal not ethnic rights, the opening up of citizenship to all persons and their descendants resident in the country, irrespective of the renouncement of their former nationality, are necessary steps towards the civic and political integration of immigrant minorities." Ibid.
[101] Kenneth Clarke, then Home Secretary: Second Reading on the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill, Hansard, vol. 213, no. 64, col. 21 as quoted by Spencer in "The Implications of Immigration Policy for Race Relations," *Strangers & Citizens: A Positive Approach to Migrants and Refugees*, 307.

non-white Commonwealth immigration. The paradoxical result of this was that the government's restriction of immigration "did not so much follow popular sentiment as actually precede and create it."[102] This policy drew attention to non-white Commonwealth immigration as something negative while at the same time trying to assert the equality of Britain's non-white population. Popular prejudice against 'visible immigrants' might be countered, if government changed its approach to immigration controls "so that decisions on entry and residence are based on research based defensible criteria such as employment skills and family connections regardless of the country of origin of the individual".[103]

The message of citizenship and immigration policies which had their racist sting removed would be to immigrants that they are worthy British citizens fully belonging to British society. This might remove the mechanisms exemplified in the novels inducing Shahid and Mrs Charles to turn racist against their own people and Vivien to feel she needed to assimilate into a mono-cultural version of Englishness, which excluded the possibilities of having hair "frizzing up around my chin" and Jamaican parents. (NN, 43) The defence against such policies has always been that they would "trigger […] a backlash that would be capitalised on by far-right anti-immigrant groups."[104] Yet, as shown above, public opinion is not as decidedly anti-immigrant as is often assumed. Moreover, evidence from France suggests that restrictive legislation does not always curtail support for the extreme right. There, the "centre-right coalition passed a restrictive nationality law [… which] did nothing to undermine Front Nationale support; if anything they conceded part of the Front's argument."[105] Hansen, Spencer, Kymlicka and Layton-Henry agree that "the dangers inherent in the current approach justify the political risk" considering the number of immigrants already in Britain as well as the number of those to come.[106]

Fifthly, the UK's existing anti-discrimination legislation should be extended.[107] First of all, the existing legislation should be made applicable to the police, as "at the

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[102] S. Saggar, "Race and Politics in Britain," *Contemporary Political Studies*, ed. J. Benyon (Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992) 77.
[103] Spencer, "The Implications of Immigration Policy for Race Relations," *Strangers & Citizens: A Positive Approach to Migrants and Refugees*, 320.
[104] Kymlicka, 206.
[105] Hansen, 30.
[106] Spencer, "The Implications of Immigration Policy for Race Relations," *Strangers & Citizens: A Positive Approach to Migrants and Refugees*, 320.
[107] The most recent and currently valid legislation is the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Martin MacEwen, "Enforcing Anti-Discrimination Law in Britain: Here There Be Monsters!" *Challenging Racism in Britain and Germany*, eds. Zig Layton-Henry and Czarina Wilpert (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 193.

local level 40% of the complaints relate to racism by the police."[108] Martin MacEwen explains that in addition to the law government must "invest […] in processes" facilitating successful claims, and permit the imposition of "penalties that hurt […] and are damaging economically and morally for the respondent."[109] Furthermore, MacEwen advises to include "all international legal obligations" the UK is subject to "into domestic law" to ensure their standard before domestic courts.[110] Also, redress has to be sought in individual court claims and there is as yet no scope for group action of individuals discriminated against by the same respondent which would "spread costs" for the claimants and "hurt" the respondent sufficiently to "invest in anti-discrimination methods."[111] Group action should be made legal.

Finally, there is a case for changing the state agency supervising the enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation, which has hitherto been the Commission of Racial Equality, to a "Human Rights Commission and an Equality Commission for all discrimination areas."[112] Colin Munro explains that it

> is harder to mock or criticise a wider concern for human rights. [… T]he backlash against the specific approach comes not only from the political right […] but also from some representatives of the ethnic minorities, who may feel that they are being wrongly labelled or patronised.[113]

MacEwen points out that the "difficulty of dealing with one aspect of discrimination in isolation is that the explanation of irrational behaviour only has to shift to some equally bizarre explanation falling outside the limits of the Act concerned for it to escape enforcement."[114] Such a more comprehensive state agency might augment the "success rate for complainants" which currently stands at "3 per cent, not dissimilar to the clear-up rate for crime."[115] While this statistic may seem disillusioning policy-experts underline that the existence of the legislation has an effect on public opinion and "creates new norms for public behaviour towards minorities."[116] The effects of an anti-discrimination legislation which included the changes proposed above might transform the experience of an immigrant in Olive's situation. At least it might give such a person the grounds to win a case against the police in court.

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[108] Layton-Henry et al, *Discrimination, racism and citizenship: inclusion and exclusion in Britain and Germany*, 18.
[109] MacEwen, 203.
[110] MacEwen, 200.
[111] MacEwen, 198.
[112] MacEwen, 200.
[113] Munro, 184.
[114] MacEwen, 200.
[115] MacEwen, 197.
[116] Layton-Henry et al, *Discrimination, racism and citizenship: inclusion and exclusion in Britain and Germany*, 27.

Sixthly, in order to avoid jeopardising all the beneficial effects of the policies outlined above, politicians must refrain from mobilising existing, if usually displaced, public resentment against immigrants for populist reasons. Randall Hansen underlines that "public suspicion can quickly be turned into loud, ugly opposition if a politician or party lends its support."[117] An example of such instrumentalisation of public fears by one politician would be Margaret Thatcher who "in 1978 […] spoke on television about 'The British people's fear' of 'being swamped' by people with 'alien cultures'."[118] Importantly, she won the general elections with the Conservatives in 1979. It has also been proved statistically that after the speech "the percentage of the public who thought that immigration was an 'urgent issue facing the country' went up from 9% to 21%."[119] This shows the at times alarming, at times beneficial, effect politicians can have on public opinion. And while it be desirable that the "two major parties" break the "consensus that immigration issues be kept out of public debate" they should maintain a consensus not to instrumentalise them.[120] Otherwise, halal butchers like the character Mo will never see declining levels of violence in their shops. (WT)

[117] Hansen, 32.
[118] *World in Action*, Granada TV, January 1978, as quoted by Spencer in "The Implications of Immigration Policy for Race Relations," *Strangers & Citizens: A Positive Approach to Migrants and Refugees*, 309.
[119] Spencer, "The Implications of Immigration Policy for Race Relations," *Strangers & Citizens: A Positive Approach to Migrants and Refugees*, 317.
[120] Spencer, "The Implications of Immigration Policy for Race Relations," *Strangers & Citizens: A Positive Approach to Migrants and Refugees*, 314.

2.3 Chapter 3: Muslims and Islamists: "Insisting on their identity."[121]

> Human beings are attached to and shaped by their culture and their self-respect is closely bound up with respect for it.
> Bhikhu Parekh[122]

> 'They have both lost their way. Strayed so far from the life I intended for them. […] All I wanted was two good Muslim boys. […] The one I send home comes out a pukka Englishman, white suited, silly wig lawyer. The one I keep here is fully paid-up green bow-tie-wearing fundamentalist terrorist.'
> Samad in *White Teeth*[123]

> 'As long as they're on the scag, they stay away from religion. And the Government – it's more scared of Islam than heroin.'
> Karim in *Brick Lane*[124]

Recently, the events of 11 September 2001 in New York as well as the bombings on London public transport of 7 July 2005 have focused public attention in the West on one particular section of the immigrant population, those of Islamic faith. In Britain the preoccupation with the Muslim communities was actually initiated when, in 1988, the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* provoked the public outcry of Muslims against the book's "sacrilege and blasphemy." (BA, 169) The book also induced the Iranian head of state, the Ayatollah Khomeini, to pronounce a "fatwah", a death penalty, against its author in 1989. Stirred by the "fatwah" or by the events of 11 September, three of the authors discussed in this thesis include fundamentalist characters and discussions of Islam in their novels. The major concern for British society today is that – while it is essential to understand the thought processes and the motivations of the Islamic fundamentalists – most resident Muslims are of the moderate kind and risk being misunderstood, labelled and shunned as Islamists. Consequently, this thesis aims to give equal attention to the attitudes and motivations of moderate and extremist Muslims. This will give indications how to accommodate better the moderate Muslims within British society while simultaneously fighting the causes that turn young Muslim immigrants against that society.

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[121] Hanif Kureishi, *The Black Album* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003 [1995]) 92. All further references are to this edition. (BA)
[122] Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (London: Macmillan, 2000) 196.
[123] Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (London: Penguin, 2001 [2000]) 406-407. All further references are to this edition. (WT)
[124] Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* (London: Black Swan, 2004 [2003]) 311. All further references are to this edition. (BL)

Two of the three novels consulted for this chapter portray both moderate and fundamentalist Muslims. In *White Teeth* both types feature within one family: the father Samad Iqbal, especially in his later years, seeks particular recourse in his religion while condemning Islamic fundamentalism outright. To his displeasure he sees his son Millat drawn to fundamentalist groups while his other son Magid is entirely pervaded by secularism. *Brick Lane* also represents both types. While Nazneen's lover Karim stands for the young and angry Islamists her husband Chanu is violently opposed to them. But also Nazneen comes to be on the side of a moderate Islam. An overview over the moderate Muslim characters and their concerns will lead into a discussion of the Islamist characters depicted in the novels. Here, Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Black Album* will additionally offer insights into the reasoning of Islamic extremists. Unlike the other two novels, the book presents as alternatives to fundamentalism only secularism or atheism. The literary findings will be followed by policy suggestions to improve relations and understanding between British Muslim communities and the host society.

2.3.1 Moderate Muslims in Smith's *White Teeth* and Ali's *Brick Lane*

What strikes the attentive reader of *White Teeth* and *Brick Lane* is that frequently Islam features not so much in a religious dimension in the characters' lives but in a cultural dimension. Islamic thought and wisdom pervaded the characters' upbringing and thus have shaped them culturally regardless of how actively religious they are in their everyday lives. This applies to the moderate Muslim characters Alsana and Samad Iqbal in *White Teeth* as well as Nazneen and Chanu Ahmed in *Brick Lane*.

Alsana Iqbal, the reader learns, "was really very traditional, very religious, lacking nothing except the faith."[125] (WT, 64) This is the mother Alsana's objection to the English Chalfen family's provisions for Millat: "They're Englishifying him completely! They're deliberately leading him away from *his culture* and his family *and his religion*." (WT, 345 my emphasis) Their dealings with Magid she brandishes as "involv[ing]" him in "something so *contrary to our* culture, to our *beliefs*." (WT, 441, my emphasis) Her character is perfectly aware of this dilemma of lacking faith but growing up, like Clara and Neena, in "strict religious families, houses where God" was omnipresent. (WT, 77) It may have been a relief for Alsana to escape the tight grip of her religious family, and she asserts, "I don't call myself anything[, …]

[125] This comes up again: WT, 227-228.

You [Samad] call yourself a Muslim." (WT, 202) But this does not entail that she embraces the turn away from her culture, too, though it is intricately bound up with that religion. She is astounded by the Chalfens' clichéd ideas about Muslim women. (WT, 351)

In *White Teeth* Samad is the only moderate Muslim character for whom issues of faith and religion play a major role. But even in his case the cultural dimension is very pronounced: "To Samad, tradition was culture, and culture led to roots, and these were good, these were untainted principles. That didn't mean he could live by them, abide by them or grow in the manner they demanded." (WT, 193) The adherence to Muslim faith is for him the major manifestation of these roots. At another stage he asserts: "I don't wish to be a modern man! I wish to live as I was always meant to! I wish to return to the East." (WT, 145) Samad seeks recourse in Islam because it was part of the culture he was brought up in and because this upbringing has instilled in him the "fear of God" and his revenge. (WT, 137-139) The fear actually seems to be outweighing the positive faith in Samad. When Abdul-Mickey comments on Samad's faith-induced abstinence from alcohol with the words, "we're all Brothers – but a man's gotta live," Samad merely returns, "I don't know, Mickey, does he?" (WT, 186)

All the same, even if induced by culture and fear, faith and religion become paramount in Samad's life. "He prays and prays" and scolds his sons when they do not stand up to his expectations of "two good Muslim boys." (WT, 286, 406) This happens on different occasions to both Millat (WT, 334) and Magid (WT, 453-454). Samad's main dilemma is that "His god was not *like* that charming white-bearded bungler of the Anglican, Methodist or Catholic churches. His God was not in the business of *giving people breaks*" and accepting deals. (WT, 140) Yet Samad's indulgent lifestyle requires these breaks and deals, which serves only to reinforce his fear of God and of the "Last Judgement." (WT, 149) His transgressions include masturbation, (WT, 139-141) an extra-marital affair, (WT, 160-201) swearing, (WT, 148) the consumption of pork, (WT, 149) alcohol consumption, (WT, 139, 352) and having for his "best friend […] a kaffir non-believer." (WT, 149) This has shown that the moderate Muslims in *White Teeth* principally do not live in a very different way from the British majority culture. Most white Britons either believe in a Christian god, but transgress the rules of their religion by yielding to the temptations of secular consumer society, or do not believe in that god but are still culturally and morally shaped by Christianity.

Nazneen, the protagonist of *Brick Lane*, has had an upbringing as Alsana assigns it to herself and Neena in *White Teeth*. She was brought up to embrace whatever Fate imposed upon her. If we listen to Samad this is the essence of Islam which literally means, "I *surrender*. I surrender to God. […] This life I call mine is his to do with what he will." (WT, 288) Nazneen initially does not have the background to think outside a framework dominated by Islam. Therefore, she turns to the Qur'an and to prayer in her unhappiness after her arrival in London. Three years later she realises, (BL, 121)

> while she had knelt, while she had prostrated herself and recited the words, she had never fully engaged in them. *In prayer she sought to stupefy herself like a drunk with a bottle, like a fly against a lantern*. This was not the correct way to pray. It was not the correct way to read the suras. It was not the correct way to live. (BL, 130-131, my emphasis)

Nazneen emancipates herself from her upbringing, too, when she takes her sick son to hospital rather than acquiescing in the face of Fate as her mother had taught her: "I fought for him." (BL, 142) Accordingly, Nazneen uses her religion to a non-religious end and later turns against one of its central messages. Her secret extra-marital affair with Karim further undermines her obedience to the laws of Islam.

Nazneen's husband Chanu seems to accept Islam as part of Bengali culture. But he only supports a moderate and 'educated' version of it. On the one hand, he wants to oppose the British "Muslim-hating peasants" by proudly affirming his family's religion and difference. (BL, 265) On the other hand, "[i]f he saw some girls go by in hijab he became agitated at this display of [Bengali] peasant ignorance." (BL, 265) He also proudly asserts that "Muslims bow to no one." (BL, 358) But Nazneen never sees him pray. (BL, 41) He only consults the Qur'an once, and his wife remains sure that "her husband's religion […] was education." (BL, 252, 260)

Thus, also in *Brick Lane* the moderate Muslim characters are culturally shaped and influenced by their religion, but their individual positioning towards that faith is as complex and inconsistent as that of most modern-day British Christians. The perspective of *Brick Lane* adds an important item of information to that of *White Teeth*: The inconsistent adherence to the laws of Islam is not only manifest when Muslims move to the West which according to Samad "drags you in." (WT, 407) In Nazneen's home village Gouripur both "Lunatic Makku" and her mother choose to die the "undignified death" of suicide, which Islam forbids. (BL, 78-79, 434-436) What is more, Nazneen's sister Hasina "eloped […] with the nephew of the saw-mill owner" at "sixteen." (BL, 16) Even after her love-marriage Hasina does not live a life of obedience to the laws of Islam despite the fact that she remains in Bangladesh.

Islam is a religion that, like Christianity, has shaped cultures. But its followers are disparate in the extent of their faith and their trueness to its laws. They cannot be generalised, in opposition to Christians, as extreme or orthodox. This applies only to a small fraction of Muslims, the fundamentalists. But what induces this fundamentalism in the mainly younger ranks of Britain's Muslim population?

2.3.2 Islamists in *White Teeth, Brick Lane* and Kureishi's *The Black Album*

The turn to fundamentalism in *White Teeth*, *Brick Lane* and *The Black Album* is often explained by the direct experience of racism by immigrant youths or their perception of a racist host society. For Zadie Smith this may be the only way an immigrant writer, who lacks the experience of growing up with Islamic culture, can approach the subject and empathise with these youths. But as Kureishi and Ali assign equal importance to this motivation it can be justified as central. Racism is a central cause for the trip of Millat's Raggastani crowd to Bradford to take part in the anti-Rushdie protest and the burning of *The Satanic Verses* in *White Teeth*. In their past, "people had fucked with" all Raggastani members for reasons such as wearing "traditional dress in the playground." (WT, 232) Not one of them has "read" the "[d]irty fucking book." (WT, 233) What takes youths like Millat to Bradford is that

> he knew that he, Millat, was a Paki no matter where he came from; that he smelt of curry; had no sexual identity; took other people's jobs; or had no job and bummed off the state; or gave all the jobs to his relatives; that he could be a dentist or a shop-owner or a curry-shifter, but not a footballer or a film-maker; […] that he worshipped elephants and wore turbans; that no one who looked like Millat, or spoke like Millat, of felt like Millat, was ever on the news unless they had recently been murdered. In short, he knew he had no face in this country, no voice in the country, until *the week before last*, when *suddenly people like Millat were on every channel and every radio and every newspaper and they were angry*, and Millat recognized that anger, and grabbed it with both hands. (WT, 234, my emphasis)

Likewise, when Millat first learns about the *Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation* (KEVIN) his reaction is that "we need to make our mark in this bloody country." (WT, 295) Millat perceives of the host society as racist and of people of his 'race' as excluded from many branches of that society. His turn to Islamic fundamentalism is a protest against that society.

Karim in *Brick Lane* likewise explains that he and his Bengali friends "used to be chased home every day. People getting beaten up the whole time. Then we got together, turned the tables." (BL, 260) These experiences of racist violence and uniting against it as a group are his motivation for the foundation of the Bengal Tigers to take action against the injustices of the host country. In *The Black Album* the experience of racist violence at school makes the idea of belonging to Riaz's

group of fundamentalist Pakistani youths tempting for Shahid. (BA, 57) Fundamentalist Chad, who "was adopted by a [racist] white couple" and grew up surrounded by "English country cottages and ordinary English people who were secure, who effortlessly belonged," (BA, 106) is not merely tempted, he whole-heartedly embraces Riaz's group. His teacher Deedee Osgood explains,

> the sense of exclusion practically drove him mad. […] When he got to be a teenager he saw he had no roots, no connections with Pakistan, couldn't even speak the language. […] In England white people looked at him as if he were going to steal their car or their handbag. (BA, 107)

The above examples have already glimpsed at another reason for young immigrants to turn to fundamentalism. Feelings of exclusion from the host society, of being "homeless" in their country of residence or often birth, (BA, 108) can induce a desire to belong and be part of a group avenging that exclusion. This is Karim's view and reason to set up the Bengal Tigers for the "dissolute youth." (BL, 260) When setting out on an unexplained expedition to defend "Our people" with Riaz's group Shahid "felt a physical pride in their cause whatever it was. He was one with the regiment of brothers and sisters." (BA, 82-83) Finally, Millat "had joined KEVIN because he loved clans […], and he loved clans at war." (WT, 442)

A further motivation for turning fundamentalist against Britain is the resentment of the deprived conditions that many immigrant communities live in. This is strongest in Karim's case who believes that these conditions, including the drug problem, are purposefully induced by "Government" to "keep" those communities "down" and "quiet" and "away from" the threats of organised "Islam." (BL, 311) The KEVIN leader Hifan shares this view pointing out to Millat that marijuana was a "drug specifically imported by governments to subdue the black and Asian community, to lessen our powers." (WT, 295-296)

This view is more generally tied up with disapproval of the lethal potential for their communities posed by "the *moribund, decadent, degenerate, over-sexed, violent state of Western capitalist culture*." (WT, 445) Aggression against this culture and society and a mission to lead their people away from its "obsession with personal freedoms" is pronounced in all three novels. (WT, 445) It is clear from the Bengal Tiger leaflet stating that "[u]ndesirable elements are seeking to turn our community centre into a den for gambling and boozing." (BL, 258) What is still very local in *Brick Lane* becomes more global in *White Teeth* and *The Black Album*. On their leaflets KEVIN engage with symptoms of "moribund" "Western capitalist culture:" "*The Right to Bare: The Naked Truth about Western Sexuality*" is one of them, "*Science versus the Creator: No Contest*" another. (WT, 372, 370) "Riaz's Sunday

talks" at the mosque frequented by a "growing audience of young people" also draw on contemporary trends. (BA, 80) He calls them "Rave to the Grave?" or "Islam: A Blast from the Past or a Force for the Future?" (BA, 80) The explicit language and the use of 'in' vocabulary and slang such as "gambling" rather than playing games of chance, "boozing" rather than consumption of alcohol, "Rave" rather than dance or party suggest an inside perspective. This prevents the disqualification of their propaganda on the grounds that they were ignorant of Western culture because they had not "tasted" its pleasures. (BA, 80) It achieves an impression of superiority and cool self-restraint. Moreover, by acknowledging the existence of this culture and its 'vices', the message to its partakers is that they can yet be saved. It is implied that it is not too late to turn away from the "bottomless basket" of "pleasure and self-absorption." (BA, 128)

The fundamentalist groups in the novels are specifically denouncing imperialism and those Western politics which have instilled deep global inequalities. Thus, a girl observes in a Bengal Tigers meeting that on 11 September 2001 "thirty-five thousand children died through hunger" in the "poorest countries in the world" without getting a fraction of the public and media attention of the victims of the attacks. (BL, 416) Western-instilled global inequalities are also denounced in the KEVIN leaflet entitled "*The Big American Devil: How the United States Mafia Rules the World*." (WT, 370)

In Riaz's group the desire to point to global inequalities and their culprits is very central. In reaction to the contention that the destitute circumstances on an East End council estate are the underlying reason for the white inhabitants' racism Riaz returns:

> They have housing, electricity, heating, TV, fridges, hospitals nearby! They can vote, participate politically or not. [… D]o you think our brothers in the Third World, as you like to call most people other than you, have a fraction of this? […] And are the people racist skinheads, car thieves, rapists? Have they desired to dominate the rest of the world? No, they are humble, good, hard-working people who love Allah! (BA, 94-95)

Riaz therefore scolds the views of the intellectual Brownlow:

> Your liberal beliefs belong to a minority who live in northern Europe. Yet you think moral superiority over the rest of mankind is a fact. You want to dominate others with your particular morality which has – as you well know – gone hand-in-hand with fascist imperialism. […] This is why we have to guard against the hypocritical and smug intellectual atmosphere of Western civilization. (BA, 98)

In addition, Riaz explains what he sees as the duty of the "fortunate" educated British Pakistanis towards their poor and "abused" compatriots who "are from villages, half-

literate and not wanted here:" (BA, 173) Not to "forsake" them by living for individual pleasure and to provide them with a "voice" in the host country. (BA, 173)

Thus, the fundamentalists blame the West for both the "degenerate" and directionless society they live in and the chaotic state of the world. This is evident from both *White Teeth* and *The Black Album*. The founder of KEVIN Ibrāhīm ad-Din Shukrallah contests: "What is the result of this so-called *democracy*, this so-called *freedom*, this so-called *liberty*? Oppression, persecution, *slaughter*." (WT, 467) This is echoed in the title of one of Riaz's talks, "Democracy is a Hypocrisy." (BA, 80) The fundamentalists are convinced that the solution to the problems of directionless society and a world at war lies in the imposition of order by means of religion. To use Riaz's words, "[t]here must be order in society for the elements to cohere." (BA, 173) Riaz argues that "atheism doesn't really suit humanity. […] Without religion society is impossible. And without God people think they can sin with impunity." (BA, 33) He sees the fatal error of Western morality in "trust[ing]" to men the decision of "good and evil." (BA, 98) As opposed to the "people" around them the fundamentalists in Chad's view "have journeyed beyond sensation, to a *spiritual and controlled* conception of life. We regard others on the basis of respect, not thinking what we can use them for." (BA, 128-129, my emphasis) Even Shahid can be compelled by this idea of being directed by religion: "I want to follow the rules. […] There must be a reason for them. Those rules have been followed by millions of people for hundreds of years." (BA, 160-161)

All the above motivations driving the fundamentalist groups in the three novels have provoked in the individual group members intense anger and hatred. The aggression is perhaps most extreme in Chad's case, the Pakistani adopted by a white couple and brought up in the English countryside. According to Deedee Osgood "his anger was too much. Too much for him, you know. It was fermenting and he couldn't keep it under." (BA, 108) Millat's anger has already been illustrated above. Likewise, Karim seems to be always angry with people and the world when he talks to Nazneen.

This anger fuels the fundamentalists' promptness for physical violence. Riaz explains, "[w]e're not blasted Christians […]. We don't turn the other cheek. We will fight for our people who are being tortured in Palestine, Afghanistan, Kashmir! War has been declared against us. But we are armed." (BA, 82) Setting out to protect the Bengali family from harassment on the estate in the East End, it is explained, "[t]he posse had required a cleansing jihad." (BA, 138) Riaz advocates death as a justified

penalty for Rushdie after the publication of *The Satanic Verses* with the words: "Sometimes there is violence, yes when evil has been done." (BA, 172) KEVIN equally embrace violence in their "programmes of direct action." (WT, 445) This is Millat's favourite element of the group's activities: "[H]e was their greatest asset, he was in the forefront, the first into battle come jihad." (WT, 445) His urge for physical violence and revenge and retribution is so pronounced that he is moved to go against the entire KEVIN clan at the Perret Institute. Millat boycotts the group's "Plan B," the "quoting [of] Sura 52," in order to fire a gun alone. (WT, 500) There is also a clear readiness to fight "Islamic Jihad" in the Bengal Tigers group in *Brick Lane*. (BL, 301) However, the group oscillates between advocating peaceful action and defending the use of physical violence. This paradox is evident from Karim's opinion: "When the Bengal Tigers march we're all on the same side. And if there's going to be any trouble we won't be the ones starting it, but we'll *finish* it all right." (BL, 407) The violent potential of the group, which is only glimpsed at here, is unleashed at the actual march. Possibly, it is the absence of a sizeable number of white opponents at the march – only "twenty or thirty" Lion Hearts show up – which induces the "Musulmans" to "fight […] themselves." (BL, 472, 472-475)

One last important point to make about the young Islamic fundamentalists is that it is usually not their upbringing, by moderate Muslims, secularists or even atheists, which induces their religious fervour and extremism. For example, "Riaz was kicked out of his parents' house for denouncing his father for drinking alcohol. He also reprimanded him for praying in his armchair and not on his knees." (BA, 109) In many cases the youths have initially tried out embracing the Western society with all its temptations and potential for pleasure. But the resulting disorientation and confusion and the encounter with persuasive individuals promising to lead them back to their roots bring about their ensuing religious conversion. Karim's aura is explained to the reader through Nazneen's initial fascination with his vigour, strength and conviction.[126] Hifan is described as having a "deep, soft voice like running water, inevitable and constant, requiring a force stronger […] maybe, than gravity, to stop it." (WT, 294) Finally, Riaz is depicted as "fluent, amusing, passionately coruscating. […] He never ran short of words or appeared uneasy. No subject could hold him." (BA, 81)

[126] BL, 210, 242, 243, 260-261.

2.3.3 The position of the moderate Muslim characters towards the Islamists

The last point makes it vital to assess how the moderate Muslim characters position themselves in relation to Islamic fundamentalists. When Alsana sees Millat involved in the burning of *The Satanic Verses* in Bradford she burns "[a]ll his secular stuff" with the comment "either everything is sacred or nothing is." (WT, 237) She refers to KEVIN as "bastards […]. They call themselves followers of Islam, but they are nothing but thugs in a gang." (WT, 442) Samad asks Millat "to stop hanging around with KEVIN," calls them "the infidels" and later "[c]razy enough to start a war." (WT, 334, 352, 455) Nazneen is initially drawn in by Karim's "strong stance," (BL, 210) his knowledge of right and wrong, and his commitment to action rather than reading and talking like Chanu. (BL, 260) But later, when she listens more closely, she discovers his inconsistencies. She often cannot but disagree with Karim, for example on the scope for suicide bombings within the word of the Qur'an:

> 'And a Muslim cannot commit suicide', said Nazneen. No matter how many times he explained to her about martyrs, it seemed to her incontrovertible.
> *He who kills himself with a sword or a poison, or throws himself off a mountain will be tormented on the day of Resurrection with that very thing.* (BL, 382-383)

Chanu somewhat admires that "[t]he young ones don't want to keep quiet any more." (BL, 258) At the same time he is acutely aware of the intellectual deficits and the explosive potential of the fundamentalist propaganda: "Are they mad? Poking these mad letters through white people's doors. Do they want to set flame to the whole place?" (BL, 275) To summarise, the moderate Muslim characters find few good words for the young radical Islamist groups and are substantially worried by their existence.

2.3.4 Policies to meet the demands of moderate Muslims

What policies could relax this tense situation? What concessions should be made to the moderate Muslims to accommodate them in British society? What British policies could lessen and prevent the anger of immigrant youths which makes them turn to radical and violent Islamist groups? At this point, it is important to mention that, as this thesis focuses on domestic policy solutions to immigrant disadvantage, the global dimension of Muslim oppression and how this can be redressed has to be excluded. Pnina Werbner explains that South Asian Muslims "identify deeply with the plight of Palestinians, Bosnians, Kashmiris, Afghans or Iraqis. They see the

West, and especially the United States, as an oppressor."[127] According to Tariq Modood this identification causes the wish to "express solidarity […] through the idea of the *Ummah*, the global community of Muslims, which must defend and restore itself as a global player."[128] This entails the concession that even if the policy suggestions listed below were to be implemented successfully a residue of dissatisfaction would remain with British Muslims, which British foreign policy would have to consider addressing.

Moderate Muslims are most offended by the disrespect shown for their culture in which religion is inherent, by their unequal treatment, in other words the religious discrimination they suffer, by their image in the media, and by the language used to describe Muslims. These issues are underlined by Tariq Modood and Fauzia Ahmad.[129] Moreover, this thesis posits that the moderate Muslim characters in both *Brick Lane* and *White Teeth* would be sufficiently appeased and feel more understood and incorporated in British society if policies were to address those malpractices. The main issue pointed out above in relation to the novels is that the moderate Muslim characters identify with Islam as part of their culture even if they do not all faithfully observe the religious rules. Bhikhu Parekh wisely points out: "Human beings are attached to and shaped by their culture and their self-respect is closely bound up with respect for it."[130] The lack of respect for their culture is what mainly discomforts Alsana about the Chalfens in *White Teeth* and Chanu about the white British working class in *Brick Lane*. (BL, 254-255) Samad is equally upset by the way he is "never welcomed, only tolerated" in Britain, "[l]ike you are an animal finally house-trained." (WT, 407)

A trend can be observed that once Muslim populations had established themselves in Britain they became more assertive and started to demand respect and equality for their religion. Tariq Modood observes that they follow in their "identity politics" the path that other "equality-seeking movements" have trod on before them. Modood names feminism and "anti-racism" as examples of such movements.[131] He observes a development

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[127] Pnina Werbner, "Theorising Complex Diasporas: Purity and Hybridity in the South Asian Public Sphere in Britain," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30,5 (September 2004) 907.
[128] Tariq Modood, "Muslims and the Politics of Difference," *The Politics of Migration: Managing Opportunity, Conflict and Change*, ed. Sarah Spencer (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 109.
[129] Modood. Fauzia Ahmad, "British Muslim Perceptions and Opinions on News Coverage of September 11," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 32,6 (August 2006): 961-982.
[130] Parekh, 196.
[131] Modood, 104, 109.

> from an understanding of 'equality' in terms of individualism and cultural assimilation to a politics of recognition […]. This perception of equality means not having to hide or apologise for one's origins, family or community, and requires others to show respect for them. Public attitudes and arrangements must adapt so that this heritage is encouraged, not contemptuously expected to wither away.[132]

Interestingly, one of the characters in the novels experiences exactly this same sentiment. Shahid in *The Black Album*, who ultimately rejects the fundamentalist friends he encounters at college and who is only 'culturally' Muslim lacking faith and religious upbringing, perceives: "These days everyone was insisting on their identity, coming out as a man, woman, gay, black, Jew – brandishing whichever features they could claim […]. Shahid, too, wanted to belong to his people." (BA, 92) This confirms the idea that "Muslim assertiveness" is founded on "contemporary Western ideas about equality and multiculturalism."[133]

It has already been glimpsed in the first chapter that multiculturalism, in order to work, needs to be endorsed more fully in Britain. (2.1.3) Will Kymlicka has pointed out that "[t]he idea that multiculturalism might require individuals in the dominant group to re-evaluate […] their inherited identities, heroes, symbols and narratives is apparently unthinkable" in Britain.[134] But in the case of Britain's Muslim communities this is exactly what is required. Modood underlines that "[i]ntegration cannot be a matter of laissez-faire."[135] It is dangerous to ignore Muslim demands, especially where they are legitimate. Firstly, there are 15 million Muslims in the EU 10 per cent of whom live in Britain.[136] As has been pointed out above Muslims increasingly develop a global solidarity and seek to become a united "global player." What is more, "[f]or many years Muslims have been the principal victims of the bloodshed that has produced Europe's asylum seekers."[137] Consequently, Muslims are a sizeable group in British society who are increasingly willing to unite nationally and globally and they are a growing minority whom it would be unwise to ignore.

Secondly, British Muslims' perception of experiencing social disadvantage is not unfounded. Cultural racism against Muslims is rife in Britain, not least in the aftermath of September 11. "It is Asian Muslims [i.e. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis] and not, as expected, Afro-Caribbeans, who have emerged as the most disadvantaged

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[132] Modood, 105.
[133] Sarah Spencer, "Introduction," *The Politics of Migration: Managing Opportunity, Conflict and Change* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 13.
[134] Will Kymlicka, "Immigration, Citizenship, Multiculturalism: Exploring the Links," *The Politics of Migration: Managing Opportunity, Conflict and Change*, ed. Sarah Spencer (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 205.
[135] Modood, 113.
[136] Modood, 101, Werbner, 898.
[137] Modood, 101.

and poorest groups in the country."[138] The Muslim asylum seekers mentioned above have recently escaped the reality of "bloodshed" around them only to become "vulnerable to the anti-refugee mood and policies" on arrival in Britain. Being Muslim they are doubly vulnerable, it could be argued. Thirdly, as seen in France, a secularist blind eye of the state to ethnic as well as religious differences can serve to exacerbate social divisions. Modood argues:

> The French approach of ignoring racial, ethnic and religious identities does not mean that they, or the related problems of exclusion, alienation and fragmentation, vanish. They are likely, on the contrary, to become more radical; and so the French may actually be creating the unravelling of the republic that they fear.[139]

In the face of all these facts it would be sensible for the government to yield to some British Muslim demands. Policies should "give parity to Islam with other religions, for instance in the funding of state schools:"[140] "In England and Wales over a third of state-maintained primary and a sixth of secondary schools are […] run by a religious group."[141] The government should extend the number of Muslim schools – so far four in contrast to several thousand Anglican and Catholic schools[142] – to give Muslims the same ratio of choice as Anglicans and Catholics to send their children to a school which represents their faith. This does not equal a demand to segregate all school children according to their religion. Merely, as in Britain religion currently enjoys "legitimacy as a public institutional presence" this legitimacy should extend to all faiths.[143] All the same, more than 50 per cent of state-funded primary education and more than 80 per cent of secondary education would remain in non-faith schools. This is a specific example of the necessary policy-changes required to ensure that "British institutions […] fairly represent not only ethnic minorities and women, but religious minorities, too."[144] The argument of this thesis is that, once these policies are implanted, aspects such as "forced marriages" or the "unacceptable views of some Muslim spokespeople, for instance on gender issues" can be justly criticised as a violation of human rights or British law without appearing to oppose "Muslim identity itself."[145]

The above argument is supported by the real views held by British Muslims many of whom would not advocate forced marriages or the oppression of women.

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[138] Modood, 104.
[139] Modood, 113.
[140] Spencer, 13.
[141] Modood, 107.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Spencer, 13.
[145] Spencer, 13.

Fauzia Ahmad discovered in her interviews of British Muslims regarding the media coverage of September 11 that

> Muslim men and women in this sample condemned the treatment of women in Afghanistan under the Taliban equally strongly, both stressing how the subjugation of women derived from distorted interpretations of Islamic teachings, not from Islam itself.[146]

It also has to be emphasised that the "North Indian Islam" of the parents of more radical South Asian Muslims in Britain "tended to be relatively relaxed with veiling and purdah largely abandoned." The children now often wear "burqas, veils, North African-style headscarves" and "beards."[147] This development for instance bewilders Nazneen and enrages Chanu in *Brick Lane*. (BL, 279, 302, 265)

But particularly moderate British Muslims are unhappy about the Muslim image in the media and the language used in relation to Muslims. They deplore the media's post-September 11 focus on the violent, "extremist, pro-Taliban, male-dominated" Muslim minority. These "hotheads" do not represent the "mainstream Muslim majority" who "clearly condemned […] giving such groups the oxygen of publicity."[148] Therefore, they object to the assignation of "collective responsibility" for the attacks to Islam and to the demand by the media and politicians, among them Baroness Thatcher, to "prove their loyalty to the British state."[149]

They also underline the media's failure to convince its consumers that the war on terror was not aimed at Islam in general. Fauzia Ahmad's respondents mainly "saw government spin (that this [bombing of Afghanistan] was not a 'war on Islam') as contradicting foreign policy – a problem that, in their view, the media was not capable of exploring or challenging." [150] In this respect Muslim resentment is further aggravated by a more general perception that Muslims only received attention "when 'bad news' stories" were on the agenda,[151] exemplified by little public interest in Islam between the "Rushdie affair" and "9/11."[152]

British Muslims are additionally grieved by the media's perpetuation of stereotypes about women and Islam. The moderate Muslims interviewed by Fauzia Ahmad saw this malpractice as founded on the ignorance of journalists and the desire to exploit the subject politically, pointing out that

> far more articles and news reports had been written about Muslim women than by them. Some women perceive a loss of 'control' over their own image and self-definition. It was also felt

[146] Ahmad, 979.
[147] Werbner, 906.
[148] Ahmad, 963.
[149] Ahmad, 979, 963.
[150] Ahmad, 975.
[151] Ahmad, 976.
[152] Ibid.

> that the situation of women in Afghanistan had been exploited by the US and UK governments to justify military action and gain support, especially from women.[153]

Considering the above grievances and the power of the media as "the public's main source of information" it is only logical that moderate Muslims should feel that the media had a large share in the increase in racist attacks they suffered subsequent to September 11. Indications for this were that "much of the backlash was perpetuated not by right-wing extremists but by ordinary citizens." [154] The media forged a link between attacks and Islam "by cutting to images of Muslims praying in mosques etc. which led to attacks on Muslim people, organisations and even Sikhs."[155] Linked to this grievance about the media's power in the misrepresentation of Muslims is the moderate Muslims' concern about the terminology used to refer to Muslims.

One of Ahmad's interviewees puts the connection made between terrorism and Islam into a linguistic context to highlight the problem: "For many people the two are now well and truly equated with one another – Islam equals terrorism, so whether you use one word or the other doesn't matter."[156] What also frustrated Ahmad's respondents was the inherent implication of the whole *Ummah* in the label 'Islamic terrorist'. They pointed out that "the language" employed in the description of "individuals or groups" was "inconsistent. For example 'IRA terrorist' as opposed to 'Catholic terrorist', 'Nazi/fascist terrorist' as opposed to 'Christian terrorist'."[157] Such language use does not help to alleviate the tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims in Britain. It does not promote a greater understanding of Islam, and it makes people feel that Muslims are the lethal enemy within.

Counteracting the negative and stereotyped media image of Muslims and the language employed in the discourse about Muslims with policies is complicated by the freedoms of expression and the press. Still, this thesis does not advocate an encroachment on these principles *per se*. Governments and politicians could however be more careful and nuanced in their discourses about Muslims so that the media pick up a different language. They could also voice the above grievances publicly and try to establish a norm against clichéd discourses about Muslims. If the media have attempted to find fault with Islam in order to defend the bombing of Afghanistan they are clearly susceptible, and to some extent deferent, to the

[153] Ahmad, 980.
[154] Ahmad, 978.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ahmad, 975
[157] Ahmad, 977.

government line. The policies suggested above to counteract religious discrimination and embrace multiculturalism, if openly and forcefully advocated, might do their bit to reinforce such a norm.

More specifically, new UK legislation against religious discrimination in employment might with time fill the ranks of the media with more Muslims which will help to make media coverage on Islam more subtle and reflected. This could passively and over time improve the representation of Muslims in the media. But a more active and quick improvement could be provided in the case of the BBC. Tariq Modood observes:

> the BBC currently believes it is of political importance to review and improve its personnel practices and its output of programmes, including its on-screen 'representation' of the British population, by making provision for and winning the confidence of, say, women, ethnic groups and young people.[158]

He argues that religious groups should find equal consideration in this "review." The BBC should take this advice on board, since also the Runnymede Trust denounces the urgency of tackling "institutional racism" in the "the arts and media sectors." [159] According to the Trust's experts these sectors have the potential to "make[…] a strong stand against racism."[160]

2.3.5 Policies to prevent the disaffection drawing the young to Islamism

The above policies should be sufficient to appease moderate British Muslims and welcome them into the British polity. But what about the young aggressive fundamentalists? This thesis has already outlined a lot of policies which could decrease their anger. A more affirmative multiculturalism on behalf of the British government including the creation of a multicultural national identity would give all citizens a greater feeling of belonging to Britain. (2.1.3) This could have positive effects on young immigrants too who are driven to violence and radical ideas by a sense of exclusion. Chapter 2 has suggested further helpful measures. (2.2.4) The informed public debate about the benefits outweighing the costs of immigration and ongoing publicly funded research documenting the developments in the area of immigration would decrease unfounded and displaced prejudices as Millat seems to encounter them all around him. (WT, 234) Regeneration and revitalisation of the deprived areas in which many immigrants live would make the young 'hotheads' feel

[158] Modood, 108.
[159] Runnymede Trust, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: The Parekh Report* (London: Profile Books, 2000) xix.
[160] Runnymede Trust, xviii.

less excluded and forgotten by society. It might also decrease the number of racist attacks from white disaffected working-class youths who are the immigrants' fellow-sufferers in these areas. The removal of the racist bias in the UK's citizenship and immigration policy would in time lessen the racism of British society towards 'visible minorities'. Tougher anti-discrimination legislation will bring down the levels of overt racism experienced by immigrants which serves to enrage the young extremists.

The current chapter has also included some measures which might lessen young fundamentalists' anger or impact. (2.3.4) For example, more state-funding for Islamic schools would actually fulfil one of the points on Riaz's agenda (BA, 241) and undermine the logic with which he turns against Western "liberal" society. (BA, 184) Equal institutional representation of Muslims, especially in the media, would provide Millat with the "face" and the "voice" in Britain he misses. (WT, 234) It would peacefully ensure Muslims their "mark in this bloody country," (WT, 295) which Millat seeks to attain by means of KEVIN's violent "direct action." (WT, 445) Likewise, if moderate Muslims were more represented in the media they might caution their employers against "giving" too much "oxygen of publicity" to extremists. The appearance on television makes those violent minorities feel powerful and menacing to that Western society which they wish to harm. This sense of importance makes them bigheaded and exaggeration about their numbers and potency only serves their purpose.[161] It might attract new recruits, and it upsets the Western sense of security. Millat was certainly spurred by the extreme Muslims on TV advocating the death of Salman Rushdie for his 'blasphemous' book. (WT, 234) Brownlow explains the two-way process in *The Black Album*: "For those TV people Riaz is a fascinating freak. They've never met anyone like him before." (BA, 243) This illustrates the media's "thirst" for "inflammatory sound-bites" denounced by Ahmad's respondents.[162] On the other hand, Brownlow points out that Riaz "can't wait." (BA, 243) Fundamentalists are intoxicated by the possibility of gaining publicity among their enemies. Consequently, the media should be prudent about giving them that publicity.

[161] In Fauzia Ahmad's article it is voiced repeatedly that the "numbers of British men fighting for the Taliban" were grossly exaggerated by extremists. Ahmad, 962, 963.
[162] Ahmad, 963.

2.3.6 Parental pressure as a strain on anti-Islamist policy-making

However, all these measures can only keep young immigrants away from Muslim extremism in cases where the cause of their turn towards it is purely instilled by the sense of exclusion, disorientation and non-acceptance in society as it is in Shahid's case. But many young extremists share another motivation, the wish to rebel which is often induced by an authoritarian upbringing. Pnina Werbner explains that across the British South Asian diaspora the older generation are "locked in the obsolete and reactionary customs and beliefs of the old country," "authoritarian," and characterised by "an obsession with honour and status."[163] This generation creates mostly acquiescent children for whom "marriage, kinship and religion continue to be endogamous, communally focused, trans-continental, and often, once young people establish new families, highly insular and nationally oriented towards the homeland."[164] It is not difficult to recognise in this description of a parental generation traits of the literary characters Samad (WT) and Alsana (WT) or Chanu (BL). Moreover, the above description of the second generation parallels the projection of how those characters would want their children to act.

Yet for the children such a role is in tension with the wider society they live in, and parental and community pressures require a suppression of all individual wishes or desires for reform which are not in accordance with the "customs and beliefs of the old country." This instils a desire for rebellion in the second generation. Werbner observes that South Asian Muslim youths often rebel by embracing a different, more extreme Islam from that of their parents. This Islam, in the current global climate and an increasingly Islamophobic Britain, has also become a "flag of political dissent."[165] To show their rebellion these Muslim youths have started "adopting diacritical ritual emblems and practices which act as boundary markers, setting them off from non-Muslim youngsters."[166] They also abstain from alcohol, popular music and "British youth and student clubbing culture."[167] Very clearly the attitudes and lifestyle of Riaz's group in *The Black Album* can be recognised in this description. Their version of Islam "open[s] up" a "space […] for young people to assert agency and autonomy" and "legitimise[s]" their "right to choose, to seek knowledge and stand up to their parents."[168]

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[163] Werbner, 901-903.
[164] Werbner, 903.
[165] Werbner, 906.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Werbner, 907.

In *White Teeth* Samad has very clear traditional ideas for his sons which he tries to impose on them in an authoritarian manner by sending one son to Bangladesh, without prior consultation with him or his mother, and constantly reproving the other for his lifestyle. Millat's Western habits and his Islamist activism come under equal attack from his father. The father's orthodoxy and authoritarianism are avenged by two rebelling sons, an atheist and a fundamentalist. Riaz generally "told his friends that if one's parents did wrong they should be thrown into the raging fire of hell." (BA, 109) In consequence Riaz encourages the girls and Hat to "make excuses to their parents" while they are on the East End mission. (BA, 126, 82) He also has no scruples about keeping Hat away from his accounting studies which his father deems more important than his involvement in the activities of Riaz's group. (BA, 91)

The parents' part in making integration in Britain difficult for their children has already been mentioned in Chapter 1. (2.1.1) Ultimately, the parent characters recognise this dilemma. Jorina observes at the end of *Brick Lane*: "But that is our problem – making lives for our children. They want to make them for themselves." (BL, 482-483) Alsana, too, is aware of it when she reminds Samad that Magid "is second generation – he was born here – naturally he will do things differently." (WT, 289) Samad also understands that "there is rebellion in" his sons which he attributes to their exposure to British society. (WT, 190) And yet the parent characters, as well as the real South Asian parents, usually do not have the heart to live up to their wise words – unlike Nazneen in *Brick Lane* who encourages her daughters to speak English and refrains from relocating to Bangladesh for their sake. Thus, they expose their children to an impossible pressure in the face of the wider society and culture around them which increases the likelihood of their going 'off the rails' or turning to extremism. Without parental support and tolerance of their children's difference government policies can only partially decrease the danger of young immigrants' fascination with Islamic extremism.

3 Conclusion

This thesis has shown that literature written by immigrants dealing with immigrant experience can provide valuable insights into the situation, the wishes and fears of immigrants in Britain. These insights are important for policy-making. Too many government policies have failed to take them on board resulting in a less than satisfactory approach to immigration by successive British governments. Clearly, there are, and have been, some insightful policy experts out there and this thesis has heavily drawn on their suggestions. However, few politicians and civil servants will have these experts' learned background in social psychology or immigration policy or their first-hand experience – Tariq Modood and Bhikhu Parekh for example come from a migrant background. It is important to make up for the experiential deficit many average citizens suffer if the processes these experts denounce and the policy measures they suggest are to be fully comprehended. This is where literature comes in. It can supplement the missing experiential background which has to inform good policy-making.

This capacity is limited to fiction written by immigrants dealing with immigrant experience and also to authors who are ready to draw on their own experience and to share it. Zadie Smith sees a good novel as an "intimation" of the "experience of the world through a consciousness other than our own."[169] Her novel *White Teeth* has helped the attentive reader to imagine existence from the perspective of immigrants living in north-west London, just as Graham Greene's fiction transmits the experience of "tak[ing] religious faith as seriously as" its author did.[170] Hanif Kureishi also wants to process his experience of racism and make it available to others through his books.[171] The sympathetic character Shahid in his novel *The Black Album* is adamant that "writers try to explain genocide and that kind of thing" and that "[n]ovels are a picture of life" and "more than entertainment."[172] These convictions and the fact that the authors are themselves trying to find answers through writing make the depiction of immigrant plights so profound and rich in the novels consulted. Zadie Smith writes to "convince" herself and her readers "of the

[169] Zadie Smith, "Fail better," *Guardian Unlimited*, 13 January 2007, http://www.guardian.co.uk. Last viewed 23 January 2007.
[170] Ibid.
[171] "Hanif Kureishi ", *Guardian Unlimited*, http://books.guardian.co.uk/authors/author/0,,-100,00.html. Last viewed 23 January 2007. See 1 Introduction.
[172] Hanif Kureishi, The Black Album (London: Faber and Faber, 2003 [1995]) 21.

inviolable reality of other people."[173] Kureishi wrote *The Black Album* to find out "why they wanted to kill" his friend Salman Rushdie.[174]

The type of novels consulted for this thesis enable the normal citizen to find the awareness and the empathy required to understand the situation of immigrants in Britain without requiring that citizen to be an immigrant, a depth psychologist, or an expert on immigration policy. These novels make it possible to figure out where policy changes are required and in which direction they should go. The fictional framework also makes it possible to speculate whether a certain policy would make a difference to the situation of the immigrant characters depicted. This is what this thesis has done. It has assembled information on a certain topic from the novels selected, established the causes and effects of the situation described, and attempted to conclude what could ameliorate the situation. To remain realistic and understand the present state of legislation it has then looked to policy experts for specific policy suggestions which could redress the situation depicted by the novels. At this point striking parallels often became apparent between the fictional and the real situation of immigrants as established through surveys, Census data and other empirical research.

These coincidences underline the defensibility of the project of this thesis. Literature has served as a shortcut to the policies, by-passing the lengthy process of empirical research. This does not retract from the necessity of ongoing empirical research for policy-making. On the contrary, it is vital in order to back up government policy and ensure it is in line with, and continually adjusted to, the changing needs of Britain's immigrant population. At the same time, empirical research and academic discourses about immigration policy can fail to inspire the imagination and evoke the empathy required to understand the situation of immigrants and the necessity for certain policies. This is where literature has a vital role to play. Unlike Canada and Australia, Britain has not yet implanted most of the policies recommended in this thesis. Most of the policy experts referred to here have been largely ignored. Literature through its capacity to create empathy can bridge this chasm between good theoretical solutions and bad practice at executive level if it loses its stigma of being considered merely as entertainment, fantasy and the "ravings of an individual imagination." (BA, 184)

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[173] Zadie Smith, "Read better," *Guardian Unlimited*, 20 January 2007, http://www.guardian.co.uk. Last viewed 23 January 2007.
[174] *Guardian Unlimited*, "Hanif Kureishi ", http://books.guardian.co.uk/authors/author/0,,-100,00.html. Last viewed 23 January 2007.

In addition, the authors and books remain in the public domain where they contribute to the immigration debate and create a little empathy every day for Britain's immigrant population. As they are read voluntarily and for pleasure, they have a greater capacity to reach people than hard social science literature or articles about immigration in broadsheet newspapers. Hopefully, they will contribute to the "deprovincialisation" of the British people. This term refers to the phenomenon that "persons who have close friends from groups which are different from their own […] are also more open to other minority groups and are less prejudiced."[175] The novels have largely shown the power of friendship and attraction in bridging boundaries of external and cultural differences and prejudice.[176] In their own way and to an extent, the novels can do something to deprovincialise their readers, making up for the possible lack of interethnic friendships. At the very least, politicians involved in the making of immigration policy would do well to read them attentively.

The thesis has focused on three particular topical aspects of the situation of immigrants in Britain: the worrying levels of spatial segregation in the capital and elsewhere, the complex effects of the experience of racism on immigrants, and the contemporaneous presence of moderate and fundamentalist Muslims in Britain. It has drawn the following conclusions from the four novels. The first chapter "Segregation: 'I hardly left these few streets'" has uncovered two types of segregation. Firstly, the concentration of immigrants in mixed neighbourhoods makes them feel safer from racist violence. There are more ways to belong in an area characterised by diversity. White British hegemony is to some extent collapsed in these areas, and there is a lot of interaction between immigrants and Britons. Thus, such areas can be seen as a step further in the development of a multicultural society. Secondly, in areas with a high concentration of immigrants from one particular ethnic minority immigrants often turn inward. Interaction with white Britons is not often necessary. Thus, the only interethnic encounters are often racist attacks and harassment, since in these poor areas immigrants and poor Britons compete for resources. The members of the ethnic minority never develop an attachment to the

[175] Zig Layton Henry and Czarina Wilpert, *Discrimination, racism and citizenship: inclusion and exclusion in Britain and Germany* (London: Anglo-German Foundation, 1994) 11.
[176] i.e. the initial relationship between Olive and Peter and Olive's friendship with Maggie; (NN) Vivien's friendship with Carol and her relationship with Eddie; (NN) the relationship between Shahid and Deedee Osgood; (BA) Irie and her "gaggle of white friends"; (WT, 328) Irie and Joshua; (WT) Millat and his white girlfriends prior to his corruption by KEVIN; (WT) Magid and Marcus Chalfen (WT) etc.

host country, only to their own people. But through their social exclusion drugs and violence thrive in these areas.

The second chapter "Scars of Racism: 'Everyone can see my crime'" has focused on ways in which the experience of racism can affect and change immigrants. The direct experience of racism or the wider perception of a racist society can have very different effects. Some immigrants adopt the society's racism against their own kind. Others try desperately to assimilate into the host society and hide their difference as much as possible to avoid conflict. A third phenomenon are immigrants who in the face of stark experiences of racism withdraw from the host society. This can manifest itself in social exclusion, in the idealisation of the 'home' country, or in the embrace of extreme opposition to, and violence against, the host society.

The third chapter "Muslims and Islamists: 'Insisting on their Identity'" has examined the dissatisfaction of moderate as well as extremist Muslims with British society. Moderate Muslims are as disparate as British Christians in their obedience to the laws of their religion, but resent the wider society's disrespect towards their religion which is part of their cultural identity. Young fundamentalist Muslims are often stirred by the experience of racism and the resulting anger to rebel against the host society. They are drawn to fundamentalist groups by the desire to belong to a group uniting against that racist society. The deprived living conditions of their communities additionally turn them against the host country. They disapprove of Western capitalist culture and society as well as of Western-instilled global inequalities. Finally, they desire to impose order on society through religion. Anger and disaffection have made them ready to use violence. Their Islamism is more likely to be a rebellion against, than an effect of, their upbringing.

The policies recommended by this thesis could be subsumed under the heading of a more decided and forceful commitment to multiculturalism than Britain has hitherto shown. They include the creation of a multicultural national identity entailing the institution of multiculturalism legislation. The initiation of an informed public debate outlining the real benefits and costs of immigration is important to win public support and lessen public anxiety about the issue. It has to be accompanied by investment in ongoing research into immigration to Britain. Politicians should also refrain from mobilising latent anti-immigrant feeling to gain popularity. Revitalisation and regeneration of deprived urban areas where immigrants and poor Britons compete for resources need to be furthered. British policies in the area of citizenship and immigration control should be reformulated so that their racist bias is

removed. The extension of existing anti-discrimination legislation is urgently required. For example penalties should become tougher, and it should be made applicable to the police. Islam should also receive the same treatment as other religions with respect to representation in British institutions. Government should perpetuate less clichéd and more nuanced discourses about Islam to influence its image in the media and the terminology used in relation to it. More generally, an eye has to be kept out for inconsistencies. Where policies contradict each other the suspicion of the public at large, and of the immigrant population in particular, will be raised. This will frustrate the success of the policies as well as public trust in the government. But while politics are essential for the improvement of the situation of immigrants in Britain the first generation of immigrants also has a major duty towards their offspring. They must refrain from putting too much pressure on their British-born children to replicate the parents' example, adopt the parents' views, or fulfil the parents' plans for their future. Otherwise, the children, trapped between their parents' ideas and wishes and the everyday exposure to different concepts, are unlikely ever to find their secure place in British society. They will, to use Andrea Levy's words, remain "never far from nowhere."

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Statutory Declaration

I hereby declare that I have written this thesis on my own, without anyone else's help. I have also, to the best of my knowledge, acknowledged the sources of all passages and ideas used, and have placed in quotation marks all quotes used verbatim. I have used no other sources or aids than those indicated.

Bettina von Staden, Munich, 27 February 2007.