

## DEBATING MULTICULTURALISM IN THE U.K. REPRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS IN CINEMATIC TEXTS

Iulia RĂȘCANU<sup>1</sup>

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### *Abstract*

*Continuous and various flows of immigrants (especially from the Indian subcontinent) to the UK throughout history have made the country a multi-ethnic, multi-faith one. The examination of multiculturalism in Britain focuses on the period starting with the middle twentieth century until the present. The article includes some of the major political views upon multiculturalism in connection to the individual, to communities and the large society, including some of the most infamous political speeches of British political figures. These views are utilised as analytical tools for the interpretation of feature films released in the U.K. in the 1990s-beginning of the twenty-first century.*

**Keywords:** multiculturalism, terrorism, extremism, identity, social cohesion

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### *1. Introduction*

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The population of Great Britain today is the result of colonisation, migration, economic inequality and neo-imperialism that put pressure on various populations that transgressed and continue to transgress borders, thus getting involved in processes of dislocation and deterritorialisation while becoming the other for the already settled inhabitants of the country they enter. This paper explores the production and reproduction of the other in the U.K., an other that has become the Muslim extremist other, created mainly by a part of the British media and by political discourse.

Both prior to and post World War II, there have been significant movements of people of South Asian origin who arrived in Great Britain either to work or accompanying spouses. However, after the war, in the 1950s – 1960s, due to a great shortage of labour force in the country, big numbers of immigrants arrived from Pakistan and some Commonwealth countries. They have been accompanied by the exodus of immigrants from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, called upon to fill jobs in government and administrative roles in the U.K., as well as a result of the “Africanization” policies in East Africa imposed by President Idi Amin in Uganda in 1972.

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<sup>1</sup> Iulia Rășcanu, The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania,  
The University of Mumbai, India, julianicole27@yahoo.co.uk

Immigrants have started to arrive after that so that people from the former British colonies in South Asia have become part of today's multicultural British society. Demographically, according to the 2011 Census in the U.K., there was a total South Asian population of 4.9% (3,078,374 people) of the total population, out of which 1,451,862 residents were of Indian ethnicity, 1,174,983 were of Pakistani ethnicity and 451,529 were of Bangladeshi ethnicity. Many of them, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, but also some Indians are also Muslim<sup>2</sup>. In the socio-political context, both global and national, especially after 9/11, the figure of the Muslim has become the symbol of terror/terrorism, the threat that jeopardises democratic society. This paper focuses on how multiculturalism and the threat topos are reflected and used in political discourse in the U.K. and at its representation in popular culture.

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## ***2. Theoretical approaches to multiculturalism***

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According to Terry Wotherspoon (1995), multicultural policies were adopted only from the 1970s and 1980s onwards by local administration, reaching national level only in 1997 with the New Labour government in the United Kingdom. Often associated with identity politics, the politics of difference and the politics of recognition, this ideology addresses the ways in which marginalised identities of individuals or groups are represented and granted access for communication (cf. Gutmann 2003, Taylor 1992, Young 1990)<sup>3</sup>. As there has been - and still is - a lot of debate upon the status of the individual, upon the individual's choice, the rights and responsibilities of communities or of minority groups, this paper looks at the role of the state in the shaping of multiculturalism as policy in the U.K.

Initiated as an ideology that addresses a wide range of disadvantaged groups, such as women, African Americans, the disabled, gays and lesbians, multiculturalism is particularly connected nowadays to immigrants who are part of ethnic and religious minorities<sup>4</sup>. Theories upon multiculturalism as a concept are varied, divided in three major categories. The communitarians (e.g. Charles Taylor) are those who embrace a holistic view of collective rather than individual identities and cultures, in which social goods are "irreducibly social" (Taylor 1995)<sup>5</sup>.

According to the same encyclopaedia, at the other end are the liberal egalitarians (e.g. Will Kymlicka) who promote the liberal values of autonomy and equality; for the liberals, the individual must be granted the possibility to choose from a variety of options. Identifying 'unchosen inequalities' (Kymlicka 1995: 109) of minority

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_290558.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_290558.pdf). Web. 6 Oct. 2015.

<sup>3</sup> See more on <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/multiculturalism/>. Web. 15 Sept 2015.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

groups and communities as those unequal positions of people that have been obtained by birth and not by choice, Kymlicka (1995) considers that these need to be rectified by creating easier access of these individuals to equal opportunities<sup>6</sup>. This may mean affirmative action under the form of special rights for the underprivileged.

Making reference to religion as a marker of difference for immigrants, Peter Jones (1994) explores two positions of members of disadvantaged minority groups that pressurise the individual into interrogating their own identity: one is the “intrinsic burden” of religion that requires individuals to observe a particular dress code (see the head scarf for Muslim women); the other is the “extrinsic burden” of the state whose demands are in contradiction with those of religion<sup>7</sup>.

One remark must be made here. Despite Jones’s identification of the intrinsic and of the extrinsic burdens, the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy differentiates between what is mandatory and what is not in terms of collective concern:

*While intrinsic burdens are not of collective concern (bearing the burdens of the dictates of one’s faith—prayer, worship, fasting—is an obligation of faith), when it comes to extrinsic burdens, liberal multiculturalists argue that assisting cultural minorities through exemptions and accommodations is what egalitarian justice requires.*<sup>8</sup>

The researcher insists that, although faith does have a number of intrinsic requirements upon the female individual, it is farfetched for one to assume that certain cultural and religious customs are a burden for the individual, thus leaving no room for him/her to dispose of that particular custom in a way that can be beneficial for him/her. The “intrinsic burden” of women/girls to wear headscarves, a religious and cultural marker that appears to unnerve and disconcert populations of a different religion and the state, may be a tool and/or a refuge for the respective individual whose understanding of privacy is in conflict with that of the country of destination.

The third type of multiculturalism is the one associated with postcolonialism which focuses on the rights and protection of indigenous groups (see Ivison et al. 2000, Moore 2005, Simpson 2000)<sup>9</sup>. Bikhu Parekh (2000) is interested in multiculturalism not as a political doctrine but “as a perspective on human life” (336), promoting intercultural dialogue between different communities.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Jones refers here to the French state’s ban on headscarves to be worn by Muslim girls at schools or in the work place.

<sup>8</sup> <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/multiculturalism/>. Web. 6 Oct. 2015.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

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### *3. Multiculturalism and politics in Great Britain*

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According to Roger Ballard (1994), Britain has become a multi-ethnic multi-faith society that needs to strengthen community cohesion, a concept that amalgamates various different communities. This vision is one that promotes standardisation while erasing boundaries. For this reason, British politics have encountered a major challenge in dealing with the rights of minority of groups and with issues of integration and community cohesion.

In the 1960s, the arrival of huge numbers of immigrants from the Commonwealth to Britain drew the attention of political parties that formed opinions and attitudes meant to maintain the support of their voters. These attitudes were not only meant to create voting power but also to mould views, views which became ingrained in the majority white population's consciousness about the immigrant and his/her role within civil society in the U.K.

One of the most influential and debated views regarding immigration is MP Enoch Powell's infamous "Rivers of Blood" speech delivered in 1968, an address to the general meeting of the West Midlands Area Conservative Political Centre, in which he criticises multiculturalism, Commonwealth immigration and the British anti-discrimination legislation. Although Powell does not use the phrase 'rivers of blood' as such in his address, he does refer to a passage from the *Aeneid* (6, 86-87) by Virgil. The politician says:

*As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see "the River Tiber foaming with much blood". That tragic and intractable phenomenon which we watch with horror on the other side of the Atlantic but which there is interwoven with the history and existence of the States itself, is coming upon us here by our own volition and our own neglect.*<sup>10</sup>

The neglect that Powell refers to is an encouragement for authorities to enforce more rigid immigration laws that would interdict immigrants to arrive and live in Great Britain. By resorting to people's sensibility, he announces his audience that the immigrant, the Other who comes to inhabit parts of the territory that used to accommodate only "English fellowmen", disrupts the order of things insisting solely on what the Other takes and strategically avoiding to specify the benefits that the same Other brings to the country of destination. Indeed, Powell utilises the "home" topos in order to further clarify the difference that exists between 'us' and 'them' by pointing to the idea of belonging to a particular country with particular

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3643823/Enoch-Powells-Rivers-of-Blood-speech.html>. Web. 6 Oct. 2015.

laws and rules that regulate and give shape to British society as he knew it. He describes the new situation in which the indigenous population finds itself:

*For reasons which they could not comprehend, and in pursuance of a decision by default, on which they were never consulted, they found themselves made strangers in their own country.*

*They found their wives unable to obtain hospital beds in childbirth, their children unable to obtain school places, their homes and neighbourhoods changed beyond recognition, their plans and prospects for the future defeated; at work they found that employers hesitated to apply to the immigrant worker the standards of discipline and competence required of the native-born worker; they began to hear, as time went by, more and more voices which told them that they were now the unwanted. On top of this, they now learn that a one-way privilege is to be established by Act of Parliament; a law which cannot, and is not intended to, operate to protect them or redress their grievances, is to be enacted to give the stranger, the disgruntled and the agent provocateur the power to pillory them for their private actions.<sup>11</sup>*

Powell raises awareness about threat - a topos that continues to haunt Britain even to this day, especially due to the Syrian crisis that has generated a new Exodus of immigrants (in this case, asylum seekers fleeing civil war) in the whole Europe. However, Mr. Powell did not make any reference to the suffering and damage generated by the British colonialism in these immigrants' countries of origin; not one word was said about the Empire's seduction of its colonial subjects with false promises of respect and social capital as *British* subjects.

His racist, extreme nationalist views have been largely criticised and continue to be condemned to this day. Nonetheless, influential political figures in the U.K. have expressed support for Powell's speech<sup>12</sup>. In November 2007, Nigel Hastilow, British journalist, businessman and politician, asserted that 'Enoch Powell was right' referring to the latter's 'Rivers of blood speech'. A prospective parliamentary candidate (PPC) for the Conservative Party, Hastilow received great criticism from the large population and consequently had to resign<sup>13</sup>. Seven years later, in January 2014, Nigel Farage (the U.K. Independent Party leader) revived the support for Powell's speech by approving his views (Graham 2014).

Another Conservative peer and former minister, Norman Tebbit, while supporting Powell's views, also warns against what he calls the infiltration of Islamist plot in

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> A short list of political views supporting Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech is found on [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rivers\\_of\\_Blood\\_speech#](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rivers_of_Blood_speech#). Web. 27 Sept. 2015.

<sup>13</sup> See details on <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2007/nov/04/conservatives.uk>. Web. 6 Oct. 2015.

schools in Britain and says: "It is precisely what I was talking about over 20 years ago and Enoch Powell was warning against long before that. We have imported far too many immigrants who have come here not to live in our society, but to replicate here the society of their homelands."<sup>14</sup>

Enoch Powell is not the only important political figure in Britain known for his racist views. PM Margaret Thatcher also used an infamous metaphor to describe the effect of immigration on British society. It is the "swamped" metaphor by which Thatcher not only differentiates between "us" and "them", but also characterises the Other as having the ability to pollute, contaminate and defile whatever it touches (namely, British society). Concomitantly, "to swamp" may also mean "to trouble", "to disturb" and "to derange"<sup>15</sup>. Or this is another fear of the indigenous populations that want to protect their national identities.

In the interview she gave Gordon Burns of Granada TV in 1978, Margaret Thatcher is concerned about the great number of the new Commonwealth and Pakistani immigrants arriving to the U.K. and 'swamping' the country while taking sides with potential hostile reaction coming from the indigenous population and thus, legitimising it:

*[...] people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with different culture and, you know, the British character has done so much for democracy, for law and done so much throughout the world that if there is any fear that it might be swamped people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in.*<sup>16</sup>

Like Powell, Thatcher's discourse is characterised by an intention of emphasising fear rather than identifying real examples of immigrant behaviour that might have generated fear among the indigenous population. The immigrants' very difference, their different culture is reason enough for PM Thatcher to see how they "swamp" the nation.

The flow of immigrants, especially those from South Asia, continued to arrive engendering new concerns among the large population and the political arena. Multiculturalism has been the political and social solution offered with groups of different cultures and religions being offered rights and opportunities to live in Great Britain. Nevertheless, the conflicts and riots that occurred throughout the years, notably the riots of 2001 in Oldham, Northern Ireland, followed by those in Burnely, Leeds and Bradford between groups of the local communities and South-

<sup>14</sup> <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/normantebbit/100275737/trojan-horse-i-warned-about-this-years-ago/>. Web. 6 Oct. 2015.

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.thesaurus.com/browse/swamp?s=t>. Web. 6 Oct. 2015.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103485>. Web. 6 Oct. 2015.

Asian (Muslim) communities, have raised questions regarding the success of multiculturalism. Additionally, the 2005 terrorist attacks in London sharpened the feelings of distrust and fear.

In this context, PM Tony Blair re-asserted the importance of the rights and responsibilities of the citizens in relation to the state (Blair 2002). Blair sees it as a contract in which the citizen enjoys the rights and opportunities offered by the state while being aware of his/her responsibilities and obligations. This contract is one based on respect and self-respect, the basis of a healthy community. Civil society is built on mutual respect and it needs re-find the “moral fabric of community” (ibid.). By emphasising community, Blair empowers the state and national identity over ethnic identity. By doing this, Mr. Blair also resorts to the idea of liberation, a liberation which every citizen deserves; however, it cannot be simply taken, it is made possible by means of the state: “We are bent on an enabling state founded on the liberation of individual potential” (ibid.). The modality to create such an enabling state is by equalising opportunity, rebuilding cohesive communities and reforming the criminal justice system (ibid.).

After Tony Blair, PM David Cameron points directly to *the* threat - terrorist attacks rooted in Islamist ideology. Trying to be politically correct, Mr. Cameron differentiates in his speech<sup>17</sup> from 2011 given in Munich between Islamist extremism and Islam, wishing not to offend those who embrace Islam as a religion: “Islamist extremism and Islam are not the same thing,” he says (Cameron 2011). Cameron even specifies that he rejects the extreme Right opinion according to which ‘Islam and the West are irreconcilable’. Struggling for “a stronger national identity” (ibid.) (like Tony Blair before him believed in community cohesion and combatting against isolated individuals and ethnic groups), David Cameron links terrorism with Muslims. His greatest concern, evidently in view of the 2005 attacks, derives from the threats that come from within the country rather than from outside it, for which reason he points to “young Muslims” (second-generation immigrants of the Muslim community). Cameron brings up the issue of identity, asserting that these “young Muslims” find it hard to identify with both traditional Islam (which he assumes is embraced by their parents at home) and with Britain, thus assuming an inherent hyphenated identity in their case. This hyphenation is also assumed by Mr. Cameron to be generative of opportunities for these people to develop an entire and unique religious identity, joined by radical beliefs, as Mr. Cameron himself asserts, beliefs that ultimately turn into violence. This is possible, he continues, because of an attitude of “passive tolerance” on the part of the state, that is because of multiculturalism. Thus, he suggests that the state be more active and asserts that “state multiculturalism has failed” (ibid.).

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference>.  
Web. 6 Oct. 2015.

If one can notice the evolution of political views in Britain with regard to immigration in general and to Muslim immigrants in particular, the discourse has become more inclusive of diversity while denying difference as a disturbing element generative of group isolation and disrupting community cohesion. Political figures such as PM Tony Blair and PM David Cameron disguise their encouragement towards cultural assimilation by using metaphors: Blair uses the contract metaphor in which the citizen and the state offer each other mutual respect; Cameron offers to provide “young Muslims” a more accessible and a clearer idea of belonging to the Nation. Mr. Cameron’s idea of belonging is defined in Western cultural terms - freedom of speech, freedom of worship, and democracy, among others, thus disregarding an idea of belonging that is different from the one included in the Western discourse.

In his article “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences”, Homi K. Bhabha (1995) sides with the perspective that enables cultural difference as a necessary element in the maintenance of a diverse, multi-cultural society as, should difference be blurred or erased, uniformity would take its place. Along with Bhabha, Stuart Hall (1991, 1995) also pleads for cultural difference and for a fluid, changing idea of identity, one that cannot be defined only in national terms. Homi Bhabha (1999) also insists on fighting uniformisation as a form of resistance as well as a form of progress; the diversity of cultures and religions that co-exist in certain spaces creates a challenge for those who live there, it puts pressure on those individuals to negotiate space and culture and to learn how to live in proximity with one another. David Cameron’s powerful hold on to the concept of Nation Thing (*Das Ding*) (see Lacan 1966, Žižek 1993) rather comes counter to the accomplishment of this goal.

The Lacanian concept of *Das Ding* describes the Thing as object of desire of a desiring subject. Ghassan Hage (2000) interprets the Thing as “a constitutive lack that can never be overcome” because “(...) the Thing, for it to be a Thing, has both to cause the subject to try to attain it and yet it has to be unattainable” (72); as soon as it is attained, it is no longer desired. Similarly, Antony Easthorpe (1999) discusses the importance of the *jouissance* (enjoyment) existent in *Das Ding* that cannot be attained (220). For Lacan, the Nation is a Thing i.e. it has “something more” than the features composing a “specific way of life” (in Hage, 2000: 72). Žižek takes over Lacan’s *Das Ding* and sees it, in Hage’s interpretation, as “the affective relationship between the ethnic/nationalist chauvinistic and their national home” (72). Thus, Hage continues, “nationalists are constantly worried that the other is going to steal their Thing (their fulfilling Nation) away from them” (ibid.). Due to this concern, generated by a potential losing of the Thing, the nation becomes aggressive or even violent towards the potential threat. As Easthorpe describes it:

*If aggressivity is to characterise nation, than it would be closer to the teaching of Lacan to regard it as likely to arise from a narcissistic structure. Žižek's account defines nation as continuously trembling on the edge of violence against those who seem to steal its enjoyment.* (Easthorpe, 1999: 222)

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#### ***4. Identity, community, multiculturalism in cinematic texts***

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There is a large number of feature films and TV series from the U.K. that portray immigrant life, conflicts and negotiations of individuals for whom the process of hybridisation is full of challenges and sometimes obstacles. Thus, one may mention a few titles: *Bhaji on the Beach* (Gurinder Chadha 1993), *The Buddha of the Suburbia* (Roger Michell 1993), *My Son the Fanatic* (Udayan Prasad 1997), *East is East* (Damien O'Donnell 1999) and its sequel *West is West* (Andy De Emmony 2010), *Bend It Like Beckham* (Gurinder Chadha 2002), *Yasmin* (Kenneth Glennan 2004), *Bradford Riots* (Neil Biswas 2006), and *Brick Lane* (Sarah Gavron 2007). Not all the films about South Asian immigrants in general and Muslim immigrants in particular are about Muslims who turn into fundamentalists. Nevertheless, directors and screenplayers have approached this matter (see *My Son the Fanatic*, *Yasmin*, and *Bradford Riots* from the list above).

In Prasad's film, a second-generation young immigrant of Pakistani origin called Farid is trying to define his identity. The young man seems to be quite well adjusted, has a job and a white girlfriend that he wants to marry. However, it does not take long until he cancels the wedding and suddenly turns into a Muslim fanatic. Farid says he wants to marry "someone suitable" trying to make his father understand that, in his view, "cultures don't mix". He develops a radical anti-capitalist discourse, becomes part of a group of fanatics that at some point literally occupy Farid's parents' house, along with a Pakistani imam newly-arrived from Pakistan. All this time, Farid's father, Parvez (played by Om Puri), is more hybridised than his son, more ready to accept the country of destination as his country.

The filmmaker and screen-player Hanif Kureishi put father and son in antithesis turning the latter into a religious fanatic and portraying the father as the more liberal individual among the two.

Farid's attitude has changed so dramatically because he noticed his white girlfriend's parents' repulsion for his parents. It is racism that pushes him towards the group of religious fanatics. Kureishi's character believes in "purity, belonging to the past"; he does not want to bring up his future children in this country (Britain) and is among the men who put fire to the brothel in the neighbourhood where he lives. It is as if the screen-player, who has created a more likeable and more complex character in Parvez, supports an idea of more integration and better

community cohesion than multiculturalism which may isolate individuals. Parvez's warning that even the imam is not the "pure man" that Farid thinks he is confirms the fact that Kureishi's stand on fanaticism is one of rejection. The imam's intention to stay in Britain, a country of 'impurity' and depravation, is proof enough that religious men like this one are phoney. He is humorously portrayed: big beard, no wise speech, enjoying watching cartoons in which a man is beating up a woman, being treated like a saint by Farid and his mother. The imam is not very active in Farid's transformation which leaves the audience think it is merely some of the young generation of Muslim immigrants who, because the sense of belonging to a national identity, because of discrimination and racism, easily turn into fanatics. Through *My Son...*, the filmmaker and the screen-player re-enforce discourses based on a strengthened national collective identity such as those expressed by Tony Blair and David Cameron in the speeches discussed in the previous section.

A different perspective on identity, racism, discrimination and multiculturalism in Britain is offered in the film entitled *Bradford Riots* (Biswas 2006), based on the events that happened in 2001 in Bradford, also called 'Bradistan' due to the large number of South Asian immigrants living there. The film is presented from the point of view of a British-Pakistani family, the main character being Karim, a young man about to graduate from college. As he arrives in Bradford, his home town, for the holidays, some family conflicts arise. In this context, the municipality and the community police recommend and ultimately prohibit the organisation of a Muslim festival. Under the pressure of these events, Karim gets involved in the riots started by a group of white men, assumed to be members of the BNP (British National Party), who beat up one of the boy's friends. Karim, portrayed in the beginning of the film as a well-adjusted immigrant, having white friends and a white girlfriend, is instantly struck by the fits of racism and hate displayed by the group of white men against the Muslim population of Bradford.

Enflamed by the violence and aggressiveness of the group of white men, by the lack of involvement on the part of the police, as well as by encouragement of other young members of the community, Karim lets himself take an active part in the riots despite his family's insistence that he come back home. The filmmaker uses many short, alternating scenes of people moving randomly, running on the streets, shop owners locking up their shops, thus creating the impression of confusion and imminence of violence. From a well-adjusted second-generation immigrant, the protagonist almost instantly turns into an aggressive man because frustrated, hurt by the racist attitude of people he had considered his fellow citizens, and disappointed in the lack of protection from the police. Not interested in becoming friends with suspicious-looking young men of his ethnic community before the riots, he now throws Molotov cocktails at the police force and at the group of white men. Post-riots, Karim, having been filmed by the street CCTV, is arrested, judged and imprisoned, despite his admitting being guilty and pleading for a less drastic

punishment on the basis of it being his first infringement of the law. The decision comes as a surprise and Karim is taken to jail. The videos used as proof in the trial are only those that show Karim and other non-white British citizens committing violent acts. There is no video showing the violence manifested by the group of white men. The judge explains his decision as a necessity to sustain and reinforce the safety of society and of its citizens.

Karim comes from a minority ethnic community and at the same time he is a British citizen. He is punished for betraying his quality as citizen of the state by acting against it while protecting that of member of his community. As Easthorpe (1999) asserts, "nation has the effect of homogeneity through citizenship and state institutions"; additionally, 'nation has the unprecedented historical feature that it can command the allegiance of its members on the basis of a claim to democratic participation' (223). The sentiment of anger is awakened in Karim at the sight of racism, hate and violence. His reaction is one that shows how violence is met with violence.

The riots of 2001 have been followed by two major reports, the Cattle (2001) and the Denham reports (2001), that show that there is still community cohesion in the communities affected by the riots, based on common vision and a sense of belonging, appreciation of diversity, equal opportunities and positive relations among people (Local Government Association et al. 2002).

Another film that portrays the ways in which second-generation Pakistani immigrants conceive the idea of 'home' is *Yasmin* (Glennan 2004). The film shows the story of a young woman, Yasmin, born and grown up in Britain and of her family (father and son). Apart from them, there is Faysal, a Pakistani man from Pakistan, Yasmin's husband, chosen by her father. Structured in two important parts by the occurrence of the 9/11 events in the U.S.A., *Yasmin* is a story about individual identity, belonging to a community and the ethnic community relationship with the major white population and its institutions.

Thus, prior to 9/11 the director focuses the story on Yasmin and on her ability of switching identities. She is a modern girl who, in spite of her father's wishes, owns and drives a (red) car to and from work. Within the family house and the community, Yasmin wears the traditional hijab but as soon as she is out of the town, she changes into Western clothes. One might be tempted to think that it is post 9/11 that her relationship with the white population and her status as a second-generation Pakistani immigrant in Great Britain change. It should be clarified that post 9/11 racist behaviour did not start, but it only intensified, the director subtly suggesting the superficial, phoney friendship manifested by her white work colleagues. What the filmmaker points to is the silent tension that existed long before 9/11, a tension joined by pressure and frustration felt by young immigrants such as Yasmin.

She is well integrated both in society and in her own community. Yasmin does not need to make an extra effort to integrate herself in society; moreover, she sometimes fights with her father for having to comply to cultural and religious norms that confine women's individual freedom. Her allegiance for the British identity is so important that immediately post 9/11, Yasmin wants to be considered one of "them" (the white British). Thus, one day, when in a pub with her co-workers, Yasmin shouts to the Pakistanis cast on TV: "Hey, go back to your country!". Similarly, when Faysal tries to force himself onto Yasmin, the woman hits him and yells: "You're drunk, you stupid Paki!", "Paki" being a racist term used by the white population in order to abuse immigrants from all South Asia. The film had in fact started with a scene which shows Yasmin's father coming down the street in order to open his small shop. Before he can open the door, he can see the words "Paki go home" written in graffiti.

The desire to be accepted, integrated, assimilated is so high in Yasmin's consciousness that she almost imposes it onto herself to take on another identity. Nevertheless, this is not meant to last as the police comes and arrests Faysal on the presumption that the man is a terrorist. Before they get hold of Faysal, the police enters the house in force, arrests all the members of the family and places guns against their heads in order to intimidate them and as part of their procedure. This is the moment when Yasmin's little brother Nasser, a small drug dealer who sells drugs to young white girls, goes through a major change. Shocked by the way in which he, a British citizen, was treated by the British police, he feels that there is a huge rupture between him and British society. Like Karim and Farid of the previous films, this young boy experiences hate generated by racism, to which he responds by becoming a fundamentalist. Manipulated by the imam of the community who encourages him to cease doing illegal things and, instead, start being "a good Muslim", Nasser is about to get involved in a terrorist organisation, planning to go and fight in Afghanistan and in Palestine for "our brothers and sisters".

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### ***5. Conclusions***

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All the three films illustrate second-generation immigrants from the Indian subcontinent who are in a continuous process of re-definition of identity between pressures of their ethnic communities and those of the large British society. Manifestations of hatred and racism on the part of those who are expected to cooperate towards the achievement of community cohesion are frequently incentives for young British Asians to re-interpret and re-define their national and cultural affiliations while making use of religious fundamentalism, many times provided by fundamentalist members of their ethnic community. Prime Minister David Cameron has accused community leaders of manipulating young Muslim

British Asians to no longer believe in national identity but to embrace a radical, fundamentalist version of Islam. By doing this, Mr. Cameron re-creates the image of the threatening other as the religious fundamentalist. Although not a rightist by political affiliation, he nevertheless boosts the stereotype of the Muslim-equals-(potential) terrorist.

In today's international political world, the "terrorist" trope has been strategically ingrained in the image of one particular religion as it appears in the Western media and discourse, religion which happens to be shared by peoples in the Middle East and some in South Asia and with whom the great political and financial powers are in conflict. The Other is blamed for his/her religion assumed to be the cause of violence and trouble in achieving community cohesion in the U.K. Closely related to religion, multiculturalism in Britain is described as sharing the blame for the creation of isolated ethnic groups believed to contain potential terrorists. In his discourse on multiculturalism and on its failure, not once did Mr. Cameron refer to the discrimination and racism that is still manifested in Britain against many members of minority ethnic groups. The root of the problem, as identified by the Conservative Party leader David Cameron, is not racism (which may generate hate, aggressiveness and violence on the part of those treated with racism), but "Islamist extremism," as he puts it. Wanting to appear fair towards the religions existent in Britain, he does iterate his distancing from the extreme Right's discourse according to which, as Cameron asserts, "Islam and the West are irreconcilable" but accuses the ideology of extremism inherent, as it is understood from the PM's discourse, in young Muslims who find it difficult to identify with Britain due to the "traditional Islam" present within their families.

The selected films in this analysis demonstrate how young non-white Muslims may be in a continuous process of hybridisation and how, due to manifestations of racism and discrimination, they are likely to change into religious fundamentalists. Such films rather represent a warning against racist behaviour rather than a rejection of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism continues to be a debatable issue in Britain as the collective national identity supported by political figures such as David Cameron and Tony Blair is, like the Nation Thing, not attainable because "the condition of collective identification - 'my blood, my family, my kin, my clan, my nation, my race' - is an ever-present and potentially violent expulsion of those who are *not* 'my blood, my family, my kin, my clan, my nation, my race'" (Easthorpe, 1999: 218-219). Additionally, discourses that blame specific religions, groups and individuals do not trigger better conditions for a smoother community cohesion. Multiculturalism, understood as the policy that protects cultural difference, may stand a better chance of making a positive change in societies such as the British one if there is more and better effort put into fighting against racism and race-based hatred.

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### ***The Author***

**Iulia Rășcanu** is currently an Assistant Lecturer with The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, the Department of Modern Languages and Communication in Business. Ms. Rășcanu has been an Early Stage Researcher, Doctoral Fellow in the European project 'Diasporic Constructions of Home and Belonging', ITN7, hosted by the University of Mumbai, the Department of English, where she has done research in diasporic and transnational studies, migration and cultural studies, postcolonial studies and gender studies applied in anthropology, sociology, literature and film studies. She holds a B.A. in English and in French literature and linguistics and an M.A. in American Studies, both awarded by the University of Bucharest. Ms. Rășcanu has been part of the organizing committee of conferences and round tables by inviting international senior scholars to deliver keynote speeches at such events. She has also participated with articles in a number of national and international conferences and published genuine papers in professional magazines on topics such as ESP, literary and socio-cultural studies. She is co-author of two English textbooks for students and co-translator of the Britannica Encyclopedia into Romanian.