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“I’m British But ...”—Explorations of Identity by Three Postcolonial British Women Artists¹

In an age when metropolitan centres such as London, New York, Tokyo or Paris offer everything from Chinese and Samoan rap to Finnish tango bands, and from Chinese Cuban to Cambodian Swiss cuisine, not to mention popular ethnic crossovers in fashion, design, and the entertainment industry, amazement at the afore-mentioned—once startling—juxtapositions has become rare. Sitting in a small arthouse cinema in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the early nineteen-nineties, however, I was intrigued by the sudden confrontation with four young South Asians on the screen talking about their lives and discussing their perceptions of themselves and the term “Britishness” in broad Welsh, Scottish and even Northern Irish accents. Gurinder Chadha’s documentary “I’m British But ...,” produced for the British Film Institute in 1989 (from which I’ve borrowed the title for this article) impressively showed that globalisation has changed the political, economic and socio-cultural fabric of societies worldwide. These changes, unwelcome as they may be for some, are not a choice but a reality.² As the BBC’s Director-General Greg Dyke said in his pledge of the BBC’s commitment to diversity at the *Race in the Media Awards* in April 2000, “For young people today British culture is already diverse,

heterogeneous, multi-ethnic, multi-everything. For them multiculturalism is not about political correctness but simply a part of the furniture of their everyday lives.”³

Indeed, no culture has ever been static but has always evolved in response to contact. Thus, even though geographically more isolated than other European states, Britain’s population was likewise “forged from successive historical migrations.”⁴ As Gautam Dasgupta reminds us, “who is not, and has never been, a product of multiple cultures? Perhaps more so than ever before in the history of the world, we are all intercultural selves.”⁵ What has changed, of course, is the pace and the size of the movement of people, goods, and values. Inevitably, such sudden and rapid transformations can cause anxieties within parts of society. Just as the notion of a fixed English identity in the nineteenth century was a reaction to the enormous changes of metropolitan and colonial societies, today’s transformations can result in new forms of nationalism and racism.⁶

Thus Dyke’s statement about multiculturalism being accepted as part of everyday life does not apply to all segments of British society. Even though Jeremy Paxman, in his portrait of the English,⁷ claims that they always had a very clear sense of their own identity, above all in contrast to the Germans, both countries have shared an increasing interest in defining their national identity. Hardly a week goes by without a new book, newspaper article, radio survey or public discussion of what it means to be British, German, or European for that matter. From Norman Davies’ *The Isles: A History* (1999) and Julian Barnes’ satire *England, England* (1998) to an ironic essay by Timothy Garton Ash announcing “Europe? No thank you, we’re British” (2001), to the rather farcical German *Leitkultur*-debate, renewed attempts are being made to come to terms with what Tony Blair’s government officially proclaims to be a multicultural society.⁸

In view of the undeniably multi-ethnic nature of society on the one hand, and the renewed national, xenophobic, and racist tendencies (not only in Britain) on the other, this article aims to explore the lives and works of three contemporary British women artists of different national and cultural heritage and the way they perceive themselves in terms of their British, bicultural and/or postcolonial identity. By examining if, and how, this finds expression in the work of the Pakistani writer and playwright Rukhsana Ahmad, the Nigerian sculptor Sokari Douglas Camp, and the Indian British writer and actress Meera Syal, I will also address questions about the convergence of ethnic, gender, and class identities.

But why these artists? First of all, it should be noted that trying to define any specific characteristics of any given group can be misleading and dangerous and any critic of multi-ethnic literature and art knows only too well that, as Paul Lauter puts it, “neither separation nor integration provide wholly satisfactory methods for representing or studying marginalized cultures.”⁹ The Asian-American literary critic Shirley Geok-lin Lim aptly describes this classic catch-22 situation as follows: on the one hand Lim argues that she doesn’t want to be seen as “different, as exotic and frozen in a geographical mythology;” on the other, she writes, “should you proceed to treat me as if I were not different, as if my historical origin has not given to me a unique destiny and character, I would also accuse you of provincialism, of an inability to distinguish between cultures.”¹⁰ So, to be sure, none of these women artists, born and raised in and outside Britain and with markedly different historical, cultural and socio-political biographies can be seen as representing the experience of whole groups of people. This would result in a purely sociological reading, denying the works their literary value and at the same time disregarding the heterogeneity within communities because, as Stuart Hall has observed, “We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about ‘one experience, one

identity'....Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories...identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.”¹¹

Nevertheless, within the context of this article, there are several characteristics which are shared by all three artists. First, their biographies are marked by the experience of cultural alienation whether through migration, immigration, or a bicultural upbringing. Second, these experiences are reflected and dealt with in their work. And third, their lives and works are marked by a number of attempts to escape any predetermined cultural, gender or social roles imposed on them. Whether they, like Ahmad, grew up in the restrictive environment of traditional Pakistan, as a member of the Kalabari people in the Eastern Niger Delta in Camp's case, or, like Syal, in the often stifling atmosphere of a small West Midlands village during the nineteen-sixties, their explorations of their racial, gender, and class identities go beyond binary theories of absolute difference or absolute universality. It could be argued, of course, that viewed historically these experiences are nothing out of the ordinary. As Jan Nederveen Pieterse has shown, “the West” has been profoundly shaped by, as well as borrowed from, those cultures it used to call “primitive.”¹² Thus the writer Zulfikar Ghose, born in Pakistan, brought up in Bombay and now living in the United States, declares:

I've had no more culture contact, as you call it, or language contact than did Chaucer who travelled to Europe and took back Italian forms and created a new English poetry. Shakespeare, Dryden, Byron, Browning—who is there of any significance who did not raid other cultures to enrich his own, who did not take what knowledge that was currently available from wherever he could find it and add it as one more facet to the millions that already constituted his imagination?...Therefore this talk about the importance of the multicultural background that supposedly makes some Commonwealth writers so remarkable is utterly

inconsequential. The only thing of consequence is the quality of the mind of the writer.¹³

At the same time, however, every writer inevitably speaks from a specific historical, socio-cultural position which is influential on her/his work. Certain similar conditions, generated by similar experiences, in turn lead to the possibility of theorising, as Salman Rushdie puts it,

common factors between writers from these societies—poor countries, or deprived minorities in powerful countries—and to say that much of what is new in world literature comes from this group...a “real” theory, bounded by frontiers which are neither political nor linguistic but imaginative.¹⁴

For a long time discourses on the changed notions of “Britishness” and Britain as a multicultural society in regard to its immigrant population have been dominated by what Paul Gilroy describes as the idea of blacks as a series of problems and their definition as forever victims.¹⁵ In a similar vein, Chandra Talpade Mohanty has pointed to the tendency of critics to automatically classify non-white women as victims, regardless of their heterogeneous backgrounds.¹⁶ Recently the victimisation of certain communities has partly given way to a “postmodern fetishization of otherness”¹⁷ which Hall partly attributes to a kind of “migration envy,” that places migrants and their experiences in a key position when dealing with postmodern identities. Hall, who has long rejected the idea of a unified, fixed and essential identity, writes:

Now that, in the postmodern age, you all feel so dispersed, I become centered. What I’ve thought of as dispersed and fragmented comes, paradoxically, to be *the* representative modern experience!...I’ve been puzzled by the fact that young black people in London today are marginalized, fragmented, unenfranchized,

disadvantaged, and dispersed. And yet, they look as if they own the territory....I do feel a sense of—dare I say—envy surrounding them. Envy is a funny thing for the British to feel at this moment in time—to want to be black!¹⁸

Zygmunt Bauman explains that whereas the problem in modern times was how to stabilise one's identity, postmodern times demand the opposite: a continuous attempt at avoiding fixation. In the postmodern¹⁹ or poststructuralist sense, identities are unstable, fragmented and fluid and an important prerequisite for "postmodern life strategies" developed for coping in a world of vanishing jobs-for-life, the fragmentation of time into self-contained episodes, and non-permanent relationships.²⁰ As David Harvey already pointed out in 1989, "the preoccupation with identity, with personal and collective roots, has become far more pervasive since the early seventies because of widespread insecurity in labour markets."²¹ The reconceptualization of identity is closely connected to the economic, cultural and social transformations over the past three decades, resulting in our current post-industrial society.²² Furthermore, as Robert Boccock points out, "consumer goods have become a crucial area for the construction of meanings, identities, gender roles, in post-modern capitalism."²³

One example of the nexus of identity, consumption and the "envy" of black youth, which Hall detected, can be found in the appropriation of (pop-)cultural references across racial lines. As Peter Christenson and Donald Roberts explain: "Of all the current popular music styles, the rap/hip hop culture most defines the pop cultural cutting edge, thus providing adolescents concerned with 'coolness' and peer status much crucial information on subjects such as the latest slang and the most recent trends in dance and fashion."²⁴ At the same time, however, Sunaina Maira, drawing on her research on second-generation Indian American youth in New York and their appropriation of hip-

hop culture, points out the performative nature of these subcultures and “cultural crossings” and emphasises the fact that these identity negotiations do not result in a “wider systematic change.”²⁵ With similar caution regarding the celebration of hybrid and unstable identities, Heinz Antor notes:

Postcolonial resistance theorists and practitioners...are worried by the consequences they see....If the subject is such a decentred and dispersed one as postmodernists try to make us believe, they ask, how then can it resist the *status quo* and contribute to an improvement of the situation in the postcolonial world? Does the poststructuralist dynamic re-interpretation of identity preclude intentionality and political activity?...Postmodernism, in such a view, becomes a hegemonic practice that is to be rejected as a dangerous trap into which critics such as Bhabha and Spivak regrettably have already fallen....How do we take sides in such disputes? The answer is that we don't.²⁶

On the whole, both discourses refer mainly to a male migrant's position. The three women artists discussed here provide us with yet another, different, perspective of identity formation within a globalised, metropolitan environment (in this case London). By pursuing the question of a potential central experience shared by non-white women in a metropolitan context they challenge traditional notions of concepts such as “multiculturalism,” “ethnicity” and “hybridity” and their supposed virtues, as well as the outmoded notion of a migrant's identity as “being caught between two worlds.” Based on my argument that notions of identity, and the promotion of an uncritical concept of hybridity²⁷—as well as the seemingly unbridgeable differences between different cultural identities—fall short of accounting for present day diversity as it is lived, I wish to show how Ahmad, Camp and Syal perceive, construct and deconstruct modes of identity by presenting characters, scenarios and images where a migrant identity neither produces an automatic dilemma nor is seen as entirely beneficial. References to the artists' own,

individual experiences will also be drawn from the interviews I conducted with Ahmad and Camp in London in the spring of 1999.

Ahmad describes herself as a “British-based South Asian writer. That’s my cop out line. Or I might say I’m a writer of Pakistani origin living in London.”²⁸ Camp explains:

I don’t really feel like a Londoner. I lived here nearly twenty years. I feel very much part of South East London. I really like the idea of being Kalabari which is a minuscule tribe in Nigeria, and I like the idea of coming from a bad part of London. It’s not the same as being called a New Yorker. We haven’t got to that kind of unity in London yet. The funny thing is that most white people in this country have umpteen heritages, you know, Poland, Austria, France, Germany. I think white people are more mixed than anybody. I mean, I can actually name my two heritages. But it is very funny to be called British because most of the time I’m not accepted.²⁹

Even though negotiations of different perceptions of national identity clearly take place, racial identity cannot simply be treated as another component of a self-chosen, multifaceted identity. As Robert Miles points out, “genetics demonstrated that ‘race,’ as defined by scientists from the late eighteenth century, had no scientifically verifiable referent,” from which he concludes that “races” are to be seen as “socially imagined” and not as “biological realities.”³⁰ Nevertheless, as Ania Loomba reminds us, although “racial classification may be at several levels a ‘delusion’ and a myth,...it is all too real in its pernicious social effects.”³¹ Similarly, the Asian-American literary scholars Shirley Geok-Lin Lim and Amy Ling point out that the concept of a “voluntary or multiple-choice ethnicity” cannot simply be applied to non-white people. Referring to the internment of Japanese-American citizens in the United States in 1942, they state that “ethnicity as a marker of difference—containing already and always the possibility of

sociopolitical content (as in discriminatory acts, violence, prejudices, unequal treatment, whether positive or negative, enacted legislation and so on)—was and remains an active cultural yeast, virus if you will, in American civilization.”³² In the same vein Bonnie TuSmith explains:

What got lost in the shuffle was the truism that ‘ethnicity is often a matter of choice for whites;’ with nonwhites, however, this was not possible, because their skin color, hair texture, and stature made them easily recognizable ... While ethnicity might prove a passing phase for the white population in America, it is here to stay for the easily identifiable other.³³

Jessika Ter Wal and Maykel Verkuyten observe that although in most countries racism “is a recurrent and significant social fact,” its complex nature when linked with particular socio-historical and cultural contexts, involving a series of conceptualisations and overlapping but different concepts such as xenophobia, ethnicity, and stereotyping, does not at all lend itself to any clear solutions.³⁴ Thus, state responses to racism and racist violence differ accordingly. In a comparison of these responses in postwar Britain, France and the Netherlands, Rob Witte identified four phases, ranging from the denial of racist violence, to the perception of racial violence as a social problem, to its appearance on the public agenda, and finally on the formal agenda. Despite frequent incidents of racist violence in all three countries, for a long time these were not seen as social problems. Thus in Britain the “Paki-bashing” of the early seventies, for example, was “explained” with reference to frustrated and bored young men under the influence of alcohol, and racist motives were denied (uncomfortable parallels to the defence of the suspects in the Stephen Lawrence case come to mind). The denial of racism as an inextricable part of British (and other) societies stems partly from their self-perception as

“democratic, ‘civilised,’ open and non-racist” societies cultivated even in times of colonisation and decolonisation and—particularly in the case of Britain—manifested through its victory over the fascist states during the Second World War.³⁵ Minority and anti-racist organisations (such as the British *Institute of Race Relations*) eventually managed to draw attention to these racist incidents as social problems. Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham observe that the increasing politicisation of migration over the last two decades has also been followed by an increasing mobilisation of xenophobic as well as anti-racist groups.³⁶ In Britain these racist and anti-racist demonstrations clashed most violently during the late seventies and early eighties (for example, the Southall and Brixton riots) and the governmental response involved stronger migration controls, on the one hand, and the implementation of anti-discrimination laws, on the other. According to Witte the subsequent entrance of racist violence on the public and, later, on the formal agenda resulted in a series of attempts by the state to explain racist violence. Whereas the negative connotations of the term “race” in France and the Netherlands contributed to its demise in the official rhetoric, this has not been the case in Britain:

In Britain, specific groups of people of immigrant origin were perceived as belonging to “a different race.” Relations between the specific immigrant communities and the mainstream white British communities were perceived as “race relations”....Implicit in this discourse is the notion that “They” and “We” might have good or bad relations, but remain “different by nature.” In this discourse, “racial discrimination” could be combated by legislative measures, but “natural differences” could not.³⁷

Critics such as Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Avtar Brah, and Tariq Modood have initiated and advanced debates concerning new approaches to and reconceptualisations of issues of race, ethnicity, and diaspora. In terms of actual political change, however, Yasmin

Alibhai-Brown calls Gordon Brown's vision of "a multi-ethnic and multinational Britain" as nothing more than "almost entirely rhetorical," and she goes on to say that

Racism is a brutal, live beast with teeth....Discrimination, racial hatreds, deliberate and unconscious exclusion are the reality.... Hardly anyone has had the foresight to see, as Bhikhu Parekh describes, that diverse immigrants "bring in new sources of energy, break up the class system, and make [Britain] a culturally rich and lively society."³⁸

Thus despite the celebration of multicultural Britain and its hybrid identities, the exposition of different levels of racism features strongly, both overtly and covertly, in the lives and the works of these artists. Ahmad recalls her own experience upon newly arriving in London:

I felt almost compelled to wear trousers and look less Pakistani. I really did not want to stand out. It really bothered me and if somebody got abusive on the road—and people do—I felt really distressed. I think I felt very burdened the moment I would arrive at Heathrow airport. And I would show them my passport to say, "See, I'm a British subject, but I'm different."³⁹

Camp remarks on her skin colour as the "prime signifier of racial identity:"⁴⁰

Wherever I go here, I stand out. And it's not just a feeling, it's real. [For example] I love running and I get out. I'm in the countryside and the countryside is lovely and I run out of the bushes and there's some poor white couple and they get such a look of fear on their face and you think, "I'm sure if I was a white person running they'd just say hello. But because I'm a black person they go 'Oh, shock.'" I'd rather not have that, but it can't be helped. Maybe that's why I keep up with my heritage so much. Because fancy just being a shock. That doesn't tell you anything about a person.⁴¹

Syal remembers that her early acting ambitions were thwarted by the fact that in auditions she was usually asked to portray the stereotypical roles reserved for actresses and actors of South Asian descent: victims of arranged marriages, downtrodden shopkeepers' wives or harassed NHS doctors.⁴² In view of these statements it can be assumed that the experience of xenophobia and racism is a common experience and influence on the work of all three artists. Paradoxically, however, "racism violates selectively," as Pnina Werbner explains (and as Ahmad's and Camp's experiences actually illustrate): "blacks are subjected to more police harassment, immigration controls affect Asians more; black women are doubly marginalised."⁴³ This differentialist treatment signalled a change in the way the New Right has been trying to enforce their own vision of "Englishness" onto the different communities by favouring those who will assimilate completely to those who won't. It also resulted in the questioning of a supposedly united anti-racist movement by activists themselves.⁴⁴

In his seminal essay "New Ethnicities," Hall identified two overlapping phases in the development of black cultural politics in postwar Britain: first, the coinage and use of the term "black" and "The Black Experience" in the seventies and eighties as a common political framework across inherently different ethnic communities, and second, the deconstruction of this same notion and its political effectiveness after the recognition, as Hall puts it, that "'black' is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category... and the recognition of the immense diversity and differentiation of the historical and cultural experience of black subjects."⁴⁵ John Solomos and Les Back summarise this development as an attempt "to navigate between essentialist notions of identity and the 'anything goes' pluralism of postmodern ideology."⁴⁶ Apart from the fact that there has been increasing competition for fewer resources⁴⁷ the ensuing rejection of the umbrella term "black" by British Asians and a potential further split into the different religious and

linguistic groups—for now gathered under the “Asian” label—can also be seen as a development analogous to the one undergone by American ethnic communities. Looking, for example, at the history of Asian-American political activism, Lisa Lowe remarks:

The articulation of an “Asian American identity” as an organizing tool has provided a concept of political unity that enables diverse Asian groups to understand unequal circumstances and histories as being related....To the extent that Asian American culture dynamically expands to include both internal critical dialogues about difference and the interrogation of dominant interpellations, however, Asian American culture can likewise be a site in which the “horizontal” affiliations with other groups can be imagined and realized. In this respect, a politics based exclusively on racial or ethnic identity willingly accepts the terms of the dominant logic that organizes the heterogeneous picture of differences into a binary schema of “the one” and “the other.”⁴⁸

Or, as the Nuyorican poet and playwright Jack Agüeros once put it even more pragmatically, “just as in New York cultures [are] mixing when they feel like it, when it’s convenient to them, and when it’s not, withdrawing again.”⁴⁹

In the same way race needs to be explored theoretically as well as through the prisms of individual communities. Recent black feminist theory understands not only race but class and gender as “simultaneous forces” all in need of historical contextualisation.⁵⁰ The latter point is particularly emphasized by Avtar Brah who argues that “the search for grand theories specifying the interconnections between racism, gender and class has been less than productive. They are best construed as historically contingent and context-specific relationships.”⁵¹ Thus I would like to examine how the three women artists portrayed in this article are further marked by gender and class. Apart from dealing with the racialisation of their gender and class identities within British society, both Ahmad and Camp also stress the role of women in their countries of origin. Ahmad explains:

I find it very hard to go back, partly because I've changed but more because Pakistan has changed. And I see it as a country that has been, if you like, completely turned inside out by all kinds of interests that have made life very hard for women and minorities. And I find the growing injustice over there extremely intolerable. I mean you have an oppression of women that's unbelievable.⁵²

Camp also acknowledges that "I don't feel strange when going back to Nigeria but I feel comatosed because, you know, our society is in such a state that women are maybe not meant to do as much as I've done in my lifetime."⁵³ Many critics have stressed the point that gender cuts across issues of race and class (that is, its "universal" quality).⁵⁴

However, again it is the simultaneity of forces such as race, class, religion, and gender, which not only constitutes people's identities but also divides them within groups and movements, be they motivated by a supposedly shared culture, religion, sexuality or gender (as illustrated, for example, by the necessary shift of "feminism" to "feminisms").⁵⁵ Regarding the different concerns of women worldwide, the issue of class identity is one of the key elements in separating, for example, Western feminists from postcolonial women's movements but also, almost more importantly, women within the same movement. I agree with Loomba who argues that "neither local nor global cultures, neither nation nor hybridity can be thought about seriously without considering how they are shaped by economic systems."⁵⁶

In regard to the class identities of the women artists discussed in this article I would like to draw attention to their own complex and ambivalent status within British, South Asian-/African-British and South Asian/African society. At first glance all three artists could be classified as what Werbner calls "multilingual gourmet tasters who travel among global cultures," arguing with Jonathan Friedman that "Third World diasporic

intellectuals” should be seen “as a special class of cosmopolitans” significantly different from transnational migrants whose life abroad is mainly determined by hard work, poverty and racism.⁵⁷ One example of Friedman’s claim that these cosmopolitan intellectuals “look elsewhere than the street for its realities,”⁵⁸ is the debate within African and Middle Eastern women’s organizations regarding the circumcision of women. Francoise Lionnet observes that even though some of the texts critical of this ritual practice are written by African and Middle Eastern women these are all Western-trained. Thus they are arguing “from the vantage point of the educated elite...and thus alienated from the common people who would neither read them nor sympathize with their views....There is...a dissymmetry of class and ideology between them and the uneducated masses.”⁵⁹

It is these ambivalences caused by their status as racialised British citizens, on the one hand, and educated, urban women from a non-western background, on the other, that are taken up by all three artists. Ahmad, for example, coming from a conservative middle-class Pakistani household, is acutely aware of the widening gap between the Pakistani elite and “the people on the street“ and has dealt with these problems extensively in her fictional as well as her journalistic work:

I think that class is a bigger divider than all those other things. There is in fact an emphasis on the universality, the so-called globalisation of culture which is in its own way quite enervating for indigenous cultures...completely insensitive to the poverty around. And Americans are doing that very consciously in the Third World....They have international executives for organisations like *City Bank* and *Bank of America*. And they employ Pakistanis but not the ordinary Pakistanis but those who’ve been educated abroad. So then you have this pocket of people whose income bears no relationship to the rest....The class barriers are kind of deepening and that wasn’t there before. Pakistan was socially a very mobile society.⁶⁰

Also, despite her being multilingual, Ahmad knows of and is affected by the dominance of literature written in English, compared to other literary traditions such as Urdu or even Punjabi:

My parents were both Punjabis but they taught us Urdu because Punjabi is considered rather a crude language, a peasant language....I love Urdu as a language. I grew up with a sense of shame about being a Punjabi. I think I've got over that. I mean, Punjabi is a very rich language. It's also an older language....We use a mixture of the languages at home. Actually, I think I dream in both languages....I write in English. I've written very little in Urdu. I've translated from Urdu.⁶¹

Ahmad's work is marked by her efforts to expose the intricate links between racial, religious, gender, and class identities. In her play *Song for a Sanctuary* produced by the Kali Theatre Company (founded in 1990 by Rita Wolf under the auspices of the pioneering Asian British theatre company Tara Arts to promote new writing by Asian women) she tackles the long-standing taboo of domestic violence among Asian families. According to Ahmad the play was sparked off by the murder of a Punjabi woman who was living in an Asian shelter (which happened to be close to Ahmad's home) by her own husband. Ahmad recalls that "there was a huge quarrel between residents and workers and it was an Asian refuge. And I think those two things troubled me greatly. So it became a play not directly about domestic violence but about differences within the refuge. I suppose I'm always preoccupied by that subject of divisions between people."⁶²

Divisions without and within families and communities are also the theme of her first novel, *The Hope Chest* (1996), in which she traces the journey of three girls with very different backgrounds from childhood to womanhood. Rani, who comes from a

wealthy Pakistani family, is sent to London for treatment of her anorexic depression. In the hospital she shares a room, and eventually her thoughts, with the English Ruth who has suffered a nervous breakdown. The second storyline evolves around Rani's childhood friend Reshma, whose parents belong to an underprivileged class of Pakistani farmers and whose life in Pakistan differs radically not only from Ruth's but also from Rani's. By moving between urban and rural Pakistan and London and by putting Rani's life in London side by side with Reshma's, Ahmad avoids the simplistic contrast between a Pakistan of supposed warmth and communal feeling and the grey and cold city life.

City fiction and poetry by older male migrants is often characterised by its nostalgic juxtaposition of an idealised home country and the hostile conditions in London or New York. From a British perspective this can be seen, for example, in the work of the writers and poets of the Caribbean Artists Movement (such as Sam Selvon, George Lamming, or Andrew Salkey) who emigrated from the Caribbean to Britain (mainly London) during the fifties and sixties. From an American perspective a similar development took place and can be detected, for instance, in the works of the writers and poets of the Nuyorican Movement (such as Jesús Colón, Tato Laviera or Miguel Algarín) who migrated from Puerto Rico to the USA (mainly New York) also during the fifties and sixties. In this context, the Chilean author and literary critic Juan Armando Epple explains that the first generation of migrants is often marked by a strong connection to their homeland whereas the second generation, "formed in that no-man's-land that is the space between the socio-cultural adherances, must conflictively construct its own territory of affirmation," and the third generation already "searches for, and shapes, a rootedness in the only real country in which their mode of social existence has been formed and defined."⁶³ Comparing the city fiction of older male migrants with that of

contemporary women writers such as Ahmad, however, differences do not mainly stem from assumed “generational gaps” but much more from their gendered experiences.

Thus Ahmad portrays the harsh conditions, especially for women, in both countries. As she remarks herself, “It’s not that the past is some kind of heaven that one must always return to or that the past identity is in some way richer.”⁶⁴ When, for example, a locust storm ruins Reshma’s family’s crop, “the family’s income and rations for the whole year,”⁶⁵ Reshma is forced to face the prospect of an arranged marriage at age thirteen for the pure survival of the family. The issue of an arranged marriage (a central element of traditional Muslim Pakistani culture) does not only determine Reshma’s but also Rani’s life. On her wedding night the groom only reluctantly approaches her bedroom, while thinking that “Rani’s person is so un-woman like! Almost as if she were sexless ... maintaining a bland sort of gender-less identity.”⁶⁶ But even though both are governed by the complex web of traditional Pakistani kinship relationships (“biradari”) strengthened primarily through the arranged marriage of first cousins,⁶⁷ their negotiations of the different aspects of their identity are also determined by their very different socio-economic situations. In the end, Rani can afford to pursue her ambitions as a painter and refuse a life as wife and mother by eventually throwing her husband out of her house. She realizes that, in contrast to Reshma who is thrown out of her husband’s house and is denied access to her children because she has had an abortion, “I will manage. This should be easy for me, easier than it is for any of them...at least I have a place of my own where I might begin to find myself.”⁶⁸ Felicity Hand observes that Ahmad seems less convincing in her portrayal of the western character Ruth and her search for identity.⁶⁹ Apart from a supposed “insider” knowledge, one reason for Ahmad’s stronger emphasis on Rani and Reshma’s personal development can be found in her general efforts to challenge common (that is, western) conceptions of Pakistani

female identity and values. By questioning western views of traditional kinship systems (for example, arranged marriage), the general victimisation of non-white women, or all too simple oppositions such as “the western woman versus the Asian woman,” Ahmad reminds us of the need to look more closely at each individual’s conditions and constraints.

Even though Sokari Douglas Camp has been travelling “among global cultures” (mainly Nigeria, the UK and the USA), her movements were not least dictated by socio-political circumstances such as the Nigerian Biafra War (1967-1970): “I was one of these colonial children that was mailed back and forth to school. So did I live in Nigeria? Quite honestly, not really. But then did I really live in England in boarding school? I’m not really sure about that either.”⁷⁰ Camp’s work and position as a Nigerian woman artist working in the rather male-dominated field of metal sculpture is another example of the linkage of identities and the transgression of boundaries. As she herself concedes, in Nigeria, “[t]hey’d probably think someone else did it. They wouldn’t know what to make of it. I mean banging metal and you’re a sophisticated woman? What’s the matter with you?”⁷¹ Not unlike Ahmad, Camp is strongly concerned with what she perceives to be western misconceptions of her Nigerian culture and influence. Since this concern is a central element of her work I would like to quote from the interview at length:

In terms of aesthetics I do have that feeling that I have to make myself clear to people. I came across this thing very early in my career. The people that I was fascinated by, the dance performances that I was fascinated by in the Delta, did things like kill dogs which is really bad form in England. So if I had wanted to discuss that in my work I have to put a zip on it just because no one would listen. They’d describe it as too outrageous. So I kept away from putting blood on the costumes....But when I worked with the *Museum of Mankind*...I decided to really just go for it....I feel that these are the places that have to be corrected, as far as I’m concerned, from misinterpreting and putting things backwards...it

was my opportunity to speak frankly, so I put blood on the costumes and I dressed the masks so you couldn't see the figure.... You know, people will know masks are things that go on the wall because umpteen books have been written about it and yet all these little children in Africa that want to aspire to be dancers or performers of any kind will always put it on their head. I think it's very important that I should correct the picture....It makes nonsense of my whole culture. It's like someone coming along and every time they shake your hand they say "good-bye" instead of "hello," so, of course, you are going to correct them.⁷²

Her approach to the pieces reflecting her experiences in London (such as, for example, her sculpture "Rose & Vi" (1993), portraying two old ladies supporting each other on their way to the shops, or her pieces of bag- and street-people) are just as much informed by her Kalabari roots as her explicit Kalabari sculptures. As Robin Horton points out, her massive yet open sculptures owe a great deal to the "complex basketry of storage vessels, fishdrying racks and fish traps which surrounded her as a young child."⁷³ At the same time Camp is an acute observer of her immediate surroundings. Her reflections of her identity and position as a black woman in London are mirrored most prominently in a series of works featuring the British flag:

There is this young black boy who was killed [Stephen Lawrence] just because he was standing at the wrong place at the wrong time....I got his picture out of the paper and I put it on to this acetate thing just because it was something that was happening at the Elephant [a tube station near her house]. And every day passing it...I'm thinking of my children's future. So I put Stephen's picture with the British flag and I put it in a glass container and so it became a kind of protest item as well. I like the idea of glass acetate and 90s air...and I put a crucifix in it. It's very graphic and not quite like me. But there are instances where you do little things that just mark a point.⁷⁴

The theme of western misconceptions of other cultures continues in the personal experiences, as well as in the work, of the third artist: Meera Syal. The only one of the

three artists to have been born in Britain, she might also be the one best known to a wider audience due to her work as an actress, novelist, screenwriter and comedian. Syal describes her own memories of the material conditions she grew up in as follows:

People are often surprised when I say that I grew up in a place where some houses actually didn't have running water even, or none of the houses had inside toilets or bathrooms....And they go, "Oh my God, where were you living, in the depths of the Punjab?" And I say, "No, no, it was Wolverhampton, or pretty near there."⁷⁵

Syal's mocking recollection of her childhood days is emblematic of her use of irony, her play with the reader's/audience's expectations and her sketching of a different view of reality. In her first, semi-autobiographical novel, *Anita and Me* (1996), Syal writes of the life of an Indian family in a mining village in the British Midlands. The story of Meena, the child heroine, born and raised in Britain, is structured like a female *Bildungsroman* with a parallel development of sexual and political awareness. The more Meena learns about herself on her journey from childhood to adolescence, the more she (and the reader) learns about the complex historical, political and socio-cultural fabric of her Punjabi heritage. The novel explores alternative models of female identity by representing girls and women situated in "border spaces" contrary to the conventional norms and traditions in their societies.

Syal shares Ahmad's and Camp's concern with overt and covert racism within and outside communities, as well as their interest in exposing the intricate web of constraints such as gender, religion, and class, all of which are highly significant in the formation of identity. Furthermore, there is the common endeavour to place those in the foreground who are otherwise marginalised or silenced, such as non-white women, but

also economically less advantaged segments of British (and Pakistani or Indian) society, as illustrated by the following passage from *Anita and Me*:

According to the newspapers and television, we simply did not exist. If a brown or black face ever did appear on TV, it stopped us all in our tracks. "Daljit! Quick!" papa would call, and we would crowd round and coo over the walk-on in some detective series, some long-suffering actor in a gaudy costume with a goodness-gracious-me accent...and welcome him into our home like a long-lost relative.⁷⁶

These aims and interests link Syal's works, whether in her black feminist reworking of *Jane Eyre* called *My Sister-Wife* (1992), produced for BBC2;⁷⁷ her screenplay for Gurinder Chadha's movie *Bhaji on the Beach* (1994), dealing with the racial incidents encountered by a disparate group of Indian women on a trip to Blackpool; her work as actress and writer in the first all-Asian British sit-com *Goodness Gracious Me* (first aired on BBC radio in 1996, before being broadcast on BBC2 a year later); or in her novels *Anita and Me*, and most recently *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (1999), which portrays three very different second-generation Indian women in London. Again, like Ahmad and Camp, Syal's answer to Western misconceptions (here of Indian and Indian British culture) are her counter-stories in which her (female) characters' identities are neither limited to a status as victims nor are they torn between two worlds or enthusiastically hybrid. As Camp puts it, "My true role in life is just to make these pictures that are important to me. It's writing whatever story it is you need to write."⁷⁸ Syal explains:

I think being able to be humorous about who you are, and that dilemma, is a sign that you're at ease in the end with who you are. And there are so many people like Meena who move very fluidly from one culture to another, and you can hardly see the join.⁷⁹

Coming full circle to my initial reference to Chadha's documentary "I'm British But..." I would like to refer to a series of interviews conducted by Wenonah Lyon in Oldham (near Manchester) which underlines Syal's statement about "moving very fluidly from one culture to another," as well as Dyke's observation regarding the young people for whom "multiculturalism is...simply a part of the furniture of their everyday lives." Interviewing British people of Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi descent Lyon discovered that for them "being Pakistani is just another way of being British, in the same way that one is English and British or Scottish and British or Irish and British or Welsh and British."⁸⁰ This perception can partly be explained by the fact that in all three cases it is *young* people who—as second- or third-generation British of various cultural descents—move more fluidly between different influences. Once again, however, it has to be emphasized that despite their increased ability to move between different cultural communities, second- and third-generation youth inevitably have to continue negotiating their social identities within constraints such as class, material differentiation, gender, religion, sexuality, and the national origin of the parent-generation. As Maira emphasizes, "Cultural theorists ... have sometimes privileged notions of fluid, fragmented identities without paying sufficient attention to how actors may negotiate both shifting identities and reified ideals in their everyday lives; the contradictions on the ground are sometimes more complex than theorists acknowledge."⁸¹

Returning to Ahmad and Camp, who were not born in Britain, I would argue that in comparison to the "indigenous" British minorities, their experiences as British citizens of non-white national descent still feature prominently in their lives and in their work. Also, Ahmad's and Camp's resort to the cultural traditions of their country of birth

reveals a different relationship to their old and new homes than Syal's use of, for example, Indian popular culture. As Camp explains:

I'm very happy to keep this Kalabari heritage and aesthetic things that Kalabari people are supposed to like. I find that great fun. I keep on adding things to my work while thinking here the highest art form is to peel everything off, take everything off to the bare. But you know I love things that are complicated. I love things that are complicated just because I don't think that there's a clear answer to everything.⁸²

But even though their use of the traditional resources of their respective countries of descent differs, there is a definite analogy in terms of their themes and subjects, such as their preoccupation with those segments of society (in Britain and elsewhere) which are often neglected by dominant discourses of identity, their grappling with xenophobia and racial stereotyping, their portrayal of physical and psychological violence against women, and their exploration of the extent to which religion, poverty, social status, and nation-specific concepts of gender, influence and shape female identity formation. This suggests that in Ahmad's, Camp's and Syal's case, a "poststructuralist dynamic re-interpretation of identity," as Antor describes it, does not at all "preclude intentionality and political activity."⁸³ Incidentally, both *Bhaji on the Beach* as well as *Goodness Gracious Me*, have been criticised by members of the Asian community: *Bhaji on the Beach* for its portrayal of Asian women and their confrontation with domestic violence (as already mentioned, in regard to Ahmad's play, a long-standing taboo within the Asian community) as well as with inter-racial relationships (in the film a young Indian British woman expects a baby from her black boyfriend); *Goodness Gracious Me* for supposedly mocking symbols of the Hindu faith, and for giving white British people the opportunity to laugh at Asian communities without thinking about it. Interestingly enough, the

criticism was mainly expressed by older Asian men and male community leaders, reminding us once again to view identity components such as race, class, religion and gender as “simultaneous forces” or, as Hall put it in his exploration of “the end of the essential black subject” and the politics of representation, “[t]he question of the black subject cannot be represented without reference to dimensions of class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity.”⁸⁴ Ahmad’s personal response to such charges can thus be seen as a preliminary conclusion regarding the artists’ explorations of identity:

I find that quite useless, I suppose, for the writer to seek a location in the canon, as it were, for either a community or a nation state or a category such as gender. I actually feel that in the end you’re speaking for yourself and the male bit of you as much as the female bit of you....So I think in a way that community business is also very false. It comes from outside. I think that you have, if you like, residual loyalties to your people, which is slightly different from, if you like, waving a banner....I mean, I would hate it if somebody said I was really European in my writing....It’s about something to do with integrity, of how quickly you can change and how much you change. I mean, I have changed and I believe in change. I believe not changing is stagnation and death. But at the same time I think there should be a logic to how you change and grow.⁸⁵

Notes

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² Even though, as Bruce Robbins points out, “many observers share the opinion that globalization is less a global reality than an effective ideological tool of the most prosperous nations.” “Race, Gender, Class, Postcolonialism: Toward a New Humanistic Paradigm?” in Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray, eds., *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 566.

³ “Greg Dyke Uses Race in the Media Awards to Pledge BBC’s Commitment to Diversity,” CRE News & Media News Release, 7 April 2000 http://www.cre.gov.uk/media/nr_arch/nr000407.html.

⁴ David Mason, *Race and Ethnicity in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 23.

⁵ Gautam Dasgupta, “Interculturalism: A Lettrist Sampler,” in Bonnie Marranca and Gautam Dasgupta, eds., *Interculturalism and Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1991), 321.

⁶ Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), 3-4. See also Iain Chambers, "Narratives of Nationalism: Being 'British,'" in Erica Carter, James Donald, and Judith Squires, eds., *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993), 153-54. Chambers identifies two versions of "Britishness:" one marked by an Anglo-centric and conservative perspective which views individual identities as "embalmed in the national epic, in the mere fact of being 'British,'" and another which can be described as ex-centric and multi-ethnic, accounting for fluid, heterogeneous identities.

⁷ Jeremy Paxman, *The English: A Portrait of a People* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998). For a more inclusive historical perspective, see Ron Ramdin, *Reimagining Britain: Five Hundred Years of Black and Asian History* (London: Pluto Press, 1999).

⁸ For an overview of contemporary notions of identity in Europe see, for instance, "Introduction," in Gisela Brinker-Gabler and Sidonie Smith, eds., *Writing New Identities—Gender, Nation, and Immigration in Contemporary Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 1-27.

⁹ Paul Lauter, *Canons and Contexts* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 164.

¹⁰ Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling, eds., *Reading the Literatures of Asian America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 18.

¹¹ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York et al.: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), 392-403.

¹² Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "Unpacking the West: How European is Europe?" in Ali Rattansi and Sallie Westwood, eds., *Racism, Modernity and Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 129-149.

¹³ Feroza Jussawalla and Reed Way Dasenbrock, eds., *Interviews with Writers of the Post-Colonial World* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1992), 195. Ghose's first novel, *The Murder of Aziz Khan* (1967), is considered to be the first genuine Pakistani novel written in English.

¹⁴ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1991), 69.

¹⁵ Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 11.

¹⁶ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, quoted in Felicity Hand, "Gentle Anthropology," *Cuadernos de Filología Inglesa* 7.1 (1998), 43.

¹⁷ Schwarz and Ray, eds., *Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, 15.

¹⁸ Stuart Hall, "Minimal Selves," in Houston A. Baker, Jr., Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg, eds., *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 114-119 (Hall's italics). For an exploration of the "value of marginality" see also Graham Huggan, *The Post-Colonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001).

¹⁹ Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Schwarz and Ray, eds., *Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, 5ff) are correct that neither the term postmodern nor the term postcolonial can be clearly defined but that their "adoption has been one of situational convenience rather than necessity." There is much to be said however, for Huggan's usage of the term postmodernism as "both a particular, self-consciously derivative style and a periodising concept linked to late multinational capitalism, the society of the spectacle and Western consumer culture, and postmodernity as a global condition characterised by the increasing power of the market over all facets of everyday life," Huggan, *Post-Colonial Exotics*, 266.

²⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, "From Pilgrim to Tourist—or a Short History of Identity," in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 18-36.

²¹ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 87.

²² The primary characteristics of this transformation were identified in central texts such as Saskia Sassen's *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), namely the spatial dispersal of production, the growth and reorganization of finance and service industries, income polarisation, and the transnational spaces created by global (or first-tier) cities such as New York, London, and Tokyo.

²³ Robert Boccock, *Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1993), 96-112.

²⁴ Peter Christenson and Donald Roberts, quoted in Sunaina Marr Maira, *Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture in New York City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002).

²⁵ Maira, *Desis in the House*.

²⁶ Heinz Antor, "Postcolonial Pedagogy, or Why and How to Teach the New English Literatures" in Bernhard Reitz and Sigrid Rieuwerts, eds., *Proceedings of the Conference of the German Association of*

University Teachers of English, Anglistentag 1999 Mainz (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2000), 255.

²⁷ See, for instance, Robbins, "Race, Gender, Class, Postcolonialism," 565, where he observes that "the hybrid identity asserted against such simplifications [against the "humanist self" as well as against pure, authentic Otherness] looks and smells like a new universal ideal. And like other universal ideals, it privileges some at the expense of others—migrants to the metropolis, for example, at the expense of nonmigrants." See also Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism," *Critical Inquiry*, 20 (Winter 1994), 328-356. For a theoretical analysis of hybridity see Nikos Papastergiadis, "Tracing Hybridity in Theory," in Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood, eds., *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism* (London, New York: Zed Books, 1997), 257-281.

²⁸ Personal interview with Rukhsana Ahmad, London, 14 April 1999. Further references are given with the abbreviation PIA.

²⁹ Personal interview with Sokari Douglas Camp, London, 25 May 1999. Further references are given with the abbreviation PIC.

³⁰ Robert Miles, *Racism* (London: Routledge, 1991), 37, 71.

³¹ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 122.

³² Shirley Lim and Amy Ling, eds., *Reading the Literatures of Asian America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 25ff.

³³ Bonnie TuSmith, *All My Relatives: Community in Contemporary Ethnic American Literatures* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), 13.

³⁴ Jessika ter Wal and Maykel Verkuyten, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Racism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 1.

³⁵ Rob Witte, *Racist Violence and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Britain, France and the Netherlands* (London: Longman, 1996), 164ff.

³⁶ Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham, "Political Claims-Making against Racism and Discrimination in Britain and Germany," in ter Wal and Verkuyten, eds., *Comparative Perspectives*, 139-170.

³⁷ Witte, *Racist Violence and the State*, 193. See also Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, on "race formation." Also note the name of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE).

³⁸ Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, *Who Do We Think We Are? Imagining the New Britain* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), 100, 104-5.

³⁹ PIA.

⁴⁰ Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 121.

⁴¹ PIC.

⁴² <http://www.wmin.ac.uk/media/pgjnet/sarah-gill/meera.html>.

⁴³ Pnina Werbner, "Essentialising Essentialism, Essentialising Silence: Ambivalence and Multiplicity in the Constructions of Racism and Ethnicity," in Werbner and Modood, eds., *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, 242-43.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities," in Baker, Diawara, and Lindeborg, eds., *Black British Cultural Studies*, 163-172. Also see Tariq Modood's work on this subject; he has been one of the prime opponents to an all-inclusive "black identity."

⁴⁶ John Solomos and Les Back, *Racism and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 138.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Wenonah Lyon, who states in regard to her ethnographic fieldwork among the Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi communities in Oldham that the "importance of ethnic groups ... appears to be directly related to how rewards are distributed in society: if group access determines reward, then groups will gain in importance," "Defining Ethnicity: Another Way of Being British," in Tariq Modood and Pnina Werbner, eds., *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Racism, Identity and Community* (London: Zed Books, 1997), 202.

⁴⁸ Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 70-71.

⁴⁹ Personal interview with Jack Agüeros, quoted in: Christiane Schlote, *Bridging Cultures: Latino- und asiatisch-amerikanisches Theater in New York* (Kassel: Reichenberger, 1997), 164.

⁵⁰ Rose M. Brewer, "Theorizing Race, Class and Gender: The New Scholarship of Black Feminist Intellectuals and Black Women's Labor" in Stanlie M. James and Abena P. A. Busia, eds., *Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 16.

⁵¹ Avtar Brah, quoted in: Solomos and Back, *Racism and Society*, 140. See also Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 1996).

⁵² PIA. Loomba concurs by stating that “the alliance between fundamentalism and the State has resulted in a series of anti-women legislations in Pakistan which are blatantly discriminatory,” Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 226. For further literature on the condition of Pakistani women see, for example, Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1992); Hastings Donnan and Frits Selier, eds., *Family and Gender in Pakistan: Domestic Organization in a Muslim Society* (New Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1997); Sangeeta R. Gupta, *Emerging Voices: South Asian American Women Redefine Self, Family, and Community* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999).

⁵³ PIC. For an examination of sexist tendencies in African societies see, for instance, Molar Ogundipe-Leslie, “African Women, Culture and Another Development,” in Stanlie and Busia, eds., *Theorizing Black Feminisms*, 102-117. Counterbalancing Ogundipe-Leslie’s view of colonialism as the main source of African men’s sexism are the fictional explorations of misogyny and black women’s oppression by African and African American women writers such as Bessie Head, Buchi Emecheta, Assia Djebar, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker.

⁵⁴ Lothar Bredella, for example, referring to the “gender debate” between the Asian American activist Frank Chin and the Asian American writer Maxine Hong Kingston (see also Schlote, *Bridging Cultures*, 242-244), declares: “Feminism, however, tends to be universalist. Everybody has the right to full recognition of his or her identity and therefore is called upon to criticize the values of a culture which regards women as inferior to men.” “Involvement and Detachment: How to Read and Teach Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*,” in Gerhard Hoffmann and Alfred Hornung, eds., *Emotion in Postmodernism* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1997), 431.

⁵⁵ In this context Françoise Lionnet quotes Elaine Marks who observes that “Feminist studies’ worst enemies have been those who have treated “feminism” like a new religion with dogmas that can allow for only one possible interpretation.” Françoise Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations: Women, Literature, Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1995), 188.

⁵⁶ Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 50. See also Epifanio San Juan, Jr., who maintains that “both traditionalists and multiculturalists fail to connect a cultural politics of identity and difference to a social politics of justice and equality. Neither appreciates the crux of the connection: cultural differences can only be freely elaborated and democratically mediated on the basis of social equality.” *Beyond Postcolonial Theory* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 12.

⁵⁷ Pnina Werbner, “Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity,” Werbner and Modood, *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, 11-12.

⁵⁸ Jonathan Friedman, “Global Crises, the Struggle for Cultural Identity and Intellectual Porkbarrelling: Cosmopolitans versus Locals, Ethnics and Nationals in an Era of De-hegemonisation,” Werbner and Modood, *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, 74.

⁵⁹ Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations*, 132.

⁶⁰ PIA.

⁶¹ PIA.

⁶² PIA.

⁶³ Juan Armando Epple, “Hispanic Exile in the United States,” in Francisco A. Lomelí, ed., *Handbook of Hispanic Cultures in the United States: Literature and Art* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993), 333-359.

⁶⁴ PIA.

⁶⁵ Rukhsana Ahmad, *The Hope Chest* (London: Virago, 1996), 58. All subsequent page references in the text are to this edition.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 182.

⁶⁷ See Susanne Rupp, “Living in two cultures: British National Report on Ethnic Minorities and Migrants,” *Sostris Working Paper*, 4 February 1999, University of East London, 55.

⁶⁸ Ahmad, *The Hope Chest*, 306.

⁶⁹ Hand, “Gentle Anthropology,” 46.

⁷⁰ PIC.

⁷¹ PIC.

⁷² PIC.

⁷³ Robin Horton, “Sokari Douglas Camp: Ekine Woman in London?” *Play and Display: Steel Masquerades from Top to Toe* (Catalogue of an Exhibition at the *Museum of Mankind*, London, 1995).

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- ⁷⁴ PIC.
- ⁷⁵ Bookworm Transcript—Programme 2, 2 August 2000.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/archive/bookworm/tran2.htm>.
- ⁷⁶ Meera Syal, *Anita and Me* (London: Flamingo, 1996), 165.
- ⁷⁷ See Claire Tylee, "The Black Explorer: Female Identity in Black Feminist Drama on British Television," *Frames and Fictions on TV: Politics of Identity Within Drama*, eds., Bruce Carson and Margaret Llewellyn-Jones (Exeter: Intellect Press, 2000), 100-120.
- ⁷⁸ PIC.
- ⁷⁹ Bookworm Transcript—Programme 2, 2 August 2000.
- ⁸⁰ Lyon, "Defining Ethnicity," 193.
- ⁸¹ Maira, *Desis in the House*.
- ⁸² PIC.
- ⁸³ Antor, "Postcolonial Pedagogy," 254.
- ⁸⁴ Hall, "New Ethnicities," 167. See also Solomos and Black who call "the discussion of race and ethnicity with an understanding of gender relations and sexuality" one of the most important developments within current debates. Solomos and Black, *Racism and Society*, 139.
- ⁸⁵ PIA.