THE POLITICS OF MULTICULTURALISM
AND THE POLITICS OF FRIENDSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines what I refer to as the politics of multiculturalism and the politics of friendship as represented in five texts: Rudyard Kipling's *Kim,* E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India,* Meera Syal's novel *Anita and Me,* Syal's film adaptation *Anita & Me,* and Gurinder Chadha's film *Bend it Like Beckham.* I argue these texts are dialogically engaged with political discourses concerning race relations and anticipate and/or problematize contemporary multiculturalist debates and practices. I read interracial friendship, which is prioritized in all five texts, as a strategic narrative device through which larger political questions of race relations get played out.

The colonial novels suggest friendship as a potential antidote to interracial tensions, but show (albeit inadvertently in *Kim*) how it cannot induce a future egalitarian world if one race rules another. In doing so, these novels anticipate multiculturalist discourses, which celebrate diverse cultures but do nothing to address the political inequalities of racialized peoples. The British-Asian texts already assume the futility of multiculturalist celebrations of cultural diversity as a means for progressive race relations and disrupt ideals of fraternal friendship that overlook cultural difference for the sake of social harmony. Even so, these texts still express the necessity of building connections between diverse peoples. Through various narrative strategies, I argue they promote the notion of political friendship, which supports the enunciation *not* elision of cultural difference, negotiating rather than avoiding the terrain of uneven, incommensurable differences between peoples and cultures to move toward a more promising future.

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This dissertation is dedicated to the glory of God.

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They are the “giants on whose shoulders” I “stand.”

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:

THE POLITICS OF MULTICULTURALISM AND THE POLITICS OF FRIENDSHIP

Much of my fascination with literature and film has been triggered by the imaginative ways writers and artists intentionally or unintentionally purvey, catalyze, and problemitize human discourses, beliefs, and conditions. Because producers and consumers of books and films have been shaped by a variety of value systems, I understand how textual realms exhibit an elastic responsiveness to the past, present, or future worlds outside their given narratives in ways their creators may or may not have consciously anticipated. In short, I agree with Edward Said when he states, "texts are worldly [and] to some degree they are events and [that] even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted" (4). Much more than the sum of their parts, books and films, for me, cannot be dismissed as discrete works of art.

My analysis of literature and film is attentive to how creative, fictional representations converge with ideological issues and concerns such as those pertaining to matters of race, gender, or class. Such convergences are enunciated within those texts comprising my scholarly interests: British novels of empire and "British-Asian" (for lack of a better term) narratives produced within the past two decades.[1] My study explores five texts from these two groups. From the first category, I have chosen to examine those

two classic novels of British India produced by literary giants Rudyard Kipling in his *Kim* (1900) and E. M. Forster in his *Passage to India* (1924). From the second group, I examine Meera Syal's novel *Anita and Me* (1996), Syal's film adaptation of the same name (2002), and Gurinder Chadha's film *Bend it like Beckham* (2002).

My grouping of the novels of empire with the recent British-Asian texts emerged as I began to see that these five texts thematically privilege interracial friendship. *Kim* and *Passage to India* foreground the friendships between British and Indian characters (colonizer and colonized) in British India while the two *Anita and Me* texts and *Bend it like Beckham* respectively foreground the friendships between white British and British-Asian characters ("once colonizing" and "once colonized" subjects) in contemporary Britain. The grouping of these five texts within one study is warranted by what I interpret to be a conversation between and amongst the texts themselves wherein the canonical novels raise questions that are relevant to the recent British-Asian texts even despite the chronological gap and obvious differences in setting between the two groups. Can British and Indian be friends and, if so, on what terms? These are the questions Kipling raises inadvertently in *Kim* and Forster navigates rather self-consciously in *Passage to India*. The British-Asian texts are responsive to this question, albeit in more nuanced ways and, specifically, in relation to their respective treatment of interracial friendship between British and British-Asian characters.

My interest in examining these texts alongside one another grew as I became struck by what Kobena Mercer would refer to as their critical dialogic responses to the

“wider social politics” circulating outside their given textual realms (64). I argue that these texts dialogically engage with those questions about race relations raised by discourses of multiculturalism and the many debates therein. As I explain in detail below, multiculturalist discourses emerged in the late 20th century as many Western societies attempted to address the growing racial, ethnic, and cultural diversification of their respective “home” populations resulting from the increased mass migrations of peoples across the world issued by and accompanying the growing forces of globalization. Though expressed in a variety of ways depending on many factors such as the particular locale where they have emerged, multiculturalist discourses in the most general terms promote a need to accommodate, tolerate, or even celebrate cultural diversity so as to encourage congenial or, in the very least, un-contentious race relations.

Analyzing the early 20th-century novels of empire through the very contemporary lens of multiculturalist discourses may seem anachronistic, but Kipling’s and Forster’s textual constructions of interracial friendship situate their works in a rhetorical context and debate that can be effectively described as a multiculturalist discourses though, admittedly, Kipling, writing at the turn of the century during the heyday of empire, and Forster, writing a couple of decades later in the waning years of empire, would not have named them as such. As I examine the canonical novels and the British-Asian works in terms of their dialogical engagements with multiculturalist discourses, I interpret their respective constructions of personal interracial friendships as strategic narrative devices through which the larger political questions of race relations get played out. However,

before I explain my interpretations in more detail, I will first explain the theoretical framework of this study. It is to this discussion that I now turn.

The Politics of Multiculturalism

The increased mass migration of peoples across the globe through the latter half of the twentieth-century has led to a proliferation of celebratory discourses of cultural diversity in many hegemonic societies. Despite the racism and discrimination experienced by non-hegemonic peoples in their respective "host" cultures, discourses of monoculturalism have yielded (albeit not always without opposition) to discourses of multiculturalism. Hardly a discrete term, multiculturalism means many things to many people. I refer to it as the general response by many hegemonic nations in North America and Europe to address the growing racial diversity inside their borders. This response is frequently characterized by the promotion of an attitude of “tolerance” toward diverse cultures in the belief that people can co-exist peacefully despite their cultural differences in what has been called a “culture of harmony.” Critic Ben Pitcher has succinctly articulated the overarching significance of multiculturalism. According to Pitcher, “In the most basic of senses, and irrespective of the extent to which it is tolerated, celebrated or condemned, multiculturalism describes the widespread recognition that we can no longer be in doubt as to whether or not cultural difference is here to stay. (2) Pitcher further explains saying, “The once prevalent fantasy of a ‘return’ to socially homogenous societies that existed ‘before’ cultural difference has become

increasingly unsustainable, and those engaged in the contemporary politics of race have accordingly shifted their emphasis onto questions of dealing with, managing, and understanding what that difference means" (2).

In the case of Britain, multicultural discourses have surfaced most vigorously in the increased public recognition of non-hegemonic people's food, fashion, and cultural production. As Tony Blair assumed leadership in 1997, the traditional pomp and circumstance of *Rule Britannia,* gave way to the hip and trendy *Cool Britannia*, a media campaign highlighting Britain's urban multiracial arts and music scene.[2] In the spirit of what Blair has often referred to as a "New Britain," all things Indian suddenly became fashionable and the links between national identity and multiculturalism began to emerge, most famously perhaps, in one high political official's pronouncement of *chicken tikka masala* as the nation's top dish.[3]

By celebrating and including racialized and ethnicized minorities within Britain's national portrait, British multiculturalist discourses have, arguably, served a crucial function in that they have created a shift away from the openly racist/exclusionary discourses expressed in previous decades.[4] It is not difficult to understand how multiculturalist discourses offer a far better alternative to those discourses publicly expressed by Conservative politicians such as Enoch Powell in the late 1960's and 1970's and by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980's (and whose sentiments carried through into John Major's administration in the 1990's).[5] These conservative discourses were insistent on the depiction of Britain as a racially pure and homogenous nation being "swamped" by

Black people, the "enemy within" (Solomos 66). Breaking away from such narrow-minded rhetoric, recent celebrations of Britain's racial plurality offer a radically different perspective as can be noted in the comments of Gordon Brown in 2000 when he, as Labour Chancellor, remarked: "Instead of a bland Britain, Britain is buzzing with difference; no longer a state in monochrome but a nation in living colour." (qtd. in Wintour). Rather than present racialized peoples as a national liability, Brown's comments underscore the vital energy these populations inject into the nation, and, as Pitcher explains, go as far as to equate Britain's racial plurality with technological progress.[6] The very suggestion that racialized peoples can and do help the nation move forward sharply contrasts with the previous political discourses that rendered the same people in question as the main reason causing Britain's demise. As John Solomos notes, black and ethnic minority communities or "at least sections of them" were presumed to be draining the nation's "resources and services;" such thinking, Solomos explains, helped perpetuate the idea that these peoples threatened the nation's social stability (64-65).

That British multiculturalist discourses have made a step in an ostensibly progressive direction does *not* preclude that they do not themselves comprise or issue regressive ideologies. In celebrating the diverse cultures inside the nation's borders, multiculturalist discourses are simultaneously objectifying them in stable, discrete terms, situating them within what postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture* would describe as a rubric of "pre-given, ethnic or cultural traits set in a fixed

tablet of tradition" (3). A given culture, then, may be celebrated for its "authentic" food, colorful fashion, or even its values (that might, for example, promote education and a strong work ethic), but, simultaneously, it is never imagined or understood beyond these or other definitive characteristics constructed by multiculturalist discourses. The detrimental effects resulting from multiculturalist discourses' containment of cultural identity is underscored by Bhabha when he argues that racialized subjects' identities "split" when they are "estranged unto themselves – in the act of being articulated into a collective identity" (4). Bhabha illustrates this conjecture by citing the experiences of African-American artist Renee Green who states:

> Multiculturalism doesn't reflect the complexity of the situation as I face it daily . . . It requires a person to step outside of him/herself to actually see what he/she is doing. I don't want to condemn well-meaning people and say (like those T-shirts you can buy on the street) "It's a black thing, you wouldn't understand." To me that's essentialising blackness. (qtd. in Bhabha 4)

Multiculturalist discourses' insistence on the fixity of cultural identity recalls the Self/Other binary perpetuated by colonial discourses that represented the white, colonizing Self and the racialized, colonized Other with definitive traits of superiority and inferiority respectively and, in doing so, helped justify the project of empire. Even while multiculturalist discourses may not assign overtly positive attributes to dominant (white) cultures and negative attributes to (Black) Other cultures, they ideologically

constrain diverse cultures and notions of cultural identity within what Bhabha would refer to as a "pedagogical" or totalizing straightjacket of presumed sociological facts, which does not account for peoples' lived, complex realities, and experiences as exemplified above by Green.

In privileging contained notions of cultural identity, multiculturalist discourses are not necessarily problematic because they have gotten the facts wrong about diverse cultures; rather, they are problematic because they do not acknowledge that facts themselves can be mitigated and changed. In this regard, multiculturalist discourses do not accommodate what Bhabha would refer to as the open-ended, fluid, "performative," ongoing "moments and processes" of hybridity, which, as he explains, emerge in between, beyond, and in excess of fixed identities that "provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal that initiate new signs of identity, and innovate sites of collaboration, and contestation in the act of defining the idea of society itself " (2). As we can see, Bhabha's concept of hybridity has nothing to do with some intact, complete, stable product but is, instead, a process of continual becoming, so that there are no definitive borders to limit that which is undergoing the evolving. If we follow Bhabha and conceptually recognize and value the liminal, shifting spaces and processes in between, on the borders of, or in excess of those limited representations of identities whether of individual or corporate bodies (e.g. the nation) pedagogically constructed for us by multiculturalist discourses, the limitations of these discourses become apparent. We can begin to understand how, despite their ostensibly progressive

façade, multiculturalist discourses not only present a potentially skewed version of identities (individual, cultural, national, etc.) but that they also potentially stifle and forego prospective new or other more progressive means of addressing race relations. In our contemporary world where so many societies are invested in "dealing" with terrorism and the "problems" of immigration, how might thinking beyond multiculturalism's contained representations of cultural identity help move us toward more productive exchanges between diverse peoples and cultures?

Aside from the pedagogical strictures they place on cultural identities, Bhabha further problemitizes multiculturalist discourses, pointing out how, even as cultural diversity is entertained, dominant culture, peoples, societies do not relinquish their hegemony. Bhabha explains how even within celebrations of cultural diversity: "A transparent norm is constituted, a norm given by the host society or dominant culture, which says . . . 'these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid' " ("Interview: Third Space" 208). Continuing, Bhabha underscores the central irony underlying celebrations of cultural diversity, when he states that "we know very well . . . that racism is rampant in various forms [in societies where multiculturalism is encouraged] because the universalism that paradoxically permits diversity masks ethnocentric norms, values and interests" (208).

Like Bhabha, Chandra T. Mohanty also discusses the limits of multiculturalism, critiquing the "culture of harmony" it prioritizes over material, political inequalities. Exposing the tenuousness of this idealized social cohesion, Mohanty argues that when

"difference is seen as benign variation (diversity) rather than conflict, struggle, threat of disruption, [it] bypasses power as well as history to suggest a harmonious [but] empty pluralism" (146). Complementing Mohanty's critique is Henry Giroux who also expresses deep concern regarding multiculturalism's idealization of interracial harmony, saying that it strips the present of its deeply rooted contradictions and tensions to reiterate instead "a set of interests that refuse to posit relations between culture and power as a moral question demanding emancipatory political action" (126). If multiculturalism remains rooted in the concept of cultural diversity, the hope for progressive political change remains bleak. The "cheery view of western civilization," as Giroux calls it, will go unchallenged, continuing to perpetuate the belief that "in spite of differences manifested around race, ethnicity, language, values and life styles, there is an underlying equality among different cultural groups that allegedly disavows that none of them is privileged" (125).[7]

Hardly as progressive as it appears to be, multiculturalism requires what Mohanty calls a "fundamental reconceptualization" that forsakes the empty celebrations of unity amidst diversity (146). One way of moving toward such a reconceptualization emerges in Bhabha's concept of cultural difference, which offers a more viable mode of conceptualizing the racially plural nation than the concept of cultural diversity. Sharply contrasting *cultural diversity*'s refusal to admit the political implications surrounding Others' differences and its ideal of social cohesion, *cultural difference* is "a notion of politics . . . based on unequal, uneven, multiple and potentially antagonistic, political

identities" (208). Because it eschews a neat universalist framework and accepts "the incongruencies, the range of different sorts of interests, different kinds of cultural histories, different postcolonial lineages, different sexual orientations" in play within today's nation space, *cultural difference* offers, as Bhabha is arguing, a more appropriate mode of visualizing and addressing the everyday reality of the cultural exchanges in many societies around the world than the concept of cultural diversity (208). Diverse cultures, according to Bhabha, cannot simply be visualized as existing discretely side by side. As Bhabha states, "they do actually articulate in challenging ways, either positively or negatively, either in progressive or regressive ways, often conflictually, sometimes even incommensurably" (208). The distinction Bhabha draws between cultural diversity and cultural difference is such that where the former seeks social cohesion and homogenization, through its insistence that Other cultures must conform to the grid of dominant culture's transparent, "universal" norms and values, the latter refuses cohesion and homogenization by challenging the notion of any one culture occupying the position of a discursive authority against whose norms all others are measured.

Though *cultural difference* accommodates the disjunctures characterizing the nation, it is a concept that does not mesh well with those in Britain who ardently seek to maintain a sense of social cohesion informed by dominant (white) interests and values despite the racial and ethnic plurality existing inside the nation's borders. One of the most infamous examples of calling for social cohesion in order to assure the security of dominant interests emerged when MP Norman Tebbit proposed his "Cricket test,"

arguing that migrants' loyalties to Britain could be benchmarked by whether they supported Britain's cricket team or the national team representing the country of their origin (Solomos 212). A more recent expression of the necessity for social cohesion came in February 2011 in a controversial speech delivered by Prime Minister David Cameron at an international security summit in Germany.[8] Focusing on the dangers of homegrown terrorism, Cameron argued for a "muscular liberalism" that would prevent people (most notably young Muslim men) from turning to religious extremism. Cameron argued that "state multiculturalism" failed because its promotion of tolerance of other cultures encouraged people to live separate lives:

> We have failed to provide a vision of society [to young Muslims] to which they feel they want to belong . . . We have even tolerated segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to *our* values. . . Instead of encouraging people to live apart, we need a clear sense of *shared national identity,* open to everyone. (emphasis mine) [9]

What Cameron refers to when he says "our values" are the idealized democratic values of liberty, equality, freedom, which he implies are antithetical to those values informing Muslim extremism. In this discourse of blame, what Cameron conveniently fails to call attention to is Muslim *cultural difference,* which is to say, the uneven political subject positions occupied by the Muslim people/youth. Therefore, while Cameron is able to indict Muslim terrorists' attack on democratic values, he does not acknowledge how

homegrown terrorism may very well be the consequence for the lack of liberty, equality, and freedom that nonwhites (including Muslim youth) in Britain face, which can, as many critics point out, make terrorist violence so attractive in the first place. [10] Cameron's solution to discourage terrorism is to replace state multiculturalism with what can be interpreted as state enforced cohesion because he warned that any organizations that did not promote integration would lose funding and that all immigrants would be required to speak English and that schools would be required to teach the country's common culture.

Politicians such as Tebbit and Cameron are not the only ones who resist expressions of cultural difference in response to their espousal of social cohesion. An example of polished, academic resistance against *cultural difference* and the threat it poses to national social cohesion emerges in David Miller's book *On Nationality* (1995). Miller laments the "severe bruising" (170) to Britain's self-image as a result of the "post-war experience" (172) and the ongoing cultural fragmentation within the nation as a result of the "impact of multiculturalism internally and the world economy externally" (185).[11] Explaining that a shared sense of national belonging forms the very basis for imagining the community of nation, Miller argues for the necessity of thick national ties and a "common ethos" for all Britons to embrace even "in the face of all their many diverse and private and group identities (74). Miller defiantly rejects the idea of a "constitutional patriotism" offered by some political thinkers that situates unity only "in terms of subscription to a set of political principles: tolerance, respect for law, belief in

the procedures of parliamentary democracy, and so forth [because it] does not explain why the boundaries of the political community should fall here rather than there," or offer an understanding of the links that "bind present-day politics to decisions made and actions performed in the past" (163). Without such links and a strong sense of national identity that is historically grounded, the members of the nation would be for Miller nothing more than "people who merely happen to have been thrown together in one place and forced to share a common fate, in the way that the occupants of a lifeboat, say, have been accidentally thrown together" (25). Striving to avoid such a haphazard fate, Miller argues for a "revived project of nation building" (180) that relies and insists upon values of coherence and solidarity.

Perhaps, the most vocal and widespread resistance toward any concept of culture that threatens social cohesion can be seen in the harsh criticism expressed by many voices within politics and mainstream culture that emerged in the wake of the Runnymede Trust's 2000 report *The Future of Multi-ethnic England: The Parekh Report*.[12] Rejecting the dominant idea of the nation as an imagined singular and homogenous community for its inability to address the cultural [racial and global] complexities of everyday life in Britain, the report's most crucial observations challenged the prevailing myths of national unity: "Britain is not and has never been the unified, conflict-free land of popular imagination" (Runnymede Trust 26). Shattering the cherished idea of the nation so long popularized in the dominant white imagination, the report incited, as Kevin Robins explains, much criticism including that from a high ranking political official who saw the

report as an attack on patriotism and from writers of a prominent magazine who argued that the report underestimated the need British people have for a strong sense of national identity (485).[13]

What is interesting to note with regard to those proponents of social cohesion and a strong British identity whom I discuss above is that, even while they advocate individuals' loyalty to the larger national community, they do not comment how such allegiance does not guarantee any reciprocal loyalty on part of the larger political structure. These critics do not understand how this lack of reciprocity so deeply and detrimentally affects the many racialized/ethnicized peoples living inside the nation whose lived experiences are conditioned by racism and discrimination on a daily basis. "Racism," as Yasmin-Alibhai-Brown argues, "continues to blight lives" (177). For this reason, as well as the inability of the "imagined community" of nation to address the complexities characterizing everyday life in Britain that would reflect the preferences, values, experiences, and personal and political histories of its residents, the conceptualization race relations through *cultural difference* remains a crucial necessity if a more democratic society is to emerge and the material circumstances and conditions of racialized/ethnicized peoples are to improve.

The Politics of Friendship

The challenge against racism and the promotion of a more democratic society, as

Bhabha and the other theorists argue, clearly lies in the *enunciation* rather than elision of difference. Though their critical assessments of multicultural discourses warrant urgent consideration and action, we understand the sheer difficulty involved in achieving the radical reconfiguration of any hegemonic discourse, much less one that appears to promote cultural harmony. To the uncritical eye, the appreciation of different cultures expresses just the sort of progressive thinking that would foster improved interracial relations and friendships. How, then, can the uneasy discussions of conflict and oppression that Bhabha and these other theorists advocate even begin to compete with the warm, fuzzy notions of cultural harmony that multiculturalism so attractively represents?

If, as Trinh T. Minh-ha tells us, “difference is not difference to some ears, but awkwardness or incompleteness,” a harbinger of “'division' in the eyes of many" because it is being "judged against some primary standard of authenticity [and] normalcy" (266), then the pursuit of *cultural difference* proves a most challenging task. Perhaps, the broaching of this hard-to-swallow concept should focus increased efforts to intensify the scrutiny of the ideals that are naturalized and privileged against it, which, in this case, is the cultural harmony and social cohesion multiculturalism presumes possible. Such an engagement should not only ask how and where cultural harmony actually materializes, but also, (given the transparent norm of whiteness on which multiculturalism sits) question why social solidarity is even valorized in the first place. That is, why should we be unified? For whose benefit does this desire for cultural harmony serve? To ask such questions is to recognize that hegemonic ideals of social cohesion disavowing difference

serve only to strengthen the discursive authority of one culture over others.

Though not situated explicitly in the context of multiculturalist discourses, Jacques Derrida raises just these kinds of questions in his *The Politics of Friendship,* which interrogates, or deconstructs rather, the hegemonic impulse to maintain a sense of unity amidst diversity. Attentive to the play of difference (différance) in his theoretical posturing, Derrida's study complements the critiques of the celebratory discourses of multiculturalism as cited above, because like Bhabha's concept of cultural difference, it, too, speaks to the constant shifts and changes characterizing the postmodern world. Motivated by the increased mass movements of people, products, and services across the globe that show no signs of waning, Derrida understands the need for developing new modes of conceptualizing the relationships and exchanges between diverse peoples that are being "formed and unformed" in today's world ("Politics and Friendship").

In taking up the subject of friendship, Derrida's study proves extremely useful because it offers us both an accessible example of the limits of multicultural discourses that idealize social cohesion and an application of Bhabha's theory of cultural difference in the context of a basic and familiar human relationship. Typically endowed with apolitical connotations in contemporary hegemonic societies, friendship becomes for Derrida a crucial site of progressive possibilities *if, and only if,* it becomes situated in the political. Following the tradition of classical theory offered by Aristotle and Plato, who contextualize friendship within principles of virtue, justice, and citizenship, Derrida seeks to reconceptualize hegemonic notions of friendship in an effort to move away from

empty ideals of social unity (such as those promulgated by multicultural discourses) and towards material, democratic change.

Derrida argues that there is "inequality and repression" in many of the celebrated forms of friendship we inherit, and uses the Western concept of fraternity to make his point ("Politics and Friendship"). Deconstructing the time-honored and revered "canonical form of friendship," he underscores its ideological weight by pointing to its frequent and continued invocation in speeches delivered by politicians ("Politics and Friendship"). Challenging its discursive authority and appeal, Derrida makes an unflattering assessment of fraternity, describing it as a "phallocentric" notion of brotherhood because it subordinates racial, social and cultural differences for the sake of social cohesion ("Politics and Friendship"). Derrida illuminates the deficiency he sees underlying fraternity when he states that the construction of friendship within representations of harmony that disavow cultural differences is certainly a response to the presence of diverse cultures, but not one that bears the "co-implication of responsibility and respect" (*The Politics of Friendship* 252).

Advocating a radically reconfigured approach so that friendship is politically mindful and attentive to the differences constantly at play in today's world, Derrida argues for a new mode of conceptualizing friendship that builds upon the notion of friendship lauded by Aristotle, one that is not motivated by personal considerations of utility or pleasure but, rather, involves a relationship in which "a man's best friend is the one who not only wishes him well, but wishes it for his own sake" (173). Following

Aristotle, friendship, as Derrida suggests, should consist "of loving rather than being loved" and operate through a discourse that "inaugurates respect . . . [and] is not satisfied with what it is, [but] moves out to this place where responsibility opens up a future" (236). For Derrida, "the promise of the future, of a deeper, more inclusive democracy" lies *not* in any idealized notions of cohesion and brotherhood that overlook difference, but, instead, the invention of radically new political friendships ("Politics and Friendship") that respect and support it.

Both Derrida's notion of political friendship and Bhabha's concept of cultural difference offer politically progressive means of conceptualizing today's hegemonic societies and addressing the race relations taking place therein. They make a sharp departure from, for example, the dominant arguments made by those in contemporary Britain who insist upon foregrounding a culture of solidarity despite the nation's racial and ethnic plurality. While such arguments are prompted by pride and patriotism, the high reliance they place on social cohesion is suffocating, as in the case of Tebbit who demands unwavering loyalty to nation and Miller who seeks thick, binding ties between and amongst Britain's peoples. Bhabha's and Derrida's respective notions offer much more breathing space because they not only respect difference, but expect it as well, so much so that it forms the premise from which they make their arguments, unlike the dominant ideals of nation that start from a point of commonality, sameness, and a fraternity based on loyalty. For Derrida, the political friend makes no demands for loyalty, but only wishes one well for one's own sake. For Bhabha, issues of loyalty do

not even arise. The very idea of loyalty, of clinging to one another, is shattered in the very language Bhabha invokes: "unequal, uneven, multiple and potentially antagonistic . . . incongruencies." Bhabha's notion of cultural difference raises for us the crucial question: to what can we be loyal given the innumerable disconnects characterizing the peoples and cultures residing inside the nation's borders?

In both Derrida's and Bhabha's respective arguments supporting difference, we can see the actual viability of that nautical metaphor of nation Miller so vehemently rejects -- that of the "denizens" (42) thrust together in a lifeboat. With no links to one another except their shared, dangerous circumstances, the survival of the members of the nation in this metaphor depends not on shared histories, cultural values, etc., but instead on a willingness to become political "friends" who are responsible to each other only to the extent of working together to stay alive. Floating precariously within the ebb and tide of the waves and subject to storms and sharks instead of being moored in some snug, stable harbor, members' survival is contingent upon their adaptability to change and differences in the environment rather than one fixed plan of action for any and all potential circumstances. In the unpredictable conditions in which these denizens find themselves, no one in the lifeboat is preordained to claim power.

Chapter Outlines

The theoretical debate surrounding multiculturalist discourses of cultural diversity and the liberation of *cultural difference* as advocated by Bhabha along with Derrida's call

for political friendship find intriguing parallels and creative expression in the five narratives being examined through close readings in this study. Whether remarkably naturalized as in the case of Kipling's *Kim,* overtly politicized as in the case of Forster's *Passage to India,* or subversively problemitized in the case of Syal's novel and film versions of *Anita and Me* and in Chadha's *Bend it Like Beckham,* the construction of interracial friendship, as I mentioned earlier, is a strategic narrative device linking friendship, one of the most basic and personal of human relationships, with the larger, political discourses of multiculturalism. As my analyses show, I read the colonial novels as engaging with the question of friendship and debating how effective celebrations of cultural diversity might be in achieving a future egalitarian world. Unlike the colonial novels, the British-Asian texts, as I read them, already assume the ineffectiveness of fraternal friendship and celebrations of cultural diversity for future egalitarian world. What these texts focus on instead is the promotion of political friendship and cultural difference as a more appropriate means to conceptualize politically progressive race relations.

In Chapter Two, I analyze *Kim.* What I am attempting to show here is how Kipling's creative efforts anticipate the alluring surface potential of multiculturalist discourses to achieve racial harmony but, ultimately, like multiculturalist discourses, occlude political conditions experienced by the Other and, thereby, fail to promote egalitarian race relations. As such, *Kim* exhibits what I call an empty multiculturalism. Yes, Kipling's novel departs from many previous colonial works through its

accommodation and celebration of cultural diversity (i.e. positive representations of India/Indians) and idealization of fraternity (that brings colonized and colonizer together in warm, personal friendships). However, it refuses to admit any notion of Indian cultural difference by which I mean dissension against British rule and, thus, presents colonization as wholly unproblematic. My discussion of Kipling's employment of the *bildungsroman* form further exemplifies *Kim*'s empty multiculturalism. Here, too, the novel suggests a progressive view of race relations; again, we see an accommodation and inclusion of cultural diversity not typical of most colonial fiction because Kipling affords the racialized Other his own narrative quest alongside that of the white protagonist's narrative quest. And yet, as I argue, this accommodation is not as progressive as it appears because the secondary narrative functions only as a foil for the main narrative, which, in depicting the development of the white protagonist into the munificent colonial ruler, reiterates the superiority of the ruling race and the necessity of colonial rule. In short, I argue and show that the novel's ostensible move toward racial equality and progressive race relations through its inclusion of the racialized Other's substantive narrative presence is illusory; *Kim* blurs racial lines only for the purposes of reinforcing the political divide that serves to maintain the colonial project and the political subjugation of the colonized.

Chapter Three analyzes *A Passage to India* to show how it represents colonial race relations in distinctive ways beyond Kipling's illusory celebration of cultural diversity and his idealization of the Western concept of fraternity. Rather than elide

questions of cultural difference to achieve textual racial harmony between British and Indian as Kipling does, Forster unabashedly showcases them by representing race relations that see the colonized subject suffer egregious social and political inequalities at the hands of the colonizer. While the novel's scathing portraits of racist colonial administrators makes an obvious case for the end of empire, the novel goes beyond merely offering anti-colonial discourse.

For me, Forster anticipates the critiques made of contemporary multiculturalist discourses that argue how such "positive" discourses still maintain the transparent authority of dominant cultural values by which Other people are judged and, as a result, do not yield egalitarian race relations. While the novel does not offer a definitive response as to whether or not friendship can be achieved between the British and Indians, it reveals the extent to which one's own dominant values impede friendship. In his dramatization of sympathetic British characters' encounters with India/Indians, Forster calls attention to how respect for cultural diversity and ideals of love and friendship remain insufficient means to achieve politically progressive race relations so long as one's own hegemonic value systems remain the standard by which to judge the colonized Other. Forster illustrates how these characters' confrontation with cultural difference (i.e. Indian value systems that are incommensurable with their own value systems) is met with their reluctance to relinquish their own hegemonic values and result in their failed friendships and personal crises. Because the narrative is replete with many twists, unanswered questions, mysteries, and muddles, I also briefly argue that the novel expresses its own textual cultural difference for us readers, making us confront our own

"hegemonic" reading values and assumptions to understand the extent to which they influence our reading lives and how they might impede our ability to connect with the text.

If, as I have suggested above, that *Kim* and *Passage to India* can help enlarge or complicate our understanding of the questions and debates surrounding race relations/ multiculturalist discourses, then examining the dialogical encounter between these contemporary discourses and the contemporary works of Syal and Chadha proves even more useful. The characters and scenarios these artists represent in their works are situated in the post-empire Britain, which is comprised by an uncontestable, de facto multi-cultural society.[14] Through their construction of interracial friendships and the self-conscious narrative strategies they employ, the *Anita and Me* texts and *Bend it like Beckham*, as I will later explain more fully, disrupt multiculturalist discourses' promotion of easy racial harmony, which they express at the expense of occluding political and social inequalities experienced by racialized peoples and cultures.

While the canonical novels through the course of their respective narratives debate the potential of celebrating cultural diversity as a potential antidote to poor race relations, the British Asian texts, as I mention above, already assume the ineffectiveness of multiculturalist discourses for the materialization of a future, egalitarian world. However, what I am attempting to show is that Syal and Chadha do not discount the influence of these discourses on their target dominant reading/viewing audiences whose metropolitan tastes may expect representations of Otherness conforming to cultural

diversity's promotion of cultures as discrete entities within a "fixed tablet of tradition." To this end, I argue that these texts in various ways disrupt cultural diversity, undermining expectations for neat, tidy categories of exotic otherness. I also show how these texts promote cultural difference through various narrative thematic and formal strategies, calling attention to the potentially incommensurable and politically antagonistic values between cultures when cultures are viewed through their interaction with one another, not as discrete entities living side by side. Because these texts sometimes enunciate cultural difference self-consciously, I argue that the texts encourage reading/viewing audiences to recognize and question how their own hegemonic values inform their understanding of cultures and race relations. In doing so, I argue that these texts illustrate how politically progressive race relations rely on the negotiation with *not* an elision of cultural difference. Syal's and Chadha's thematic constructions of friendship also enunciate cultural difference because they highlight the incommensurable, incongruent subject positions of the British-Asian and white English "friends." Decidedly un-fraternal, these un-sentimentalized constructions of friendships are characterized by transient, relationships of convenience that fade away, break-up momentarily or permanently, or show no signs of continuity. Through such representations of friendships and their thematic and formal expressions of cultural difference, I argue these texts make untenable the notion of social cohesion promoted by dominant discourses (i.e. multiculturalism's promotion of racial harmony; dominant political discourses calling for a cohesive national community).

Chapter Four explores the novel version of *Anita and Me*. I pay close attention to the first-person narration, arguing that the first-person narrator's opening monologue and numerous digressions disrupt the invoked metropolitan audience's easy consumption of the narrative and, in doing, so call attention instead to the racialized protagonist's cultural difference. I also argue the novel expresses cultural difference through its *bildungsroman* form, which ends in the protagonist's departure from rather than assimilation into the larger (white) society, which is typical of the narrative form.

Chapter Five explores the film version of Syal's *Anita and Me*. I read the film adaptation as being complementary to the source text's expressions of cultural difference. As with the novel, I argue that the film utilizes first-person narration to draw attention to the racialized protagonist's cultural difference. I also show how the film employs various aural and visual strategies that shatter the invoked metropolitan audiences' gaze to disrupt ideals of social cohesion. Despite both novel and film texts' self-conscious interactions with reading/viewing audiences that call attention and disavow the discursive authority of whiteness and despite the failure and/or fading away of friendship, respectively in the novel and the film, I show how the novel and film are not involved in a politics of blame, but, rather, are initiating a dialogue for political friendship with their reading/viewing audiences.

Chapter Six focuses on Chadha's film *Bend it like Beckham.* Like Syal's novel and film, this text challenges the concept of cultural diversity and promotes cultural difference. However, the film's attentiveness to cultural difference is, as I argue, self-

consciously directed toward issues of nation because its coming of age narrative of a British-Asian girl is interwoven with the nationally revered sport of football, which I read as a metaphor for the nation. I argue that Chadha's intervention undermines the ideals of a homogenous, socially cohesive nation as perpetuated in many dominant narratives that support the hegemony of dominant culture.   I discuss how the film renders such ideals untenable in the face of the differences and disjunctures at play within the nation, which, as I show, are enunciated through the repetitive imagery of travel and technology that call attention to the globalizing forces informing the characters' lives. Through discussion of the protagonist's experiences on the football field, I further show how the film destabilizes the ideals of social cohesion because it problemitizes the dominant policies of inclusion, showing how it negates cultural difference by demanding the racialized other to assimilate to dominant cultural norms. I show that the un-sentimentalized construction of friendship, which calls attention to the mutual benefits each friend may derive from the relationship and which breaks up in the course of the narrative and shows no sign of continuity in the conclusion, complements the film's undermining of social cohesion. Likewise, I make the case that, through various visual and aural strategies, the film encourages viewing audiences to confront and negotiate (not elide) cultural difference in order to move in the direction of egalitarian race relations.

Contribution to Scholarship

Within the copious scholarship on *Kim* and *Passage to India,* there are

suggestions of the multiculturalist frame [15] in which I situate my textual analysis but nothing as substantive as my study since its framework addresses multiculturalist discourses with particular regard to the construction of interracial friendship in the novels. Given the colonial subject matter of the novels and because textual expressions of imperialist discourses have been of paramount importance from the perspective of postcolonial scholarship, some criticism may easily seem to be raising or responding to questions involving the authors' imperialist intentions: "Is or isn't Kipling a racist?" "Is or isn't *Passage to India* an Orientalist text?"[16] My study may also seem to be addressing these questions; however, what I wish to enunciate in my readings of the colonial novels is not aimed at indicting or validating the authors'/ novels' respective ideological messages: rather, my interest lies in trying to underscore the relevance that *Kim* and *Passage to India* have to our contemporary world. Focusing on the novels in this manner allows us not only to appreciate the ideological prescience of their creators, but also to contemplate, probe, and devise, however broadly, the ways we consumers and critics of these texts might ourselves approach questions of race relations. In our ever increasingly globalized, post 9/11 world, such questions promise not to abate. Whether in terms of, for example, outsourcing, terrorism, economic financial collapse, war, immigration policies, or technology, questions of race relations inform our daily lives. Not simply a matter of whether or how they might be addressed, such questions remind us of the huge stakes involved for all of us if they are not.

Scholarship on all three British Asian texts is relatively limited given their recent production/publication dates, but it is growing. Earlier scholarship and commentaries often feature thematically driven analyses related to issues of gender, family, generational differences, and childhood. More recent scholarship approaches the texts in new or more nuanced ways that often call attention to how formal and structural elements help support the texts' thematic elements.[17] My analysis follows suit, illuminating how the formal and structural elements express the respective texts' rhetorical undercurrents pertaining to multiculturalist discourses. My scholarship also moves in a different direction because of my emphasis on the texts' construction of friendship. While other critics reference the interracial "friends" in the texts, they do not prioritize friendship to the extent I do in this study. In emphasizing the texts' dialogic engagement with multiculturalist discourses through their construction of interracial friendships, my readings offer less explored means of approaching and interpreting Syal's and Chadha's respective works. In the least, my work will add to the quantity of existing scholarship, and, perhaps, it will help encourage further scholarly attention to these two artists whose creative efforts certainly warrant it.

Though I examine the two novels of empire as well as the recent British-Asian texts to explore the various ways in which all engage with multiculturalist discourses through their construction of interracial friendship, my juxtaposition of the recent British Asian texts with the canonical novels of empire goes beyond the thematic connections they share. In organizing this "community" of texts of five texts, I want to underscore

that Syal and Chadha are indeed inheritors of that great tradition of British cultural production *not* trendy, exotic outsiders and that their works along with those of many other British-Asian writers and artists are o*rganically* part of this larger tradition, *not* aberrations or outside phenomena. In short, to borrow the words of Yasmin Alibhai-Brown who argues against the narrow perceptions made of Black cultural production, these writers and artists are the "voices of Britain, *not just* Black Britain" (265; emphasis mine). Enunciating this point serves not only to help bolster Syal's and Chadha's creative reputations (and that of other black and British-Asian writers and artists), but also to call attention to the heterogeneity of that great tradition itself, a notion that may still yet meet with some resistance.[18]

My grouping of the novels of empire with the recent British-Asian texts also opens up a space for me to contribute to a body of growing scholarship that undertakes to re-envision the relationship between canonical texts and postcolonial works as one that it is not purely adversarial. Critic John Thieme does this very effectively in his study in which he describes his findings concerning the relationship between postcolonial "con-texts" that re-write canonical "pre-texts."[19]

> Whether or not they set out to be combative, the postcolonial con-texts invariably seemed to induce a reconsideration of the supposedly hegemonic status of their canonical departure points opening up fissures in their supposedly solid foundations that undermined the simplism involved in seeing the relationship between 'source' and con-text in terms of an

> oppositional model of influence. Attractive though binary paradigms are to some theorists . . . the evidence invariably suggested a discursive dialectic operating along a continuum, in which the influence of the "original" could seldom be seen as simply adversarial – or, at the opposite extreme, complicitious. (2)

Like Thieme, I recognize that the canonical "pre-texts" I examine are not hermetically sealed into a box of regressive, imperialist ideologies. To be sure there are many disparities between all the texts comprising this study, especially when comparing the canonical texts to each other or to the British-Asian texts, but, even while I may address these disparities, I want to emphasize how all of the texts are part and parcel of a "continuum" of similarities and differences. As Thieme acknowledges, hegemonic source texts are hardly so simplistic that binary lines can easily be drawn between them and later postcolonial "con-texts." The continuum of similarities and differences I identify operating through all five texts involves a general concern for the necessity of improving race relations and how such a goal might be achieved. As I mentioned earlier, my grouping of the texts reflects what I see as a conversation taking place between and amongst the five works. The canonical novels debate the efficiency of celebrations of cultural diversity as a potential means toward improved race relations, while the British-Asian texts already assume their inefficiency and promote, instead, the concept of cultural difference as well as the formation of political friendships as more promising means to move toward a future egalitarian world.

If I speak of Syal and Chadha as being the inheritors of that great tradition of British cultural production, then I would be remiss not to also underscore how they are, of course, also descendants of a long line of British-Asian writers and artists.[20] In highlighting this point, I am aiming again to minimize any notions of exotic trendiness that might be attached to Syal's and Chadha's respective works if they are not contextualized as such. This is a concern Susheila Nasta raises when she argues that well-known writers V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, and Hanif Kureishi have been "incorporated by a Western readership as 'exoticized' representations of 'otherness' and readily assimilated into the mainstream" as a result of being "frequently divorced from a relationship to a diverse continuum of South Asian writing in Britain" (17).[21] Nasta's comments are easily applicable to Syal and Chadha as they and their works have become increasingly well known in the years since they produced the works that I am examining in this study. Without contextualizing Syal and Chadha within the larger diaspora cultural production, critics run a risk of representing these artists' works as being emblematic of what British-Asian texts are supposed to represent and thus marginalizing those texts that may differ in textual content, form, or, marketability/entertainment value.

Though diaspora works are heterogeneous because they exude innumerable differences in terms of narrative content and style and represent the diverse perspectives of the peoples and cultures that are typically recognized under the umbrella label of South Asian diaspora, they do share some general qualities and features. Foremost, Syal and Chadha's works, like those of their diasporic predecessors, give voice and subjectivity to

the lived experiences of the racialized Other residing inside England's borders. In doing so, they reiterate the nation's colonial past and contemporary racial plurality, thus helping shatter the many homogenous representations of the national community that have dominated British cultural production.[22] Likewise, those issues of identity and themes of migration that are paramount in so many of their predecessors' works also make their way into Syal's and Chadha's narratives. Shared links emerge, for example, if we compare Syal's *Anita and Me* with V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men.* Both novels feature nonlinear, *bildungsroman* narratives moving from present to past, re-invoking the colonial space/history into a postcolonial England, to highlight the fragmented identities of their first-person narrators who still manage, in the course of telling their stories, to come to terms with their "in betweeness" even as they are not ultimately reconciled with dominant culture.[23] Other shared links can be detected as we recall the overarching emphasis on the fluidity and translatability of all identities in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* that also finds expression in Chadha's *Bend it like Beckham* whose protagonist is shaped both by her collective Indian/Sikh ethnicity and culture as well as her individual tastes and preferences that are informed by dominant English cultural icons and the revered national sport of football.[24] Likewise, if we consider the reluctance of Syal's and Chadha's protagonists to don the dutiful role of the good Indian girl (who does not tell lies or swears as Syal's protagonist does) or who would not play sports or sneak around behind her parents' backs (as Chadha's protagonist does), we may be reminded of the more extreme gender restrictions thematized in previous diaspora writers' works such

as Ravinder Randhawa's *A Wicked Woman* whose protagonist is considered a wicked woman for not conforming to the traditional role of good wife and mother.

Perhaps, however, the echoes of previous diaspora members resound strongest when we contextualize Syal's and Chadha's works within the oeuvre of Hanif Kureishi. His works can be considered "pioneering and groundbreaking," to borrow Susheila Nasta's terms, because his are among the first that can be characterized as distinctly British-Asian because they speak to the concerns and issues experienced by the children of immigrants/migrants who, unlike their parents, have only England to call home and no other homeland (real or imaginary) to which to return physically or metaphorically (182).[25] Like Kureishi's characters in *The Black Album* or *The Buddha of Suburbia,* the protagonists in Syal's and Chadha's texts, having been born and/or largely reared in England, are critical insiders of English culture who identify with their English surroundings and culture (and/or Western cultural icons). As Kureishi's work underscores cultural identification with dominant English culture through frequent references to English/Western culture, so, too, do Syal's and Chadha's. The *Anita and Me* texts feature a protagonist who is a devout follower of *Jackie* magazine, wants to eat fish sticks for dinner, and prefers to sing kitschy English pop songs she has heard on the radio rather than the classic Indian songs her parents sing. *Bend it like Beckham*'s protagonist's identification with dominant English culture is made apparent in the very title of the film that invokes the nation's revered sport of football and its most famous football star, David Beckham. Such references attest to the consumer driven, postmodern

times and sensibilities that inform the lives of the characters and creators of these more recent diaspora works, but they likewise illuminate the ways in which an individual's cultural heritage and identity can be derived from a variety of sources outside of one's racial or ethnic group or culture. In this regard, the texts echo Stuart Hall's discussion of cultural identities. Hall explains how cultural identities can be shaped by past experiences, history, and culture that members of a collective group may share, but that they also belong to the future as well to the past since they "undergo constant transformation" and are always in process of "becoming" not simply "being" (394).[26] In Chadha's film, this is particularly highlighted given that the protagonist faces stereotypic assumptions about her Indian identity as is made obvious when her ambitions to play soccer is met with surprise by her soon-to-be soccer coach who tells her, "I didn't know Indian girls played football."

Notwithstanding the ways in which Syal's and Chadha's texts reflect the cultural production of other diaspora artists, they also make some creative departures, which are worth addressing here so as to get a better understanding of the readings I offer in the chapters ahead. One important feature their works exhibit involves comedic elements and devices. Of course, comedy has been utilized by other diasporic artists especially Kureishi whose works are often considered black comedies for their irony and satire. However, Syal's and Chadha's employment of comedy illustrates a marked difference because their texts express a more lighthearted, "feel good" humor, thus sharply contrasting the works of many other diaspora writers and artists, which feature the

sobering aspects of the immigrant/migrant experience. Sam Selvon's *Lonely Londoners*, David Dabydeen's *The Intended,* or Udayan Prasad's film *Brothers in Trouble* are, for example, three works that amply illustrate the hardships of material inequalities and discomforts of poverty, discrimination, racial violence, and social isolation. Even though Syal and Chadha do not shy away from dark or serious moments in their respective narratives, the comedic aspect to their works offer a distinctly different reading/viewing experience than that offered by many other diaspora members' dramatic works, making them infinitely more palatable and accessible to dominant cultural audiences and helping to alleviate what has been referred to as the "dourness" and "didacticism " often associated with the so-called "ethnic" text (Needham 112). However, even beyond their entertainment value and marketability, the comedic elements in these works can still be read in those terms of resistance illustrated in Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque that highlights the significance of comedy in its ability to create scenarios that destabilize authoritative discourses of power.[27] Syal's and Chadha's respective employment of comedy disrupts stereotypes of the exotic Other because it situates their characters in innocuous, humorous scenarios, fostering dominant audiences' identification with diaspora members/cultures. Whether through a pun that begins with one meaning and ends with another, the puzzling juxtapositioning of two completely different things, the physical reaction of someone being taken by surprise, or misunderstandings between characters, Syal's and Chadha's respective use of comedy help position diaspora peoples in comfortable, less "alien" contexts. Because the comedic elements draw on such scenarios that are as familiar as they are funny, they help invoke what can be

appropriately termed a "dialectic of similarity and difference" because the racialized Other is housed and/or delivered through points of similarity.[28] Through their enunciation of similarities, these texts are able to contextualize difference in a manner that does not convey "otherness ."

Another notable feature in the *Anita and Me* texts and *Bend it like Beckham* that distinguishes them from many diaspora works is the extent to which they include characters who are from within dominant white culture. Even as these texts feature characters and content concerning British Asian lives and experiences, white English characters are afforded significant narrative attention and seamlessly interwoven into the dominant narrative. Syal's narrator in both her novel and film looks backward to describe in detail the working class lives and stories of local people, including, of course, her white best friend, she knew whilst growing up in the rural West Midlands. Chadha's film goes as far as to represent Jules, the protagonist Jess's white friend, within a secondary storyline that runs alongside the main narrative concerning Jess's own coming of age. Like Jess, Jules, too, faces resistance from her mother who would rather have her daughter give up playing soccer and, instead, pursue those "feminine" endeavors that lead to marriage and family. In these respects, Syal's texts and Chadha's film can be seen as exemplifying the trend that John McLeod identifies in his discussion of contemporary black writing in Britain, which he argues, is engaged with superseding "exclusively Black British concerns" (46).[29] Of course, Syal's and Chadha's narrative inclusions concerning white English characters illustrate again Syal's and Chadha's critical position as insiders intimate with English

peoples and cultures. Their portraits of white characters and dominant culture attest to their dialogical interventions into the politics of representation, helping disrupt narrow notions of what might be expected from a British-Asian artist (which, incidentally, as I will later discuss, is precisely what Syal takes up rather self-reflexively by her first-person's narrator's prologue in the novel version of *Anita and Me).*

CHAPTER 2

EMPTY MULTICULTURALISM AND AN EXPEDIENT FRIENDSHIP IN RUDYARD KIPLING'S *KIM*

Contemporary multiculturalist discourses vary in the ways in which they are expressed, purveyed, or practiced, but they are generally characterized by their efforts to recognize, tolerate, appreciate, or celebrate cultural diversity. However lukewarm or enthusiastic, multiculturalist discourses attempt to promote some sense of social cohesion amongst the disparate cultures living within the borders of a given nation through their emphasis on the inclusion rather than exclusion of those (often racialized) peoples once considered outsiders within that nation. In this regard, multiculturalist discourses can be considered a step (albeit, perhaps, only a tentative or even reluctant "baby step") toward some form of racial harmony in many societies in today's ever-increasingly globalized world.[1]

If ever there was a novel anticipating the most vibrant, appealing manifestations of multiculturalism, which exuberantly celebrate cultural diversity and optimistically evoke the desire for social cohesion and interracial harmony, it would have to be Rudyard Kipling's *Kim.* [1] This assessment may seem surprising given Kipling's oft-cited reputation as a diehard imperialist; likewise, it would seem somewhat perplexing given that Kipling's oeuvre comprises texts that often illustrate racial arrogance through their frequent validation of the racial divide between the colonizer and colonized and typically

narrow, negative representations of colonized peoples and the Indian subcontinent.[2] In *Kim,* however, Kipling ostensibly makes sharp departures from his other works and undertakes what can effectively be called a multiculturalist discourse because the novel illustrates at length an appreciation of India's and Indians' cultural diversity, promoting social cohesion and racial harmony. We see in the novel that India is presented as a place of diverse landscapes teeming with natural beauty and inhabited by human beings richly varied in their caste, creed, and language. Even more significantly, Kipling seems to do away with the racial divide between the colonizer and colonized through his characterization of Kim, the eponymous young hero of the novel who confounds the neat, secure division between (superior) British and (inferior) Indian, which Kipling's other texts otherwise enunciate that ideologically justifies colonial rule. Though Kim (owing to his Irish parentage) is racially white, he is also overwhelmingly Indian by virtue of his upbringing on the streets of Lahore, ardent preference for Indian food and clothes, respect and understanding of indigenous customs and beliefs, and fluency in Indian languages that allow him, for example, to think and dream in Hindi. Furthermore, the confluence of Kim's racial and cultural identities is epitomized in his physical appearance since his being "burnt black as a native" (3) allows him to pass as an Indian.

As if presenting us with a nearly native hero who prefers all things Indian was not enough, Kipling further evokes a multiculturalist spirit by promoting social cohesion between colonizer and colonized through his heavy thematization of interracial friendship that sees the unproblematic integration of British with the Native, bringing them into

shared physical space, social circumstances, and emotional relationships with one another. *Kim*'s high priority on interracial friendships is particularly important to note not just with regard to its deviation from Kipling's other works, but also because it offers a radically different response to the interracial relations (or lack thereof) found in most colonial fiction concerning the subcontinent written during the British Empire's heyday. As Philip Darby explains, British writers "made little use of categories of interpersonal behavior between British and Indians," choosing, instead, to focus on "the position of the British in India, their role as leaders, and the personal and racial qualities which fitted them for rule" (91).[3] Darby adds that "British heroes were pitted against not Indians as such but "against abstractions of the subcontinent and its peoples such as irrational violence, a culture of depravity and decadence, or an inert, stagnant land" (91).[4]

Not only does *Kim* naturalize interracial friendship by never questioning its validity, it wastes little time weaving it into the narrative fabric. The very first chapter ushers in the most significant interracial relationship involving Kim and Teshoo Lama, newly arrived from Tibet on a quest to find the elusive "River of the Arrow" that will bring him salvation from "the Wheel of Life," which is to say, the material world and all pursuits related to therein. The easy meeting and pairing of the street-wise, 13-year-old orphaned boy of Irish descent with the old, unworldly Tibetan cleric occurs so quickly that the reader has little, if any, chance to question the convergence of the two rather disparate personas. Before the chapter ends, Kim not only befriends the lama, but agrees to become his *chela,* or disciple, and accompany him on his journey; a loving, emotional

bond develops between the two, stretching across the rest of the narrative. Kim's relationship with the lama, congenial exchanges with the many Indians he encounters in his travels, and friendships with Mahbub Ali and Huree Babu, his fellow spies in the British Secret Service (euphemistically referred to as the Great Game), earn him the endearing nickname "Friend of All the World" that is repeatedly invoked throughout the narrative.

Kipling's choice *not* to write a simpler (cruder) novel, say, of pure imperial adventure underscored by a strict Manichean divide – of a white boy skillful in the art of espionage working in the British Secret Service meeting success after success against an uncivilized Black enemy in an alien and hostile land – and the decision to incorporate positive, diverse portraits of the colonized land and its people and presentation of a culturally hybridized hero who becomes friends with his racial others makes *Kim* as well as the hero of the novel a most fascinating exception in British colonial fiction, infinitely more desirable than those more overtly racist works negatively abstracting India/Indians. As such, it is not surprising that *Kim*'s multiculturalist leanings have earned some scholars' affirmative responses in their criticism, which pays special tribute to Kipling's ostensibly progressive attitude toward race relations.[5] Impressed by the departures the author makes from his decidedly less sympathetic texts about the colonized, these critics' responses illustrate, as Patrick Williams tells us, a distinct trend in *Kim* scholarship that bestows praise for the novel and almost exonerates Kipling's well-established reputation as an imperialist.[6]

Reading it as “more inclusive, complex, humanised, and mature” than any of Kipling’s other works, Mark Kinkead-Weeks exclaims “*Kim* as a whole is a triumph of exploratory vision . . . *Kim* is the answer to nine-tenths of the charges leveled against Kipling and the refutation of most generalizations about him” (441). K.C. Belliappa, who sees in Kipling’s later, works a “maturity of attitude,” “a greater poise” and a “refusal to take sides easily” (150), states this of his most famous character: “Kim . . . is able to comprehend both the Indian and the English with a[n] ease that is both credible and astounding. Kim succeeds, where many of Kipling’s earlier heroes had failed, because he is endowed with an enormous amount of sympathy for the native way of life; is free from any feeling of racial superiority, and also possibly because he has gone native himself in many native habits” (155-6). Noted postcolonial critic Abdul JanMohamed praise for *Kim* reads it as the colonial text that does more to bridge the racial divide than any other. Enamored with its “positive, detailed, nonstereotypic” portrayal of Indian/native characters, he states: “What may initially seem like a rapt aesthetic appreciation of Indian cultures turns out, on closer examination, to be a positive acceptance and celebration of difference” (79).[7] John McClure, whom Williams considers “representative” (480) of the trend of critical praise for *Kim*, acknowledges the novel as a “utopian fantasy,” crediting Kipling for being “able to see beyond the horizon of his times and portray a world of yet to be realized interracial harmony,” adding that “for this reason *Kim* may well be a more effective antidote to racial antipathies than [even] any of Conrad’s works” (166).

Critics' celebratory assessments are certainly justified to the extent that *Kim* constitutes a radical departure from the overt racism characterizing Kipling's other works and, for that matter, most colonial fiction written about India; however much beneath the colorful surface of Kipling's narrative belies its optimistic representations of race relations within the colonial arena. And, if *Kim* can be seen as reflecting the most appealing features of multiculturalist discourses, as I argue it does, so, too, does it also illustrate the deficiencies of these discourses. Attesting to the latter, many critics argue that the inclusion, acceptance, and even celebration of cultural diverse peoples espoused by many multiculturalist discourses are empty, meaningless endeavors because the political inequalities experienced by many of those very peoples being included, accepted, and celebrated by dominant cultures remain woefully unacknowledged and unaddressed.[8] Among these critics is Homi Bhabha. Reminding us that racism still exists in those societies which embrace multiculturalism, Bhabha explains that the concept of cultural diversity (which he sees as the foundation of multiculturalist discourses) is inadequate because it merely acknowledges the discrete existence of diverse cultures and appreciates only their benign differences (such as those involving food or fashion) but *not* those perceived as threatening the hegemonic status quo (i.e. political inequalities and material oppressions experienced by racialized peoples).[9] Bhabha suggests a better alternative in the concept he refers to as "cultural difference," which sees all cultures existing in relation to one another and understands how this relativity conditions or leads to "unequal, uneven, multiple and potentially antagonistic political identities" (208). Unlike the notion of cultural diversity, which fosters a false

sense of racial harmony because it obfuscates the asymmetrical power relations between cultures and allows hegemonic cultures to maintain a transparent authority, Bhabha's concept of cultural difference is more useful because it illuminates political hierarchies, and, thus, would help pave the way to challenge the transparent authority of any one culture over others. In a framework of *cultural difference*, then, the connections between racialized peoples' oppressions and the authority of the hegemonic order becomes more visible and, of course, susceptible to critique.

Keeping Bhabha's distinction between *cultural difference* and *cultural diversity* in mind as we analyze *Kim,* we see how Kipling's positive, sympathetic representations of India and its peoples and constructions of congenial interracial relations and friendships evoke the colorful spirit and potential of multiculturalist discourses but little else because they, like multiculturalist discourses themselves, are not coupled with, anchored in, or set against a backdrop of any problematic political scenarios. Indeed, Kipling repeatedly sidesteps any political landmines. Even as he makes radical departures from his other colonial fiction by pursuing and achieving textual racial harmony within the fictional colonial arena, he does so because he refuses to admit into the narrative the harsh, gross dimensions of colonization that inevitably involves the political and economic subordination of India/Indians by the British. *Kim* may be a step in a new, better direction in colonial fiction but, much like the critiques made against contemporary multiculturalist discourses, Kipling's efforts are only superficially progressive.

Kipling's omission of the political dimensions of empire is rather remarkable when considering that Kipling writes *Kim* during a time when, as Jeffrey Meyers states, "Indian-British relations are at their worst" (19), and, as Edward Said notes, during a "specific moment" when "the relationship between British and Indian was changing" because the Indian National Congress was established in 1885 and "India was well on its way toward outright dynamic opposition of British rule" (135).[10] In light of the historical conditions during which *Kim* is written, the superficiality of the novel's progressive features is further underscored when we note Kipling's inclusion of natives' overwhelmingly benign attitudes toward or outright respect for British rule. All Indians in the novel, for all their amazing diversity in caste, class, and creed, share the critical common denominator of being "friends" with the British and supportive of colonial rule. Sometimes acceptance of the British emerges through an attitude of indifference as is the case for the many Indians traveling along the Grand Trunk Road who take no notice of the colonial administrator riding in their midst. In other cases, acceptance of British rule is implied by the those Indians aiding and abetting Kim's espionage activities as a junior spy in the British Secret Service including, for example, the young prostitute in Lucknow who helps disguise him for an upcoming spy mission and the hill men of Shamlegh who do his bidding while he thwarts the surveillance of Russian spies plotting insurrection against British control.

Furthermore, Kipling inflates Indians' acceptance of British rule rather shamelessly by having natives themselves articulate their support of the British. When

Kim and the lama meet the Sahiba, the Old Woman of Kulu, she nods approvingly of the aforementioned colonial administer riding on the road, expressing her admiration for his familiarity in Indian customs, cultures, and languages that enable him to understand the people he rules. After engaging in a few moments of lighthearted banter with the administrator, the Sahiba judiciously states: "These be the sort to oversee justice" (67). The Sahiba's comments foreshadow those proffered by the "Old Withered Soldier" (47), a veteran of the infamous Mutiny of 1857, during which Indian sepoys revolted against their British superiors as a result of longstanding grievances.[11] The soldier entreats Kim and the lama (and, by extension, us readers) with another litany of pro-British rhetoric that suggests a rather heavy-handed obliteration of Indians' political dissension against the British. In this the novel's single historical reference, the soldier offers an account of the Mutiny in which he discredits his native brethren for causing the insurrection. He explains: A madness ate into all the Army, and they turned against their officers. That was their first evil, but not past remedy if they had then held their hands. But they chose to kill the Sahibs' wives and children. Then came the Sahibs from over the sea and called them to a most strict account (47). In one fell swoop, the soldier's loyalist sentiments effectively reduce the Indians' revolt into a flight of unbridled irrationality, thus demonizing the natives and heightening the presumed innocence of the British. In noting the extreme pro-British view expressed by the loyalist soldier "whose more likely nationalist and aggrieved counterpart is never seen in the novel," Said offers comments that speak to Kipling's commitment to the elision of Indian political dissension when he states: "So far is Kipling from showing two worlds in conflict that he has studiously only

given one, and eliminated the chance of conflict appearing altogether" (148). Like the overseas reinforcements who effectively silenced those Indians who dare opposed the British Raj, Kipling squelches the voices of any dissenting discourse against colonial rule by refusing to admit them into the narrative.

Against the backdrop of the happy-go-lucky race relations Kipling presents, there is no chance much less need for our Indian-loving hero Kim to undermine colonial rule. The racially harmonious world in which he resides allows him to have his proverbial cake and eat it, too, because his great love for India/Indians and fascination for the Great Game are, it seems, mutually exclusive since nothing in the narrative instigates their conflict with one another. Though he initially demonstrates a distrust of white men, everyone Kim meets in the course of the unfolding narrative, including the Sahiba, the loyalist soldier, Mahbub Ali, and Huree Babu, helps naturalize for him the legitimacy of British rule. As a result, Kim, who, incidentally, prizes personal freedom, remains politically unconscious of how his work in the Secret Service contributes to the colonial subordination of the land and peoples he calls his own. For many critics, this is what constitutes the central weakness in the novel. The oft-quoted Edmund Wilson says it best when he states,

> We have been shown two entirely different worlds existing side by side, with neither side really understanding each other, we have watched the oscillation of Kim, as he passes to and fro between them. But the parallel

> lines never meet; the alternating attractions felt by Kim never give rise to genuine struggle." (30)

The apolitical or, rather, pro-British stance expressed in *Kim* makes it difficult to support any critical praise for the novel as a potentially progressive ideological text. After all, can the novel even be remotely considered a potential "antidote for racial antipathies" if it so conspicuously avoids them? *Kim* would indeed be an ideological triumph *if* the substantial, sympathetic attention it pays to India/Indians and the racial harmony it constructs emerged as the imaginative resolution of a narrative in which the terrain of British political control of India was acknowledged and negotiated so as to *problemitize* (not legitimize) the question of colonial rule. In short, to be considered as such, *Kim* would have to admit everything it excludes -- conflict, struggle, and points of contention between the races that would situate Indian dissension against the British as a viable competing discourse against those discourses supporting colonial rule. But, of course, this would have been unthinkable for Kipling who ardently believed that the non-white could not rule themselves effectively. The race relations he imagines in *Kim* are situated in the framework of a monologic discourse of what one critic calls "a kinder, gentler imperialism" that displaces the greed and aggression of the colonial enterprise and situates the colonizer as a benevolent, respectful leader deeply concerned for the welfare of his native subjects, but which never wavers from the notion that the white man can and should rule over his non-white counterparts.[12]

Sweeping the ugliness of the imperial status quo under the rug of a racially harmonious world, Kipling's imaginative portrait of race relations idealizes the Western notion of fraternity, highly appealing, as Jacques Derrida tells us, for its coalescence of disparate peoples into the bonds of cooperation and brotherhood, but problematic, nevertheless, because it forsakes racial, social, cultural differences in order to achieve the desired unity.[13] Prioritizing unity rather than the more typical estrangement between the races found in most colonial fiction, *Kim* optimistically responds differently to the British-Indian encounter by constructing it as a fraternal friendship, but this response, however exceptional and harmonious, is one that does not, as Derrida would argue, "bear the co-implication of responsibility and respect" because it is "not a concern in what concerns the other" (252). Even as it blurs the division between colonizer and colonized, *Kim*'s achievement of interracial unity speaks to the concerns, values, and needs of the colonizing culture *not* the colonized because it is predicated upon the exclusion of Indian cultural difference, which is to say, Indian dissension against colonial rule, as well as the natives' direct or indirect toeing of the imperial company line. Those who refuse to assimilate to the colonizer's politically homogenous society such as the Indian sepoys invoked in the loyalist soldier's memories become relegated to the confines of madness. Similarly, those other political Others in the novel, the Russian and French spies plotting insurrection against British control in the Northwest provinces whom Kim successfully undermines in his most critical spy mission, are relegated to the realm of insensitive, "bungling idiocy."[14] What we have in *Kim,* then, is a colorful, happy narrative surface that belies a more complex, different scenario that lies beneath, which *maintains* rather

than deviates from the Manichean divide found in most colonial fiction. The only difference is that in *Kim* the divide is informed not by factors of race, but instead political allegiances that essentially separate the "friends" of the British imperial state from its enemies.

Rather than celebrate *Kim* for what it includes (i.e. harmonious British-Indian race relations), we need to ask, as I have tried above, how what it includes comes at the cost of what it excludes.[15] In the analysis that follows, I continue emphasizing how *Kim's* celebration of Indians' cultural diversity is a response to British-Indian race relations, but not one that imagines for us a politically progressive model because it, like contemporary discourses of multiculturalism, avoids cultural difference for the sake of inducing an interracial harmony that serves to maintain the norm of dominant culture, which, in the case of the novel, involves the notion of white superiority and the legitimacy of colonial rule.

The focus of my analysis is the friendship at the heart of the novel between Kim and the lama. Kipling's choice to make the lama Kim's best friend is itself another major occlusion of cultural difference because he (the lama), being a non-Indian who does not practice a major Indian religion, is removed from any possible suggestion of India's political condition; thereby, he poses no threat of raising Indian dissension against colonial rule that might otherwise feasibly arise in close, emotional relationships between colonizer and colonized.[16] Kipling's use of the lama helps support the underlying emphasis in the novel accommodating and celebrating cultural diversity. The

construction of the friendship ostensibly gives the impression of the convergence of two equal subjectivities at play in the narrative whose disparate personas complement each other. The lama, representative of the spiritual world, is the unworldly-wise father figure who serves as the moral compass for the impish Kim; while, Kim, representative of the material world that is the domain of the colonizer, is the street-wise energetic son whose physical strength compensates for the aged lama's infirmities. The constant stream of endearing sentiments mutually exchanged between them attests to the sense of emotional completion they offer each other: "I have no friend save thee in all the world" (104) says Kim to the lama; while the lama says of the boy: "My chela is to me as a son is to the unenlightened" (227). Most importantly, Kipling further evokes a sense of equal subjectivities because *both* characters are invested with considerable narrative significance because each is afforded an intriguing personal quest. Kim seeks the destiny predicted for him by his dead father that will bring him a secure future, and the lama searches for the sacred River of the Arrow that will bring him salvation. That the lama as well as Kim is assigned his own quest suggests a willingness on Kipling's part to respect and include the cultural difference of a racialized other, which, in this case, comprises the spiritual tenets of Buddhism. Ostensibly, the lama's presence and unworldly values represent an alternative discourse that competes with the material values of the colonizer, but a close examination of Kipling's treatment of the friendship and the lama's character, however, illustrates that the lama is divested of any political potential to undermine the colonial order in the course of the unfolding narrative.

As my analysis reveals, I explore how the interracial friendship between Kim and the lama is a strategic narrative device that contributes to the ostensible celebration of cultural diversity in the novel, but which ultimately reinforces the superiority of the colonizer. My general argument is that even as the novel prioritizes the relationship between Kim and the lama, Kipling constrains both the significance of the friendship and the lama's character through his employment of the *bildungsroman* form, which necessarily privileges the life, development, values and experiences of the individual protagonist, who in this case is, of course, Kim.[17] What is problematic is not so much the emphasis on Kim's development, but, rather, how it frequently comes at the cost of grossly diminishing the complexity of the lama's character. Though the lama is highly esteemed by Kim and other characters in the novel who express their appreciation of his holiness, Kipling offers very little in the way of qualifying the lama's spiritual values whether through the character's own voice or that of the third person narrator's. This omission of any substantive elaboration of the lama's Buddhist beliefs effectively prevents the articulation of his (spiritual) cultural difference that could offer a competing discourse against the worldly colonial influences informing Kim's development. Not unlike the discussion I outlined above concerning the empty ideals of multiculturalist discourses, the lama's presence in the novel adds color to the narrative without contributing any conflict or contention to compromise Kim's identification, initiation, and ultimate integration into the Colonizer's white world. Furthermore, because Kipling repeatedly juxtapositions the mostly meditative, silent holy man and his obscure spiritual world with the more lively, articulate Kim and his richly detailed material world, we see

how the lama is not unlike his native counterparts in other colonial texts because he functions not as friend to Kim but the foil who illuminates his white superiority. Kipling's construction of the interracial friendship along with his inclusion of the lama, then, very much like multiculturalist discourses, gives the impression of a meaningful dialogue with the racialized other, but *does not* actually engage in one. And, ultimately, Kipling uses the device of interracial friendship to blur the racial divide, but only for the purposes of reinforcing the superiority of the colonizer.

An Expedient Friendship

The most heartwarming feature of the novel, the interracial friendship between Kim and the lama, is also one of the most memorable because it is showcased through copious emotional rhetoric, celebrating Western ideals of fraternity that promote universal brotherhood. In an effort to reiterate his love and devotion to the lama, Kim, for example, repeatedly renounces his identity as a Sahib (ruler) to assert instead his subordinate position as "chela" (follower). Conversely, the lama is deeply impressed with Kim's commitment, saying "never was there a chela such as thee" (62). Perhaps, the most loving sentiments exchanged between the two friends are those expressed in the heart-wrenching moments just before Kim is about to leave the lama and begin his formal English education at St. Xavier's. Here the anguish of separation is made evident when Kim "passionately" cries out 'how can I ever forget thee?,' while the lama, coaxing the

reluctant boy to enter the school gates, replies 'Let me see thee go. . . Dost thou love me? Then go, or my heart cracks' (105). The repeated exchange of intense emotional sentiments such as these throughout the narrative ostensibly stress the importance of the relationship between Kim and the lama, but they also have the effect of aggrandizing the friendship, which, in fact, is not the main focus in the novel. True to the novel's title, the main priority is the individual life of Kim, whose story is told in the *bildungsroman* format that charts his growth over a period of three years, between the ages of thirteen to sixteen or seventeen years of age. In a novel that so ostensibly makes an interracial relationship between two seemingly equal subjects its emotional touchstone, the form of the text, which necessarily prioritizes the interior reality of the single protagonist, prompts us to ask not if but *how* the representation of the friendship and its participants might be mitigated by the structure of Kim's development and for whose benefit it may do so.

Traditionally, the *bildungsroman* form focuses on the development of a socially ostracized young protagonist whose coming of age involves a growing self-knowledge and identity achieved through successful negotiation of various struggles and trials. Ultimately, the form ends with closure that sees the protagonist's reconciliation within the society at large against which s/he has negotiated his/her life and the achievement of some form of social and material success (i.e. marriage, money, education, status, etc.).[18] In *Kim,* we see the familiar pattern of progress: Kim starts off as an illiterate street urchin, who is destined by his father to achieve a secure if not glorious future, undergoes various

struggles, and attains a proper English education and training in espionage that allow him to develop into a promising young man whose skill and intelligence earn him much esteem. Furthermore, by the end of the novel, Kim is fully integrated into white colonial society and guaranteed a future career as a full-time spy for the British Secret Service. The novel, however, also makes an important twist from the typical *bildungsroman* narrative. Whereas the *bildung* protagonist usually undergoes growing self-knowledge about his/her identity (i.e. Defoe's Moll; Bronte's Jane; Dickens' Pip), Kim's narrative of progress is less about his coming into knowledge of his personal identity and origins and more about his *coming to terms* with it. That is, Kim has always been cognizant of his racial identity but still has yet to become convinced of the value and meaning of his whiteness within the political hierarchy of the colonial world.

Long estranged from the community of his race-peers, Kim has little sense of any obligation that he as a white boy may have to the larger white collective. From the outset, Kim is integrated and accepted into the Indian society into which he is born and raised. And though clearly aware of his white racial identity, he is happy living life as a native and shows no desire of taking up the life of a Sahib. He even takes pains to distance himself from whiteness by refusing to wear European clothes and avoiding those "missionaries and white men of serious aspect who asked who he was, and what he did" for fear of being taken away from the freedom of street life (5). In this early stage of his life, Kim has no desire to assume his white identity nor can he anticipate any value in assuming it. Even when his behavior seems to demonstrate nascent characteristics of

white racial arrogance, his understanding of the validity of colonial rule is limited. This is made apparent in the opening of the novel where he is shown playing "king of the castle" with two native boys his age. Sitting astride the famous cannon Zam-Zammah of Lahore, Kim refuses the other boys' demands to be let up onto the gun. He says to Abdullah "all Mussalmans fell off Zam-Zammah long ago," and then to Chota Lal, "the Hindus fell off Zam-Zammah too because the Mussalmans pushed them off" (6). Obviously, Kim is aware to some degree of the political turnover in the local region, but it is important to note that while Kim is able to cite the historical reasons why his playmates cannot assume the prized position on top of the cannon, he demonstrates no understanding of why *he* can. It is the third-person narrator, instead, who steps in to articulate what Kim does not: "There was some justification for Kim, he had kicked Lala Dinnath's boy off the trunnions, -- since the English held the Punjab and Kim was English" (3).

Though Kim's actions in playing the role of the king suggest, on the one hand, a comfort and ease in assuming the position of a brazen white authority figure (perhaps a foreshadowing of his future in the British Secret Service), it is important to note, on the other hand, that, as Richard Cronin rightfully points out, he is only *playing* a game (9). At this early point in the narrative, Kim still has no interest in becoming integrated into white society or desire in exploiting the political power that can come with it. His distrust and avoidance of white men for fear of losing his personal freedom itself reveals his reluctance to join their collective community. Even Kim's desire to fulfill the destiny

predicted by his father that is to bring him into his personal fortune is meaningful only to the extent that he believes his *individual* success in life will be achieved. Kim has no inkling that it will involve his eventual reintegration with white men and make his personal life and identity conform to the collective colonial political interests. That when he does eventually realize this (upon being captured by his father's old army regiment but tries in vain to run away) illustrates the extent to which Kim does not want to become initiated into whiteness.

In bringing a young boy and the Tibetan priest into friendship with each other early in the narrative *before* Kim has the desire or chance to be influenced by the white world, the novel raises the expectation that the lama's cultural difference, as represented by his spiritual beliefs, will offer a competing discourse against the material-minded colonial forces that have not yet caught hold of Kim. Even before Kim gets personally acquainted with the lama, the narrative suggests the lama's capacity to influence others through the comments of the knowledgeable English curator of the Lahore Museum, who is moved to tears by the presence of the old Buddhist priest whom he observes is "no mere bead-telling mendicant but [instead] a scholar of parts" (10). Though Kim is initially fascinated by the exotic appearance of the foreigner, he, like the curator, becomes deeply impressed with the lama when he hears "the old man speaking the truth" (17), so much so that he is willing to offer up his services and take up the subordinate position of chela. Kim's willingness to serve the lama is matched by the lama's willingness to direct his newfound chela's spiritual growth. Even before he becomes

well-acquainted with Kim, the lama (thinking on one occasion that Kim has disappeared), states "It was in my mind to have taught him the Law on the way to Benares" (17). When Kim reappears and tells the lama that he seeks to fulfill the destiny predicted by his father and serenely conjectures he may even become king one day, the lama promises to lead him in a more meaningful direction, saying in a "voice of authority," "I will teach thee other and better desires upon the road" (16).

Presumably, Kim's life can be altered significantly through an acceptance, understanding and negotiation with the lama's cultural difference, which is to say his alternative discourse that renounces the (colonizer's) material world in favor of the spiritual, but such a course of development would undermine Kipling's staunch belief of the white man's racial responsibility to rule non-white peoples as well as the very nature of empire itself, which at the core constitutes a grand economic enterprise built upon willful, physical acts of material domination. While Kipling makes room to celebrate the lama's cultural diversity in the colonial society he imaginatively portrays, he will not let the lama prevent Kim from developing into the colonizer he (Kim) is destined to become. Ensuring this end is Kipling's third-person narrator who is responsible for delivering the racially harmonious world that privileges colonial rule. This steady voice of imperialist reason never lets Kim or us readers get too carried away by amazing India and its diverse peoples, or, as we see in the unfolding narrative, the lama who is presented as the spiritual authority in the text. From the opening paragraphs of the novel, the narrator makes it a point to assert the primacy of Kim's white racial identity as the most crucial

element of his being, thus negating his physical, cultural, and behavioral markers of blackness. The narrator states:

> *Though* he was burned black as any native, *though* he spoke the vernacular by preference and his mother tongue in a clipped uncertain sing-song, *though* he consorted on terms of perfect quality with the small boys of the bazaar; *Kim was white* . . . (1; emphasis mine)[19]

The narrator's reiteration of Kim's whiteness dictates that Kim cannot be absolved of his racial identity or obligations to the collective white colonial world. The narrative repeatedly and subtly reminds us of Kim's racial responsibility through a recurring refrain: "Once a Sahib, always a Sahib." Though Kim does not understand the larger political significance surrounding his whiteness in the colonial hierarchy, the narrator will burden him with the destiny of the white man to rule the native. As the subsequent unfolding of the novel reveals, the lama will have no part in dissuading Kim from pursuing the colonial calling preordained by the narrator. The narrator will, however, utilize the lama to perform critical plot functions in the course of the narrative that enable Kim to come to terms with his whiteness and assume his racial responsibility to rule the natives. In sum, the interracial friendship is an expedient means to a desirable imperialist end.

Constructed as both an aged man and a foreigner, Kim's best friend is also the one character most dependent on him.[20] Unfamiliar with the land and its customs and prone

to fatigue, the lama requires the aid of the young streetwise boy to get him around India, living on Kim's strength, as he himself admits, "as an old tree lives on the lime of a new wall" (226). In the course of their travels, the lama's limitations catalyze Kim's development into the altruistic colonial ruler Kipling idealizes in his imperialist vision, who, as Richard Faber explains, understood the "sanctity of work and discipline," "hardship and sacrifice" and an "unselfish" sense of "Duty" (105).[21]

Unlike his formal English education at St. Xavier's and informal training in espionage that make him mentally and intellectually fit for service to the empire, Kim's friendship with the lama allows him to gain an emotional maturity and responsibility that cannot be taught to him by any instructor or books. Such qualities are precisely what distinguish Kim from others who serve the empire such as the insensitive army drummer boy who regards Indians as lowly "niggers" (92); or, fellow spy Mahbub Ali who, though loyal to the Great Game, allows his desires of the flesh (i.e. dancing girls and prostitutes) to compromise his service; or, Huree Babu who works in the Service with a keen eye for personal recognition, reward and the possibility of gaining admission into the Royal Ethnological Society. Unlike these less desirable supporters of British rule, Kim's role as the lama's chela enables him to develop those characteristics befitting the ideal altruistic ruler whose responsibility lays squarely in the welfare of his subjects, seeking, as Faber explains of the benevolent ruler, their "profit" and "gain" (104).

That it is the lama and not any one of the other teachers from St. Xavier's or the Secret Service to whom Kim's moral development is entrusted is a significant point to

note. Utilizing the lama in this way, the narrator neatly justifies Kipling's specific imperialist vision of an altruistic colonial leadership by linking it with the very need for it, with, in other words, the very person who will benefit from it the most, thus reinforcing the necessity of colonial rule. Unlike Kim's other teachers such as Colonial Creighton, Lurgan Sahib, Mahbub Ali or Huree Babu who are capable individuals whose survival and livelihood do not rest solely on Kim's efforts, the lama is physically weak and innocent of the ways of the world, and, thus, his life necessarily requires Kim's management. In short, whereas Kim's other knowledgeable and capable teachers illustrate the competency of colonization, it is the incapable lama who, more importantly, establishes the need for it.

From his first interaction with the lama, Kim demonstrates some of the nascent qualities of the ideal Sahib even though he does not want to have anything to do with white men. Whereas the native boys run away in fear thinking the lama a strange priest whom they believe may eat little boys, Kim swiftly takes charge of the lama's welfare by befriending him, responding to all his questions, fulfilling his wishes to go the Lahore Museum by taking him there personally, and, upon seeing his unfamiliarity with Indian begging customs, procuring him warm, nourishing food before making arrangements for his travel and shelter. As they begin their journey, Kim uses his street-smarts to make sure the lama is not cheated by schemers on the road. Kim's leadership assures the lama's physical well-being during their travels and is most crucial in enabling him to keep pursuing and ultimately achieve his spiritual quest at the end of the novel. In all of

these respects, Kim becomes not only the benevolent colonial ruler, but also the proverbial white savior. The lama himself acknowledges Kim as such when he recounts to a group of Jain priests the story of an old elephant who is freed from his shackles by a young elephant calf, who turns out to be the "Lord [God] himself" transfigured into animal form (166).

Through his portrayal of Kim's great service to the lama, the narrator slowly builds a case for what Faber would call a "kinder, gentler imperialism" that displaces the ugly economic exploitation at the heart of the colonial enterprise and, thus, offers a form of colonial rule that is entirely palatable. In the course of their travels, which he continues to take up in between his school breaks and in the six months' time before he goes into full time service as a spy, Kim is no longer the carefree free boy he once was indulging in the idyllic pleasures of playing boy's games, "yelling at Hindu festivals," or "going out to eat" with his Indian friends (3). Seeing to all aspects of the lama's welfare, Kim develops those traits of self-sacrifice so deeply valued by his creator and, essentially, takes up the responsibility of the "white man's burden," which lies at the core of Kipling's imperialist vision and expressed in his most famous poem of the same name. In describing his service to the lama toward the end of the novel in the wake of the attack against the Russian spies, Kipling epitomizes Kim's commitment as the ideal ruler:

> Kim's shoulders bore all the weight of it – the burden of an old man, the burden of the heavy food bag, with the locked books, the load of the writings on his heart, and the details of his daily routine. He begged at

> dawn, set blankets for the lama's meditation, held the weary head on his lap through the noonday heats, fanning away the flies till his wrists ached, begged again in the evenings, and rubbed the lama's feet . . . (224)

At the end of the novel, the lama professes a deep appreciation to Kim for his undying service saying, "Was never a Sahib like thee, I swear it" (225). Like the Sahiba's earlier praise for the colonial administrator who maintains an intimate understanding of the people he governs, the lama's comment here does not question at all the colonizer's rule, but only helps to reinforce the *kind* of ruler that is desirable. Despite the material reward and recognition he receives from his white superiors and fellow spies for his mastery of school subjects and skills in espionage, Kim's finds greater value in his services as chela to the lama, because it allows him a much larger, unquantifiable reward of meaning and purpose in life. Toward the end of the narrative, Kim acknowledges it in a conversation with the lama, saying to him: "Thou lean on me in the body, Holy One, but I lean on thee for some other things" (226).

Kim's internal growth reflects the spirit of the *bildungsroman* narrative, which typically sees the emotional and moral growth of its protagonists, but in the context of the colonial space in which it takes place and the interracial friendship from which it springs, higher political, racialized stakes are involved. Developing into the altruistic ruler certainly makes Kim a better person, more compassionate than the somewhat brazen boy whom we first meet sitting atop a cannon refusing his friends a chance to share his fun, but it simultaneously reinforces his superiority over the lama, whose character and the

spiritual world it represents largely goes undeveloped for much of the novel. For a novel that prioritizes interpersonal relationships between the races and very early in the narrative suggests the convergence of two equal, complementary individuals embarking on his own important quest, the lama's lack of development disappointedly dashes the possibility for the racial syncretization raised in the first chapter. Whereas Kim's leadership is continually illuminated, the lama, to whom Kim was initially drawn for his uniqueness, becomes objectified and is portrayed as inarticulate, incapable and, at times, inhuman (for his refusal to celebrate the beauty of the material world). In short, the relationship reflects the familiar Manichean divide underlying most colonial fiction that presents a white self whose identity is inextricably linked with that of his racial other, the foil or the alter-ego, who affirms the colonizer's superiority by his own inferiority. Though the friendship creates social cohesion, bringing the two races into close emotional proximity, the relationship only serves to foreground the disparity between Kim who functions as the novel's designated white self and the lama who is assigned the role of the designated Other.

Through the juxtapositioning of Kim and his material world with the lama and his spiritual world, the narrative keeps inviting the reader to make comparisons between the two friends that pit Kim's "superior" white, western values against the lama's "inferior" eastern beliefs and values, and, ultimately, to identify with the former and reject the latter. Given that Kipling's audiences predominantly comprised British readers in England, who, as E. F. Oaten explains, expected and responded to the themes, values, and

ideas that were familiar to them, it is not the readers' identification with Kim and the material, Western values he projects that is surprising or problematic, but that this identification is induced at the heavy cost of the disparagement of the lama's character.[22]

Though the first chapter raises the expectation that Kim will be influenced by the lama's teachings and become equipped with an alternative, competing discourse that might make him resist his eventual integration into the white world, the narrator does not entertain this scenario by repeatedly occluding the lama's potential for expressing his cultural difference. One way he achieves this is by essentially rendering the lama mute for much of the narrative. We are told, for example, that the lama is a "scholar," "an old man, wise and temperate, illumining knowledge with brilliant insight" (209), but because he is often closed off in deep meditation much of his wisdom goes unspoken. Even when directly asked to explain his faith by an admiring fellow traveler on the Trunk Road, the lama fails to live up to his role as the great master teacher. He starts off with promise by calling on the people to listen to him, addressing the eager crowd in their native Urdu, and beginning his tale of the Lord Buddha, but ultimately, as the narrator notes, becomes "borne by his own thoughts" [and] slides into the Tibetan language and long droned texts from a Chinese book about the Buddha's life" (31). Unable to articulate his ideas in a manner that can be understood, the lama is no better than the many holy men of India who go about "stammering in strange tongues, shaken and consumed in the fires of their own zeal" (31), doing nothing effective to promote their listeners' faith.

The lama's cultural difference is also occluded by the narrator's omission of any significant elaboration of the lama's beliefs. In the course of their travels together, Kim (and the reader by extension) does not learn much from the lama whose spiritual tenets are rendered largely through, as Jeffrey Meyers rightly points out, "capitalized abstractions like Desire, Wheel, Way, and Enlightenment, Search, [and the] Cause of Things" (23). This absence of any substantive qualification on the narrator's part make the very little that is offered nothing more than what Said has himself labeled as "mumbo jumbo" (142). The narrator on one occasion seems to make a possible accommodating gesture toward the lama's cultural difference when he/Kipling transliterates into English one of the lama's Tibetan pronouncements, "Om mane pudme bum! Om mane pudme bum!" (32), but, again, it is rendered meaningless because no corresponding explanation follows.

The one main point that the narrative does make clear about the lama's Buddhist Way is that it stresses that all of life is an Illusion and spiritual freedom can be achieved only by escaping the Wheel of Life. In the first two chapters, this belief, which is, incidentally, validated by the English curator, makes the lama seem infinitely wise. As the narrative unfolds, however, the lama's adherence to asceticism seems overwhelmingly harsh and increasingly incomprehensible. In part, this is because his spiritual practices, like his spiritual tenets, are afforded little narrative description that would make them even remotely appealing to the reader. Whatever transcendental wisdom and strength the lama receives remains a mystery enshrouded in his ongoing

internal reflection that seems not to warrant any explanation whether through an assessment by the narrator or in any dialogue with Kim. At best, the lama's meditations are acknowledged only by the clicking of his rosary beads and nothing more.

Closed off from the lama's interior reality, readers' distance is further compounded by the narrator's excessive attention to Kim's perspective. Such treatment is, of course, to be expected for the hero in a *bildungsroman,* but, in the context of the poor treatment afforded to Kim's best friend and constant companion on the road, it functions to keep reader's sympathy *away* from the lama as much as it serves to support Kim. Denied any substantive elaboration by the narrator, the lama and his spiritual world become increasingly segregated into a hazy sphere that is ever present in the narrative, but always too far out of reach to make any sense. The reader, however, may not mind, being directed by the narrator to focus on Kim and his material world, which are rendered through superior clarity and descriptive detail. This is made evident in the lengthy passages the narrator offers concerning the new and exciting world Kim finds on the Grand Trunk Road. Here the narrator seems to spare no detail to convey the sights and sounds that so utterly delight Kim.

> . . . The diamond-bright dawn woke men and crows and bullocks together . . . Kim . . . thrilled with delight. This was seeing the world in real truth; this was life as he would have it - bustling and shouting, the buckling of belts, and beating of bullocks and creaking of wheels, lighting of fires and cooking of food, and new sights at every turn of the approving eye. The

> morning mist swept off in a whorl of silver, the parrots shot away to some distant river in shrieking green hosts: all the well-wheels within ear-shot went to work. India was awake, and Kim was in the middle of it, more awake and more excited than anyone . . . (81)

In other passages, the narrator complements the vibrancy of the physical world by offering more poignant details:

> . . . It was beautiful to behold the many yoked grain and cotton wagons crawling over the country roads: one could hear their axles, complaining a mile away, coming nearer, till with shouts and yells and bad words they climbed over the steep incline and plunged on to the hard main road . . . It was beautiful to watch the people, little clumps of red and blue and pink and white and saffron, turning aside to go their own villages, dispersing and growing small by twos and threes across the level plain. . . . (81)

Exposing the landscape through Kim's ebullient and alternatively contemplative perspective, the narrator induces readers' identification with not just the protagonist but the material world itself. The narrator's efforts through these richly detailed passages describing life on the Grand Trunk Road, perform what Catherine Belsey in her discussion of the classic realist novel refers to as the "work of ideology," which succeeds in interpellating the reader as subject so that s/he is invited to "perceive and judge the 'truth' of the text," that is, "the coherent, non-contradictory interpretation of the world as

it is perceived by the author whose autonomy is the source and evidence of the truth of the interpretation (63).[23] Though the narrator articulates Kim's perspective, various authorial assessments of the scene are transparently woven into the captivating, colorful, and poignant details with little or no qualification by the narrator -- "this *was* seeing the world in truth; this was life as he would have it;" "It *was* a beautiful sight to behold;" It *was* beautiful to watch" (81;emphasis mine) thus, allowing the descriptions to give readers not just a highly sensory experience of the material world, but a shared understanding of the meaning and value of that world, inducing their compliance so that the sights laid out in front of them are indeed beautiful to behold even if, say, they might not otherwise deem swearing wagoneers and itinerant travelers as such. These passages, incidentally, rendered early in the novel, are artfully conducive in achieving a social cohesion and friendship between the reader and the material world and the colonizing culture who also appreciates it.

As if to cement readers' intimacy with Kim's world further and maintain the divide that is being increasingly broached between readers and the lama and his spiritual world, the narrator includes the lama's reaction to the same sights that delight Kim, which, incidentally, is included immediately after a particularly dense passage that heaps detail upon detail to describe the veritable moving feast that is the Grand Trunk Road. After enjoying a long, colorful stream of merrymakers, sweetmeats sellers, and marriage processions as well as the scent of marigolds and jasmine and sounds of laughter, haggling, music and shouting, readers are confronted with the sobering presence of the

lama: "The lama never raised his eyes. *He did not see*. . . He looked steadily to the ground, and strode as steadily hour after hour, his soul busied everywhere. *But* Kim was in seventh heaven (61; emphasis mine). Juxtapositioned against Kim's buoyant response, the lama's obliviousness to the world around him creates a sharp contrast disappointing readers who have been conditioned through Kim's perspective to see the beauty of life on the road, but, perhaps, the lama's remarks to Kim may prove even more offensive. When Kim exclaims that the "land is good," the lama finally emerges from his spiritual cocoon only to moralize: "And they are all bound upon the Wheel . . . Bound from life after life" (61). Though he speaks through the spiritual convictions he has come to value over the course of fifty plus years, the lama's response eludes the reader's understanding, coming across as unduly harsh and judgmental because they have not been substantiated in the preceding narrative.

In the later chapters of the novel, the narrator continues to steadily diminish the lama's presence and potential to influence Kim (and, by extension, the reading audience). The lama's shortcomings are especially reiterated when Kim returns to the old man while on a break from school. Here the narrator's representation of the lama invites the reader to question the lama's concern for Kim, because he, despite his emotional love for his chela, appears completely self-absorbed in the pursuit of his own quest, so much so that he remains oblivious to the changes Kim has undergone after going to St. Xavier's. Instead of finding out how his chela has fared in the company of the Sahibs, the lama

seems careless to investigate these matters; but, again, this can be read as an assessment instigated by the narrator who states:

> But it was noticeable that the lama never asked him [Kim] any questions for any details of his life at St. Xavier's, nor showed the faintest curiosity as to the manner and customs of the Sahibs. His mind seemed all in the past and he revived every step of their journey together. (190)

Given that the reader has borne witness to Kim's development into an intelligent, capable, contemplative spy, the lama seems inconsiderate and self-absorbed, but when he later tells Kim rather contently: "We are now together, and *all things are as they were,* my chela," he suggests other weaknesses in his character, namely, his deep-seated reliance on Kim's presence in his life as well as his reluctance to accept change (190; emphasis mine).

Whereas the lama's growth has been stunted, Kim has undergone some significant changes after spending time in the Sahibs' rational world. And though he is able to resume his role as chela with no difficulty, the narrator makes sure to highlight Kim's achievements in education and espionage, for which Kim receives much praise from his other teachers and mentors in the narrative. Still the ever dutiful chela, Kim now begins articulating his western rationale, and, not surprisingly, it comes at the expense of the

lama's character and spiritual values. Coming upon the base of a vast immortal cliff, and being partial to the hills by virtue of his home in Tibet, the lama states in a moment of profound reflection, "Here . . . indeed are my hills. Thus a man should abide perched above the world, separated from delights, considering vast matters" (247). To this Kim responds, "Yes, if he has a chela to prepare tea for him and to fold a blanket for his head and to chase out calving cows" (247). Though the lama disregards what Kim says, the significance of the comic quip, is not lost on the reader who by now possesses a clear understanding of Kim's devotion to the lama, and can, therefore, read between the lines of the joke to know that the lama's spiritual contemplation is a luxury, supported wholly by his chela's physical labor.

While the lama's character is afforded more presence and dialogue toward the end of narrative, his adherence to the spiritual world still makes little sense, especially now as it comes against the harsh reality of Kim's world of espionage of which he knows so very little. One crucial episode reveals how the lama, who was required to make his own way during Kim's absence, has not learned much concerning how to handle himself in the material world unlike his chela who, as a result of his education at St. Xavier's, now follows the notion that "action is befitting a Sahib" (208). It is precisely this understanding that effectively equips Kim to handle any situation that may come his way. This disparity between Kim and the lama is highlighted toward the end of the novel in an episode that sees the two friends in a violent confrontation with the Russian and French spies, one of whom attacks the lama. In this crisis situation, the lama is radically

disturbed not by the act of violence enacted against him, but by his own angry internal response to it. With very little in the text to validate his religious beliefs, the lama's self-deprecating explanation comes across as excessively irrational:

> Had I been passionless, the evil blow [from the Russian spy] would have only done bodily evil - a scar, or a bruise – which is an illusion. But my mind was not abstracted . . . in fighting that lust, my soul was wrenched beyond a thousand blows. . . that moment's carelessness works out to its end. (246)

By regretting the humanity of his reaction, the lama indicts himself to the realm of the inhumane. As if to stress this point further, Kim himself undercuts the lama's spirituality. When the lama admonishes him to "learn the lesson" he has just learned, Kim mutters "It is too high for me . . . I am glad I hurt the man" (246).

Of the various ways in which the narrator negatively represents the lama, it is his alteration of the typical ending of the *bildungsroman* form where this character, arguably, becomes most disenfranchised and the potential of his cultural difference most egregiously occluded. Typically the *bildung* protagonist ascertains some sense of closure that sees him/her reconciled with the society against which s/he has had to navigate his/her life. This is most certainly true of Kim, who, after oscillating back and forth between his rational identity as a Sahib and, respectively, his emotional identity as chela, asking himself "Who is Kim? What is Kim?" in the process, finally comes to know that

his place belongs not in the lama's spiritual world but, instead, in the living, breathing material world. After suffering a period of illness in the wake of the Russian spy incident, and recuperating at the residence of the Sahiba, Kim achieves an epiphany:

> . . . with an audible click he felt the wheels of his being lock up anew on the world without. Things that rode meaningless on his eyeball an instant before slid into proper proportion. Roads were meant to be walked upon, houses to be lived in, cattle to be driven, fields to be tilled, and men and woman to be talked to. They were all real and true – solidly planted upon the feet – perfectly comprehensible. . . (234)

Kim's epiphany is significant in more ways than one. Firstly, it is obviously important because it gives him the closure regarding the path he must take in life -- the wheels of his life have run their course and are now locked into position, making it abundantly clear that he is to leave the lama and wholeheartedly pursue the material world and the active work of the Sahib, by engaging directly with the land and its people. The epiphany is also significant, however, because aside from delineating Kim's designated path in life, it can be read as a directive not just for Kim, but for readers as well, reiterating the "truth" of the text as upheld by the narrator's/Kipling's ideological values -- "Roads *were meant* to be walked upon, cattle *to be* driven, fields *to be* tilled, and men and women *to be* talked to" (emphasis mine). For the readers who have been identifying with Kim all along, and, simultaneously, encouraged to discount the lama's spiritual Way, Kim's

closure, for all intents and purposes, validates for them that the rational, Western way is *the* Way.

What is most striking about Kim's epiphany, however, is that though it offers the closure that is in keeping with the *bildungsroman* form, its structural placement in the novel is not because it appears as the *penultimate* ending instead of the finale. As we soon find out, the narrative still goes on to describe in length the spiritual epiphany the lama achieves. Even so, this narrative aberration diminishes the significance of Kim's closure. His path is certain and his development is complete. As Sharon Montieth states in her comments on the convention of narrative closure in the realist novel, "the protagonist's maturation and self-discovery is 'the end' and this 'ending' forecloses on any further or deeper interaction with others" (146). Kim's epiphany, which directs him to become fully committed to the material world, its peoples, roads, cattle, etc, will be informed by the knowledge, values, and education he has *already* gained, which, is to say, all that he has acquired from being exposed to the colonizer's material world. Nothing now will mitigate his assumption of his racial responsibility and the material world that is meant for his dominion, not even the spiritual epiphany experienced by the lama. Kim's epiphany now forecloses the possibility of any new deep interaction with the lama. That the narrative ends with the lama's epiphany suggests, then, only a continuation of the negative and simplistic treatment his character has received in the course of the preceding narrative and the occlusion of his cultural difference. For whatever enlightenment the lama finally achieves, its significance diminishes because it

will have no effect on his beloved chela whose development has now been hermetically sealed.

Furthermore, as Kim is now firmly anchored in the material world, he is, likewise, in no state of mind to even slightly appreciate the lama's testimony, which, ironically, is more lucid, detailed and accessible than any of his previous comments. As we see in the final passages, the emotional bond between them starts dissolving and a palpable gap starts forming that prevents them from understanding the significance of each other's epiphany. Kim, who up to this point had been deeply and physically invested in the achievement of the lama's spiritual quest, is unable to offer an excited response when the lama begins disclosing his spiritual revelations.

> "Hear me! I bring news . . . Hear me! I bring news!," The Search is finished. Comes now the reward" . . . I took no food. I took no water. I sat in meditation for two days and two nights, abstracting my mind . . . upon the second night so great was my reward the wise soul loosed itself from the silly body and went free. . . . (283)

Being now of sound mind and body, Kim hears the lama's words through the filter of the material world, and responds as only an unbeliever attuned to the needs of the flesh can: "A marvel indeed. Two days and two nights without food!" (282). Being so newly borne of the spirit, however, the lama takes no note of Kim's remark and continues narrating his lengthy epiphany, explaining: "Yea, my soul went free, and like a wheeling eagle . . . my

soul drew near to the Great Soul which is beyond all things. I knew the soul had passed beyond Time and Space and Things . . . By this I knew I was free" (282).

Continuing, the lama explains how he on the verge of utter salvation worries about the spiritual welfare of his beloved chela: "Then a voice cried 'What shall come to the boy if thou art dead?' And I was shaken back and forth in myself with pity for thee; and I said: 'I will return to my chela lest he miss the Way" (283). The lama further goes on to explain how he withdrew from the "Great Soul" in great agony, postponing his salvation in order to return to Kim, and then subsequently falling into the River of the Arrow, which, apparently, had been existing all along on the Sahiba's property. The lama's passionate account, however, is undercut again by the materialist Kim who is more interested in matters of the body, not the spirit. Instead of marveling at the lama's discovery of the River that for so long eluded him, Kim asks, "Wast thou very wet?" (283) before going on to inquire about the Sahiba's reaction upon hearing the lama's story, suggesting a tinge of disbelief regarding the account.

While the lama's return to Kim is in keeping with the doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism, which sees the spiritual master seek out the salvation of his kindred souls as well as his own, there is no qualification by the narrator either here or in the preceding narrative showing that it is reflective of his spiritual beliefs.[24] As is suggested in the lama's disclosure, the voice the lama hears is unanticipated and, though it asks a rhetorical question, it is not a direct command. The lama's return, then, is presented as a matter of personal, emotional choice borne of sheer concern for the well-being of the

beloved chela. This conflation between the spiritual and material again occludes the potential of lama's cultural difference to serve as an alternative discourse to compete with the colonizer's values to which Kim has now fully subscribed. In effect, the clarity and voice finally afforded the lama is significant only to the extent that it supports the ideological truth Kim learns through his epiphany, stressing the importance of material connections between people. As Zohreh T. Sullivan explains, the lama's return serves only to valorize "the world of action, will, and choice over the renunciation and austerity" of the spiritual world (449). In this context, the lama's final disclosure also supports the material world because the lama passionately shares his epiphany with Kim, inviting him to join him: "I have found it. Son of my soul, I have wrenched my soul from the Threshold of Freedom to free thee from all sin – as I am free, and sinless, Just is the Wheel! Certain is our Deliverance. Come!" (283-4). As confident and commanding as the lama's plea is, it is met with no response on Kim's part. That the lama's excitement is met with silence is not surprising if we consider, as I have discussed above, that Kim's maturation in the novel's penultimate ending "forecloses any further or deeper interaction with others."

Interestingly, the lama's excited speech does not end the novel. Kipling reserves the final words for his third-person narrator who proffers one last thought for readers' own meditation concerning the lama. The narrator states: "He crossed his hands on his lap and smiled, as a man *may* who has won Salvation for himself and his beloved" (284; emphasis mine). A simple sentence, yes, but in the context of the preceding passages and

narrative as a whole, it suggests something more than an objective, quiet afterthought. Allowing the lama to achieve his quest and express his subjectivity though his passionate exclamation illustrates the narrator's accommodation for cultural diversity, but this gesture will not come at the cost of diminishing the colonizer's material world, which, as I discussed above, Kim has successfully validated in his own epiphany. The lama, then, cannot have the last and final word. Offering a simple observation *after* the lama's passionate plea, the narrator forecloses the possibility of influence the lama may potentially exert over the audience, through his passionate expression of cultural difference. As did his previous disclosures concerning the lama, the narrator's observation here has the effect of putting the lama back into his usual inarticulate place. As quickly as the lama's voice has erupted the narrative surface, the narrator's single sentence neatly shuts it down, reducing the lama back into his physical body: "He crossed his hands and smiled…" Once again, the lama becomes the familiar object we have seen all along in the preceding narrative. Striking a pose and a smile that likens him to the statues of the Great Buddha at the Lahore museum, the lama is, at novel's end, a "treasure locked" (10), fixed into an eternity that only he understands.

CHAPTER 3

"BOUTIQUE MULTICULTURALISM" AND THE QUESTION OF FRIENDSHIP IN E. M. FORSTER'S *A PASSAGE TO INDIA*

Only connect - *Howard's End*

I believe in personal relationships . . . If I had the choice of betraying my country or my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country. - E.M. Forster

Genuine and thorough comprehension of Otherness is possible only if the self can somehow negate or at least severely bracket the values, assumptions and ideology of his [own] culture - Abdul JanMohamed

If, as I have argued in the previous chapter, Kipling's *Kim* painstakingly occludes the political dynamics and tension between colonizer and colonized in order to achieve interracial friendship and racial harmony, E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (*Passage*) illuminates them to underscore their divisive effects between the British and Indians.[1] Nowhere is this more apparent than in the novel's final exchange between the principle characters: Mohammed Aziz, a physician in the service of the Raj, and Cyril Fielding, the headmaster of a government college in Chandrapore where the novel is set. Incited by Fielding's mockery of an independent India, Aziz declares: "Down with the English . . . Clear out you fellows, double quick, I say . . . [even] if it's fifty-five hundred years we shall get rid of you, yes, we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea

. . . and then . . . you and I shall be friends" (362). Aziz's declaration reflects Forster's own support for the end of colonial rule, but the novel is not simply a staunch political tract for Indian independence. Much of the preceding narrative offers more nuanced expressions of the political tensions surrounding the colonial encounter in British India because Forster's main concern is the personal relationship between the colonizer and colonized. Forster problemitizes this relationship through the question of interracial friendship that is raised early in the novel, entertained unsuccessfully throughout the subsequent chapters, and left hanging with angst in the mournful conclusion.

Setting the novel in the early 1900s, roughly 20-25 years before its 1924 publication date, Forster looks backward to re-present the colonial contact zone as a space of unrealized potential for productive interracial exchange. Though Indians, such Professor Godbole (who teaches at Fielding's school) and the Nawab (the local Chandraporean royalty) comprise the cast of characters and while Aziz is a central character who remains at the heart of the main plot and dilemma, Forster's novel is less concerned with representing the native people of the subcontinent than he is with the British -- those who have *literally made the passage to India.* The setting in *Passage* is not the England or Italy featured in his other novels, but Forster's preoccupation with the British characters illustrates what Forster is generally known to do best -- wielding the power of the pen to critique the character of the British and explore the limitations of the value systems to which they subscribe. Even while the limitations of Aziz's character is revealed and Aziz's own misunderstandings contribute to the strain his friendship with

Fielding undergoes, Forster reserves his most incisive and sustained critiques of human flaws for the British, exposing their culpability for being unable to achieve progressive relationships with those whom they colonized.

Forster's undertaking in *Passage* does not seek to ideologically redress the social ills of empire; for empire, as Forster believed, was beyond redemption. As Philip Darby explains, *Passage* and other English novels set in colonial India and written during the inter-war years play out "what is happening in this transitional period, not so much with an eye to what might be done to put things right but with the intention of establishing what went wrong much earlier" (105). These narratives engage in what Darby describes as a "fictional exercise [that] becomes a post-imperial lament about mistaken turnings and lost opportunities" (105). Referring to the novel's representation of the potential for progressive relations between the British and Indians, Darby adds that *Passage,* represents the "classic expression" of an "opening up [of] the sense of promise or expectancy which in fact represents an inquiry into . . . [what Forster himself calls] a historical 'might-have-been' (105). As we note the omniscient narrator's comment about one insensitive colonizer, "One touch of regret not the canny substitute but a true regret from the heart would have made him a different man and the British empire a different institution (53)," *Passage* can be read as an elegy for the interracial friendship that never was.

The novel's attentiveness to interracial friendship follows suit with Forster's oft-cited personal desire to build relationships between peoples and things existing on

opposing sides of some seemingly intransigent divide. As Cyril Connelly states of Forster's works, "His themes are the breaking down of barriers: between white and black, between class and class, between man and woman, between art and life. "Only connect," the epigraph of *Howard's End* might very well be the lesson of all his work" (6). However, as Forster's novels likewise reveal, attaining and sustaining personal connections prove to be formidable challenges given the dominance of restrictive English traditions and mores that privilege and insist upon hierarchies and exclusions. In what is one of Forster's most famous remarks, in which he states he would hope he would have the "guts" to betray his country rather than his friend, we understand how difficult it is to demonstrate allegiance to personal relationships, to one's own friend, in the face of those larger, more "significant" power structures of society, even for those of us, such as Forster himself, who most ardently wish to do so.[2]

In *Passage,* the test of an individual's strength against dominant discourses is tied hand in hand with the question of interracial friendship. The potential for making connections across the racial divide is entertained repeatedly in the narrative, but is likewise challenged constantly because, as the text reveals, the imperialism that begat British colonization informs the lives of even the most sympathetic of British characters (of which Fielding is the foremost) who desire to "connect" with Indians. Consequently, interracial friendship fails as is made evident in the haunting conclusion. Here, Aziz's dissolution of his friendship with Fielding is made all the more wistful because the anthropomorphic voices of the metaphysical Indian landscape have also weighed in their

heavy response, refusing to sanction the friendship between the two men who happen to be riding in the hills of Mau during what will be their last time together. Even as Fielding asks, of Aziz "why can't we be friends?" and declares, "It's what you want. It's what I want," the narrator informs us:

> But the horses didn't want it – they swerved apart; . . . the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which the riders must pass single file . . . the temple, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House . . . they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, 'No, not yet,' and the sky said, 'No, not there.' (356)

Nature's blunt, repetitive negation of interracial friendship as well its rocky landscape, which forces Aziz and Fielding to physically separate and ride "single file," makes for a bleak, ominous conclusion, sorely testing the viability of Forster's imperative to "only connect." For Edward Said, the novel's end evokes an unbridgeable racial divide. Commenting on the novel's "disappointing" conclusion, he states, "We are left in the end with a sense of pathetic distance still separating 'us' from an Orient destined to bear its foreignness as a mark of its estrangement from the West" (244). Said's reading can be supported by the preceding narrative's frequent abstractions of India, which is represented not so much as a place where actual Indians live but, instead, as an alien, inhospitable, and foreboding land that confounds the senses --"how can the mind take hold of such a country?," asks the narrator (150). Despite its Orientalist leanings, however, the novel's textual and thematic complexities also open up for us other

interpretations; for the novel, as other critics have argued, is indeterminate and often contradictory in a number of ways, evoking what Paul Armstrong refers to as narrative "double-turns" (371). The narrator, for example, offers a scathing critique of the colonial administrators of Chandrapore, calling attention to their ignorance about Indians/ Indian cultural values and undermining their presumed knowledge of the people they rule, but, yet, he himself does not refrain from making his own sweeping generalizations of the so-called Oriental. Likewise, the novel, like so much other colonial fiction, thematically raises up the colonial trope of rape and its itinerant discourse of the fear of the dangerous black man only to have the alleged rapist Aziz (who is arrested and tried for raping Englishwoman Adela Quested) cleared of all charges and freed.[3] Another example of the unwieldiness of the novel can be seen in the indefinite nature of the relationship between Aziz and Fielding, which functions platonically on the surface of the narrative, but which illustrates a hidden homoeroticism, as many critics have argued.[4] Most confounding of the novel's indeterminate features are the textual gaps, silences, and omissions in the narrative that our omniscient narrator does not clear up for us, thus leaving unanswered our most pressing questions: Has Ms. Quested actually been raped, and, if so, who is the perpetrator? And what of those enigmatic Marabar Caves (site of the alleged rape) whose symbolic presence pervades the novel's entirety—what exactly do they signify?

At the end of the novel, we see again the narrative's proclivity for indeterminacy. The conclusion underscores nature's disavowal of interracial friendship; however, it does not render it an eternal impossibility. Even as it issues a racial divide in the time of the

now, it simultaneously looks beyond it through that small shred of saving grace, that tiny loophole of hope emerging in the final words ending the novel: "No, *not yet* and no, *not there*." (emphasis mine), thus maintaining the possibility of interracial friendship in some other time and place. What conditions are required for that more progressive time and place to materialize and accommodate interracial friendship? Given that Aziz and Fielding's friendship is broken even despite the emotive exchanges between them (Aziz seals his declaration with a half-kiss and Fielding expresses, as cited above, his longing for Aziz's friendship, saying both he and Aziz "want" friendship), we can understand that neither love nor sheer desire is enough to sustain the relationship between the two men. And, in this regard, *Passage* disavows fraternity, that ever popular idealized form of Western friendship that, as Jacques Derrida comments, prioritizes love, loyalty, and unity and overrides differences political or otherwise between peoples to promote universal brotherhood.[5] The most obvious condition, of course, for future interracial friendship emerges in Aziz's own political ultimatum that calls for the end of British rule before he and Fielding can become friends. Whereas early in the novel, Aziz would have been content with Fielding's love and kindness, his development in the course of the novel into an Indian nationalist now requires that Fielding become a political friend more so than an emotional one who can appreciate and support his (Aziz's) political values for an independent India.[6] However, even Fielding's love for Aziz does not persuade him to become that friend whom Aziz now seeks. Fielding's comments betray a deep-seated imperialism that shows no signs of waning even if it results in a broken friendship with

Aziz. Just prior to Aziz's declaration, Fielding remarks "Away from us (British) you Indians go to seed at once… India a nation! What an apotheosis!" (361).

The challenge to friendship posed by Fielding's imperialism is also reflected in the novel's other two sympathetic British characters: Adela Quested, newly arrived to Chandrapore from England to visit her fiancé Ronny Heaslop, the city magistrate, and Mrs. Moore, Ronny's mother who accompanies Adela to India. All three sympathetic characters are starkly different from their imperialist compatriots as they each have an appreciation for India/Indians and cultural diversity, which allows them to be open to friendship with Aziz/Indians and positions them as potential disrupters of the colonial discourses of British/white superiority (espoused by their fellow compatriots) on which the colonizing mission so crucially depends. Their potential, however, remains unrealized because they are much too informed by those same discourses to overthrow them. If, as Abdul JanMohamed tells us that, "Genuine and thorough comprehension of Otherness is possible only if the self can somehow negate or at least severely bracket the values, assumptions, and ideology of his own culture" (65) then these characters' cultural appreciation for India/Indians has little chance to succeed because the characters (unbeknownst to them) are much too invested in the colonial discourses as well as other western-oriented value systems to be able to bracket them off. Of course, we cannot fault these characters for being unable to comprehensively identify with Otherness because this ideal, as JanMohamed acknowledges, "entails in practice the virtually impossible task of negating one's very being, precisely because one's culture is what formed that

being" (65). But, Forster's dramatization of these characters' unsuccessful personal encounters with Indian cultural difference is not insignificant. The point he is making is not so much that they cannot achieve "thorough" and "genuine" "comprehension of otherness" (for who in the world would be able to achieve that?) but that they are, firstly, unable to see how their thoughts and actions are indeed informed by larger ideological discourses and, secondly, when they are confronted by Indian cultural difference, they are unable bracket their own cultural, intellectual, or spiritual values as being different *not* superior to those presented by India. These characters have difficulty seeing how Other perspectives and values are valid in their own right and cannot be judged by one's own (dominant) beliefs and values, which one may presume (consciously or subconsciously) to be the standard against which others should be measured. These characters take their own perspectives and values for granted, believing that they are not subject to the question of difference that they naturally assign to their Indian Others. As a result, these three sympathetic characters prove to be more similar *not* different from their more overtly imperialist compatriots than we readers may have previously imagined. Unable to move beyond their own dominant frame of reference, their attempts at interracial friendship with Indians fail.

In Forster's dramatization of the difficulties of resisting discursive dominant values that insist upon the racial divide and impede interracial friendship even as the colonial Self may try to bridge that divide by appreciating or even loving the Other, we see the relevance of *Passage* to our own contemporary world because it anticipates the

debate and critiques concerning the multiculturalist discourses that have been circulating for the past several decades in many of today's racially plural societies. Such discourses have yielded buzz words such as tolerance, acceptance, inclusion, and diversity, and have been sometimes idealistically rendered through colorful clothing advertisements featuring a range of racialized bodies "getting along." On the surface, these discourses seem positive and progressive in that they acknowledge and accept that what may have once been or perceived as a largely monoculturalist society is indeed no longer applicable or appropriate. This multiculturalist trajectory is infinitely preferable to discourses of exclusion that may have been expressed in the past or continue to be expressed against racialized others (immigrants, guest workers, refugees, etc.) within a given nation. But, as some critics argue, these multiculturalist discourses' ostensible acceptance or respect for other cultures belies an unprogressive undercurrent; cultural diversity is tolerable only as long as it does not threaten the dominant cultural authority. Homi Bhabha is one such critic. He explains how even within those societies promoting multiculturalism, ". . . cultural diversity is entertained and encouraged, [but] it is simultaneously contained [because]. . . A transparent norm is constituted, a norm given by the host society or dominant culture, which says . . . 'these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within *our own grid'* " (208; emphasis mine). As we can obviously infer, dominant cultures' necessity to locate Other cultures into their grid presupposes that that grid is legitimate and valid and that Other peoples' practices, beliefs and value systems that do not conform with it are unacceptable.

Stanley Fish, offers a detailed discussion that complements Bhabha's in that it attests to how flimsy one's appreciation for cultural diversity might reveal itself to be when an/Other culture cannot neatly fit into one's own grid. Fish bases his discussion through what he conceptualizes as "boutique multiculturalism." According to Fish, boutique multiculturalism is characterized by the superficial or cosmetic relationship to the objects of its affection such that boutique multiculturalists admire or appreciate or enjoy or sympathize with or (at the very least) "recognize the legitimacy of the traditions of cultures other than their own; but they always stop short of approving other cultures at a point where some value at their center generates an act that offends against the *canons of civilized decency as they have been either declared or assumed* [and are applicable to all peoples and cultures] (378; emphasis mine). Fish illustrates his point saying:

> A boutique multiculturalist may find something of value in rap music and patronize (pun intended) soul-food restaurants, but he will be uneasy about affirmative action and downright hostile to an afrocentrist curriculum . . . A boutique multiculturalist may honor the tenets of a religion other than his own, but he will draw the line when the adherents of a religion engage in the practice of polygamy. (378)

Fish explains that the boutique multiculturalist cannot accept the Other's differing values because s/he cannot imagine them as the legitimate core values; s/he only imagines such differences as (egregious) superficial overlays masking the essential human values that serve as the foundation for all peoples. Fish illustrates this point through politicized

examples when he states;

> The boutique multiculturalist resists the force of the culture he appreciates at precisely the point at which it matters most to its strongly committed members, the points at which the African American tries to make the content of his culture the content of his children's education, the point at which a Native American wants to practice his religion as its ancient rituals direct him to . . . (379)

As Fish's examples reveal, the presumed threat to one's own beliefs and/or political power is what drives the boutique multiculturalist to resist Other peoples' cultural values, perspectives, and practices.

While Forster, writing *Passage* in the early 20th-century, could not have anticipated the debates and discourses Bhabha and Fish expound upon in reference to the post-colonial contact zones of today's world, his novel demonstrates a prescient understanding of the problems, issues and questions surrounding contemporary race relations and multiculturalist discourses. The three sympathetic British characters he represents in *Passage* can be read as boutique multiculturalists because their interracial friendships fail as a result of their inability or reluctance to accept the legitimacy of Indian cultural difference (i.e. the values and practices informing their Indian Others that are incommensurable with and threaten those British/Western-oriented values they themselves hold dear). Forster's dramatization of these three characters' Indian cultural

difference, which forces them to examine the value systems informing their lives that they had previously taken for granted, offer important insights for so many of us in today's world where encounters with cultural and social difference emerge as everyday encounters in person or on-line as a result of globalization and ever-expanding and increasing technological achievements.

Critic Paul Armstrong also establishes Forster's relevance to today's world. He situates Forster within the camp of "liberal ironists," which, he explains, follows American philosopher Richard Rorty's notion of liberal irony. "Liberal ironists," as Armstrong tells us, "combine commitment with a sense of the contingency of their own commitment." Armstrong expresses the ideological value he reads in *Passage* when he states,

> Forster's great novel of India stages for the reader what it might mean to practice politics under erasure – to pursue ideals of justice and humanity with full faith in their claims to validity, even as one recognizes that any norms (including one's own) are perspectivival constructs, which cannot finally legitimate themselves. (367)

As Armstrong continues, he offers a thought-provoking question he believes *Passage* raises for us: "How can one commit oneself to the realization of particular values and beliefs while maintaining an ironic awareness of their contingency and contestability, their incommensurability with other equally plausible ways of thinking?" (365). If we

agree with the premise of Armstrong's question, then we understand how achieving progressive race relations involves understanding not only that one's own culture(s), values and beliefs systems may very well be incompatible with another's/Others,' but that all cultural values and beliefs systems can be called into question and cannot serve as some overarching template for behaviors and practices for all cultures.

Textually, Forster's *Passage* demonstrates an acute understanding of this commitment to contingency and contestability through the narrative ambiguities, questions, and unwieldiness it refuses to set straight. These narrative features illustrate an expression of the novel's own cultural difference. Their ambiguity may be incommensurable with the expectations we readers bring to the text and which we expect to be fulfilled. We do not get clear answers to the many important questions the text raises, nor do we get a clarification of the copious imagery, and, perhaps, most frustrating, we are left wondering who is actually speaking in a given conversation between characters because frequently the speech is not identified with one character or another. Through its expression of textual cultural difference, the novel asks us to confront the "contingency and contestability" of our own (reading) expectations and values that we may have very well taken for granted as being legitimate expectations. How will we negotiate our "passage" through the novel's unwieldy textual cultural difference? Will we be successful at breaking down the "barriers" between "life and art" and "connect" with the novel?

Thematically, the emphasis on the contestability and contingency of all values is

enunciated through Forster's representations of the three sympathetic characters' experiences over the course of the narrative. As the narrative unfolds, their failure to achieve connections and friendships with India/Indians can be attributed to their inability to reconcile their values with those incommensurable values posed by Indians but, more importantly, also to the palpable discomfort, even personal crises, they experience in having the validity of their respective personal values questioned and potentially undermined, in the face of Indian cultural difference. The larger issue, then, underlying the three British characters' attempts to connect with India/Indians is not so much that the East/West divide should be bridged (though it does express this) but that, in order to move toward that idealistic bridging or, in the least, a shortening of the gap between those on either side of the divide is the recognition that the divide itself and the values attached to those sitting on opposing sides therein are indeed, to borrow Armstrong's terms, "perspectivival constructs" set within a *human* grid of beliefs *not* ontological truths. Through both the depiction of the three sympathetic characters' experiences as they confront Indian cultural difference as well as in his representations of the non/less-sympathetic British colonials (Ronny, "the Turtons and Burtons," the police superintendent, etc.), Forster illuminates the contestability and contingency of the British/colonial/western-oriented value systems informing all the members of the ruling race in Chandrapore. Unlike that other great novel of India, Kipling's *Kim,* which never questions the legitimacy of the colonizing mission and thus serves to naturalize colonial rule, *Passage* re-presents the colonizing mission, colonial culture, and British/Western values as deliberate, carefully woven constructions thus rendering visible the discursive

norm of superiority that informs the British characters.

In what follows, I analyze Forster's representation of the colonial venture and colonizing culture and peoples as careful constructions that foster the racial divide and which serve to support British rule and impede interracial friendship. The racial divide, as I continue to discuss, translates into physical segregation and a significant disparity in wealth and accommodations, all of which inhibit interracial friendships. I further analyze the three sympathetic characters' encounters with Indian cultural difference and how their attempts of making connections with India/Indians is impeded by their burgeoning, uncomfortable understanding of the constructedness of their personal (imperialist/Western-oriented) values, which leads them to personal crisis as in the case of Mrs. Moore and Adela, or translates them into ardent supporters of the Raj as it does in the case Fielding and, temporarily, in the case of Adela.

Constructing the Colonial Grid, Constructing the Racial Divide

While Forster, at the time of the publication of *Passage*, earned many a harsh critique for his scathing portrait of the British colonials in ruling in India, the novel is less a personal attack on his fellow countrymen in India as it is against the colonial discourses that inform their value systems. Much of the text challenges the colonial discourse centered upon the notion of what Bhabha terms, "fixity," which determines that the identities of the colonizer and colonized exist in stable, unitary terms that are also

absolutely distinct from and necessarily in conflict with each other.[7] That Forster reads the colonial encounter through the metaphor of friendship and offers moments of exchange and intimacy between the colonizer and colonized is itself an acknowledgement that the two races can exceed presumed irreconcilable differences posed by their respective racial identities. Specifically, however, it is through Forster's incisive treatment of the colonial administrators, the non-sympathetic characters in the novel, where Forster most overtly disrupts colonial discourses.

As the novel unfolds, we see that the colonists have no social relationships with Indians. Hardly a consequence of presumed ontological differences, this lack of intimacy with the colonized is the result of a carefully constructed sense of difference cultivated through the daily habits and customs that constitute the colonists' lives. Maintained vigorously in a variety of ways the ideological construction of colonizer and colonized materializes not just in the emotional distance between the races, but also their physical distance from one another. The first chapter opens not with an introduction to character and plot but, instead, a geographical description of Chandrapore, where both races live in essentially two different worlds. Reflective of the hierarchical society of the colonial world, the indigenous residents of the city are situated in the outskirts and lower lying "abased," "monotonous" area with its "mean streets" and filthy alleys, while the colonists' residential area, "a city of gardens," is situated inland on higher, cleaner ground where "the prospect alters" completely because the toddy palms, neem and mango trees mercifully screen out the rotting city below from the "sensibly planned"

civil station, where "nothing hideous" exists" and "roads. . . intersect at right angles" (3-5). The disparity is so great between Chandrapore's indigenous and colonial sections that "newcomers cannot believe" the city below "to be as meagre as it is described" and "have to be driven to acquire the disillusionment" (5).

Given these spatial constraints of the city, the opportunity for friendship between the races remains bleak at best since "socially" there is "no meeting place" for them (358). This point is underscored early in the novel when Mrs. Moore learns that Aziz cannot be admitted to "The Club" because it is restricted to British patrons only. That the colonists enjoy a more aesthetically pleasing residential area is also an important barrier to social relations between the races since it is Aziz's shame of his own home that prevents him from inviting Mrs. Moore and Adela (and which, incidentally, becomes the catalyst for the ill-fated cave expedition during which the alleged rape is said to occur). Aziz's relief while in Fielding's home where he notes that there is "some luxury . . . but . . . nothing to intimidate poor Indians" (66) further reflects Aziz's discomfort in English spaces. In explaining to Fielding that he had long wanted to meet him, Aziz again reiterates both the squalor of the native quarters and the racial segregation of the city, saying, "But where is one to meet in wretched Chandrapore?" (67). Forster further highlights the paucity of appropriate interracial meeting places when he stresses the ease and frequency of the gatherings between and amongst Indians, which, incidentally, is discussed early in the novel in the opening of Chapter 2.

The physical racial segregation further assures the colonizer's social and metaphoric distance from the Indians as the colonists' structurally rigid, introspective civil station fosters the British characters' general ignorance of Indians' social habits and customs, which, thereby, facilitates their misunderstandings and ill-treatment of them. Major Callender, for example, snubs and later admonishes his subordinate, Aziz, being deeply offended that he has not arrived when expected. Callender is oblivious to the fact that "educated Indians visited one another constantly" (55) and that, consequently, Aziz's social life after hours might actually delay him from appearing instantaneously when summoned. Curtailing their relationships with Indians only to those official ones borne of necessity in the workplace, the colonists lack social graces when dealing with those Indians they happen to meet elsewhere. Ronny, who adamantly subscribes to the belief that the English are in "wretched" India " to control it by force and "not [to be] pleasant ," (52) displays his bad behavior to the shock of his fiancé Adela and his mother Mrs. Moore by being rude to Aziz and Godbole when he meets them at Fielding's tea party. The rudeness to the two men is not necessarily intended, but Ronny is hardly accustomed to such meetings since "the only link he could be conscious of with an Indian was the official, and neither [of them] happened to be his subordinate" (81). Unable to fathom Indians "as private individuals" (81), Ronny treats them as objects to be ordered around.

Presumably, it is the fear of losing their cultural superiority that drives the English to remain so obsessive about maintaining their sense of English identity. Keeping this fear in mind, there is a certain economy in the geographic boundaries of the civil station

because aside from helping to keep the Other out, they create a space within that serves as breeding ground for Englishness. Turning its back on the city and the landscape, the space of the civil station helps reinforces and hone the constructed sense of social and cultural homogeneity of English identity that is practiced by the colonists. Within the boundaries of the civil station, the retention and maintenance of perceived notions of English identity is very much an everyday obsession involving time honored English rituals of having drinks at the club (of which Adela and Mrs. Moore are so "weary" [24]); singing "God Save the Queen;" and reenacting London plays such as *Cousin Kate*." Through the colonists' almost "slavish devotion," to borrow a phrase from Simon Gikundi, to English food that we can see their ardent allegiance to what they ascribe as "Englishness":[8]

> they did drive away from the club in a few minutes, and they did dress, and to dinner they came. . .and the menu was: Julienne soup full of bullety bottled peas, pseudo-cottage bread, fish full of branching bones, pretending to be plaice, more bottled peas with the cutlets, trifle, sardines on toast: the menu of Anglo-India A dish might be added or subtracted as one rose or fell in official scale, the peas might rattle less of more, the sardines and the vermouth be imported by a different firm, but the tradition remained; the food of exiles, cooked by servants who do not understand it. (49)

The colonists' consumption of the repetitive, even unappetizing dishes (fish full of bones and bottled rather than fresh vegetables) as well as the substitutes to which they resort in mimicking home fare reveals not only the lengths to which the colonists go to retain their identity but, perhaps, their fear of losing it. That the servants do not understand the food they are ordered to prepare, speaks less to their inadequacy than the dislocatedness of the ingredients themselves, which either have to be imported from faraway places or substituted with local ones, such as the fish full of branching bones that are clearly not meant to be eaten in the manner of the plaice fish that would otherwise have been served at home in England. Ironically, in the attempt to maintain their homogeneity, the colonists must hybridize their dishes with local ingredients.

The colonists, however, do not rely purely on the repetition of their cultural rituals, food and entertainment in order to keep maintaining and assuring themselves of their identity. The constitution and reconstitution of the English identity depends heavily upon insisting the alterity of the Other. Just like the food and drinks they consume incessantly to affirm their English identity, the colonists repeatedly and, at times, vociferously articulate colonial discourses to assert their superior difference and justify their rule of India. Being so heavily invested in these discursive colonial discourses, the colonists cannot perceive of themselves and their Others in any other way than as opposing collective groups. If there are newcomers who don't necessarily espouse these discourses, they are, as Adela notes, "snubbed in the same good-humored way until they kept to the accredited themes and began to snub others " (49). To further affirm their

own superior conception of themselves, they reduce Indians to a mass onto which they affix vigorously defended stereotypes so as to lock them into presumed otherness. "I know them as they really are" says Police Inspector McBryde to Fielding as he explains his theory on the natural proclivity of Indian males to sexual deviancy: " all . . . natives are criminals at heart, for the simple reason that they live south of latitude 30" (186-7). Ronny, who makes frequent negative comments about Indians, tries to impress his mother and Adela with his extensive knowledge of Indians' habits and behavior as he comments on Aziz's missing collar stud, which unbeknownst to him Aziz has generously given to Fielding: "There you have the native all over again," he says, " inattention to detail; the fundamental slackness that reveals the race" (87). Through their incessant articulations of these and other stereotypes, the colonizers become more like caricatures rather than characters. But, perhaps, this is precisely the irony Forster seeks to reiterate. In the colonizers' attempts to disparagingly categorize the Other, they themselves become disparaged.

The colonists' stereotypes of the Other reveal the gross extent of their racism and ignorance, but they can also be read in another contradictory way that further fractures the colonizer's authority. The currency of the stereotype's presumed truth (that insists upon the inferiority of colonized subject, be it moral, physical, intellectual, etc.) is, as Homi Bhabha explains, not as established as it seems to imply because the supposedly "already known" truth, has to be reconfirmed through endless repetition ("The Other Question" 95). Furthermore, this leads to what Bhabha sees as a "lack" in the colonizer's

psyche, because the stereotype requires him to identify himself in terms of what he is *not* whilst also undermining him because his identity then is partially dependent upon a confrontational relationship with the Other. Forster's representation of the colonists is attentive to the colonizer's need to define his authoritative and superior position over the colonized and demonstrates an underlying concern to expose the fragility and contingency of the colonizer's identity. It is through a small, but potent example in the text involving Ronny that Forster most masterfully demonstrates his cognizance of the ambivalence of colonizer's authority. In this incident, we see Ronny constructing an adversarial relationship with his servants. Being so driven to validate his authority as the colonizer, Ronny feigns anger toward his servants. When Krishna, one of his servants, does not turn up with the files he was supposed to bring his master, the narrator remarks:

> Ronny stormed, shouted, and howled *and only the experienced observer could tell that he was not angry,* did not want the files, and only made a row because it was the custom. Servants, quite understanding, ran slowly in circles, carrying hurricane lamps . . . until the Englishman was appeased by their echoes, fined the absent peon eight annas, and sat down to his arrears in the next room." (104; emphasis mine)

Because we are afforded little access to Ronny's subjectivity, it is not clear whether or not he is aware of his servants' mimicry, which accommodates his feigned anger by offering feigned subservience. Nevertheless, the scenario demonstrates that Ronny is acutely aware that he is required to play the part of the colonizer if he wants to be the

colonizer. In this incident, Forster perfectly captures the colonial mentality George Orwell incisively expresses in his famous line that "A sahib has got to act like a sahib. . . . . . He wears a mask and his face grows to fit" (249).

Forster is careful to note, however, that Ronny's imperialist mind frame is not the result of an ontological condition but, instead, a product of a gradual acquisition. Though he does not change much as events unfold, the novel implies that Ronny has already undergone a transformation wherein he has changed from being an individual with his own opinions into a dutiful colonist who adamantly toes the company line. Ronny's change does not go unobserved by Mrs. Moore, who sees how colonial life has corrupted her son. Recalling his scornful opinions when he originally watched *Cousin Kate* in London, Mrs. Moore sees how "tolerant and conventional his judgments" had become because Ronny now "pretended that it was a good play, in order to hurt no one's feelings" (40). While Mrs. Moore is convinced her son has changed for the worse, Ronny meets with more favorable reviews by the colonial officials including Collector Turton who praises him: "the long and short of it is that [Ronny] Heaslop's a sahib; he's the type we want, he's one of us" (24). As Turton's comments suggest, Ronny's desirability lies exclusively in his ability to cede his individuality and maintain the social solidarity that is needed to keep the empire in business. He cannot be influenced to reject the ways of the collective herd as his pathetic response to his mother's criticism reveals his unwavering allegiance: "Go against my class, against all the people I respect and admire our here? Lose all the power as I have for doing good in this country because my

behaviour isn't pleasing? " (51). Far too invested in the constructed sense of superiority driving British colonial life, Ronny has transformed utterly and beyond the point of no return by the time his mother and Adela arrive in India.

Failing to Connect

Against the backdrop of colonial administrators, Mrs. Moore, Adela, Fielding offer a reprieve from their narrow-minded, imperialist compatriots. They possess values that make them resistant to the mentality of the colonial herd and which are more conducive to making connections rather than creating barriers with Indians: Christian love in the case of Mrs. Moore, intellectual rationalism in the case of Adela Quested, and liberal humanism in the case of Fielding. But, as Forster's treatment of these characters reveal, these value systems do not suffice to adequately address the characters' experiences with Indian cultural difference, illustrating how what may appear to be progressive ideals cannot be taken for granted as systematically, universal appropriate means of navigating the world. As the narrative unfolds, the initial disparity between these characters and the other colonists lessens considerably because Mrs. Moore, Adela, and Fielding also cannot escape the discursive influence of imperialist notions, which reiterate the unequivocal divide between the European/white Self and the racialized Other and prohibit their connection with India/Indians. As a result, the potential of the three sympathetic characters to achieve interracial friendship with Indians is diminished.

Likewise, in the process, these characters have to confront the limits of those values they hold dear and which they are reluctant to give up.

The trauma of having to confront and negate one's own values in the face of Otherness is most acutely experienced by Mrs. Moore, leading to her emotional unraveling and ultimate physical demise, which thus forecloses her chance to connect with Indians . Prior to this crisis, however, Mrs. Moore represents great potential in trying to achieve friendship with Indians since the operative principles in her life are founded upon the Christian tenet "God is love." True to her name, she is moored in her Christian values and expresses them without hesitation to critique her son Ronny's narrow-mindedness. Whereas he is bent upon pursuing the work of empire in ruling the indigenous peoples whom he believes incapable of ruling themselves, Mrs. Moore is resolute in emphasizing the social connections she believes the English have a duty to promote in India. She firmly tells Ronny:

> The English *are* out here to be pleasant. . .Because India is part of the earth. And God has put us on the earth in order to be pleasant to each other. God. . . is . . . love . . . God has put us on the earth to love our neighbors and to show it, and He is omnipresent, even in India, to see how we are succeeding. (53)

Mrs. Moore's capacity to love wins her Aziz's undying respect and affection when they meet by chance one moonlit evening in the ruins of an ancient mosque.

Having experienced only insults and snubs from other Englishwomen, Aziz is amazed that Mrs. Moore has taken off her shoes by her own volition upon entering the mosque. Deeply moved by this act of love and respect for his faith and her willingness to interact with an/Other, Aziz calls her an "Oriental." Mrs. Moore's behavior in the mosque ostensibly bridges the cultural difference between Christianity and Islam, but it can also be read as an accommodation of similarity as well as difference since the two religions though distinct share some general features: both are monotheistic faiths and, as is commonly acknowledged, share historical roots in Abraham and emphasize the importance of a loving God and the tenet of loving one's neighbor. When Mrs. Moore is confronted with an Indian religion that does not conform to the Christian ideals she values, she becomes disturbed and her ability to show love begins to diminish.

Mrs. Moore's first unsettling experience occurs at Fielding's tea party when Godbole, a Hindu, sings a religious song in which a milkmaid's appeals to the god Krishna are repeatedly forsaken. Baffled by Godbole's explanation of the song, Mrs. Moore asks, "But surely He comes in some other song, I hope?" (85), to which he responds, "Oh, no he refuses to come. . .[the milkmaid keeps saying] Come, come, come, come, come, come. [but] He neglects to come" (85). Though Mrs. Moore does not respond to Godbole again, we can infer that her question is posed out of deep concern rather than mere curiosity. A god who neglects to come despite pleas from his followers is antithetical to Mrs. Moore's Christianity, a faith whose underlying tenet establishes that an all-loving and merciful God comes to man unconditionally with the express

purpose of saving him. The "moment of silence" following Godbole's disconcerting explanation in which "no ripple disturbed the water" and "no leaf stirred" (85) underscores the breach that is beginning to form between Mrs. Moore and India as a result of having to confront Godbole's cultural difference, which is incommensurable with her beliefs.

The experience of Godbole's song foreshadows a more significant crisis for Mrs. Moore, which takes place in the mysterious Marabar Caves, the site most deeply inscribed with the weight of India's unknowability. Though regarded as "extraordinary," "no one," as the narrator informs us, "can explain why:"

> Nothing, nothing attaches to them, and their reputation - for they have one – does not depend upon human speech. It is as if the surrounding plain or the passing birds have taken upon themselves to exclaim "extraordinary," and the world has taken root in the air, and been inhaled by mankind" (137).

Defying human explanation, and lacking any notable aesthetic features, the empty, dark caves trouble Mrs. Moore. Up until now, she has appreciated India's physical beauty especially the moonlit Ganges River. The caves, however, offer her no aesthetic pleasure as they contain nothing interesting -- no interesting rock formations, carvings or sculptures that would warrant their extraordinary reputation. In short, the caves do not conform to the aesthetic values informing Mrs. Moore's Western notions of what

constitutes natural beauty. For her, such beauty is characterized as that which can be found in “romantic but manageable places” such as her “beloved ““Grasmere” in England “with its little lakes and mountains” (152).

More so than their appearance, the caves are unsettling because theirs is a space where nothing is defined, and, in this regard, they sharply contrast the other non-threatening places frequented by Mrs. Moore. The club, the mosque, the purdah section of the train that takes her to the Marabar -- all are safe enough because the spaces inside them are clearly delineated. In them, she knows her place, and, perhaps, more importantly, so do others. In the cave space where nothing and no one is distinguished, however, she becomes disconcerted. They do not offer her the distinction to which she is accustomed whether as an Englishwoman, the mother of the city magistrate, or Aziz’s respectable English guest for whom all comforts have been arranged. Such qualifications have no bearing in the Marabar Caves. The close proximity with the villagers as well as the darkness which veils her privileged racial identity causes Mrs. Moore to lose her senses momentarily:

> Crammed with villagers and servants, the circular chamber began to smell. She had lost Adela and Aziz in the dark, didn’t know who touched her, couldn’t breathe and some vile naked thing struck her face and settled on her mouth like a pad. She had tried to regain the entrance tunnel, but an influx of villagers swept her back.. For an instant she went mad, hitting

> and gasping like a fanatic. For not only did the crunch and stench alarm her; there was also a terrifying echo. (162)

As the passage describes, the terrifying experience of the cave makes her, and, by extension, us readers, confront the limits of her ability to love and connect with others, the very thing, she believes, as discussed above, is the God-given purpose of the British in India. Unlike her first foray into an/Other space, Mrs. Moore's cave experience is a radically different experience than what she experienced in the openness of the mosque. It is far easier for Mrs. Moore to spread God's there, a space presided over by a monotheistic God where she can discern her environment and be discerned by Aziz, an educated, Westernized Indian, who pays her the greatest respect. In the darkness of the cave, Mrs. Moore does not know her place and her identity is lost. Engulfed by the crowd of lower class/lower caste Indians, she envisions evilness and yields to the colonial logic that all natives are not to be trusted. In the midst of this crises, Mrs. Moore abandons her mission to love and seeks instead a culprit for her misery in the cave:

> As each person emerged, she looked for a villain, but none was there, and she realized that she had been among the mildest individuals whose only desire was to honor her, and that naked pad was a poor little baby, astride its mother's hip. Nothing evil had been in the cave, but she had not enjoyed herself and she decided not to visit a second one. (163).

While Mrs. Moore is able to forget the rush and stench, she cannot forget the echo of the caves, which "began in some indescribable way to undermine her hold on life." Through the echo she hears an unsettling message: Pathos, piety, courage – they exist, but are identical, and so is filth. Everything exists and nothing has value. If one had spoken vileness in that place, or quoted lofty poetry, the comment would have been the same – "ou-boum" (165). That the caves hold no distinction between good and evil is what is most troubling for Mrs. Moore whose own Christian faith reiterates the necessity of such absolute divisions. Whereas her firm resolve in Christian love once challenged Ronny's colonial rhetoric, her inability in the cave to show that same love to the mass of pagan Indians only seems to support it and imperialist claim that Christianity is the supreme religion.

The experience of the caves overwhelms Mrs. Moore to the point where she eventually withdraws from social life and can love no longer. Her alienation is disappointing because she does not even venture out to defend Aziz, whom she believes to be innocent, from the charges of Adela's rape: "She lost all interest , even in Aziz, and the affectionate and sincere words that she had spoken to him seemed no longer hers, but the air's" (166). Despite this withdrawal from society, Mrs. Moore later manages to achieve some redemption as she opens herself to the Indian landscape she came to loathe in the caves. This experience occurs as she is making the passage home. Having arrived in India with a resolute mission of love, she leaves it contemplating uncertainty. As she

begins her journey out of India, however, Mrs. Moore realizes the strength and viability of the disparate parts its landscape:

> She watched the indestructible life of man and his changing faces, and the houses he has built for himself and his God, and they appeared to her not in terms of her own troubles, but as things to see. . . moonlit pinnacles rushed up at her like the fringes of a sea; then a brief episode of plain, the real sea, the soupy dawn of Bombay. " I have not seen the right places,, she thought, as she saw embayed in the platforms of the Victoria Terminus the end of the rails that had carried her over a continent and could never carry her back. She longed to stop. . .'So you thought an echo was India; you took the Marabar caves as final?' What have we in common with them, or they with us? (233)

Though it is affirming to see Mrs. Moore's bitterness dissipate as she realizes that India is far more expansive than what she previously understood it to be, the realization comes too late and she will pay the price with her death. Thus Mrs. Moore's chance to have a sustained connection with India and Indians is also gone. But, Forster does not let the promise of such connection die with her. Upon the burial of her body at sea, Mrs. Moore's reincarnated spirit makes its way back to Chandrapore. In through this second passage back to India that Mrs. Moore can compensate for the lack of support she failed

to give Aziz in life since her spirit rouses the Indian crowds outside the courthouse into vociferous protest against Aziz's trial. They cry out "Esmiss Esmoor. . . Esmiss Esmoor . . . Esmiss Esmoor. . . Esmiss Esmoor" (250).

Ironically, Mrs. Moore's reincarnation into a minor goddess entrenches her forever into the polytheistic faith of Hinduism, which her Christian beliefs in life oppose. It is also ironic that Mrs. Moore's name is diffused into the air as "Esmiss Esmoor" by the Indians' chanting because this hybridized version of her original name challenges the neat divisions and absolutes to which she once clung. Likewise, it seems a fitting complement to her hybridized spirit that, by the end of the novel, Mrs. Moore's most revered belief, "God is love," has not only been appropriated by Godbole's Hindu festival, but also transformed (by a draughtsman's mistake) and celebrated as "God si love" (320). The mis-appropriation offers a rich example of how connections between people cannot be achieved by one's own intentional terms and conditions.

Like Mrs. Moore's Christian beliefs, Adela's most prominent/promising feature, her intellectual rationalism enables her to disconnect from the collective colonial mentality. Cerebrally equipped to objectively examine the colonists' behavior and critically observe their slavish devotion to English cultural habits, Adela recognizes how susceptible individual newcomers are upon arriving into the narrowly defined fold. Being exposed to the "same food and ideas" and snubbed until they themselves begin to snub others, Adela can see how they are eventually worn down into conformity. Though

she resolves to "never get like that," Adela is astute enough to know that what she had "come up against [was] something that was insidious and tough" (49). Armed with this knowledge, Adela is able to rationalize that her success in resisting such a formidable influence depends on her acquisition of a few likeminded "allies" such as Mr. Fielding (49).

While she is well aware of her own sense of difference from the colonists and strives to retain her individuality in the midst of the civil station's suffocation, Adela is blind to the individuality of the Indians. Though she does not subscribe to the colonist's deplorable treatment of them, she has been influenced by their binary logic. The difference for Adela is that the colonists read the Indian's alterity as terror and lack, while she reads it as an exotic alternative to boring colonial life. To her credit, Adela is able to see that there is more to India than the "superficial glamour" that meets the eye -- " a pageant of birds, brown bodies, white turbans, idols whose flesh was scarlet and blue" (48), but she still can't see Indians as subjective individuals. They are for her part and parcel with an expansive India whose constitution is driven by a spirit, a "force that lies behind it" (48). Foreseeing that married life with Ronny will drown her in the endless monotony of colonial life, while the "true India slid by unnoticed," Adela's quest to "see India" becomes paramount as does Aziz's role as her translator of India. It is Aziz whom she believes "would unlock the secrets of the country for her" (73). Adela's interpretation of India as a country whose secrets need to be unlocked by a native underscores her inability to see India beyond its otherness. She forecloses the possibility

of ever connecting with India because she has already constructed a figurative wall between herself and the India through rationalizing that Aziz can translate the country for her.

At Fielding's tea party, Adela is eager to talk with Aziz, pressing him with questions concerning the puzzling behavior of an Indian couple who failed to make good on their promise of entertaining her and Mrs. Moore. Adela automatically attributes the couple's behavior to some matter of Indian social etiquette of which she is unaware and relies on Aziz, solely by the virtue of his race, to make sense of it. Ironically, Aziz is hardly representative of any Indians including his fellow Muslims because he remains detached from them in many ways.[9] His response to the question about the Indian couple is offered not out of expertise, but, instead, his stereotypical despise of "slack Hindus" (72) as he tells her that they failed to make the visiting arrangements because they were ashamed of their house. Taking everything that Aziz says to be verbally true, Adela is entranced by Aziz's "excited" chatter, and regards "him as India" personified, places him on a "pinnacle," which as the narrator tells, "he could not attain"(76). Her ignorance is "registered by the narrator who notes that she "never surmised that his outlook was limited and that no one was India (76).

Despite her fondness for Aziz, Adela's "pose of seeing" him is as Aziz later remarks in bitterness is "only a form of ruling" because she never extends her view of him to accommodate his subjectivity or feelings. Adela's sense of Aziz as an exotic object is further revealed in her sudden assessment of his physical appearance as she

notes that he is a “handsome little Oriental who would attract women of his own race” (169) Because we readers already know by now that Aziz is a complicated character, Adela’s observation, which occurs while Adela is conversing with Aziz, has a rather disruptive effect seems all the more reductive.

Having only read Aziz in his alterity, it is, perhaps, not so surprising that Adela later in the text allows herself to be influenced by the colonists unequivocally belief that he has indeed raped her when she herself has reservations. In the wake of the alleged attack, Adela is sequestered, as Fielding remorsefully notes, among “people who distrust Indians” (188), and her limited knowledge of Aziz’s individual character cannot bear the weight of the colonists’ discourses of rape. In their collective midst, with no like-minded allies to support her (Fielding is barred from seeing her), Adela’s fear of being engulfed by the colonial mentality have come to fruition. Consequently, the individuality, which she strived to retain, has all but disappeared in the frenzy caused by the trial. No longer the queer Adela Quested whose desire to connect with Indians elicited their wonder and irritation, she has instead become an anonymous “English girl fresh from England” who suffers a heinous crime by the hands of a lecherous Indian (182).

While Adela’s submission to the collective is disappointing, Forster allows her, as he did Mrs. Moore, a measure of redemption during the trial. Upon hearing the name of Mrs. Moore’s reincarnated spirit, “ Emiss, Esmoor,” seeping into the courtroom walls, Adela’s intellect is destabilized and she becomes engulfed by a sensation that enables her to make an “irrational” return to the caves. It is this return which offers Adela a sense of

clarity regarding the fateful trip to the now beautiful Marabar Caves, thereby allowing her to offer some key evidence that will eventually secure Aziz's innocence.

In the midst of this new sensational experience she has in the courtroom, Adela is finally able to "see" an individual Indian, the punkah wallah, who monotonously pushes the fan in the courtroom. Though he is the "most humblest of all who are present" (241), Adela is inspired by his presence, seeing him outside of his low caste status because he appears to her more like a god who is "splendidly formed" and possessing "strength and beauty" (41). Upon observing him, Adela begins questioning the necessity of the trial as well English values and imperialism: "Her particular brand of opinions, and the suburban Jehovah who sanctified them – by what right did they claim so much importance in the world, and assume the title of civilization?" (253). Undoubtedly, this experience is an important step for Adela as it represents her first time connecting with an Indian. She is certainly altered for the better in being able to acknowledge the singularity of the Indian man, who, though romanticized, is afforded some subjectivity, the likes of which he as a low caste man would not receive within his own racial group. But the connection, like Mrs. Moore's, is partial and uni-directional. Adela's recognition of the Punkah Wallah will not alter his material world. English and Indian have not actually become friends. Perhaps this understanding of him could have been more productive had Adela decided to enact upon it with other Indians. But this cannot happen because by the end of the novel, Adela has already made the passage back to England.

If Adela's and Mrs. Moore's failure to connect with India and Indians is disappointing to us readers, then Fielding's failure promises to disappoint the most. Fielding's liberal humanitarianism, his most prominent quality, makes him the most promising candidate for sustaining friendship with Indians. It is through this quality that he is able to see Indians as individuals rather than a collective inferior group. "I believe in teaching people to be individuals and understand other individuals," he tells Aziz before adding, "It's the only thing I do believe in" (131). Unlike, Mrs. Moore who does not support Aziz at the time when he needs it most and Adela who leaves India without actually connecting with Indians individually, Fielding's ideals materialize into impressive actions through his staunch public defense of Aziz's innocence. Fielding offers a powerful expression of political friendship and brave individualism by declaring that he is to resign from the club immediately and will be leaving India if Aziz is found guilty. In the context of such brazen behavior, Fielding's eventual failure in sustaining a viable friendship with Aziz is as surprising as it is disappointing.

Fielding's failure can be traced not before or during the trial, but to its aftermath. Like Mrs. Moore and Adela, he undergoes a critical experience that tests his values. While Mrs. Moore dies and becomes spiritually linked with Indians and Adela's expulsion from the colonial herd causes her to leave India forever, Fielding's transformation, ironically, leads him to become entrenched in the colonist's collective fold, which for so long he has eschewed. While the women undergo their respective crises after they have made the passage into India, Fielding's change occurs as he makes

the passage *out* of India when he is sent away to England on school business. As he makes the sea journey away from India and closer to Europe, Fielding starts to see India in the presumed alterity that informs the colonists' way of life. Whereas his content existence in the social margins has not accommodated the constructed division

between all things English and Indian, Fielding's journey out of India induces in him an objective view that replaces the subjectivity he has heretofore afforded India and Indians. As he travels further away from the subcontinent, Fielding becomes metaphorically distanced from the Indians with whom he has already made connections (Aziz, Godlbole, his students) and becomes fixated on the geography of places outside of India, admiring their beauty and form and in the process comparing them to what he now see as the formless of India:

> The buildings of Venice, like the mountains of Crete and the fields of Egypt stood in the right place, whereas in poor India everything was wrong. He had forgotten the beauty and form among idol temples and lumpy hills; indeed, without form, how can there be beauty? . . . the harmony between the works of man and the earth that uphold them, the civilization that has escaped muddle, the spirit in reasonable form, and that this constituted serious barrier. Writing picture post-cards to his Indian friends, he felt that all of them would miss the joys he experienced now, the joys of form. They would see the sumptuousness of Venice, not its shape, and though Venice was not Europe, it was part of the

> Mediterranean harmony. When men leave that exquisite lake, whether through the Bosphorus or the Pillars of Hercules, they approach the monstrous and extraordinary; and the southern exit leads to the strangest experience of all. Turning his back on it yet again, he took the train northward, and tender romantic fancies that he thought were dead for ever, flowered when he saw the buttercups and daisies in June. (314)

In an interesting twist, Fielding's transformation is instigated by a romantic lens through which he sees the Mediterranean, but which he never has attached to India. India for Fielding had never been an abstraction, but rather a place inhabited by individuals. As a result of leaving India, however, he regards Indians collectively and they become an abstraction when he anticipates that all his Indian friends will not be able to appreciate the beauty of form. In short, Fielding's physical distance from India encourages his emotional distance from it.

Fielding's altered character has little hope of transforming back to its previous self. His admiration of form and structure becomes the dominating metaphor for the rest of his life. When he returns to the motherland, he becomes rooted in the very forms and structure of the English society, which he had for so long eschewed, by taking up a wife and family. Married and expecting his first child when he returns to India, Fielding can no longer "travel light" as he was once wont to do (303). Likewise, he cannot sever ties

with the English colonists since “his income and the comfort of his family depended” on British rule of India (355). Though Fielding maintains fondness for Aziz and still wants his friendship, he knows that his allegiance to the Raj and commitments to marriage will allow them no social “meeting place:” “He had thrown in his lot with Anglo-India by marrying a countrywoman, and he was acquiring some of its limitations” (358). Though he once risked everything to defend Aziz during the trial, the sense of sacrifice is gone and Fielding is somewhat surprised that he had made such a gesture. Likewise, he understands that his commitment to empire precludes him from doing it again: “Would he to-day defy all his own people for the sake of a stray Indian?” (358).

While Fielding and Aziz had been able to initiate their friendship precisely because each had no particular investment in the collective political values of their respective race, their lives must now diverge at the end of the novel because they have now become so heavily invested in them. As the novel concludes, Fielding stands firmly on the side of the imperial Raj, mocking India’s desire for independence when he “jeeringly” asks, “who do you want instead of the English? The Japanese?” (361). Aziz also remains in staunch opposition: “India shall be a nation! No foreigners of any sort! Hindu and Moslem and Sikh and all shall be one! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah for India!” (361).

Divided and unable to cross the gap their opposing politics have created, Aziz and Fielding have now become the allegorical representations of England and India. The question raised early in the novel as to whether or not English and Indian can be friends

is no longer a question. We already know before we hear the metaphysical voices of nature's "No" that a viable, sustainable friendship in time of the now -- when England still rules India is not possible. But, likewise, we also understand that the failure of friendship is not a failure of emotional intimacy: the last dialogue between the two men is marked by a half-kiss and an embrace as one asks the other, "why can't we be friends now? It's what I want . . . It's what you want" (362). That this last final passage is marked with such pathos makes the impossibility of friendship all the more challenging to accept, but, and, perhaps, this is the point, the angst filled final scene reveals not only the significance of what is at stake when we do not connect with others, but also how not even love is enough to achieve progressive race relations.

Though Forster could not have anticipated that the descendants of the colonizer and colonized would be meeting up in the heart of the former empire when he wrote his novel, the political question of friendship on English soil has been asked now for some several decades as Indians and other once-colonized peoples have been making the passage to Britain, settling inside its borders, and making it their homeland. How has the question of friendship been imagined in the cultural production of those who have made the migration or descended from those who have? Has friendship been between English and Indian been achieved in these narratives? Have colonial discourses survived the death of the colonization and if not, through what means, do they articulate themselves. Will adherence to the values of collective groups continue to take precedence over

individual desires? These are the questions to which I will now turn in the next chapter as I explore the treatment of failed friendship in Meera Syal's novel *Anita and Me*.

CHAPTER 4

CHALLENGING MULTICULTURALISM:

INITIATING A DIALOGUE FOR FRIENDSHIP

IN MEERA SYAL'S NOVEL *ANITA AND ME*

> The understanding of difference is a shared responsibility, which requires a minimum of willingness to reach out to the unknown. - Trinh T. Minh-ha

Early in E. M. Forster's *Passage to India*, two minor characters debate the question of friendship between English and Indian, setting the stage for the primary dilemma between Aziz and Fielding.[1] In the exchange, Mohamed Lal expresses his deep pessimism about the colonizing race, while, Hamidullah, who believes the constraints of rule prevent the English from being congenial with Indians, contends that friendship is possible "only in England" (8).[2] Following Hamidullah's contention though articulated more abstractly and with less confidence, the conclusion of the novel manages to leave open a small window of possibility for friendship in another time and place through the metaphysical voices of nature who announce in unison, "No, not yet . . . No, Not there" (356). Though the inconclusive ending may be more a reflection of his modernist angst than an optimistic forecast for future interracial connections, the final words proffered by the novel remain relevant in a way that Forster himself could not have imagined writing his novel in 1924.[3] Reading the novel's ambivalent conclusion in the wake of the increased mass migrations of the once-colonized to the heart of the former empire in the

middle and late 20th-century raises questions: "If not now, when?" and "If not there, where?"

How have Forster's literary descendants addressed these questions? Do their narratives imagine the spatial and temporal conditions in which the possibility for friendship is realized? The long-time absence of the once-colonized in dominant post-empire British narratives suggests negative responses.[4] A general examination of the works produced by British writers and artists attentive to the lived experiences of South Asian diaspora peoples in Britain would also reveal that the possibility for friendship that *Passage* raises has yet to be accommodated. Because these narratives, however, are attuned to racial tensions and oppression, they illustrate the naiveté of Hamidullah's contention, generally articulating how the continued presence of colonial discourses, which reiterate irreconcilable racial differences, impede the potential for progressive interracial relationships in the contact zone of the contemporary Britain they imaginatively portray.

Writer Meera Syal demonstrates a particular concern for interracial relationships and exchanges. She takes up the specific theme of failed friendship in her first novel *Anita and Me*, which is presented through a first person-narrator looking back on a two-year period of her childhood.[5] While the time of narration takes place in contemporary Britain, the narrative events take place in the late sixties in the fictional, rural, working-class village of Tollington. The novel recalls the time and place in which Syal herself grew up and features a protagonist who shares a similar name and family background.[6] Acknowledging these narrative details, the novel is often touted a semi-

autobiography by critics. Syal's imaginative return to the past, however, is no mere conveyance of biographical truth or innocuous, nostalgic memories. It is, instead, a return to a racially charged time and place, to an England where hostility toward immigrants and policies of repatriation are a familiar order of the day. The racist rhetoric of the controversial Conservative politician Enoch Powell makes its way into the narrative through the angry though less polished comments of minor character Sam Lowbridge who declares to a crowd of villagers: "We don't give a toss for anybody else. This is our patch. Not some bloody wog's handout" (193).[7] That Sam's piercing words do not go unsupported by some of the village residents shatters the "cosy, village idyll" the protagonist knows, making her cognizant of a dangerous undercurrent lurking in the community that makes "strangers out of friends" and turns "friendly passers-by" into "possible enemies" (196).

Syal's invocation of a racially extroverted England for her contemporary metropolitan reading audiences, accustomed to the pleasantries of multiculturalism that celebrate the nation's racial plurality, is a disturbing reminder of England's racist past and the continued divisions between its white and nonwhite cultures.[8] In situating the question of failed friendship through a past moment, Syal instigates a basic question: How far have we really come? But the novel is not simply a critique of existing social circumstances. In choosing to deliver the past problematically through the device of a selective first-person narrator, Syal's look backward engages in what Roger Bromley calls an "act of anamnesis," where "the past is not so much recovered or even discovered, but brought into being, invented and made and unmade" (123). *Anita and Me* does not

purvey a faithful depiction of the past that would render it the way it "actually was," rather, it offers a re-construction of the past to disturb the "truths" and assumptions of the present. A subversive narrative strategy utilized by Syal, the past, to borrow Homi Bhabha's terms, "innovates and interrupts the performance of the present" because it reveals how discursive dominant assumptions are truthful only to the extent that they are being exercised and performed (*Location* 10).

Through her treatment of the relationship between two young girls, one white and the other of Punjabi descent, and the narrative strategies and devices she employs in the novel (which I discuss below), Syal recognizes that productive race relations is not simply a question of increased congeniality or the avocation of race-blind rhetoric that ignores the political inequalities experienced by non-hegemonic races. As she underscores in *Anita and Me*, the potential for friendship involves and requires, more importantly, a critical examination and rupturing of those discursive colonial discourses that have shaped the past and, subsequently, the present. These discourses continue to assume, though, perhaps, in more subtle ways, the superior, normative position of white culture and inferior, aberrant status of those that are non-white. For Syal and many other contemporary British writers and artists attentive to issues of race, the epistemic violence of these discourses cannot be countered merely through the refutation of the alterity assigned to the racialized Other with more favorable designations since such reversals and substitutions only serve to reinstate the parameters of binary logic.[9] Nor can it be resolved through celebratory multiculturalist discourses that preach inclusion of the marginalized Other into the center because these supposedly "tolerant" ideologies, as

Homi Bhabha tells us, only serve to maintain the hegemonic status of the center.[10] Bhabha explains how, even as multiculturalism seeks to acknowledge and include the marginalized Other, dominant cultures, structures and assumptions remain intact and go unquestioned. As a result, they continue to function as the standard, the measure and means by which all Others are ruled.

For Syal and many of her fellow racially conscious writers and artists, the discursive authority of colonial discourses can only be effectively ruptured by the deconstruction and hybridization of the very structures of center and margin. To clarify and better describe what Syal attempts in *Anita and Me*, I defer to Browntyn Williams' succinct comments, which he makes with regard to the literary efforts of Black-British writers:[11]

> It is not an attempt to create a separate but equal narrative to run alongside the dominant cultural narrative of nation, nor is it an attempt to assimilate the story of the Other into the dominant narrative. Rather, it is an attempt to disrupt the narratives forged to define the dominant culture, to hybridize the discourses, to reconfigure the concept of all cultural identities as fluid and heterogeneous . . . (2)

Syal's *Anita and Me*, like the works of her literary contemporaries mentioned above, articulates a narrative of resistance against dominant assumptions and structures, ideological as well as aesthetic, and, in doing so, and textually expresses what Bhabha calls the "third space," an ambivalent site where no identity or discourse can attain discursive authority. It is also a space characterized by the notion of cultural difference

rather than cultural diversity. The distinction between the two conceptual modes, as Bhabha discusses, is crucial. He explains that unlike *cultural diversity,* which asserts that cultures exist in a vacuum with no exchanges or sense of contingency between them, *cultural difference* recognizes the "uneven," "unequal," "political" and "antagonistic" positioning of cultures that has yielded the hegemony of white cultures and subordination of nonwhite cultures ("Interview: Third Space" 208). As Bhabha further explains elsewhere, "Cultural difference marks the establishment of new forms of meaning, strategies of identification, through [a] process of negotiation where no discursive authority can be established without revealing the difference of itself" (*Location* 315). Within the concept of cultural difference, then, whiteness is made strange unto itself, acknowledges its positionality as having a racial identity, and understands its hegemonic positioning, and, in doing so, can no longer be held up as the defining, normative standard.

In my analysis of *Anita and Me* below, I argue that Syal's thematic content, narrative strategies and devices disrupt the discursive authority of conventional discourses that impede viable, progressive interracial friendships and connections, and, in doing so, promote the concept of cultural difference. Though my discussion is not a commentary on the specific intentions Syal may have had in writing her novel, my reading recognizes that Syal, as a racialized subject herself, possesses a heightened consciousness of the discursive presence of dominant discourses and the epistemic violence they perpetuate and seeks to address them rather intentionally to dominant white

reading audiences through the narrative strategies and devices she employs to deliver her novel.[12] This is a point worth elaborating upon before I offer my analysis of the novel.

As an inheritor of the British narrative tradition, Syal takes up the novelist's task that Raymond Williams describes in his discussion of "Knowable Communities" in which he examines how 19th century writers such as Jane Austen and George Eliot made rural communities knowable for their dominant reading audiences. As Williams explains: "It is part of the traditional method, an underlying stance and approach that the novelist seeks to show people and their relationships in essentially knowable and communicable ways" (165). This endeavor involves, as Williams explains, the functions of the "objects – of what is there to be known" in novels, but more importantly, the function of the subjects, of the observers – of what is desired and what needs to be known" (165). Continuing, Williams explains that writing is not only the "reality of the community being made known," but also the reality of the "observer's position in and toward" that community.

Syal, like her literary predecessors, is also trying to make an unfamiliar community (that of the British-Asian Diaspora) knowable for dominant reading audiences. Because dominant narratives have long ignored or stereotyped the British-Asian/Black subject, the task Syal embarks upon in writing *Anita and Me* still remains a crucial necessity, but fraught with complications the likes of which Austen, Eliot and other dominant fiction writers have not had to imagine. Unlike her canonical predecessors, Syal does not share the same racial/cultural background of her dominant

reading audiences, and this mitigates, to various degrees, their reception of her work. As Kobena Mercer has argued, producers of cultural texts who are racial minorities are perceived differently than those who emerge from the majority culture and often taken to be "representatives" who are expected to "'speak for' the marginalized communities from which they come" (235).[13] Likewise, I will add here that dominant audiences may also expect the Black writer to deliver the communities they are making knowable through the narrative forms and conventions to which they are accustomed. The act of writing, then, for Syal and the Black-British writer in general constitutes an engagement in the politics of representation, and the challenge these writers face is to represent the complexity of his/her self-identity and the subjectivity of those of communities s/he desires to make knowable and the aesthetic strategies s/he prefers to employ against the constraints placed on them by dominant audience expectations. Rather than employ dour didacticism, or deliver an outright declarative narrative attack against dominant expectations that would sooner offend than raise readers' consciousness, or engage in highly experimental fictional techniques that run the risk of alienating the very audience she is attempting to reach, Syal opts for literary strategies that camouflage the decidedly political issues of race she makes knowable in her novel.

There is, as Roger Bromley astutely argues using Bakhtinian theory, a "hidden polemic" operating in the works of writers, whom he refers to as the "migrant othered" and among which he includes Syal (122). Bromley explains: "In a hidden polemic, as Bakhtin argues, the author's discourse is directed toward its own referential object but, 'at the same time every statement about the object is constructed in such a way that, apart

from its referential meaning a polemical blow is struck at the other's discourse, at the other's statement about the same object' (122). Continuing, Bromley argues, by analogy, that narratives produced by the migrant othered writer are always "articulated in antagonism with the othering discourse (colonialism, racism, hegemonic whiteness, or Western values, for instance) which forces the narrative to 'alter itself accordingly under [its] influence and initiative.'" (122). Following Bromley's argument, Syal's narrative strategies respond antagonistically to dominant discourses of irreconcilable differences and audience expectations and stereotypes of the Other, and, in doing so, produces, as Bakhtin would argue, an intense dialogicality," a discourse that "'draws in, as it were, sucks in to itself the other's replies, intensely reworking them'" (Bakhtin in Bromley 122). The discourse Syal produces is, as I have mentioned above, a textual third space that undermines the structures and assumptions that perpetuates racial divisions through nondiscursive modes of understanding the world.

What I am attempting to show in the remainder of this essay are the ways in which *Anita and Me* engages in a hidden polemic against multiculturalist discourses that, as I have discussed above, read the identities of diverse cultures and their respective members as finite and static entities, render transparent the hegemonic position of white English culture (values and assumptions), and promote social cohesion at the expense of cultural difference. Syal employs narrative interventions to challenge all of the above in a variety of ways. Focusing on her employment of first-person narration, I argue that she de-familiarizes the discursive authority of whiteness, re-presents the cultural difference of the British-Asian subject in a way that does not read otherness, and instigates a dialogue

with her metropolitan reading audiences so as to foster their own critical awareness and interrogation of dominant assumptions and values. Can whiteness relate to itself externally, admitting its own internal differences and accepting its perceived homogenous identity as being as heterogeneous and fluid as all other identities? How willing is dominant white culture to enter into dialogue and negotiations with its Others and acknowledge the cultural difference of *all* races along with its own political and social hegemony? Likewise, is it willing to reject cultural assimilation as the criteria by which to establish interracial friendship? These are the crucial questions I argue that Syal's novel raises. While the responses to these questions are left up to reading audiences to ponder, *Anita and Me* stresses how friendship cannot be contingent upon cultural assimilation of dominant culture and the erasure of cultural difference, offering up a failed friendship as the disheartening predicament if dominant culture remains mired in its own assumptions and refuses to engage in a collective dialogue with its Others.

The Failure of Friendship

The title of *Anita and Me* references the childhood friendship between protagonist Meena Kumar, a pre-adolescent girl born to Punjabi immigrants, and her white neighbor, Anita Rutter, a brassy, precocious girl who is two years older. The friendship hardly serves as an ideal because both girls are to some extent involved in the relationship for some personal advantage or gain. Meena, who longs to belong, is prompted to become friends with Anita who, by virtue of her whiteness and commanding

presence in the communal yard, offers her the ideal "passport to acceptance" into the white community (142). Though she desires a more equitable relationship, Meena expends considerable effort catering to Anita's habits and manners, mimicking the local Black- country dialect to perfection and becoming an accomplice to Anita's bullying of younger children and acts of petty thievery. As the "'undisputed' cock of the yard," Anita rules the roost amongst the children in the neighborhood, and, thusly, expects, demands, and receives Meena's conformity (28). Understanding the power she wields, Anita "plays off one girlfriend off another" in order to create discord amongst those who would worship her, and, in doing so, secures her own hegemonic position (88).

Anita demonstrates no willingness to extend herself beyond the confines of what she deems normal as is the case when she when she goes to Meena's house for dinner. While the Kumars go out of the way to make her feel comfortable and respect her English tastes by cooking fish and chips for her, Anita makes no effort to respect them and does not reciprocate their attempts to make polite conversation. Furthermore, she unabashedly questions what she perceives as strange ingredients (e.g. garlic) and food pairings (e.g. tomatoes and chicken) used in their Indian dishes, and becomes disgusted when they eat dinner with their fingers instead of using cutlery. Anita's unwillingness to accept the difference of Indian culture is demonstrated again, albeit more subtly, when she later tries to sneak away with several of Meena's modest Punjabi suits with the intent of turning them into more revealing mini-dresses.

Though Meena continues to accommodate Anita for some time, the friendship does not last, suffering a permanent breach when she learns of Anita's indirect

participation in the violent “Paki-bashing” of an Indian businessman assaulted by a gang of local boys headed by Sam Lowbridge, who, incidentally, happens to be her neighbor and friend. Unable to contextualize Meena within her collective Indian identity, neither Anita nor Sam can understand how their racist actions insult Meena. Sam’s ignorance is displayed when he tries explaining his racist rhetoric, saying to Meena, “I never meant you, Meena! It was all the others, not yow!,” to which she angrily replies “I am the others, Sam. . . You did mean me” (313).

Anita and Sam’s refusal to acknowledge Meena’s cultural difference is prompted by the Kumar family’s assimilation of white culture. Among other things, they can speak English without an Indian accent; Meena is involved in the local church activities; and, Mrs. Kumar wears trouser suits to work instead of Punjabi ensembles so as to avoid stares. The congenial community relations the Kumars experience are contingent on these outward acts of assimilation that make them more palatable to their white neighbors. The neighbors, however, are unconscious of the assimilatory behavior they demand from their Others as is reflected in Sandy’s comments to Mrs. Kumar when she states, “You know, I never think of you as, you know, foreign. You’re just like one of us” (29).

On the occasions when the Kumars engage in behavior that enunciates rather than erases their cultural difference, the neighbors become disconcerted as is the case when they “shift uncomfortably” every time they see them entertaining large numbers of Indian friends, whom they presume to be their relatives (29). “Contemplating” the “apparent size” of the Kumar family, the neighbors are wondering, according to Meena,

how the Kumars "managed to bring every one of them" into England (29).[14] Ignorant of England's checkered colonial past and inextricable ties with the subcontinent, the white villagers can include the Kumars into their fold, but only as token outsiders who are required to erase or at least tone down markers of cultural difference.

The conditions, then, for friendship are not quite ripe in Tollington. It is a community that tolerates discourses of cultural diversity, but not those of cultural difference. Deeply entrenched in dominant assumptions of white culture's natural superiority, they cannot view their whiteness externally, and, thereby, are unwilling to dislocate their white culture from its assumed hegemonic position as the standard, "normal" culture, the rule by which all others should be measured. Though they conditionally accept Meena and her parents, neither Anita, nor Sam, nor the neighbors, nor Mr. Ormerod, who is always trying to convert the Kumars to Christianity, or the other villagers supporting Sam's racist rhetoric possess any cultural self-consciousness that would enable them to yield the hegemony of their whiteness.

The willingness to go against the hegemonic grain of whiteness, however, is what the novel presents as the crucial element to help foster a climate conducive to equitable interracial relations. The novel offers up examples of such connections in two relationships it represents. Sharply contrasting the relationship between Meena and Anita and the polite relations the Kumar family has with their white neighbors, these relationships involve white individuals who assume no position of cultural superiority and are attentive to cultural difference. As such, they lean toward those progressive connections Derrida would call political friendships, which "operate through a discourse

that "inaugurates respect . . . [and] is not satisfied with what it is, [but] moves out to this place where responsibility opens up a future" (236). Unlike the sentimentalized friendship idealized within the concept of Western fraternity, political friendships do not subordinate racial, social and cultural differences for the sake of social cohesion, but are instead attentive to them and; as such, they hold, as Derrida explains, "the promise of the future, of a deeper, more inclusive democracy" (252).

The first of the two progressive relationships is a chance encounter between Meena's grandmother, Nanima, who is visiting from India, and Mr. Turvey, one of the local villagers. Having been to India during the colonial regime and able to speak Punjabi, Mr. Turvey possesses his own cultural difference from his fellow white villagers, which is precisely what enables him to connect with Nanima. Unlike the other villagers who objectify and treat her as the exotic other, Mr. Turvey acknowledges Nanima's subjectivity, quickly engaging her in conversation. The sight of the two elders conversing in Punjabi sparks the amazement of all the onlookers including Meena, who, unable to speak her grandmother's language, is disturbed that Mr. Turvey achieves an intimacy with her that even she does not enjoy. That Mr. Turvey expresses his dissenting opinion of the colonial project further underscores his detachment from and disapproval of dominant discourses. "We should have never have been there," he shouts to Meena, "Criminal it was! Ugly!" (222). Ironically, these exclamations, unbeknownst to him, mirror the exact thoughts running through Meena's mind and reiterate Nanima's earlier disclosed sentiments regarding the greedy colonizers she encountered in India. Despite its brevity, the impromptu meeting significantly affects the two participants as is implied

in the “fond, faraway look” that remains in Mr. Turvey’s “brimming eyes” even after Nanima walks away, and in her gratified response of meeting someone in Tollington who actually shares an intimate connection with her, which she expresses when she “breathlessly” states, “‘Achha Admi Si, Ohne Punjabi aandi hai’” (“yes, you know Punjabi like me) (222). An even more striking reaction to the encounter that takes Meena by great surprise is her grandmother’s sudden ability to speak in English, which occurs when Nanima effortlessly comments to herself, “Nice man” (223).

The second progressive interracial friendship presented represented in the novel is that between Meena and Robert, a terminally ill boy she meets in the hospital where she is recuperating for several months from a broken leg. Robert’s illness requires his physical isolation from the other patients in the children’s ward. Even despite the glass barrier separating the two that prevent them from meeting face to face except on one occasion, Meena and Robert become fast friends through their exchange of written notes. First observing “the obvious channels, jokes word games and gossip,” the two swiftly progress to “swapping autobiographical details” and “sharing secrets” (286). For the sake of privacy and convenience, they create and communicate through a code language. That, in a short course of time, they are able to respond to each other in a very intimate way, finishing each other’s sentences and offering responses to questions the other has not yet asked, illustrates the depth of their connection. Arguably, Robert’s sense of his own difference, resulting from his possession of a decaying body and physical isolation, allows him to identify and connect with Meena in a way that transcends bodies and voices.

Both Robert and Meena's relationship and the chance encounter between Nanima and Mr. Turvey are drastically different from Meena's friendship with Anita. Unlike the girls' inequitable relationship, in which Meena caters to Anita's manners and preferences, these progressive connections illustrate what Trinh T Minh-ha would call a "willingness to reach out to the unknown" and an understanding of one's own sense of difference as well as an/Other's (85). Through the very act of initiating and participating in these progressive relationships, these four involved individuals breach the lines of racial divisions instead of standing idly by them.

Interestingly, the distinguishing feature of both of these connections is the crucial, enabling presence of a "secret" language, Punjabi and, respectively, a clandestine written code. In privileging these languages to open the lines of communication between people who would otherwise be unable to communicate with each other, Syal offers a subtle though potent articulation of resistance against the dictates of dominant discourses and, more specifically, the hegemony of Standard English. With regard to Robert and Meena's shared language, that favors written over oral language, unusual letter and word combinations rather than properly spelled English words, there is a suggestion that new, hybridized, multi-formatted modes of communication may be better able to accommodate and foster progressive interracial relationships in a way that standard languages may not. That the two friendships cannot continue outside the situations and spaces in which they are conceived and experienced, as Nanima must go back to India and Robert eventually dies, is metaphorically suggestive that the introspective, culturally unilingual, Tollington community cannot accommodate or adapt to such relationships.

Meena's unconventional friendship with Robert complements the gradual change she has already started to undergo in the course of the narrative after becoming increasingly aware of the racism around her. Whereas she once sought to culturally bleach herself by assimilating to dominant culture's norms and values, wanting to "shed" her "body like a snake slithering out of its skin and emerge reborn, pink and unrecognizable," Meena no longer internalizes her racial oppression (147). Robert's friendship as well as the valuable cultural influence of her grandmother, who equips her with alternative, complex representations of India that resist the simplified, negative versions she learns in her history classes, Meena moves into a new state of mind, open to new ways of seeing the world and acquires a positive self-image. Ultimately Meena, who previously thought herself "too clumsy" and "too scabby" to be a "real Indian girl" and "too Indian to be a real Tollington wench" is able to move away from perceived notions of fixed identity and embraces her hybridized identity (148-9). The narrator reflects upon the major shift in Meena's attitude towards herself, saying:

> I now knew I was not a bad, mixed-up girl, a girl with no name
> or no place. The place in which I belonged was wherever I stood
> and there was nothing stopping me simply moving forward
> and claiming each resting place as home. (303)

No longer seeking validation from Anita, Sam, or the white world at large, Meena finally achieves unity with her body: "It was time to let go and I floated back down to my body which for the first time ever, fitted me to perfection and was all mine" (326). Meena,

who has spent so much time trying to fit in, is finally "content" deriving a sense of home and belonging internally (303).

Meena's unification with her body and resistance against dominant discourses are complemented further with the promise of future material success. At the end of the novel, Meena and her family move out of the rural village to a more urban and urbane area and into a larger residence with modern amenities. The move will allow the Kumars to be nearer to their Indian friends and the posh, new grammar school Meena will soon attend. Having been the only child in Tollington to have ever passed the entrance exam and gain admission to the school, Meena's physical departure from the rural, economically decaying village and the implied metaphorical journey she will make into educational success and prosperity assures that her ties with working class Anita and the other villagers have been severed indefinitely with little to no chance of resuming. The break in the friendship, then, is compounded by the break from Tollington community as a whole.

Syal's treatment of Meena's development offers a notable subversion of the dominant *bildungsroman* form wherein the protagonist would otherwise be reintegrated unproblematically into the society through which s/he has had to negotiate his/her life. Unlike Dickens' Pip, Bronte's Jane, or Defoe's Moll, Meena's achievement of material success does not afford her any such reconciliation with dominant society. Though she chooses to embrace her ambivalent, in-between identity and acquires a strong measure of internal agency, Syal's novel cannot be read, as it is by some critics, as the teleological triumph of the racialized Other who resists dominant discourses.[15] Meena's rise does not

resolve the alienation she will continue to experience from the white society that sees her as a perpetual outsider. Whereas the dominant *bildungsroman* protagonist, who eventually conforms to society's standards of acceptability (via education, moral growth, money, marriage and family), is assured that the social ostracism s/he previously encountered is no longer a problem, and the "happy ending" s/he is awarded will not be rescinded, Meena's struggle with society will be ongoing. Her acquisition of internal growth and resistance offer no guarantee against external difficulties and her comfort with her racialized body does not mean that she will no longer be reduced to it by dominant culture. Meena's embrace of her hybrid identity is met with society's continued commitment to neat divisions of binary logic, which dictate that English and Indian are mutually exclusive cultures.

How are we to read this break in community as well as individual friendship? Is Meena's material success (a promising education, a more modern residence away from economically decaying rural life) the most for which she as a racialized Other in England can strive? Does Meena's comfort with her hybrid identity and internal sense of belonging replace her desire to achieve social solidarity?

While Meena's agency will, presumably, enable her to continue surviving dominant discourses, her desire, I would argue, for social solidarity does not diminish. Even after the break with Anita, even after she can find a sense of home within herself, the failed friendship remains a matter of concern as she attempts to reestablish links with Anita. Whereas she once planned to mentally "erase" (282) Anita out of her life after their breakup, the now internally resistant Meena keeps her "options open," and, using

the voice she finds in the course of finding herself, decides to write her a note. Whereas she previously waited for Anita's lead, Meena's actions here demonstrate her confidence to take the initiative in their relationship. In this the final passage of the novel, the narrator describes Meena's attempt to reconnect with Anita:

> I used the pen that night, wrote a short note and pushed it through the appropriate letter box. 'Dear Anita, We're moving Saturday. I'm going to the grammar school, so at least you won't be around to tease me about my tam-o'-shanter! See you around. Meena'
> She never replied, of course. (328)

What is particularly striking about this passage is the *extent* to which Meena has gone to reconnect; hers is a deliberative, communicative act underscored in the effort she expends in taking up a pen, writing and pushing the note into the correct letter box.[16]

That the proactive effort is met, however, with Anita's inaction reiterates a sense of futility, illustrating that no measure of internal agency will enable Meena to alone instigate the change necessary to achieve unity with her white other. As the conclusion reveals, physical distance and separation rather than reconciliation is eminent because Anita "won't be around" wherever Meena is "moving" and "going." Meena's "see you around" suggests that even if the two girls happen to come into contact again, the interaction will be, at best, temporary and at an emotional arm's length. The narrator's curt, final sentence, which she ends with the flat, expectant "of course," underscores Anita's predictable unwillingness to engage in anything that may compromise her

hegemonic power. Rather than partake in the dialogue broached by this new Meena, whose confidence allows her to take the initiative to reconnect, Anita opts for silence.

But has the interracial dialogue broken down indefinitely? Does Anita's silence indicate that Syal is offering a conclusive "No" to Forster's ambivalent conclusion, thus sealing the doom for the potential for friendship? If we read the novel solely through what Raymond Williams calls "the function of the objects – of what there is to be known," there is little to suggest possibilities for friendship. Meena's break with Anita, departure from Tollington and the unrequited note all stress the breakdown in the dialogue and, thus, the permanence of the failed friendship.

The novel's bleak response to the question of friendship appears to be further underscored through the embedded narrative of the wealthy Oxford-educated Harrinder Singh, another Other who achieves material success, but no societal integration. Singh's story foreshadows an extreme version of the life that potentially awaits Meena if she is unable to achieve belonging in white society. Meena encounters Singh only at the end of the narrative when she unexpectedly finds herself in an emergency situation, involving Anita's drowning sister, and is forced to find help from the presumed haunted "Big House" (318). To her great surprise, Meena learns that Singh, a "Sikh just like mama," is the mysterious rich owner of the house and has moved to Tollington in order to escape England's racism (318). Singh chooses to live life anonymously in quiet self-exile with only his wife, Mireille, and their "thousands" of books for company (318-9). That

Mireille is French is very apropos of Singh's situation given France's historical status as England's most despised European Other.

While Singh goes out to rescue Anita's drowning sister, Mireille engages Meena with stories, which come "spilling out after so long," having "no one else " to talk to" for years besides her husband (319). Explaining their predicament to the perplexed young Meena who silently wonders why the "glittering international couple" chose to live in Tollington, Mireille states:

> . . . He did law at Cambridge. I was over from France studying chemistry. . . Poor 'Arry, 'e was so brilliant and no one wanted him here, he got offered clerical work, can you imagine? . . . Then 'Arry and me we drove through this place one day, we were lost looking for Stratford-upon-Avon . . . So, we stayed. . . And . . . here, we only needed each other, 'Oo else would have understood us, strange creatures like us? (319)

The couple's inability to find their original destination illustrates Syal's subtle irony. Given Stratford's geographical location in central England and celebrated status as the birthplace of Shakespeare, *the* icon of English culture, there is little wonder that racialized Singh, despite his intellectual prowess, is not equipped with the sense of direction that would lead him to this metaphorical center of Englishness, and lands instead in marginal Tollington, a town on the verge of economic and social collapse. The couple's need to escape xenophobic England, however, is not easily understood by the

young Meena. She remains disappointed that the Singhs have opted to live in self-imposed exile, noting that they remained "hidden for all these years, wasting their gifts and zest for life instead of sharing them with people whom they could have inspired and entertained, for whom they could have been living proof that the exotic and the different can add to and enrich even the sleepiest backwater" (319).

While the picture she paints regarding Singh's predicament is rather extreme, Syal's inclusion of his story into the main narrative underscores her concern over the potentially life altering and devastating effects of racism that no measure of material success can prevent. In juxtapositioning Meena's innocent idealism that racist stereotypes can and should be obliterated with the futile efforts for acceptance that have been attempted by the now middle-aged Singh, Syal articulates the dire need for political change, whilst simultaneously recognizing the enormous difficulty of achieving it. Portraying Singh's comprehensive withdrawal from white society along with Meena's inability to reinstate a dialogue with Anita, Syal underscores that progressive interracial relationships, political friendship, cannot be achieved if the effort is racially one-sided.

Initiating a Dialogue for Political Friendship

Though Syal makes knowable the issues of exclusion experienced by the racialized Other in white society through Meena's story and, respectively, Singh's, her pessimistic treatment of the question of friendship is not entirely conclusive. Examining

the narrative through what Williams refers to as "the function of the subjects" of the observers, "of what is desired and what needs to be known," offers a more complex reading worth exploring. As the author of the text, Syal performs the function of the external subject and observer, but chooses to create an internal observer for her novel in the fictional persona of the first-person narrator, the older, more racially-conscious Meena who looks back on her life, making knowable only that which she desires needs to be known.

At first glance, Syal's choice of narration is not surprising. Having Meena's story told in first-person affords the racialized Other, who has been long ignored and/or stereotyped by dominant fiction and discourses, a significant measure of subjectivity and presence. Likewise, because the protagonist is an innocent, likeable girl with a penchant for sweets and telling exaggerated stories, the first-person narration encourages audience identification with Meena and the issues the novel raises. Syal's choice, however, is expedient for other reasons. Drawing on details of her personal life, the novel's semi-autobiographical details may yield too quickly dominant audiences' assumption that the protagonist is none other than the author herself, which risks both the objectification of Syal and potential readings of the novel as unmitigated truth, a transparent window on Meena's/Meera Syal's fixed identity. Syal resists such objectification by offering the fictional, subjective, and, thereby, potentially unreliable narrator who cannot be considered a discursive authority. This point is further underscored when considering

that the story is a constructed retrospective involving the narrator's selective memories about only a two-year period of her past.

Simultaneously, however, Syal's creation of a racialized subject to narrate the story enables her to subversively capitalize on the commanding attention a first-person narrator inevitably receives as the narrative "I" in order to voice, as I explain below, her own issues and burden of representation she experiences in undertaking the novelist's task of making knowable the British-South Asian diaspora community knowable to dominant reading audiences. Again, because the narrator is fictional, Syal absolves herself of any faults she could potentially receive for critiquing dominant audience expectations. Incidentally, the parallels that can be drawn between Syal and the narrator are just as significant, if not more so, than those between her and the protagonist, which are typically noted by critics to designate the novel's semi-autobiographical status.

Throughout much of the narrative, the narrator sustains a muted presence because she prioritizes Meena's child voice and perspective. This is especially the case mid-narrative onward as Meena rises into racial consciousness. Furthermore, in describing events as Meena experiences them, the narrator does not always qualify through her adult perspective what the younger Meena is saying or doing even when the opportunity is ripe to do so. For example, the narrator does not step in to reveal the unfounded fears Meena has of the "Big House." Even though she possesses the hindsight to know that the house is neither haunted nor presided over by a witch, as Meena believes it to be, the narrator does not intrude, leaving Meena (as well as us readers) in the dark until the very end of

the narrative when the Singhs are finally presented as the longtime residents of the "Big House."

Because many of the narrator's comments are frequently blurred with those of protagonist Meena, who is actually the primary object of her narration, critics tend to discuss the two separate characters as one and the same, frequently privileging the protagonist's identity and story over the narrator who is, in fact, controlling the narrative.[17] Though what is being made knowable about Meena dominates the narrative, we do well to remember that all of it is a product of the narrator's construction and that what she chooses to deliver and the manner in which she delivers it is inevitably telling a story about herself – her desires, her vested interests, and her subject position. In order to determine her story, however, requires that we keep asking questions of her. What does the narrator want? How might her construction of the narrative reveal her desires? How does her subject position mitigate her presentation of the narrative? And, to return to theme and question of friendship, what does she mean to suggest by concluding the novel on the breakdown in dialogue?

The narrator's choice of an inconclusive ending displaces what otherwise would have been the pinnacle of Meena's rise against racist discourses. Arguably, there is logic in this choice. A "happy ending" one in which the protagonist enjoys the material success she has acquired *in spite* of the racism she encounters runs the risk of "whitewashing," so to speak, the devastating effects of racism on Meena and other Others in the narrative such as the Indian businessman left for near dead by Sam's gang or

Harrinder Singh who is driven into self-imposed exile. Perhaps, the narrator's last line, "She never replied, *of course,*" hints at something other than just Anita's unwillingness to cede her hegemonic control (328; emphasis mine). Perhaps it suggests the narrator is disappointed and/or bitter about the failed friendship even years later. Whatever she means to make knowable in this her last word of her narrative, its inclusion confounds a simplistic view of the novel as a whole, further reiterating, as I argued above, how Meena's story cannot simply be read as the rise of the racialized individual.

Prioritizing Meena's unrequited note as the novel's concluding note, the narrator offers a conclusion but no closure. If closure is, as novelist Joyce Carol Oates has suggested, "that which makes the narrative intelligible as totality" so that when it ends, 'the attentive reader knows why,'" then Syal's narrator refuses to accommodate readers' need for order and completion (qtd. in Whitebrook 112). Has she offered closure, the narrator would have enabled the easy consumption and digestion of her narrative, effectively "barring" her audience, to borrow D. A. Miller's narrative discussion, "even from suspecting possible discontinuities between closure and the narrative movement preceding it, not to mention possible contradictions and ambiguities within closure itself" (xiii).

Though the narrator offers some lengthy digressions in the early chapters that invoke prior experiences and events in Meena's family life, the narrator's portrayal of the protagonist's increasing maturity and consciousness renders a strong, upward, linear movement within the course of the narrative as a whole. Since the preceding narrative is

on the rise, so to speak, the lack of closure effects a thematic and structural disconnect at the end of the novel. In this sense, Syal's conclusion is not unlike the inconclusive, open-ended conclusions characteristic of the modern/postmodern text (including, for example, Forster's *Passag*e), which disrupt outdated notions of mimetic realism and linearity espoused in the Western narrative tradition. Yet, Syal's employment of the disruptive strategy, however, is employed for entirely different reasons. While modern/postmodern texts aim to deconstruct the Master narrative and make audiences question their need for a totalizing, coherent narrative, Syal's conclusion strives instead to recuperate the lived, fractured experience of the *racialized* subject residing within hegemonic culture. What we have here in this ending is not so much a questioning of reality, but, rather, a reiteration of the reality of what it means to be Black living in the heart of whiteness.[18]

By dwelling on the failed friendship, Meena's efforts to initiate dialogue and Anita's refusal to accommodate it, the narrator forces her audience to confront an uneasy ending, depriving them of the "feel good" conclusion they may be expecting after having witnessed Meena's increasing consciousness and resolve to love her hybridized self. Instead of proceeding to a logical, final destination in Meena's life that would gratify such expectations, the narrative breaks off into another direction, into an "aperture" or an opening, which suggests that, as G. S. Morson explains in his discussion of narrative structures, the narrative could "continue" (305).

As Meena's story is told retrospectively, we can understand that the narrative does indeed continue through the ongoing life of the older Meena who now narrates the

story. It is her story that begins just as the protagonist's ends, only we are not made privy to most of its details since the narrative proper has to come to an end. The narrator, however, does offer one brief glimpse of her story through a direct address she makes to her listening audience in the novel's unofficial prologue. As it demonstrates a very-performance attitude through its conversational and shifting tones, I refer to it as the narrator's monologue.

Because the monologue is very short, only a page and a half in length, and dominated by the lengthy, engrossing chapters, the less attentive reader may easily forget the monologue by novel's end until, perhaps, a second reading. Critics themselves tend to entirely disregard or underestimate the significance of the narrator's monologue in their discussions. Notwithstanding the otherwise valuable readings offered by these critics, I argue that examining the narrator's monologue is crucial in appreciating the complexity of Syal's narrative strategies and yields analysis that underscores a more profound story underlying Meena's ostensible rise into consciousness and material success.

Whereas she uses the body of her narrative to focus primarily on the objects she desires to make knowable, the narrator allows herself the spotlight in her monologue, to reveal what appear to be her most intimate thoughts. Opening with a casual, conversational tone, the narrator begins discussing memories of her early childhood and parents' arrival to England, explaining that she does not have many memories except the "obvious ones, of course" (9). In the next line, the narrator directly acknowledges her

audience through second person address. “You know,” she says, indicating that the memories she is about to disclose -- those of her “windswept, bewildered parents” arrival and first glimpses of England -- are already familiar to her listeners (9). Continuing, she offers a brief description of the poor, dismal, boarding house environs suffered by her parents, which, presumably, to this invoked audience, is the inevitable lot of newly arrived immigrants. While the narrator hints that this history is not entirely factual or certain when she says “I slept in a drawer*, probably,* swaddled in back copies of the Daily Mirror” (9; emphasis mine), it is not until she has finished discussing her parents’ early days that she finally admits that the scenario she has just outlined is, in fact, a complete fabrication, an “alternative history” she trots out in job interviews or to “white middle-class boys who come sniffing around, excited by the thought of wearing a colonial trinket on their arms” (10).

Thus far, the monologue demonstrates how the narrator/Meena has obviously become more attuned to racist discourses after having left Tollington. In constructing and deconstructing stereotypes of the “immigrant’s plight,” the narrator demonstrates what Fanon would call a “triple consciousness,” a term he uses to describe his own heightened awareness of the “triple role” and fixed identity he is assigned by the white man who does not see the Black man beyond his “fact of blackness” (111). Fanon explains:

> . . . it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in third person, but triple person. . . I was given not one, but two, three places . . . I existed

> triply . . . I was responsible at the same time for my body, my race, for my ancestors. . . I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave ships, and above all: sho' good eatin.' (112)

"Triple consciousness" is not to be confused with the "solely negating" notion Fanon refers to as "third consciousness," which causes the Black man to view himself in third person as the white man sees him, "always an object, always from the outside " (110). Unlike "third consciousness, "triple consciousness" offers a potential means of resistance because the black man discovers not the actual "truth" of his presumed inferiority, but, rather, white others' construction and belief of it as such. Though "triple consciousness can be, as Fanon describes it above, a traumatic experience, it is precisely this awareness of the white man's narrow perceptions that paradoxically enables the Black Man to resist and deconstruct them. Similarly, Syal's narrator demonstrates in her monologue that she is copiously aware of the alterity she has been assigned by her white others including not only just the white boys who come calling and prospective employers who interview her, but also the white others in the listening audience whom she invokes into the narrative. Understanding their expectations of her, the racialized "I" who is to purvey to them the Other's exotic story in the manner in which they expect, the narrator constructs her monologue to disrupt their expectations and break out of the otherness they affix to her identity.

Drawing in this audience with just the details they desire and expect from the token Other story, the narrator encourages her white others' voyeuristic expectations of dominant immigrant stereotypes. By exposing her romanticized fabrication, however, she shatters their white gaze and articulates, in the process, the epistemic violence of dominant discourses that parade as discursive truths. The opening of the monologue, then, works to instigate her listeners' self-consciousness of their own complicity in the perpetuation of such stereotypes. Also, it is precisely through establishing her unreliability that the narrator also makes them question their consumptive, metropolitan need for an "authentic" account of the racialized Other's story. Ironically, while her unreliability instigates their self-critique, it also neatly absolves her of being herself labeled a discursive authority.

Continuing her monologue, and adding a few more nonchalant lines in which she reveals what she says is her earliest memory, describing how she once laughed uncontrollably upon hearing the punch-line to a joke, the narrator drastically shifts the tone of her monologue to offer a rather sobering disclosure that, incidentally, displaces any concerns her audience may have regarding her previous fabrications. Here, as the narrator explains her motivation for inventing alternative personal histories, her playfulness gives way to what appears to be a moment of truthfulness and gravity: She states:

> But I've always been a sucker for a good double entendre; the gap, between what is said and what is thought, what is stated and what is implied, is a place in which I have always found myself. I'm not really a

> liar. I just learned very early on that those of us deprived of history sometimes need to turn to mythology to feel complete, to belong. (10)

If the narrator's unreliability, as I argued above, makes the audience self-conscious of their preconceived notions of her supposedly exotic, colorful otherness, then the transition from casual fabrication to unveiled "truth" offers them a view of the Other they least expect. A far cry from the epitome of Otherness they know, the stark, heightened subjectivity she presents to the audience forces them to confront the rather disconcerting question of what it means to Black in a white world. Because, however, the narrator emphasizes the effects of having her Other history erased rather than the culpability of the hegemonic race perpetuating this epistemic violence, she is not interested in placing blame. Instead, she desires to raise her audience's awareness that the alterity she is assigned is itself a discursive dominant construction, and that the erasure of her cultural difference and political history has promulgated her cultural objectification, which makes her little more than a fetishized "colonial trinket" in the eyes of her white others.

Though the nature of what she is challenging is important, the narrator's subversive strategy is particularly striking because it illustrates that she does not want to target the audience who is the object of her subversion.[19] Had this been her intention, she could have easily chosen to overtly mock her audience from the start, but the narrator does not polarize in order to polemicize. In short, she is not interested in alienating her audience members but is, instead, interested in building connections with them that

would have them share the responsibility of achieving progressive race relations. Her prologue initiates a dialogue for political friendship, which can, as Derrida argues, "open up the promise of the future, of a deeper, more inclusive democracy" ("Politics and Friendship" 3). Rather than widen the existing racial, cultural gap between herself and her listeners further, she seeks to do the opposite and open up the lines of communication to disrupt deeply entrenched divisions. Invoking her white listeners' presence through her direct address, producing them in the process of narration and engaging their participation, the narrator's deconstruction of dominant discourses enables her to construct a textual community that induces interracial dialogue and exchange. In doing so, she is making them aware of the cultural difference and the uneven subject positioning of those majority and minority cultures within the metropolitan contact zone.

The narrator's initiation of this community, however, is not simply an attempt to ascertain the inclusion she, and her protagonist and younger self, Meena, have been unable to achieve in their lives. Less a quest to find stable, common ground than an attempt to shift and destabilize the ground itself, the narrator's textual community is, to use Bhabha's terms, an ambivalent "third space," that exposes and enunciates cultural difference so no discursive authority can attain hegemony. In creating this textual community, the narrator seeks to inspire in her listeners a shared understanding of their respective cultural differences.

Refusing to play the role of the audience's signifying Other by not offering an exotic history and identity, the narrator has begun eroding away at the notions of

Self/Other that has thus far constituted their separate sense of identity from her. Unbeknownst to her listeners, the narrator has been effectively and subversively (mis)leading her audience into a space they have never occupied, namely, inside the gap where she "always finds herself." Whereas previously her listening audience occupies a comfortable viewing position on the outside looking into her world, viewing her as a spectacle, they are now, surprisingly, re-positioned on the inside looking out. Here, they are offered the perspective to see whiteness externally and understand its hegemony rather than presume its standard, normative authority. Whether or not the narrator's audience is willing to acknowledge whiteness in this way and act upon it, as the narrator, presumably, hopes they will, is, of course, entirely up to them to decide.

Though the narrator's monologue is artful and provocative, we readers would be remiss in not recognizing its significance to the narrative at large. Her grave, disconcerting disclosure raises crucial epistemological issues, but it also acts as an invitation for us to read between the lines of "what is stated and what is implied" in both her monologue and the entire narrative that is still yet to come. All of it is a construction, a "mythology" she creates "to feel complete, to belong," which again reiterates that Meena's rise into consciousness does satiate her desires for friendship and community. As the monologue attests, these desires never diminish and are, perhaps, articulated in the unbalanced, inequitable title of the novel, *Anita and Me*, which presents the narrator/protagonist through the diminutive objective pronoun, while recognizing her white other Anita by her proper name, thereby, allotting her the lead role.

Though ostensibly a pessimistic response, *Anita and Me* does not offer a conclusive "No" to the question of friendship. As made evident through her monologue that subversively eschews racial divisions, Syal's narrator still holds out hope for the realization of progressive interracial relationships. Her efforts are not unlike those of Meena who attempts to reestablish dialogue with Anita at the end of the novel. Like Meena, who expends time and effort in writing and sending her note to Anita, the narrator is painstakingly constructing her narrative so as to induce exchange and interaction with the white others she ushers into her narrative. Whereas she previously mimicked exotic stories, keeping her "true" self from them, and thereby maintaining her distance, she breaks out of her self-imposed exile to reopen the lines of communication between them. Whether or not the intimate thoughts the narrator discloses are actually true is immaterial since her sobering disclosure aims to bridge the distance between her and her white listening audience. Again, her artful construction of the monologue as well as the rest of the narrative she offers illustrates the lengths to which the narrator will go to achieve interracial connections.[20] Unlike Harrinder Singh, the narrator is resolved not to hide herself away "wasting her gifts and zest for life." She will use her gift of storytelling to instigate progressive change and dialogue amongst those who are willing to listen to her. Hopefully, they will not opt for silence like Anita, and instead become proactive participants who, like the narrator, would be willing to extend themselves beyond the confinement of dominant discourses.

CHAPTER 5

CHALLENGING MULTICULTURALISM:

REWRITING THE TERMS OF FRIENDSHIP

IN MEERA SYAL'S FILM ADAPTATION *ANITA & ME*

> How independent do I want to be if the cost of being pure independent is marginalized . . . And if the only way to intervene is to be assimilated, perhaps, I should allow myself to be assimilated . . . - Dave Haslam

> Adaptation is a peculiar form of discourse but not an unthinkable one. Let us use it not to fight battles over the essence of the media or the inviolability of individual art works. Let us use it as we use all cultural practices, to understand the world from which it comes and the one to which it points. - Dudley Andrew

The invitation to engage with issues of cultural difference Syal's novel *Anita and Me* offers to its reading audiences is extended again in the film adaptation of the same name also written by Syal.[1] Released in 2002, *Anita and Me* became a commercial hit, arguably a testament to the source text's critical and popular success. Heavily marketed across Britain, the film's box office sales also reflected a continuing and healthy multicultural appetite for all things "Indian." Appearing in the wake of two other recent hit films, *East is East* (Dir. Damien O'Donnell, 1999) and *Bend it Like Beckham* (Dir. Gurinder Chadha, 2001), *Anita and Me*'s release underscores how British Asian cultural production has undeniably secured its footing in the mainstream.

What follows below is an analysis of Syal's adaptation, which I read as a continuation of the hidden polemic in the novel against multiculturalist discourses even

despite some significant departures from the original narrative's events. Inevitably, there is some comparison between the source text and the adaptation, but the analysis does not pursue parochial questions of authenticity and reliability. Following the insights of film theorists such as Dudley Andrew who read adaptations of literary texts as meaningful works in their own right, my analysis seeks to address the aesthetic complexity of *Anita and Me*, to illuminate, as Seymour Chatman would say, the "peculiar power" of the film medium (404). My reading illustrates how the film adaptation thematically and cinematically crystallizes the issues raised by the novel, but, likewise, how it transcends them to pursue other important questions surrounding cultural difference and the possibility of political interracial friendship.

As made evident by my reading of the source text, Syal is a novelist who demonstrates a desire to educate dominant audiences about the issues of cultural difference as experienced by British-Asian racialized Other. Syal's numerous successful endeavors, acting, writing, and producing for radio, television, theater and film productions, attest not only to her prodigious creativity and talent, but also her commitment to reach out to a wide range of audiences. Her decision to adapt her *Anita and Me* into a feature film, then, is hardly surprising.[2] As the most dominant, accessible form of narrative, mainstream film offers Syal an invaluable means of exposing her work to much larger, diverse audiences than even those who read her popular novels.

The ability of film to convey "truth" serves as another important advantage for Syal. Through its "larger- than-life scale visual medium," which makes us believe that,

as Hugo Munsterberg puts it, “the camera does not lie,” film is the ideal format to facilitate audience reception of the issues of cultural difference so important to Syal. Furthermore, because of the “reality” it convincingly portrays, film affords Syal enormous ideological potential to challenge racist stereotypes and discourses long perpetuated in dominant cinema about the so-called Other, and, specifically, the Asian/once colonized/diasporic woman whose identity is typically confined to the role of the dutiful wife/daughter who is caught between cultures, and perpetually oppressed. While it is not the first film to feature a British-Asian girl as the protagonist, Syal’s characterization of a free-spirited, imaginative, funny girl with an ardent desire to become a professional writer is a far cry from these narrow, one-dimensional stereotypes. That the adaptation employs first-person voiceover narration reiterates the desire to maximize the complexity and authority of its protagonist. A crucial tool in destabilizing dominant stereotypes, the “power of the voice,” can serve, as Sarah Kozloff tells us, as an effective “counterpoint to the [white] imperial gaze,” deepening the protagonist’s character, inducing viewers’ identification, and, thereby, rejecting the discursive objectification of women/racialized peoples in dominant cinema.

The benefits of using the film medium, however, are tempered by the negotiations and compromises Syal, like any screenwriter, must make in the process of adaptation. Original screenplays typically undergo many revisions as a result of various challenges that inevitably come up such as those concerning the intended audience or those raised by the other creative voices invested in the film including those of the director,

cinematographer, editors, composers/sound designers, etc. Likewise, time constraints and the expense of commercial filmmaking will effect changes in the adaptation. Many of these types of changes involve outright elision of the source text's narrative details, or the diminishing of certain characters and plot events. Other changes might be implemented to attract mainstream audiences such as the inclusion of new characters or changing of the sex of characters in order to feature well-known actors whose presence would help increase box office sales. Still, other changes may occur that involve the film medium itself since what works in a novel does not necessarily translate well onto the screen.

Syal's film narrative can be best described as the process of adaptation film theorist Dudley Andrew refers to as "intersecting." Andrew distinguishes the intersecting adaptation from the more common form of adaptation, "borrowing," which "hopes to win an audience by the prestige of its borrowed title or subject" and expects the audience to "enjoy basking in a certain pre-established presence and call up new or especially powerful aspects of a cherished work" (422).[3] The intersecting text is also distinguished from what Andrew refers to as the "transforming" adaptation that purposefully observes no fidelity to the source text, using it only as a point of departure.[4] Unlike these modes of adaptations, "intersecting," as Andrew explains, "wants to preserve the uniqueness of the original text to such an extent that it is intentionally left unassimilated" (422). The intersecting adaptation has no intention of expansively reproducing the source text, which is the case for the borrowing adaptation. Nor does it

want to critique or compete with the source text, or seek to make it more accessible for contemporary audiences as the transforming adaptation is wont to do. Instead, the intersecting adaptation seeks to respect the source text even as it alters it.

Referring to the insights of celebrated film theorist Andre Bazin, Andrew further defines the intersecting adaptation, saying that it is "the novel as seen by cinema," which produces an "experience of the original modulated by the peculiar beam of cinema" so that "we are presented not with an adaptation so much as a refraction of the original" (422). Continuing, Andrew extends one of Bazin's most elaborate metaphors to distinguish the source text and the intersecting adaptation, saying, "The original artwork can be likened to a crystal chandelier whose formal beauty is a product of its intricate but fully artificial arrangement of parts while the cinema would be a crude flashlight interesting not for its own shape or quality of its light but for what it makes appear in this or that dark corner" (422). As Andrew explains, the potency of the intersecting adaptation lies less in the fluidity or comprehensiveness of its re-presentation of the source text and more in its ability to intensify the events and issues, great or small, it *chooses* to bring to the viewers' attention.

Syal's adaptation reflects many changes from its source text. Most of these are discernible in the elision of the many small details, events, and characters found in the novel, and are presumably undertaken because of time and/or medium constraints. The single most significant change, however, appears in a sharp departure from the original narrative's conclusion concerning the relationship between the two girls. Whereas the

novel offers an abrupt, disconcerting ending with no closure because Meena's deliberate efforts to reconnect with Anita prove futile, the film offers a more optimistic conclusion that sees the friendship reconciled and a penultimate scene in which the two girls are embracing. If, as I argued above, a "happy" ending runs the risk of glossing over the oppression experienced by the racialized Other, then the film's reconciliation between the two friends ostensibly undermines the novel's political integrity. This observation seems all the more tenable when considering the film's most consistent visual and aural features, sepia toned celluloid and the frequent non-diegetic eruption of popular British songs from the 70's. These cinematic features seem to make the film less a critical look backward, as I argued of the novel in the previous chapter, and more a nostalgic longing for a faded past and the innocence of childhood.

Though the film's "feel good" ending and nostalgia appear to "sell out" the novel, I argue that they simultaneously point to a more subversive strategy at play, which is reflective of an emerging trend in films dealing with the British-Asian experience. Along with the two other recent hit British-Asian films, *Bend it Like Beckham* and *East is East* , Syal's adaptation is distinguished from many previous films within the tradition of Black British cinema. Rooted in their opposition to mainstream cinema, the majority of Black British film productions heavily prioritize the challenge against dominant discourses. Among these are dramatic works depicting the gritty, lived experiences of hardship encountered by British Asians; [5] documentaries responding to actual racial riots and hate crimes; [6] biting satires that politicize the act of representation,[7] and formally

experimental, expressionistic films unambiguously concerned with issues of race.[8] Despite their unique "alter-native" perspectives and ideological and aesthetic integrity, the distribution and viewership of these films, not surprisingly, remains much more limited than that of mainstream British films. Being too far removed from what Emily Zants calls "the habitual frame of reference of the general populace," and "too different from the frozen social form of thought," these films' oppositional narratives and ideologies cannot attract significant numbers of people to appreciate or enjoy them.[9]

Unlike many of their overtly counterhegemonic predecessors within the Black British film tradition, *Anita and Me, Bend It Like Beckham* and *East is East* move in a different direction in that they prioritize cinematic pleasure and the need to attract mainstream audiences *along* with the need to challenge dominant discourses. These films demonstrate an understanding that sometimes "the only way to intervene is to be assimilated," to borrow Dave Haslam's sentiments. These films choose to "talk back" by speaking through the narrative forms and language familiar to their intended mainstream audiences. While their mimicry fractures the white gaze of their audiences, these films have still earned much commercial success, the likes of which many would not have thought possible in the years before their respective release. Their consistent use of "pleasing" elements such as lighthearted comedy, linear narrative, frequent references to popular culture (i.e. 60 fashions in *East,* 70's songs in *Anita and Me*, and the national sport of football in *Bend It Like Beckham*) reflects, as Judith Williamson would argue, an acute awareness that refusing to entertain audiences may engage in "the very opposite of

a politics that's concerned with people changing their perceptions" (181). Conventional as they are in many ways, however, these films do not sacrifice issues of cultural difference, but, instead, choose to deploy them subversively. In doing so, these films "reclaim" as Williamson would argue, "certain kinds of pleasurable experiences" without throwing out the "politically unacceptable bathwater" (181).

A careful analysis of Syal's adaptation, one that does not rely merely on the film's most obvious "feel good" features, yields a complicated reading that indeed affirms an altered, more easily digestible version of the source text, but not one that compromises it. As I will argue, Syal's adaptation subversively complements and intensifies the novel's hidden polemic against multicultural discourses. Even while much of the original narrative details and events from the source text have either diminished in narrative significance, or been excluded entirely, or have been changed altogether as the "happy" conclusion reveals, that which constitutes the film remains committed to the novel's concern with issues of cultural difference, never deviating from the underlying questions raised in the novel, namely, what it means to be Black in a white world and the necessity of establishing political friendships. Arguably, these questions achieve more impact in the film since they are delivered through various visual and aural strategies, allowing the viewer a much more sensory experience of the Other's cultural difference.

Like the novel, the film exposes the racism lurking in Tollington, bringing it up through its inclusion of the pivotal events in the original narrative. For example, we see in the film, as we did in the novel, the racist rhetoric expressed by Meena's friend and

neighbor Sam Lowbridge at the annual village fete as well as the “pakibashing” he and his skinhead gang inflict upon the Indian engineer who comes to Tollington to work on the new motorway. The film, however, makes some changes from the novel by rearranging and altering the events in order to underscore a causal relationship between the racial violence and its effect on the Kumar family, thereby, intensifying viewers’ appreciation of the devastation of racism on the racialized subject. Like the novel, the film raises up these issues of race not for the purposes of inducing viewers’ sympathy, but to make them question their political responsibility regarding matters of race that the racialized Other experiences on a daily basis. On occasion, the film relies on dialogue to instigate viewers’ political consciousness as is the case when the village vicar, progressive-minded Uncle Alan, who brings news to the Kumar family of the “pakibashing” incident, makes a rhetorical comment to Meena. In quiet exasperation, he states, “Every time I see you, I end up wanting to say ‘sorry.’ *But it isn’t enough,* is it Meena?” (emphasis mine).

Being attentive to the needs of its intended mainstream audience that would not appreciate dour didacticism, the film does not rely extensively on dialogue to convey the necessity of political responsibility. Nor does it (as the novel does rather effectively in its opening monologue) employ first-person narration for that purpose, though voiceover narration (as I discuss below) is used throughout the film for other reasons. Instead, the film capitalizes on the qualities particular to its medium to subversively engage viewers’ acute awareness of the devastating effects of racism. Again, being attentive to its

mainstream audiences' desire for realism, the film avoids using expressionistic, experimental techniques that would disrupt their viewing experience and potentially alienate their identification with the issues it seeks to convey. Instead, it strategically and economically uses various visual and aural strategies to offer the viewer not just an understanding of the racialized Other's unequal political positioning in a white world, but also a highly sensory experience of living in the margins.

When Uncle Alan brings the news of the "pakibashing" to the Kumars, the film encourages the viewer's identification with the feelings of shock felt by the family by filming the scene through their point of view. The viewer stands alongside the Kumars and sees, as they do, Uncle Alan coming into the room with a forlorn look on his face. The viewer looks down, as they do, to see the front page article of the newspaper he sets in front of them, read the numbing headline "Local Indian man attacked in Tollington," and note the accompanying picture of the victim. It is through this intimate knowledge of the Kumar family that the viewer understands the significance of the events in a way that Uncle Alan cannot. Whereas the man's picture denotes for Uncle Alan an unfortunate anonymous victim, it possesses much more personal significance for the Kumars as he was their impromptu dinner guest the previous evening, having accepted Mr. Kumar's invitation after meeting him by chance on the street. The table on which his picture in the newspaper lies is the very same table where he and the Kumars enjoyed not just dinner, but an evening of camaraderie and cultural connection. Though the Indian man promises to come back again, the violence of the assault he sustains that leaves him near dead

suggests that it is very unlikely another meeting will occur. The depiction of the man in the picture almost assuredly suggests that they will not ever meet again. The composed, dignified picture of the man situated within the newspaper's small black print makes the report seem more like an obituary rather than front page news. The dramatic irony of the situation induces a sense of shock for both the Kumars as well as the viewer whose intimacy and identification with the family has been firmly secured by the time this scene occurs. The irony intensifies when we later learn that Anita who was also at dinner that fateful night was indirectly involved in his assault, which took place once the Indian man left the Kumar home.

In the next scene that takes place after the Kumars hear about the shocking news, the film continues to encourage viewers' empathetic rather than sympathetic responses concerning the lived experiences of the racialized subject. Unlike Uncle Alan who is long gone, the viewer remains and, being privy to the Kumars' private lives, is afforded a disturbing scene that illustrates the huge emotional toll the "pakibashing" has on Daljit (Meena's mother) who suffers a breakdown. Opening in the dark of night, the camera pans slowly across Meena's body as she lay asleep on her bed. A sense of foreboding trauma heightens as distant sounds of breaking dishes can be heard along with some screaming. While the words are barely audible, the tone of anguish and frustration is discernible. In the next point of view shot, the viewer moves with Meena out of the room, walking through the dark house to investigate the nature of the disturbance. As the camera moves closer to the kitchen, the unheeded cries of Meena's baby brother are

heard before fading away in complete silence. Continuing, Meena and the viewer finally discover the source of the disturbance, seeing through the doorway what appears to be the aftermath of the troubling outburst previously heard. As Shyam (Meena's father) quietly begins picking up the host of kitchen items scattered on the floor, Daljit with tears streaming down her face sits against the far wall in the only patch of light that comes through the window. That the film dramatically depicts the quiet aftermath *instead* of the fit of anger and actual physical outburst leading to the disarray emphatically suggests the deep, psychological blow the "pakibashing" has on Meena's mother, thereby, inducing the viewer's empathy rather than astonishment.

The film's reordering of events which links Daljit's emotional breakdown with the "pakibashing" is a departure from the novel's original narrative sequence. Though the episode of racial violence is included in the novel and startles the Kumars who read about the crime in a brief report tucked away on page eight of their morning paper, the event triggers an uneasy silence rather than any charged emotional responses. That the victim is not personally known to them also diminishes its narrative presence in the novel. The novel situates Daljit's breakdown as a response not to the "pakibashing," but, instead, Sam Lowbridge's racist rhetoric at the annual village fete through which he expresses his contempt for the immigrants in England. [10] Whereas the novel's treatment of the breakdown focuses more attention on the anguish Daljit feels about being marginalized in the very community where she has made her home, the film's alteration of the events raises more provocative issues to incite viewers' political consciousness.

Establishing a relationship between Daljit and the Indian man, the film stresses to its mainstream audience the larger significance of the racial violence and the collective ethnic identity the two people share as racialized others. Though the assault is a violation against one man, it constitutes a crime with many victims being motivated purely by Sam and the skinhead gang's hatred against Indians. As such, it signifies a message of intolerance against the collective Indian community as a whole. The blows meted out on the individual Indian man's body, then, are intended for all those other Others his racialized identity represents. The severity of Daljit's breakdown, which presents a sharp contrast from her otherwise composed, strong demeanor, articulates just how deeply and personally these blows are felt. Though mainstream audiences, are, presumably, aware of the presence of racial violence through news media reports, the film's heightened emphasis on the pakibashing and the link it makes with Daljit's emotional state and personal reaction stresses the decidedly *political* nature of hate crimes. In doing so, it vociferously articulates all the more so the urgent necessity for political action and responsibility to combat such crimes.

The link the film establishes between Daljit and the Indian man echoes the link that is constituted between the audience and Meena as the breakdown is depicted entirely through her point of view. As she rises into consciousness about the devastating emotional as well as physical effects of racism, so, too, does the viewer. Though it is impossible to determine whether or not the viewer actually becomes politically engaged, the film continues stressing the importance of avowing the Other's cultural difference

through Meena's growing internal resistance against racism. The film's encouragement of the necessity for viewers'/society's political responsibility and action regarding matters of race emerges most forcefully and creatively in the next scene, which takes place at the annual village fete. Here, Meena's resistance is expressed in very physical terms.

Meena, who comes to the fete only because Anita will be there, experiences a rude awakening about her "best friend in the whole world" when she overhears her say to two other girls that she (Anita) was present at the "pakibashing." Though Meena is mounted on a horse about to take a free ride, she listens intently to the rest of Anita's casual disclosures and learns how Anita stood by holding Sam's packet of crisps while he and the other boys in his skinhead gang beat up the "paki." Anita's ignorance of how her indirect involvement insults her friend Meena is underscored through the callousness she expresses when she mockingly states that the "paki" "just stood there and took it." Upon hearing Anita's disclosures, Meena is incensed and charges toward Anita on the horse.

The film's depiction of Meena's angry response offers a creative "moving" critique against Anita's complicity with the racial violence and her utter lack of political responsibility. Deviating from its cinematization of the rest of the narrative events that are conveyed in typical realist, linear mode, the film achieves the level of spectacle to produce what Sonia Sontag would call "discontinuities," which transform "ordinary reality" into something more (366). Again, because it is interested in engaging rather than alienating mainstream viewers, the film maximizes visual and aural effects without

being overly expressionistic.

Stressing the causal relationship between Anita's gross (in)action regarding the violent assault and Meena's justified anger, the film rapidly crosscuts four separate shots: the "pakibashing" as it *imaginatively* flashes up in Meena's mind; the galloping, swerving legs of the horse on which Meena charges; Anita's hardened stance as Meena charges toward her; and panicked villagers jumping out of harm's way. Though the accompanying diegetic sounds of the horses' stamping hooves, the thud of Anita falling to the ground as Meena charges past her, and screams of the villagers underscore the mayhem caused by Meena's seemingly bizarre behavior, they all fade out as the voiceover narrator's mantra-like repetitions are foregrounded: "What's your name? Be my mate. What's your name? Be my mate. What's your name? Be my mate." While the villagers and Meena's parents remain clueless about Meena's erratic behavior, the viewer understands completely. Hearing the voiceover narrator's mantra, the viewer recalls that same repetition of words Meena desperately rehearses to herself when she sees Anita for the first time. Hauntingly reminding both Meena and the viewer how badly Meena desired Anita's friendship, they now reiterate her *naiveté* at the time of thinking so highly of Anita.

The conclusion of the scene continues employing dramatic effects to stress both Anita's ignorance of Meena's cultural difference and Meena's relationship with the Indian man. As Meena is thrown off the horse, the shot cuts immediately to another depicting the lifeless Indian man's body falling on the ground literally at Anita's feet to

reiterate (very much like Daljit's breakdown) the collective identity and oppression Meena shares with the victimized Indian man. Their connection born of racial trauma and oppression contrasts with the connection achieved between Sam and Anita who have instigated their oppression. This becomes apparent in the very last shot of the scene in which the beaten man lies in front of Sam and Anita's feet. Because this shot like all the shots of the beaten man depict his assault *and* her "friends'" involvement in it, the viewer is encouraged to become as disturbed as she is. The very last shot of the scene punctuates Sam and Anita's gross insensitivity and unified front as the perpetrators of the violence. While the beaten man lays unconscious on the ground literally their feet, Sam and Anita's bodies move close to each other to kiss. Anita's hand is then shown pouring the remaining crisps from the bag she has been holding for Sam over the man's head before she and Sam saunter away in the night air. The callousness of their racism is echoed by the amplified sounds of their shoes scraping against the hard pavement. That the shot does not cut immediately to the next scene, but, instead, fades out slowly, induces viewers' careful consideration of the gravity of the preceding events. As Meena's version of the assault is the only version that is visualized, the film stresses its authority over the other versions of "pakibashing." Whereas the newspaper's account is expressed in the quiet written word and accompanied by a dignified picture of the man *before* his assault, and Anita's disclosure is offered solely through the casual spoken word with no accompanying visual flashbacks, Meena's visual version speaks a greater sense of "truth" and tragedy by its graphic, dramatic depiction of the physical violence inflicted upon the man, the impact of which is amplified by the sounds of the blows he receives. Through

Meena's version, the viewer is afforded a much more complicated understanding and a highly sensory experience of the racial violence than is offered by the "black and white" facts in the newspaper's "official" account, or in Anita's mocking account that pays no attention to either the violence of the act or her own culpability, indicting, instead, the victim for not fighting back. Through Meena's version, the viewer becomes acutely aware of not just the suffering experienced by the man, but also its interrelationship with the inhuman, hateful mindset that led to the violent act.

The efforts of the film through both Daljit's breakdown and Meena's "breakout" scene at the village fete, like their counterparts in the novel effects cracks in the overall narrative surface of the film. Though brief, their visual and thematic "discontinuity" with the rest of the film challenges the narratives superficial "happy-go-lucky" nostalgia that has been, presumably entertaining its mainstream audience. Taking place at night, the literal and figurative darkness of these scenes disrupt the golden sepia tones bathing the rest of the narrative, most of which takes places during the day. The ideological significance of these two scenes is unambiguous, speaking in no uncertain terms to the viewer of the seriousness of racialized oppression. Placing the emphasis on the deep, emotional impact both Meena and her mother, respectively, sustain, these scenes encourage viewers' empathetic identification with the characters' racialized existence to prompt their political responsibility and respect for the Other's racial difference.

Even as the film encourages political responsibility, it does not idealize it. In fact, the adaptation makes a point of stressing the difficulty of achieving it. Uncle Alan,

the resident “hippie bugger” symbolizing the political consciousness of Tollington, receives no support for his causes. His efforts to rouse villagers’ protest against the impending new motorway that poses economic and environmental threats to their community falls on deaf ears. Sam Lowbridge openly mocks Uncle Alan for his political “talk” while Hairy Neddy, the only villager who stops to listen, fails to make the “personal is political” connection, enthusiastically noting the convenience the motorway will bring him and his rock and roll band. When Uncle Alan attempts to garner the Rutter household’s support, Anita’s parents’ ongoing domestic disputes that involve copious insults and crashing dishes illustrate how the motorway is the least of their concerns. Even the ragtag bunch of children Uncle Alan has assembled and fitted with protest signs abandon him when they hear that an amusement fair is being set up. Though sympathetic to Uncle Alan, Meena, too, runs off to join them.

Uncle Alan’s most difficult obstacle, however, is not the political unconsciousness that plagues its villagers, but, rather, the regressive ideologies circulating in the village. His charity efforts to raise money for the “Babies in Africa” fund incites vehement opposition by both Sam and Mrs. Ormerod, the provincial proprietor of Tollington’s only store. Sam, who preaches a message of hate against Uncle Alan’s message of “love,” angrily says: “Yow, do nothing but talk Uncle, and give away all we have to some darkies we don’t know.” Sam’s racist rhetoric may induce viewers’ shock or rouse their anger as it does in one villager onscreen, who shouts “Yow don’t talk for me, son!” Its inclusion in this scene, however, seems less an attempt to have viewers confront overt expressions of racism than to contrast it with the more

insidious forms of racism that they may less likely perceive as a threat, much less protest against. Mrs. Ormerod's opposition to Uncle Alan's cause offers an example of such racism. She forsakes Uncle Alan's cause for a cause of her own, namely, the leaky church roof she believes contributes to the dismal health of her fellow pensioners. Whereas Uncle Alan's creation of the *Babies in Africa* fund reflects his ability to extend his vision beyond the borders of the rural village and the nation, implicitly articulating the inextricable relationship between England and her former colonies, Mrs. Ormerod's myopic, hegemonic values can only discern an us/them binary relationship between her fellow English and the babies in Africa. More a religious zealot than a faithful believer, she foregoes Jesus' golden rule of loving one's neighbor as one's self, preferring instead to valorize a different code of morals, which she vehemently cries out to the vicar: "What ever happened to 'charity begins at *home*'?"

Lacking Uncle Alan's progressive politics, Mrs. Ormerod does not share his desire for conflict resolution through a democratic process. Rather than taking a community vote, as he suggests in order to decide which charity to support, Mrs. Ormerod follows a more totalitarian route as she and her executive church committee hold their own exclusive vote. Their decision is revealed when she excitedly croons to Meena, "No more African babies!" That her words reverse the actual name of the fund (*Babies in Africa*) to racialize the babies is telling of the condition of Otherness to which she attaches to them. Through this racist lens, she cannot see the babies in the same terms she sees her fellow pensioners, as fellow human beings in need. Her executive church decision is a racist political response in that the babies represent for her a threat to

the comfort and well-being of the white church parishioners. Mrs. Ormerod's reaction, like Sam's more overt racist rhetoric, reflects the growing anxiety of the late 60's and early 70's in which the novel and film, respectively, are set, a time when politician Enoch Powell's racist, anti-immigrant rhetoric perpetuated fear and anger concerning the "swamping of English culture" by the "enemy within."

That the conflict between Uncle Alan and Mrs. Ormerod is muted by the humorous contrast between their sharply distinct personalities and the physical comedy surrounding their exchanges, again illustrates the film's desire to subversively raise viewers' political awareness without alienating or boring them. It is very amusing to see the progressive young vicar with the "groovy haircut" attempt to negotiate with the fussy, provincial "old" woman. Laughs are also elicited when we see Mrs. Ormerod in her sensible pillbox hat stomp up onto the stage where Uncle Alan stands and wrench the microphone away from him, a full grown man whose reluctance to engage in violence makes him succumb to her forcefulness. Unhappily he stands by while she vociferously exclaims to the crowd that the money raised by the fete will go to the "Tollington Church Roof Fund!" The humor, however, is superficial as the incident symbolizes the systematic, political and bureaucratic racism choking expressions of progressive politics taking place in the everyday world off screen. That the crowd, who reacts in shock or anger to Sam's racist rhetoric, does not seem to care that Mrs. Ormerod has forcefully disrupted the vicar's speech, and has already decided without their input what to do with their community raised money underscores their political unconsciousness of the more insidious forms of racism.

Though my analysis of Uncle Alan and Mrs. Ormerod, as I have shown above, emerges from my critical examination of the film's thematic and cinematic treatment of their respective characters and the conflict between them. It also derives from the film's adaptation of the character of Mrs. Ormerod who in the novel occupies a less significant narrative presence and is actually a man, Mr. Ormerod. By changing the character's gender and giving Mrs. Ormerod more narrative presence (i.e. via appearances/ dialogue as well as complexity of character) the film is able to tease out the conflict between her and Uncle Alan in a way that reflects not merely a personal disagreement about the allocation of church funds, but an ideological battle between progressive politics and racist conservatism. Making Mrs. Ormerod's character, the stereotypical fussy, old woman allows the film to convey the conflict ,as I mentioned above, with humor and avoid preaching the audience to death. That English actress Lynn Redgrave is cast in the role of Mrs. Ormerod also demonstrates the narrative importance the film attaches to the characters' ideological conflict. Though her fame as an actress would certainly attract mainstream audiences, Redgrave's iconic status in English culture greatly bears, I would argue, significant ideological weight in mainstream viewers' interpretation of Mrs. Ormerod. Apart from the convincing performance she gives, Redgrave's well known English family pedigree and her royal appointment as officer of the OBE (Order of the British Empire) gives credibility and meaning to Mrs. Ormerod's symbolic role as the great protector of English culture.

Raising Mrs. Ormerod up, so to speak, from the original narrative, giving her more presence than the original character on which she is based and increased attention

by casting Redgrave to play her, the film brings the character out from the obscurity of the copious pages of the novel. But, as the final scene of the film suggests, the character and the regressive political ideology she represents is built up only to receive a shattering blow in the film's final scene. Again, because it is conveyed through entertaining humor, its draws viewers' attention without being overly didactic. Here, Mrs. Ormerod is rushing to gather up the Sunday school children to welcome the new vicar replacing Uncle Alan who has left Tollington. Admonishing them to stand straight and not pick their noses, she stands tall and proud with a welcoming cake in hand. Behind her, a church sign reads "You Will Find a Friendly Welcome Here." As the car drives up and the new vicar emerges from the car with a broad smile on his face, the smile on Mrs. Ormerod's face turns to anxious shock upon seeing that he is black. This most memorable look constituting that very last shot of the film brilliantly underscores that the forces of change Mrs. Ormerod's executive church decision shut out proved ineffective in combating the change about to walk through its front gates.

That the new vicar is actually Uncle Alan's "best friend" from seminary, as we learn from the accompanying voiceover narration, suggests that the vicar with the "groovy haircut" has had the last laugh. The film, however, is careful not to idealize Uncle Alan or his progressive politics. Tested to his limits by Tollington's unwavering political unconsciousness, Uncle Alan drops his political "talk," exchanges his vicar vestments for a much less conservative sleeveless vest and rope of beads, and leaves the village in his flower-power hippie van, setting off eventually to India. The suggestion of the film's critique of Uncle Alan's departure, or abandonment, rather, of his political

beliefs for personal nirvana comes through humorously and subversively loud and clear when the voiceover narration informs us that he suffers from dysentery upon his arrival to India.

As I have been demonstrating thus far, the film's potency as an intersecting adaptation lies in its ability to refract rather than merely reflect the novel on which is it based. Its selective "flashlight" processes that "make appear this or that" gives the viewer an innovative experience of Syal's novel that establishes its narrative authority and reputation as a work of art in its own right. As Jean-Louis Baudry tells us, "To seize a movement is to become movement, to follow a trajectory is to become a trajectory, to choose a direction is to have the possibility of choosing, to determine the meaning is to give oneself a meaning" (307). In the course, then, of adapting the literary text through its "peculiar beam," which sees the condensing, rearranging or altering of its details and events, Syal's adaptation fulfills Andrew's general claim of film adaptation as both a "leap" and a process (421).

The integrity and complexity of Syal's narrative is also demonstrated in the "leaps" it makes into other issues it presents for the consideration of its viewing audience. As I have been arguing, thus far, the film's reiteration of cultural difference (through its depictions of the overt and insidious forms of racism) stresses, like the novel, the necessity for political responsibility and political friendships. The film, however, also demonstrates a critical engagement with the subject of friendship itself and engages in a hidden polemic against the hegemonic idealization of the platonic relationship that is

constructed, as Derrida tells us, as a time-honored trust of loyalty. Though the film recognizes that personal friendship can certainly bring pleasure and emotional comfort and stability, it makes a concerted effort to challenge hegemonic ideals precisely by *not* idealizing friendship in these terms. This is apparent in (Meena's mother's) Daljit's relationship with her best friend, Shaila, whose character, incidentally, is performed by Syal herself. Having been there for her in India "when the dark days came," as Daljit notes of Shaila, the friendship between the two women demonstrates a continuing bond in England that sees them always sharing each other's joys and concerns. Even their strong bond, however, is not immune to fractures, as we see a temporary estrangement between them in the course of the narrative.

Not surprisingly, the film most emphatically challenges hegemonic ideals of friendship through its most dominant friendship between Anita and Meena. The friendship between the two girls is anything but ideal. Anita, who doesn't care for the younger Meena initially, only becomes her friend after Meena follows her lead and becomes an accomplice to her acts of petty thievery. The inequity and hierarchical nature of their relationship that is apparent throughout the film can be traced to Meena's desperate desire to be friends with the cool, beautiful Anita who represents everything she wants to be. The melodramatic cinematization of Anita's arrival in Tollington demonstrates Meena's groupie-like fascination with her. In that scene, Meena is mesmerized by Anita who suddenly appears out of nowhere sauntering down the street in a cloud of white mist as a David Cassidy love song plays non-diegetically in the

background. It is in this scene where Meena repeats to herself the same words that comprise the narrator's mantra at the fete as Meena charges toward Anita on the horse -- "What's your name? Be my Mate. . ."

The film's thematic attention to disrupting hegemonic ideals of friendship is also expressed through its employment of a voiceover first-person narrator. Though her presence reflects that of the first-person narrator telling the story in the novel, she is an entirely different persona. She is not a grown woman like the novel's narrator who, as we know from the monologue, has gone on job interviews and attracted the attention of white boys. The film's narrator is only slightly older than the protagonist, telling the story after she has moved way from Tollington. As we learn from details she discloses in the conclusion, she is still in school and cannot be more than one or two years older than the protagonist onscreen. While the novel's narrator constructs her narrative to instigate, as I have argued above, a political friendship with her audience, the film's narrator as I discuss below does not demonstrate any desire to have a political or personal relationship with her audience.

As Sarah Wichlacz explains, the use of narration in film is distinguished from narration in literary texts in that it is coupled with the visual language (images and action) taking place onscreen. As this visual language itself conveys events as they occur, voiceover narration becomes "redundant," as Brian Henderson argues, if it seeks to explain that which the viewer already comprehends through the onscreen activity; however, he argues that "voiceover can be a successful narrative technique only as long

as it conveys something different than the visual narrative and the narrative contained in dialogue" (Henderson qtd. in Wichlacz). As we can infer from Henderson's remarks, voiceover narration can play a crucial in viewers' understanding of the events being depicted on screen when those events may signify something other than what is most ostensibly being conveyed by the other cinematic elements in the film. Taking this further, I will add that when the narration offers such insights, a relationship of trust is created and enhanced between the narrator and the viewer precisely because the latter has a more accurate understanding of what is being depicted onscreen, which s/he believed to be something else. In the case of voiceover *first*-person narration where the narrator is the "voice" of the protagonist with whom the viewers are encouraged to identify, a relationship of trust between the narrator and viewer develops because the former is presumably giving privileged information (i.e. characters' inner thoughts) to the latter who cannot discern those insights for him/herself. In this sense, I read the relationship of trust between the narrator and viewer as very much like a friendship, as constructed by hegemonic ideals which, as we know from Derrida, prioritize trust between the parties involved.

In Syal's adaptation of *Anita and Me,* the voiceover first-person narrator challenges hegemonic ideals of friendship by refusing to be loyal to the viewers who rely on her for privileged information. She raises up their expectations to think of her as their trustworthy friend only to disrupt them through two important "shifts" she creates in her narration, both which effect separation not intimacy between herself and her viewers.

The first of these shifts occurs in the opening sequence, which opens with a shot of Meena and Anita standing across each other against a background of lush foliage on the edge of a rock platform situated over, as we later find out, a deep pond below. The idyllic scenery is complemented by the soft, non-diegetic, Indian-inspired contemplative music giving the scene a melodramatic, sentimental air. As there is no dialogue, however, the viewer is unable to discern what exactly is going between the two girls who are staring at each other. It is only when the voiceover narrator begins speaking, that the viewer receives some pertinent information corresponding to the two girls on screen. As the camera shows a close up shot of Anita's face, the narrator says: "This is Anita." She's my best friend in the whole world." Inviting the viewer to admire Anita's physical beauty as she does, she adds, "And a natural blonde, Gorgeous isn't she?" The camera then renders a close up shot of Meena. Though the almost mournful look on her face suggests that she, perhaps, covets Anita's beauty, the narrator tells us that Meena is not as self-deprecating as the viewer might think: "This is me, Meena. I've got brown hair, but I do have nice eyelashes." In offering these "truthful" comments that make sense of the ambiguous visual language on screen, the narrator encourages the viewer's trust in her, implicitly suggesting that the viewer can rely on her to offer more accurate information. No sooner than the viewer becomes invested in this relationship, however, the narrator begins distancing herself from the audience, offering up a puzzling comment that seems to have no relevance to what is being depicted on screen. She states: "People in *Jackie* magazine are always telling each other "I love you to death." Before the viewer can even begin trying to make sense of what the narrator means, more confusion is elicited as the

two girls on the screen suddenly begin physically fighting each other, and go plunging into the water below. Oblivious to the fighting and her viewer's confusion, the narrator makes her next comment: "But I never got it . . . until *now*." As the opening sequence closes with a shot of a white shoe bobbing in the water, and the title credit rolls, the viewer has no clue as to what has just transpired. The narrator never explains the reason why the girls fight, much less explain what ends up happening to them, nor does she give the viewer any clarification about the puzzling, irrelevant comment she makes and what personal insights she has gained from it. Unlike the source text's first-person narrator who creates a bond and relationship with her listener/reader by the end of her brief monologue that opens the novel, the film's narrator has broken her bond with the viewer who relies on her by not clarifying the strange turn of events between the girls and her puzzling statement.

In a sense, the film's narrator refuses to befriend the viewer. The shifts in her narration that move her out from the role of viewer's trustworthy informant seem to suggest that loyalty to her audience's comprehension is not a primary concern of hers. Rather than explain the significance of why people are always saying "I love you to death," the narrator opts instead to move into the opening scene and start from the beginning of her story, saying, "It all began in the spring of 1972." She invites the viewer to forget the opening sequence altogether through her rapidly unfolding narration that is punctuated by the non-diegetic beat of a popular 70's song. In less than minute, the narrator introduces at dizzying speed the village of Tollington, its residents, the local

pub and even the home of the local monster, the "Yeti," who is rumored to live in the presumed haunted "Big House."

Offering such a fast-moving narration, the narrator impedes viewer identification with her voice since the speed of her narration deters their comprehension. Also effecting distance between her and the viewer is the West Midlands Black Country accent through which she speaks, which, as some film reviewers note, is difficult to understand for even many native English viewers. As a result, the pictures onscreen become the viewers' primary mode of understanding. As all these shots feature and favorably present the protagonist Meena, viewer's identification and bonding with her is secured by the end of the opening scene. Happily riding her bike against the charming sepia-toned rural landscape to the non-diegetic beat of an energetic song, waving and smiling to all she passes, Meena, the very picture happy-go-lucky, makes for a very likeable protagonist with whom viewers would presumably want to be friends. As the narration continues the introduction to village life, the camera moves into the next scene which takes place in Meena's classroom. Here, the camera tracks forward leading the viewer up the center aisle where Meena stands at the front of the room holding a book to her face. A close up shot of the book reveals that it is her private diary. As we hear the narrator's comments about Tollington wind down, Meena is simultaneously lowering her book and saying, "Tollington, the jewel of the Black Country . . . The End." Surprisingly, it is only then that we understand that a shift, or conflation, rather, in the narration has taken place in the course of the classroom scene. The narrator's voice has in fact ceded itself to the voice of

the protagonist who, as it turns out, has been reading an essay about Tollington to her fellow classmates.

As demonstrated in the narration that occurs in the opening sequence and continues into the opening scene, the narrator seems to avoid asserting her narrative presence to her audience. Never explaining her comment (regarding why people are always saying "I love you to death") in the opening sequence, the narrator, unlike her literary counterpart, keeps her personal insights to herself. Conflating her voice with that of her protagonist' voice in opening scene, where Meena dominates the screen, the narrator privileges viewers' identification with Meena rather than encourage their identification with her voice. In short, it seems that the narrator wants the viewer to become friends with Meena *not* her. That she often speaks through the protagonist's younger voice in the present tense further supports her ardent desire for viewers' identification with Meena and not her. As it is the narrator who deliberately constructs the narrative, one questions begs to be answered -- What does she want, if not the viewer's identification/relationship?"

The response to this question may lie, perhaps, in the two narrative shifts themselves: the puzzling statement and conflation of narration. Looking at these shifts again with the understanding that the voiceover narrator is deliberately constructing the narrative, there is evidence to suggest that what she wants seems to reflect her/Meena's longtime dreams of becoming a writer. In the course of the narrative, the viewer learns that *Jackie* magazine agrees to publish Meena's story the "Sprain of Destiny," a tribute to

the ankle sprain she receives after falling off the charging horse at the village fete. The experiences of writing this story, as the narrator explains, helped "clear" her "head" and made her "grown up." Not wanting to lapse back into naive adolescence and political unconsciousness, the narrator exclaims how she needs "to write to keep going." The narrative the viewer is watching, then, is presumably the next story the narrator writes in an effort to keep her "head clear." With this in mind, the narrative shifts created by the narrator in the opening scene and the opening sequence can be read as narrative strategies she employs in telling this story. Rather than explicitly *tell* the viewers what she means by the puzzling statement in the opening sequence, she chooses, like a good writer, to avoid heavy exposition and let the unfolding narrative events themselves *show* what it means, thus creating a much more interesting story.[11] Likewise, the conflation in narration in the opening scene and the privileging of Meena's twelve-year old voice, throughout much of the narrative, also function as narrative strategies suggesting that the narrator is more interested in developing the complexity of her protagonist rather than her own.

We can further appreciate the narrator's writing skills when we take note that she does not exploit her more knowledgeable, older perspective in telling her story because she chooses *not* to clear up the local Tollington legend of the "Yeti" who lives in the "Big House." As the older more mature Meena who has already experienced the events being related to the viewer on screen, she already knows that there is no actual monster living in the house, yet she continues to perpetuate the mystery so as to create the suspense that

makes for an interesting story. Again, she never explicitly *tells* the truth about the Yeti, choosing, instead, to allow the unfolding narrative events *show* the truth about the so-called "monster," who, as it turns out, is actually a wealthy man of Indian descent, who simply desires a reclusive life. In his two very brief appearances, the narrative shows how the Yeti's reclusiveness does not indicate a monstrous personality, but, instead, a quiet humanity. In the first, he is shown standing in the distant fields swaying to the melodic Indian music he hears coming from the Kumar household. In the second, the Yeti reveals his decidedly un-monster like actions by rescuing Anita who is drowning in the pond she and Meena have fallen into during their fight.

In a sense, the narrator is not unlike the Yeti in that she, too, remains an elusive presence in the film. As she hardly ever discloses any details of her own life except the sparse comment in the conclusion when she mentions how busy she became with her new school and home to which the Kumars have moved, the viewer knows very little about the girl the protagonist becomes once she leaves the village. In the scene where the Yeti is rescuing Anita, the narrator herself suggests a connection she has with him. Here she makes a rare offering of her own inner thoughts that, incidentally, correspond with her puzzling statement in the opening sequence. As he is shown rescuing Anita, the narrator states rather poignantly: the "yeti saved Anita *and* me." Invoking the film's very title, *Anita and Me,* the narrator's comment comes as something of a surprise since the title taken out of the context of this scene could easily be construed solely as a reference to Anita and *Meena*, whose relationship has been the focus of the narrative. As the narrator

makes clear, however, the "Me" in the title actually refers to *her* and not the protagonist. The question now is to determine just how the Yeti has saved the narrator.

Because the Yeti never speaks in both of his brief appearances and disappears as quickly as he appears, we can infer that it is his actions that affect the metaphoric enlightenment the narrator's implies when she says that he saved her. In both of his appearances, the Yeti's actions demonstrate that he is a man with little need of direct social relations. In his first appearance, where he is shown swaying in the distant fields listening to the music he hears from the Kumar house, he, as the narrator notes, is "enjoying himself" even though he is alone. As made obvious in his second appearance when he appears out of nowhere to save the drowning Anita, his desire for solitude does not prevent him from springing into action in moments of crisis. His disappearance, however, from the scene shortly thereafter suggests that he does not need any validation from society that would make him a hero. In fact, his departure from the scene leaves Meena to take credit for the rescue.

In a sense, the Yeti's lifesaving actions demonstrate that democratic form of political friendship, Derrida talks discusses which is based on loving rather than being loved. It is through his actions that the viewer gleans some understanding about the narrator's puzzling statement, finally understanding the significance concerning peoples' frequent expressions of "I love you to death." The Yeti's actions go beyond such "talk," speaking as it were to the urgency and need for relationships in the time of crisis, as demonstrated by his rescuing of Anita. It is through the Yeti's actions that the narrator

understands that the social cohesion to which her younger self desperately aspired is not necessary for personal contentment. It is through the Yeti's actions that she is inspired to live life on her own terms without forsaking ties with her fellow human beings. Her narration is an act that achieves both of these things since she is able to both "keep her head clear" and, simultaneously, "rescue" her audiences from political unconsciousness, instigating their responsibility and respect for the protagonist they identify with as well as the other Others she represents.

The experience with Yeti also affects protagonist Meena's actions in a profound way. Seeing his willingness to leave the comfort of his solitude to help the drowning Anita, inspires her to still pursue friendship with Anita, but in very different terms than those she had previously espoused. Whereas she once desperately sought Anita's friendship in an attempt to bolster her social standing in their communal yard, Meena, at the end of the film, sees the value of friendship not in personal gain but, in Derrida's terms, as an act of "loving rather than being loved." Though Anita has betrayed her through her involvement in the "pakibashing" and failure to take responsibility for it, Meena decides to move on by not holding any grudges, and makes a deliberate effort to reconcile with her by slipping her precious diary into Anita's mail slot. The gesture is meaningful in more ways than one. Understanding Anita's loneliness and broken family life, Meena's offering of her most private thoughts and stories is an act that literally gives something of her own self to Anita who, as we learn though the dialogue in the scene, feels abandoned by everyone in her life. Meena's act is also important because it does

not restage the asymmetrical relationship they shared in the past. Offering up her diary that discusses her life and experiences, good and bad, Meena offers up her cultural difference of which Anita has always been ignorant. The terms of a new relationship between them will have to see Anita respect and be responsible for this cultural difference.

The final scene of the film sees Anita and Meena reconciled as the two are shown embracing tightly just as Meena is about to leave Tollington forever. Apparently, Anita has read the diary, thus signaling her willingness to hear out Meena's culturally different voice. Though this ending sharply contrasts the novel's conclusion of failed friendship, the film does not offer comprehensive closure for the viewer because it refuses to idealize the reconciliation between the girls. While Anita reads the diary and tells Meena that it was "bostin" and that ""even the sad bits were really good," she also informs her that she "didn't get all of it." As the film is suggesting here, Anita's understanding of Meena's cultural difference will require much more than a single reading of her friend's diary. This is a point further reiterated by the Christmas card Anita sends Meena, which she alters in an effort to respect Meena's religious heritage. As the narrator explains, Anita crosses out the word "Christmas" and writes in the name of the Hindu holiday Diwali but misspells it. Through Anita's actions here and in her inability to comprehend everything in Meena's diary, the film emphasizes that Anita's political responsibility and respect for the Other's cultural difference is still burgeoning. What she manages to achieve in reading Meena's diary and sending her a Diwali card by the end of the film is most

assuredly a step in the "right" direction, but still only a step and not a final destination. Less a "happily ever after" than an ending that signals the possibility for a new beginning, the conclusion of *Anita and Me* leaves the options open for viewers to consider.

As demonstrated in the film's final scene that sees Mrs. Ormerod awaiting the new vicar, the potential for progressive change is very much within sight. To embrace it is a choice worthy of much celebration, but that celebration cannot serve as an end unto itself. To actually move towards the world to which Syal's adaptation points will require nothing short of the adaptation and alteration of our own selves.

CHAPTER 6

DEMOGRAPHIC MULTI-CULTURALISM AND A TENUOUS FRIENDSHIP IN GURINDER CHADHA'S *BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM*

> England is . . . an island story. What happened to that story with the coming of the aeroplane? - Gillian Beer

> Nations are imagined communities . . . [they] are not characterized by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. - Benedict Anderson

Like Meera Syal's works, Chadha's film *Bend it Like Beckham* makes knowable a British-Indian community for dominant audiences, calling attention to questions of national identity – who is British and what does it mean to be British –by depicting a portrait of the racialized Other who is a critical insider within dominant white culture.[1] However, Chadha's film invokes these questions concerning nation rather self-consciously as is made evident in its very title that references football, the nation's most revered sport, and David Beckham, the nation's most famous footballer. The narrative concerns the coming of age story of Jessminder (Jess) Bhamra, a British girl of Punjabi-Sikh descent who, overcoming parental resistance achieves her goal of becoming a footballer and is positioned for a professional sports career by the end of the film. Depicting the rise of a racialized Other in the national sport, the film ostensibly reads as a representation of a racially inclusive England, but, even more so, it suggests a rather taken-for-granted stance on the nation's multi-cultural population. Jess sees the

realization of her football dreams right alongside her white friend Jules, and both Jess and Jules are members of a team whose captain is black and whose coach is Irish. Furthermore, because a British-Asian teenage girl is unproblematically shown (albeit in a daydream) playing in a game against a foreign team and deemed by reputed football commentators as the "answer to England's prayers," the film asserts that the nation can indeed be represented by the racialized Other. If, as Hanif Kureishi has argued of outdated attitudes of white nationhood, saying that "Britishness is no longer what it once was" (38) and attitudes need changing, then *Bend it Like Beckham* makes an ideological case for such change, enunciating, if dreamily and fictively, its demographic multi-culturalism[2] through its representation of football, which I read, as a metaphor for nation itself.

Complementing the film's emphasis on inclusion is its representation of the nation space. Unlike many other "ethnic" films, Jess's physical mobility is not restricted to a racialized urban scene.[3] Not only does Jess maintain a skillful athletic presence on that hallowed grassy ground of the nation, she easily occupies other national spaces off the football field as well. Jess lives in a West London suburb in a typical semi-detached house and has white neighbors. She plays football with her guy friends in the local park, a multi-racial venue that sees brown, black, and white peoples all enjoying the same public leisure space. She moves easily to and from various points within the suburb by walking or taking the bus and travels from suburb to central London, taking the subway to get there and back. Such access validates not just Jess's inclusion into the nation, but also her ownership of it -- evoking Chadha's own sentiments when she says, "There is no

such thing as ours and theirs. There is no part of Britain or England that I can't lay claim to."[4]

Jess's participation in the nation is clear; however, the film is not merely engaging with the nation to cinematically expand its borders and insert that which has been excluded so as to acknowledge the undeniable reality of the nation's racial plurality. Nor is it solely engaging with questions of national identity (who is British, what constitutes Britishness?) though, of course, it certainly does do this. More than affirming who can lay claim to the nation, the film is engaging with the very concept of the nation itself. As I argued of Syal's works in the previous chapters, Chadha's narrative interventions are not simply trying to reverse political and social discrimination by bringing the racialized other into the center space of the nation; they are, instead, intervening and transforming the center itself, which is, in Chadha's case, the nation, the very "scenario of articulation" itself, to borrow Homi Bhabha's description (312). To better appreciate Chadha's intervention of the nation, I will first briefly discuss the concept of nation and dominant representations of England.

Much theoretical debate throughout and especially since the latter decades of the late 20th century has focused attention on the concept of the nation, illuminating the nation as a construct underlined by ideals of social cohesion. Among the most well-known discussions of nation is Benedict Anderson's seminal text *Imagined Communities.* Anderson describes the modern nation as being an "imagined community" because its members "will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the mind [of each of them]lives the image of their communion" (7).

Anderson's offers further qualification saying the nation is imagined as being "limited," having "finite, if elastic, boundaries," which distinguish it from other nations. Highlighting the patriotic aspects of nation, Anderson states: "the nation is imagined as expressing a "*fraternal,* deep, horizontal comradeship" for which millions of people are prepared "not so much to kill as willingly to die" (7). Building upon Anderson's discussion of the ways the nation is imagined, Homi Bhabha highlights the nation as a matter of coming into being, discussing it as a construction evoked through the process of narration. For Bhabha, national identity emerges through what he refers to as the *pedagogical*, by which he means the totalizing sociological facts that dominant narratives of nation purvey as essential national characteristics, which are located in historicity – that is, emerging from a past of a horizontal (linear) time. Though the pedagogical aspects of a nation can have long lasting ideological influence, narrating the nation in various given terms, they cannot, as Bhabha explains, be assumed to be finite representations of the nation because they are always called into question by what he refers to as the *performative* dimensions of nation, which are expressed by the people within the nation, who alter on a daily basis those said pedagogical facts, disrupting the horizontal time of the nation and illustrating instead its cultural temporality and transitional social reality (209-226).

England has long been narrated in literary and non-literary texts through static pedagogical terms yielding an imagined cohesiveness community, of an ongoing nation populated by racially homogeneous members with a shared basis of cultural values and interests. Many dominant narratives underscore a presumed sense of social and physical

cohesion because they imagine, as Gillian Beer tells us in her landmark essay, England's story as "an island story," one which assumes myths of the nation's cultural insularity and imperviousness to outside influences (265). One such early narrative of nation emerges in the oft-valorized description of England in Shakespeare's *Richard II,* which offers a grandiose vision of England as a "sceptered isle," "an [island] fortress built by Nature herself against infection and the hand of war," a "blessed plot," a contained "little world," where live a "happy breed of men." (II.i.40-50). Though in such myths of England's island story, as Beer reminds us, the nation's borders are imaginatively stretched to meet the edges of the island, suppressing Wales and Scotland -- the other nations comprising the this land mass (269), sentiments of England's cultural uniqueness, insularity and cohesion have long maintained their vigor in the national imaginary. As Chris Rojek tells us, "Myths of a unified nation, bound together by common blood and shared history . . . respecting origins, connections, [and] destiny" have continued to have real consequences for how British peoples think of themselves and how others think of themselves today (15).

Even despite the increased numbers of non-white settlers into England's borders from the erstwhile colonies in the late 20th century, anachronistic pedagogical ideals of "continuity, rootedness and homogeneity," to borrow Kevin Davey's terms, maintained their ideological currency (6). Such ideals were nostalgically bolstered by conservative MP Enoch Powell's political rhetoric in the late 60's and early 70's, which made non-white settlers in England tantamount with a contaminating force threatening to divest the nation of its presumed timeless essence and purity; Powell's (in)famous "Rivers of

Blood" speech helped construct, as John Solomos explains, "an image of white Britons as "strangers" in their "own country" (Solomos 61). Echoing Powell, Margaret Thatcher's political discourse expressed white anxiety over black immigration, rendering it a "swamping" of England (Solomos 96) because (white) people felt "their whole way of life" had "been changed" (Solomos 96). Sentiments reifying a homogenous white nation were later expressed by Thatcher's successor John Major, who infamously occluded England's racial plurality (as well as regional and class plurality) in a 1993 speech forecasting the nation's future saying, "Fifty years from now . . . Britain will still be the country of long shadows on county grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers, and . . . old maids riding through morning mists to holy communion" (qtd. in Davey 15). Complementing the political myths of homogeneity informing the national imaginary were the so-called heritage texts of the 80's and 90's, film adaptations of canonical novels such as those domestic fictions by Austen and Forster, which reified the image of the nation's contained physical boundaries and racial homogeneity through their perpetuation of an archaic England of yore, hearkening green rural landscapes and country manor houses.[5]

Notwithstanding the ideological prowess of the aforementioned myths of England's homogenous, cohesive national community, dominant narratives of nation have not always been racially exclusive or pastoral.[6] The heightened expression of multiculturalist discourses, of *Cool Britannia,* in the late 90's under Tony Blair, began to narrate the nation in starkly different terms, celebrating rather than demonizing or occluding England's racial plurality. *Cool Britannia* ushered in "saris, steel bands, and

samosas," to borrow a popular expression, and moved away from pastoral landscapes to emphasize, as Davey explains, the nation's "urban and multi-racial" arts scene, nightclubs, galleries, [and] sports fields," offering "a marked departure from the Powellite England of "timeless tradition, [and] white nationhood" (11) and those iconic symbols of England such as "bowler hats, stiff upper lips, and horsewhips" (7). The spirit of Cool Britannia, as Davey continues to explain, inspired MP Peter Mandelson's assertion that the national flag no longer signified "division and intolerance" and was "restored" as "an emblem of national pride and national diversity" and "a symbol of confidence and unity for all peoples and ethnic communities of a diverse and outward-looking Britain" (11).

Multiculturalist discourses' rewriting of racialized peoples and cultures in England as legitimate insiders is infinitely preferable to the limited, demonized ways they had previously been imagined in national narratives, but, as I have already discussed in the earlier chapters of this study, they represent only one small, superficial step forward. Even as they tolerate, accommodate, and celebrate cultural diversity, multiculturalist discourses, as numerous critics have argued, continue to promote social cohesion and unity at the cost of occluding the political and social inequalities experienced by minority cultures. Furthermore, as Homi Bhabha explains, multiculturalist discourses celebrate diverse cultures but maintain the "transparent norm" of dominant white culture, which functions as the hegemonic standard against which Others are so frequently judged ("Interview: Third Space" 208).[7] Political narratives of England continue to rely upon, a cohesive sense of shared national identity built expressly on the assimilation of Black

peoples into what the current British Prime Minister David Cameron has referred to as "our" ways.[8] Superficial expressions of difference (i.e. food or fashion), what Stanley Fish refers to as "boutique multiculturalism," are acceptable, but those more significant matters of difference (i.e. religious beliefs or political practices), which cannot easily be reconciled with the values dominant culture holds dear and which are deemed to threaten the social cohesion (built upon the transparent norms of dominant culture) of the nation, are not.[9]

The conditional terms on which Black peoples are accepted into dominant white society, which require them to subordinate their cultural difference in order to support national social cohesion, is a main concern underlying Chadha's *Bend it like Beckham* challenges. The film employs narrative and cinematic devices that not only disrupt the ideals of social cohesion --"continuity, rootedness, and cohesive common ethos" -- but undermine the very value of these ideals as well, calling into question for whose benefit they may exist. The film destabilizes dominant narratives' pedagogical myths of nation by being attentive to cultural difference, illuminating the performative movements inside the nation's borders that express the uneven, incommensurable, and potentially politically antagonistic values and positions between cultures. In doing so, the film makes untenable what Bhabha calls that "modern metaphor" of [a presumed cohesive] nation" expressing "the many as one" (204) to illustrate that any achievement of egalitarian race relations relies on the *negotiation* rather than a suppression or occlusion of cultural difference within the nation space. Complementing Chadha's un-cohesive narration of nation is her construction of friendship which, moves away from the binding emotional

ties of love and loyalty idealized in the Western concept of fraternity, offering instead a tenuous and transient relationship that comes into being as a result of the mutual benefits each friend may potentially gain by the relationship, breaks up temporarily in the course of the narrative, and shows no definitive signs of continuity by film's end. I am not arguing that the film's disruption of social cohesion serves to reject the concept of nation or seeks to promote a post-national ethic; rather, I argue that its narration imagines a nation that is not mired in pedagogical terms that privileges the hegemony of any one culture's values (i.e. dominant culture's social cohesion) over others.'

I first examine the repetitive imagery of airplanes and technology to argue that characters cannot easily be co-opted into the nation because of their ease and access to leave the nation's borders literally and figuratively. I then examine Jess's participation in football (which, as mentioned above, I read as a metaphor for nation), as the film's critique against the occlusion of cultural difference effected in dominant policies of inclusion. I lastly discuss how the film encourages dominant viewing audiences, through visual and aural strategies, to confront and negotiate (not elide) cultural difference in order to move in the direction of egalitarian race relations.

The Island and the Airplane

Gillian Beer's famous question, which she asks of Virginia Woolf's novels and which intertwines the narration of the nation with the arrival of that modern technological wonder, the "aeroplane," is a question that begs to be asked of *Bend it like Beckham*. The film features the frequent arrivals and departures of airplanes throughout its narrative.

There are long shots of airplanes flying across the sky at a distance and close up shots of airplanes flying noisily and seemingly very low over the roofs of houses and cars while still other shots show planes through car windshields. Sometimes, airplanes are referenced in unusual ways: one shot depicts the shadow of a plane gliding gracefully upwards on car's front windshield while another shot depicts one of the characters mimicking an airplane in flight (as a celebratory gesture when he thinks he's gained an advantage in a cricket game). Airports and air travel are also featured in the film. Protagonist Jess and her family live within close proximity of Heathrow where, incidentally, both Jess's father and sister, Pinky, work. Jess travels back and forth to Germany with her team to play in a tournament and is later shown at film's end with friend Jules at the airport as they are about to leave for an American university to embark upon their collegiate sports careers. Not unlike the airplane's presence in Woolf's novels as analyzed by Beer, the repetitious airplane imagery in Chadha's film calls attention to the permeability *not* inviolability of England's borders. This assessment is further heightened by the film's many references to technology. Jess's room, as her mother notes, is equipped with a "TV, computer, music center, VCR." In other scenes, characters are shown using cell phones. Early in the film, Pinky's engagement ceremony scene underscores peoples' reliance on cell phones in particularly funny fashion when several gray-haired Indian grandmothers all reach into their purses upon hearing a cell phone ring. The scene also marks technology's ubiquitous presence and intervention into social and sacred life because the religious engagement ceremony is disrupted as a result of the repetitive ringing, causing more interruptions because Pinky's fiancé's takes the

call and yells at his coworker for calling. When characters are not on the phone, they are occasionally watching satellite TV as do Jess and Jules in one scene in which they turn on "WUSA" to view an American women's soccer game. Mrs. Bhamra, too, enjoys the privilege of satellite TV that allows her to watch her favorite Indian TV shows. That she refuses to change the channel to something else when her husband asks suggests the extent of her preference for such shows over others.

The film's many references to technology and travel recall Arjun Appadurai's discussion of modernity at large, signaling our attention to the disparate and diverse identities at play in the film. [10] If the airplane sometimes signaled death and destruction in Woolf's novels, thus pointing to the nation's physical violability and vulnerability as we can glean from Beer,[11] it signals in Chadha's film a metaphoric rupturing of the nation because the influence of technology and air travel, as depicted in the film, helps diminish the ties and loyalty to England that the characters, as members of the nation, might ought to ideally possess according to dominant discourses of social cohesion. As a result of their access to, use of, and ease with technology and travel, the film's characters are able to cultivate for themselves highly individualized identities; consequently, they do not lead lives that show much regard for a strong sense of that "shared sense of national identity," David Cameron desires for the nation, or an unwavering, patriotic loyalty that Norman Tebbit's infamous "Cricket test" would have them demonstrate, or see them participate in a "project of nation building," which political scientist David Miller believes is necessary for England today. [12]

Instead of promoting or participating in a cohesive national community, Chadha's characters demonstrate their tenuous links to the nation. Mrs. Bhamra is physically located in the suburbs of West London, in a semi-detached home typical of those residences in which many other members of the nation live; yet, she can easily maintain an imaginary homeland apart from the world that sits outside her front door merely by turning on her Indian TV shows. Her investment in that other homeland materializes in the domestic space of the Bhamra house, which speaks to Mrs. Bhamra cultural values. Perhaps, most indicative of these values is the ominous portrait of the Sikh saint Guru Nanek, whose picture is a constant presence in the background of the living room scenes, who appears to be looking down on the family as they go about their daily lives, and who is invoked by Mrs. Bhamra's frequent prayers.

Like Mrs. Bhamra, Jess and Jules also have tenuous links with the nation. Even though they have stronger links to the nation than Mrs. Bhamra, because they both support the national sport, the two girls are hardly restrained by them. Even before they board the plane at the end of the film to go to the California, they have been influenced by satellite TV to imagine lives for themselves outside of the nation's boundaries in a new homeland where they could potentially achieve their highest career ambitions. Incidentally, Jules's English national identity has been particularly compromised through her TV exposure to American soccer, which leads her to identify with an American *not* English sports legend. Unlike Jess, whose hero Beckham is a national icon and treasure, Jules idolizes Mia Hamm. Jules' strong identification with Hamm is illustrated by the

many posters of Hamm hung up in Jules's room. That Jules is often shown wearing a replica of Hamm's numbered football jersey symbolizes her willingness to play on another nation's team before she even leaves the nation's borders.

The Politics of Inclusion

While the film's emphasis on technology and air travel makes a case for the transnationality of the nation and renders untenable the concept of a nation that is circumscribed by ideals of social cohesion, the film is not a celebratory assessment of unfettered, unproblematic cosmopolitan life. As much as it might illuminate the ease through which characters can leave the nation (literally by plane and figuratively through technology), the film is just as concerned if not more so with what is happening *inside* the nation's borders and the lives of those who choose to stay (or are unable to leave). Though Jess leaves to pursue her education and sports career in America, her family will continue living in the nation they chose to make their home years ago when they immigrated from East Africa. Jess's sister Pinky happily takes up the domestic life Jess renounces, eagerly embracing the traditional route of marriage. Pinky's investment in the nation is underscored in the penultimate scene of the film which shows her in full-term pregnancy. Pinky's soon-to-be born child symbolizes the racialized community that will inevitably continue to be part of the nation and reiterates the importance and necessity for improving race relations in the future.

Much of the preceding narrative suggests that a progressive future for race relations cannot merely focus on inclusionary politics because inclusion is not as unproblematic as it might appear to be. If we read the football field as a metaphor for nation and Jess's participation on the Hounslow Harriers as her inclusion into the nation/national community, we can see how the materialization of progressive, egalitarian race relations require much more than a simple open door policy. No doubt that Jess's inclusion into the Harriers brings her closer to realizing her daydreams for a professional career in football, but, even so, it is still not something she can take for granted because her admission into the team, as the film constructs it, is a process of negotiation that has been brokered by (white) Jules, the team's most valuable player. In the initial interaction between Jess and Jules, the film suggests the selective process by which Jess has been invited to join the team. The first scene in which the two girls both appear shows them just missing each other in the park, but a subsequent shot in the same scene shows Jules looking through the bushes to take a look at Jess while she (Jess) plays a quick pick-up game with her friends. The suggestion here, then, is that Jules would never have become friends with Jess were it not for reasons to do with football. Presumably impressed with Jess's football skills, Jules watches Jess more closely in a subsequent park scene before approaching her directly in hopes of gaining some "new blood" for the team. That Jules's interest in Jess is something of an oddity even in this multi-cultural public venue is underscored by the British-Indian girls sitting on a nearby bench one of whom, upon noticing Jules intently watching Jess, indignantly asks, "hey -- who's that gori watching her [Jess]?"

As a very determined-looking Jules walks straight onto the grass where Jess and her friends are playing breaking up their group dynamic without inhibition, we see the beginning of an informal negotiation taking place between the two girls as Jules invites Jess to try out for the Hounslow Harriers team: "I've been *watching you* for some time now; you've gotten really good . . . nothing's *open* at the moment, but we've got [a] summer tournament coming up. You should come and have a *trial*" (emphasis mine). The undercurrent of surveillance, testing, and exclusivity invoked in the calculated (on Jules's part) exchange, which necessarily excludes Jess's guy friends/ informal teammates, this first interaction between the two girls reads like a business meeting or initiation of an outsider into a secret club especially when considering it is sealed with a handshake. The encounter, however, does not seal the deal; Jules's recommendation only gets Jess a chance to try out for the team; Jess will still have to prove herself to Joe, the coach, and "pass" the "test" before she can be counted amongst the Harriers.

Jess's inclusion on the Hounslow Harriers is also contingent upon various conditions, not unlike those that might be required of racialized peoples to achieve acceptance into the dominant society including, for example, adoption of an official language (i.e. to gain citizenship), assimilation to dress requirements (i.e. no head coverings especially when wearing school or work uniforms), or adherence to dominant values (i.e. national social cohesion) that are deemed to be universally beneficial. The film self-consciously calls attention to the process of assimilation Jess must undergo to secure her position on the team. Prior to her football trial, Coach Joe gives her an impromptu grilling session to determine if Jess is actually "serious about playing

football." He shows doubt in her ability before she even plays because, as he can see, she is unfamiliar with standard football terminology. When Joe asks Jess which position she prefers to play, she offers an amateur response, saying "I like to play up front, on the right is best." Joe further appears unimpressed with Jess when he, assuming she possesses the standard football equipment, learns from her that she does not have any football shoes. The film further calls attention to Jess's assimilation into the team by dramatizing how she *must* wear the shorts that are part of the team uniform despite the embarrassment she suffers from a scar on her leg. Even off the field, the film underscores the different values and physical environment Jess will now need to negotiate if she is to play for the team. This is made clear when Jess is trying to maintain her sense of modesty in the locker room where she is noticeably uncomfortable in having to change her clothes in front of her teammates and, perhaps, even more embarrassed at having to be subjected to her teammates' uninhibited changing habits.

The role Jess is expected to play on the team also makes clear the conditions to which she must conform if she is to play for the Harriers. While she does indeed "pass" the coach's "test," and eventually impresses him with her athletic prowess on the field, Jess is not free to play the game as she does in the park with her own friends where she unabashedly plays for her own glory on a patch of unmarked grass rather than on a "real pitch." If Jess is indeed to play the game in "proper matches" for the Harriers, she must do so under the auspices of an unwritten obligation to support Jules, the (white) team member and star player in whom Coach Joe invests the most time to lead the team to victory. Despite Jess's impressive handling of the ball from the minute she gets on the

field that allows her, as the camera points out to us, to get very quickly within shooting range of the goal, she is commanded by Joe to "pass it to Jules!" Jules, who in this scene has not been shown hustling for the ball, easily takes the pass and scores. If in the frenzy of the initial trial practice, Jess does not realize her prospective secondary role on the team, the message is made more obvious a little later in the locker room when, Mel, the captain of the team, welcomes her and tells her, "Jules could do with some decent *service*." (emphasis mine). Jess's own comments to Jules (when Jules tries to persuade Jess to play in the final match) suggests that Jess herself believes she is expected to play for Jules's benefit; she exclaims to Jules, "you just want me there for that American scout who's coming!"

While Jess does continue to show her commitment to the team even at the cost of lying to her parents, her service and sacrifice does not get reciprocated by either Jules or her coach Joe in her own crucial time of need, which occurs during a game when an opposing white player pulls on Jess's shirt and calls Jess a "Paki." Ironically, as Jess defends herself against the opposing white player's racist remark, she *not* the opposing player receives a red card penalty from the referee, requiring her to quit the game immediately. Aside from this scene suggesting how commitment to the team/nation does not secure a level playing field for the racialized subject, it further suggests in the two subsequent shots that it will neither guarantee redress or support for the racialized subject in a time of political crisis. Perhaps, even worse than the humiliation Jess suffers from being expelled from the game, is humiliation she experiences from her coach. Rather than support Jess when the referee makes his unfair call, Joe yells at her as if she were a

child for she potentially jeopardizing the team's chances to play in the championship game. The final shot of this scene is particularly suggestive of the elision by dominant cultures/peoples of the specific material inequalities and violence racialized peoples may experience. When Jess tells Joe that he did not have to yell at her, he tells her that he has "to treat her like everyone else." Knowing that the opposing player fouled Jess, but having still taken Jess to task for her defensive action against the opposing white player, Joe's reaction is particularly disappointing. In short, Jess is penalized by Joe because she has dared to defend herself rather than "taking one for the team," to borrow a common sports metaphor. When Jess tries to assert the specific racism she's experienced, Joe again tries to cultivate a sense shared collectivity and subordinate her individual cultural difference. As Jess exclaims to Joe that he doesn't know "what it feels like to be called a Paki, " he replies in quiet exasperation, "Jess, I'm Irish. Of course I'd understand what that feels like." Even while Joe's Irish cultural difference has earned his own historical ethnic exclusion in dominant national discourses, his equation of it with Jess's racialized exclusion downplays the specificity of the racialized inequality she experiences in the moment and historically. Joe's "empathy" especially rings hollow for us viewers, who, having had a privileged view of the recent events on the field have come to understand the egregiousness of the racial injustice to which Jess has been subjected.

The Politics of Friendship

Joe's inability to appreciate Jess's cultural difference is also reflected in Jules's friendship with Jess. Like Joe, Jules does not show any sympathy for Jess when Jess is

subjected to the racist remark from the opposing player and referee's unfair call. Though she and Jess have become friends from very early in the narrative, she does not take up the role of the *political friend,* who, as we can glean from Derrida, would be concerned with the concerns of one's friend for that friend's sake.[13] Jules's action or rather inaction is contrasted with some of her other teammates who express a political friendship for Jess by disputing with the referee, bearing as it were what Derrida would call "a co-implication of responsibility and respect" for the injustice Jess has endured (252). Despite her teammates' attempts to support Jess, Jules wears a stalwart look on her face and maintains her distance from Jess on the field. While Jules's inaction can be attributed to a fight she and Jess have had (over their romantic interests in Joe), her physical and emotional distance from Jess here in this moment of political crisis can also be read in similar terms to Joe's inability to understand Jess' specific racialized experiences.

Jules's friendship with Jess, as I mentioned above, is initiated by her professional football interests in Jess. As both the unofficial team recruiter and as the catalyst whose "whining," as Joe jokingly puts it, has led to the formation of the girls football team where previously there were none, the film suggestively places Jules within the symbolic role of the White western feminist who, as critics such as Chandra Mohanty have argued, seeks to create a sisterhood between all women but fails to recognize non-white women's' respective cultural difference.[14] That Jules has no inhibitions in recruiting a racialized Other for her team attests to a certain progressiveness on her part that other white girls (i.e. the opposing racist team player) may not possess because, to her credit,

she can see past Jess's color to admire her football abilities. Jules is also a refreshing alternative to the other white woman in the film, her mother, Mrs. Paxton, who only reads Jess as an exotic other, someone who "respects her elders" (unlike her own daughter) and whose parents will probably arrange for her to "marry a handsome young doctor soon." However, it is precisely because Jules can overlook Jess's otherness that will make her inattentive to Jess's cultural difference both in terms of the political inequalities Jess may experience (on or off the football field) or the specific Indian-Sikh cultural/family values informing her life, which Jess, as the film makes clear, still appreciates even if she disagrees with her parents' resistance to her playing football.

The film illustrates Jules's inconsideration of Jess's Indian cultural values in one particular scene, which takes place when Jules meets up with Jess and Jess's friend Tony in the park. When Jess initially tells Jules that her parents no longer want her to play, Jules equates her own gendered experiences with Jess's, encouraging Jess to revolt as she does: "That's bollocks! My mum's never wanted me to play . . . you can't take 'no' for an answer!" When Jess explains the specifics of her situation saying that her parents are stressed because of her sister's wedding, Jules encourages Jess to lie to them in order to keep coming to practices and games, even offering to put in a word where she works to get Jess a job.   Having easily solved Jess's problem, Jules resumes an upbeat tempo and starts running away as she and Tony start playing football; leaving Jess behind to follow.

Jules does not understand how the inflexible, resistant actions she feels justified in taking herself (i.e. yelling at her mother, saying I'm never gonna give it up!) to play football and which she directs Jess to take may severely disrupt Jess's relationship with

her parents. In a later scene, when she goes to Jess's house, she continues to demonstrate her personal feminist discourse, rhetorically and accusingly asking Jess, "What are you going to have to give up next?" Even after Jess has just disclosed to her that her father has not been speaking to her (after catching her in an unexpected embrace with Joe), Jules remains insensitive to how Jess must negotiate her individual desires around the deep-seated collective identity and values informing her parents if she (Jess) is to avoid breaking her relationship to her family, which Jess values deeply. Coming from a different culture, which is informed to varying degrees of individualism, Jules cannot understand the collective values informing Jess's parents' lives and to Jess's own life. Jules's ignorance is amplified for the audience, because we, as privileged insiders of the Bhamra family, have seen what she has not. The film repeatedly enunciates the family's s traditional, collective values through its many, crowded group shots of Jess's family and friends as they gather together to partake in the preparation and celebration of the Pinky's engagement and wedding celebrations. Such shots sharply contrast with Jules' personal/home life, which Jules, an only child, shares with just her mother and family and no extended family. The importance of the family is emphasized again even as Jess is about to leave her parents to go to America when Mrs. Bhamra reminds Jess to call up relatives in Canada when she's landed, saying, through her tears, at least "there is *some* family nearby."

Toward the end of the film, a small window of opportunity arises for Jules to get more acquainted with Jess's Punjabi-Sikh culture and family when Jess invites her to her sister's wedding reception. Upon arriving on the scene, Jules exclaims, to her mother

who has driven her to the reception, "how colorful everything is!" and is especially wowed by the flower-decorated wedding car. Though extended time with Jess and her family could potentially help deepen Jules's superficial impression of Indian culture into a deeper appreciation of Jess's collective identity, the rest of the scene forecloses this possibility because Jules must leave almost as soon as she arrives because her mother causes a disruption (after falsely assuming that Jess is a lesbian in love with her daughter).

The Politics of Cultural Difference

If, as I've shown above, how *Bend it Like Beckham* illuminates how productive, progressive race relations cannot ignore the cultural and political specificity of racialized peoples, the film also moves in the direction of a more egalitarian future by encouraging the viewing audience to conceptualize the nation and race relations therein through a lens of *cultural difference.* As I have explained, cultural difference is distinguished from the concept of cultural diversity promoted by multiculturalist discourses, which, as discussed above, promotes an empty racial harmony because it only superficially appreciates Other cultures and sees them as discrete entities living side by side with dominant culture. Cultural difference offers, as Bhabha explains, a better mode of understanding race relations, calling attention to the material, political conditions and scenarios that arise from the *interaction* of cultures with one another. As we can glean from Bhabha, understanding race relations through cultural difference – through a framework of the interaction between cultures -- will make more readily visible those potentially and

politically antagonistic, incommensurable, uneven subject positions and values informing those said cultures and their relationships with each other *and* shows, thereby, how dominant cultural values and practices cannot be assumed to be the universal standard by which Other cultures should be measured. Rather than promote a pedagogy of (empty) racial harmony, cultural difference enunciates how the performative points, ruptures, and disjunctures in the nation (that, as mentioned above, illustrate the nation's "cultural temporality" and transitional social reality) cannot be overlooked for the sake of promoting social cohesion.

Bend it Like Beckham's attentiveness to the performative features of the nation, suggests how expressions of cultural difference need to be negotiated *not* avoided in order to move toward more egalitarian race relations. While the film's enunciation of cultural difference could have easily gone the route of serious, politicized drama that could potentially alienate Chadha's target mainstream audiences,[15] her choice to create a light-hearted, "feel good film" inflected with many humorous situations illustrates a concern to create a narrative that builds *not* breaks connections with the mainstream audiences for whom she is making knowable the lives of British Asians. Strategic thematic, visual, aural devices employed throughout the film enunciate cultural difference without alienating her audiences.

The film's stress on cultural difference is made apparent from the very beginning. As is typical of most films, the title sequence hints at what is to come in the subsequent narrative. Chadha's construction of the title sequence thematically sets the stage for the many expressions of cultural difference that will repeatedly occur in the course of the

film; however, it also offers the opportunity for the viewing audience itself to confront and negotiate cultural difference. The title sequence serves as an expedient means to get audiences thinking about cultural difference with little risk because it is delivered rapidly, humorously, and through, as we soon find out, an innocuous, inconsequential daydream as opposed to an actual event within the narrative.

The sequence begins with a few seconds of black screen that roll the opening credits while the familiar voice (for mainstream British audiences) of John Motson, a real life, well-known BBC sportscaster, announces a play- by-play description of a football game, which appears a few seconds into the sequence. With only the credits rolling and no other visuals, Motson's voiceover narration helps the viewing audience get acclimated to the upcoming scenario before they are able to actually see it. Taken from actual footage of a Manchester United game against a Belgium team, there is little chance for the audience to resist the excitement of the game events unfolding on the screen accompanied by Motson's compelling narration. The fast-moving footage pans across the scene through a long shot, bringing Jess into visibility and showing her from a distance on the field scoring a goal after receiving a pass from teammate David Beckham. The goal earns her an embrace from Beckham and elicits the roaring cheers of the crowds. Even if the target audience consciously understands the improbability of the footage since there are, after all, no women in men's professional football, the subject matter (devoted to the national sport) along with the actual (albeit doctored) footage narrated by an actual BBC announcer invokes the nation and cinematically naturalizes Jess's place therein. Moreover, the events that take place in the scene as narrated by

Motson all work toward a portrait of the nation as an inclusive, unified national community. Jess, like the other Black player shown in the footage, is part of this community. Her links with the nation are underscored not just because she plays on the home team, on home turf, for a home crowd against a foreign team, but also because Beckham, a national icon, physically links himself with her as he drapes his arm over her shoulders.

When the game footage cuts to a television studio, three more well-known BBC sports commentators are shown standing by to assess Jess's performance. Their comments further reiterate Jess's celebrated place within the nation:

> *Gary Linekar:* Could Jess be the *answer to England's prayers?* Alan?
>
> *Alan Hansen:* There's no denying it the talent. Quick thinking, comfortable on the ball, vision and awareness – absolutely magnificent. I tell you I wish she was playing for Scotland.
>
> *Gary Linekar:* John, do you think *England has found the player* to relive their World Cup glory from '66?
>
> *John Barnes:* Definitely, Gary I think we've finally found *the missing piece of the jigsaw.* And the best thing is, she's not even reached her peak yet. [16]
>
> (emphasis mine)

As the comments reveal, Jess is now being ideologically integrated into national iconic greatness. The accolades she receives come from the three veritable "sports authorities" whose national real-life reputations as former players and BBC commentators make their fictional assessments, like Motson's narration, seem all the more credible. Having had her national English identity enunciated by Alan Hansen's wish that she played for

Scotland, and having been praised by those who see in her the hope of the nation for future World Cup glory, Jess's place in the nation is officially sealed. The praise, then, also assumes Jess's continued connections with the nation.[17]

Though up until now, the title sequence has unfolded smoothly via the fast-moving footage and the casual banter in the studio, it does not end on the high note the commentators have pitched because the subsequent shots in the sequence shatter the discourse of national unity and community in which they have situated Jess. As quickly as the harmonious nation has been constructed, the disjunctures therein become apparent with the performative presence of Mrs. Bhamra who comes into focus when Gary Linekar introduces her. Presumably, she has been asked to join the studio crowd to support the discussion at hand and, by extension, the nation. However, the seamless segue Linekar anticipates is not to be had as Mrs. Bhamra's response disrupts the continuity and unity of the commentators' previous conversation, effecting as it were a rupture into what has been up till now a one-way horizontal discourse of nation. Announcing that Jess's mother has joined the commentators in the studio, Linekar inquires : "Mrs. Bhamra, you must be very proud of your daughter," to which she replies "Not at all!" Continuing with her pointer finger raised and shaking angrily, she adds "She shouldn't be running around with all these men, showing her bare legs to 70,000 people! She's bringing shame to the family. And you three shouldn't encourage her!. . ."

The scene is funny because it foregrounds the opposition between Mrs. Bhamra and the commentators, juxtapositioning the ostensibly irrational, backwards, unprofessional, parental authority with the rational, forward thinking, professional, sports

authorities. The ideological opposition is supported by the mis-en-scene, which pits the easy-going, suited men of the West – real life sports legends and BBC commentators -- with an almost caricatured, Orientalized "angry Black woman" whose salwar kameez and scarf-clad hair register her ethnic difference almost as loudly as her voice. Beneath the playful evocation of the stereotypical East/West binary, however, the comedy, in Bakhtinian terms, creates a scenario where authoritative discourses of power are destabilized and/or even overturned.[18] Mrs. Bhamra's response offers a competing discourse against the pedagogical values of the nation, as represented by the commentators' unified seemingly universalized valorization for Jess's athletic prowess. Mrs. Bhamra does not join the nation as is expected of her but, instead, breaks with it by refusing to conform to the commentators' opinions. In short, she conveys an incommensurable discourse that goes against the grain of dominant discourse to iterate her cultural difference. Rather than read Jess's football prowess as an honor and service to the national family, Mrs. Bhamra, speaking through the ethnic cultural values she holds dear, reads it as shame and disservice to the Bhamra family. Less a question of who is right or wrong, Mrs. Bhamra's performance illustrates that Mrs. Bhamra cannot easily be co-opted by the dominant members of nation as represented by the commentators, crowds and Beckham and, by extension, mainstream, football-loving viewing audience. Unlike Jess whose membership and investment in the nation is taken for granted by the commentators, Mrs. Bhamra's proves that hers cannot be. Whereas Jess is deemed the "missing piece of the jigsaw," Mrs. Bhamra represents that one puzzling piece that will not simply fit neatly into the national jigsaw. Her performance

here shatters that "modern metaphor" of nation "of the many as one," to borrow again Bhabha's terms.

Though the studio commentators are taken aback by Mrs. Bhamra's unexpected response, the confrontation with cultural difference depicted in the title sequence is not merely intended only for the commentators, the textual members of the nation. In the course of her speech, which is first directed to Linekar, Mrs. Bhamra breaks the fourth wall and begins talking to Jess assuming she is watching the broadcast. Though she is speaking to her daughter, the visual effect of breaking the fourth wall, which is accompanied by a rapid zoomed-in shot, brings us unsuspecting viewers to face her direct gaze and, by extension, into this uneasy national dialogue. Invoked into the textual nation and confronted with Mrs. Bhamra's cultural difference, we are cinematically directed if only for a split second to consider our own value judgments. Having borne witness to the racially inclusive football field, having experienced for ourselves the crowd's elated response to Jess's game-winning goal, hearing the commentator's glorified assessments, we, too, may have been drawn into the imagined unified national community, and read Jess's performance in terms of honor. Having to confront Mrs. Bhamra's cultural difference challenges, the passivity of our spectator role that, incidentally, is further compromised because Mrs. Bhamra starts speaking into Punjabi. But, while we in the audience are invoked into the scene, our response to it is not scripted by the film. The studio daydream ends as quickly as it unfolded and without anyone else verbally responding to Mrs. Bhamra.[19] The conclusion of the title sequence, then, is not to offer pedagogical answers to uneasy questions of cultural difference, but, instead, to

humorously provoke the viewing audience members to negotiate their own responses. How should we react to expressions of cultural difference? Do we ignore it? Should we cut to something else entirely as Linekar might do in real life if confronted with a guest whose onstage performance does not conform to the leading, apolitical questions he poses? Or, do we take the more challenging road of negotiating with difference, and potentially move toward some more progressive scenario of race relations?

The questions raised by the title sequence are also suggested when we see Mrs. Bhamra's cultural difference represented in the rest of the narrative as she goes about her everyday life. Many scenes illustrate how much Mrs. Bhamra values her Sikh faith and community. They also make clear the concern she has for her daughter's well-being and reputation, which, incidentally, comes under threat when Pinky's fiancé's family mistakenly think Jess has been kissing a white boy in public. In dramatizing Teetu's parents' reaction to Jess's alleged promiscuity and their decision to call off the wedding as a result, we see how the consequences of "shameful" activities inform Mrs. Bhamra's values and her resistance to Jess's participation in football. When Jess herself later acknowledges to Joe that football is something that takes her away from everything her parents know, Mrs. Bhamra makes more sense than we may have given her credit for in the title sequence. In short, the film's representation of Mrs. Bhamra's cultural difference is not to get the viewing audience to side with Mrs. Bhamra's opinion, but, rather, to get us to consider her point of view as a valid one and that the value system informing it is as legitimate as that which informs dominant opinions. As such, Mrs. Bhamra's views cannot easily be discarded or expected to conform to dominant cultural values.

The questions regarding nation, cultural difference, and race relations that the title sequence elicits continue underlining the unfolding narrative. Another significant scene where they emerge occurs late in the film where the narrative rapidly crosscuts two separate events, Pinky's wedding reception and Jess's championship game. Crosscut against each other, the two scenes acquire an ideological significance that would not necessarily be otherwise conveyed if rendered separately. Visually, the rapid crosscuts evoke cultural diversity rendering two distinct cultures. The wedding scene suggests Indian culture since it takes place at an Indian wedding hall and depicts Pinky in traditional red wedding attire replete with copious gold jewelry and wedding guests also clad in Indian attire enjoying Bhangra music and Indian food. The game scene suggests English culture depicting Jess in her team uniform playing the national sport outside on the grassy green turf of the nation. However, as the crosscutting begins, the visual signification of two discrete cultures becomes compromised by the fast-paced, instrumental music that starts playing. Because it is not part of the diegesis of either scene (since the characters in the wedding scene are dancing to music only they can hear and, respectively, in the game scene are embroiled in the action-packed thrill of the game), the instrumental music is non-diegetic, applied to the scene purely for the benefit of the viewing audience.[20] While the fast crosscutting of the two scenes visually effects an understanding of two separate things (as would be the case if one turns a light switch on and off and experiences lightness and darkness), the music creates a structural unity[21] between the two scenes because it is applied to both events and links the disparate events taking place at the wedding in the one scene and the game in the other. The music further

emphasizes a unity between the two scenes because its energetic beat simultaneously complements the action taking place in the wedding scene where guests are dancing on a conga line and in the exciting game scene depicting the players are running fast and furiously on the field.[22] Through this aural strategy, the film suggests not just that there can be points of similarity between the two cultures, but that Indian culture is not subordinate to dominant English culture. If rendered only through visual crosscutting, Indian culture, as represented by the colorful wedding scene, could easily be read as the exotic other to dominant English culture, as represented by the football game; however, because the music strategically smooths over the differences evoked in the visual crosscuts and links the two cultures together through the same musical terms, the visual signifiers of exotic otherness are diminished. Represented right alongside dominant culture through the same musical terms, the aural strategy of the crosscutting also allows Indian culture to be viewed in terms of humanity because we notice the energy of the wedding guests' movements and the happiness on their faces and the obvious fun they are having just as we notice the energy and movement effected by the players in the game scene who are working hard to win. Furthermore, the music also appreciates Indian culture in a way that does not read otherness because even though Jess chooses to leave the wedding to participate in the game, the value of the wedding (and the culture it represents) is not diminished because a multitude of people have chosen to stay. And, guessing by the looks on their faces and the fun they are having, they would rather not be anywhere else.

A second round of crosscutting that follows the initial fast crosscuts further encourages the viewing audience to consider the nation in ways that not only respects expressions of cultural difference therein but also to look forward and move into a direction of more progressive possibilities for race relations. This round of crosscutting still involves scenes from the wedding and game events; however, the pace is that of slow motion. The aural strategy also changes as the upbeat non-diegetic music is replaced with other non-diegetic music applied to both the wedding and game scenes. However, this non-diegetic music is a very different in style and pace because it is the slower, more deliberate tenor aria "Nessun Dorma," sung obviously in Latin, from Puccini's opera *Turandot*. As this slower crosscutting takes place, we see Jess at a critical point in the game about to take a shot at the goal that could potentially win the game for the Harriers; in the wedding scene, we see Pinky as she is being twirled around on the dance floor by Teetu, her new husband. As Jess kicks the ball into the air, Teetu starts to twirl Pinky around. While we wait to see if the ball makes it into the goal, the opera music continues being played, increasingly escalating into higher notes. When the ball finally hits the net, assuring us of the goal and Pinky's twirl has just been completed, the opera reaches its grand finale --- "Vincero! Vincero! Vincero!" (I will conquer, I will conquer, I will conquer). In this atmosphere and apex of victory, we see Pinky being lifted high into the air; similarly, Jess is elevated onto her teammates' shoulders.

The buoyant emotion of the opera music suggests the happiness Jess and Pinky, respectively, experience, but it also illuminates momentarily an understanding of progressive race relations beyond the cultures being represented in the two scenes. Unlike

the instrumental music applied to the faster-paced crosscutting, the opera music features words, which, of course, being sung in Latin would only have literal meaning for those (few) of us learned in the dead language or the opera itself. Presumably, Chadha's target mainstream audiences will not comprehend the actual words being sung. In effect, the aural strategy here gives us a sense of something glorious through the emotion being conveyed by the music and singing of the words but *not* by the words themselves because they are meaningless for most viewers. That the words are not from a (living) language that can easily be claimed by any one cultural group (at least in England anyway) suggests that relations between cultures cannot be determined by the hegemony of any one culture. Unlike the previous upbeat, instrumental music employed in the fast crosscutting, the opera music goes above and beyond the two cultures being represented in the scenes. (And, again, its non-diegetic application is purely for the benefit of the viewing audience.) With its indefinable words, escalating high notes, and ability to convey strong emotion, the opera music effects a sense of upward motion that moves away beyond the two cultures being represented, which can be read as opening up what Bhabha would call a hybrid "third space" between and betwixt cultures that ruptures the horizontal linear space of the nation. Not an amalgamation of the two cultures as ostensibly represented by Pinky and Jess, this operatic third space is something new entirely defying any notions of origins, essential characteristics or borders. Pinky and Jess momentarily occupy this third space when they are physically lifted above the earth in their respective scenes. While we can assume that they are elated at the victory they have each achieved (Pinky marrying the man she loves; Jess scoring the winning goal in

the game she loves), we cannot assume we know exactly what they are feeling since their expressions of joy are muted by the opera music and because the elation they are vocalizing are not expressed in any definable word only sounds.

As glorious as it is to see the two girls who, as their father says, "are made happy on the same day," the film does not end on this high note and, as quickly as they are thrust up, Pinky and Jess are literally brought back down to the earth where they will continue to live their lives and negotiate their material existence within the nation space. For Jess, the negotiation will begin in a new nation space where she will be an outsider; for Pinky and the rest of her family and friends as well as the new family she and her husband and her unborn child will soon create, the negotiation will continue to take place inside England's borders.

The film's closing sequence, which takes place some several months after wedding, offers hints at what kind of negotiation will inform the characters ongoing lives in England. It also illuminates the changes that have occurred within the Bhamra family dynamic: Jess is away, Pinky's husband Teetu has become a full-fledged member of the family, and their soon-to-be born child will make for another addition. However, there is also one more person unofficially added to the Bhamra clan – Joe, who as we can infer, has obviously maintained a long-distance romantic relationship with Jess. While Joe's romantic relationship with Jess may not be surprising to us viewers, his admission into the family might be given his previous uncomfortable history with the Bhamras when he affected something of a "white savior" role, by visiting the Bhamra household unannounced on two previous occasions to convince Jess's parents to let her play

football. That Joe is now part of the family scene, despite his previous history with the Bhamra's, suggests a moving forward for both Joe and the Bhamras -- Joe has started to understand the family values Jess holds dear and the Bhamras have accepted Jess's individual choices even if they do not conform to their own cultured hopes for her. Even though we can infer these more progressive minded shifts, the film resists offering us a clichéd ending of interracial harmony. Again, it enunciates how progressive race relations need to be negotiated through not away from cultural difference. It does this through its humorous construction of the final scenes.

In the penultimate scene, Joe, Mr. Bhamra, and Teetu are outside on the green in front of the house playing cricket in their cricket whites. That they are playing cricket, as opposed to the national sport of football, is highly suggestive of cultural difference. As the sport of empire, cricket symbolizes the wide range of interests, histories, cultures, and nations informing the players and teams who play the game. Invested with such multiplicity and inserted into the grassy "village green" inside England's national space where the men play, the film's employment of cricket expresses both the competitiveness of the sport and the inability of any one nation to claim a monopoly for victory. Even if the viewing audience, especially an American audience, may not understand the ideological significance of the game, the film disavows notions of easy interracial harmony through the performance of the players themselves. Despite wearing matching uniforms, the men are not on the same team. The ostensible visual expression of unity or uniformity is quickly disrupted when Mr. Bhamra misses the ball Joe throws. Assuming Mr. Bhamra has struck out, Joe expresses his elation by doing a dance mimicking an

airplane in flight, but his celebration is cut short when Mr. Bhamra disputes the play. Presumably, Joe's and Mr. Bhamra's opposing opinions will not be resolved anytime soon as indicated by the camera pulling away and upward from the cricket game to begin ascending to the film's final shot, which affords us a long, rising aerial view of the green, the surrounding neighborhood, an ice cream truck playing its familiar truck music, and a plane flying across the blue sky. From this view, the men become insignificant white dots on the grass before ultimately disappearing from our sight as the view continues to ascend. The ice cream music morphs into the feel good, fun song, "Hot, Hot, Hot," which is being sung with Hindi lyrics and applied non-diegetically,[23] again for the benefit of the viewing audience because the characters do not hear the song. Through this energetic song, with its familiar tune, but not necessarily familiar words (for Chadha's target mainstream audiences at least), and the visual scene of pure blue sky high above the earth, the film brings us viewers unexpectedly into an indefinable third space. Away from the context of the conflict on the ground, which we have just witnessed, but is now visually a distant memory, the final scene brings us into an undefined space of possibility and a spirit of openness. The question now is what we will do with it once we return to our lives on earth. Through the familiar/unfamiliar song and pure blue sky, the film invites us to not just re-consider the ways we interact with cultures different from our own, but also the possibility of the achievement of something glorious outside and beyond the range of our cognitive, rational understanding if we are able to productively engage with cultural difference.

CHAPTER 7

AFTERWORD: REIMAGINING RACE RELATIONS

. . . the potency of literature lies in its utopian potential, its capacity to imagine a different future. For liberation is not possible until it is first imagined. - Bill Ashcroft

How effective are multiculturalist discourses in building politically progressive race relations? Are celebrations of cultural diversity enough to yield a more egalitarian world? Is cultural difference a more appropriate means of conceptualizing race relations than the concept of cultural diversity? These are the underlying questions informing this study. In the preceding chapters, I have outlined the issues and debates concerning multiculturist discourses as they pertain to the theme of interracial friendship in the five texts I examine. Following the critiques against multiculturalist discourses made by critics such as Homi Bhabha, I have attempted to problemitize the ability of multiculturalist discourses to induce the improved race relations such discourses are ostensibly aimed at achieving. Following Bhabha's discussion of the concept of cultural difference, my analyses have also attempted to show how politically progressive race relations require ongoing negotiation of that challenging terrain of the uneven, incommensurable, and potentially antagonistic values and subject positions informing dominant and minority cultures in any given society. I have assessed the viability or failure of friendships represented in the given texts through the lens of Jacques Derrida's notion of political friendship, which, unlike the Western ideal of fraternity, does not

subordinate racial, social, and cultural differences for the sake of unity and social harmony, but, instead, acknowledges and respects those differences.

What I want to briefly underscore here is the imaginative potential of the texts. As previously disclosed in my Introduction with reference to Edward Said, I do not view literary and film works as discrete texts segregated from the worlds in which they are created, read, and interpreted. Rather, I see them as powerful ideological tools that can potentially influence audiences' ideas, beliefs, and values systems. As we can glean from Bill Ashcroft's comments cited above on the utopian potential of literature (20-21), which are also applicable to film and other forms of narratives, cultural production is valuable for its potential to imagine new, improved worlds. All the texts examined in this study are imagining such worlds with regard to race relations through their thematic prioritization of interracial friendship. This is the common denominator they all share; what the texts suggest as being "improved" relations is what constitutes the differences between them. We contemporary readers and viewers would do well to contemplate the insights and ideas these texts offer us as we develop our own individual and/or corporate responses (e.g. as members of a given nation) to those many complex issues concerning race relations that are inevitably part and parcel of our ever increasingly globalized world and which underwrite a host of areas including, for example, immigration policies, homeland security, international travel, and the outsourcing of goods and services, just to name a few.

Of all the texts I examine, *Kim* offers us the most exuberant response to the question of race relations. Kipling, typically recognized as a diehard imperialist, departs from previous colonial fiction to re-present the colonial scene as a textual world of possibility and of racial harmony. In his novel, the question of friendship is not a question at all. That is, interracial friendship is not problemitized, but accepted. This, in and of itself, is a progressive step forward compared to the demonization of the racial Other that dominates much British colonial fiction. However, as I previously discussed, Kipling's racially harmonious world is built upon the proverbial sand because his hero, the "friend of all the world," who loves and celebrates India, remains unconscious of Indians' political subjugation. In this regard, *Kim* parallels the limitations of multiculturalist discourses, which, as critics argue, celebrate diverse cultures but do nothing to address the political inequalities experienced by many racialized peoples. The improved race relations Kipling imagines idealize fraternity and involve congenial, loving interracial relationships, but do not threaten British rule. In other words, even as Kipling reimagines the colonial relationship through terms of emotional intimacy, the novel still maintains the political hegemony of the colonizer over the colonized. As I state in my discussion of some critics' praise for the novel's progressive potential, *Kim* can hardly serve as a potential antidote to racial tension because it evades the political problems associated with colonial rule and elides Indian cultural difference, which is to say, Indian dissension against British rule.

The imaginative reach of Forster's *A Passage to India* extends in different directions than Kipling's *Kim* primarily because it illustrates, rather self-consciously, how progressive race relations require much more than mere celebrations of Other cultures. This novel does what Kipling's cannot – acknowledge and problemitize the political dimensions of empire to show how progressive race relations are unattainable so long as one race rules another. The novel's assertion to "only connect" remains strong throughout the narrative, but Forster's treatment of the three sympathetic British "friends" of Indians shows how this noble aspiration cannot materialize merely by a longing to bridge divisions but, instead, through the more challenging path of negotiating the cultural differences between people. Likewise, Forster's depiction of failed interracial friendships expresses how commitment to one's own cultural values constitutes a significant impediment to the desired connections one hopes to achieve with peoples and cultures other than one's own.

Beyond Forster's representation of the main British characters' well-intentioned but troubled interaction with India and Indians, form follows function to underscore the importance of negotiating cultural difference in order to achieve connections. The novel's unwieldy narration, unanswered questions of plot, vague symbolism, and open-ended conclusion may potentially conflict with readers' own expectations of what might constitute a "good" novel; readers' ability to connect with the text might be diminished if readers are unwilling to relinquish the hegemony of their own reading values. Perhaps, even more disrupting for readers is the novel's resistance to the cherished Western ideal

of fraternity. The failure of the main interracial friendship in the novel's conclusion illustrates how even the greatest love between friends is not enough to achieve politically progressive race relations. Simultaneously, because the novel, as I previously explained, is an elegy for a friendship that never was or could be between colonizer and colonized, we are reminded of the potentially great, gratifying rewards that are at stake when political differences cannot be negotiated between friends.

The disrupting of the Western ideals friendship, which Forster's novel effects, also emerges in the British-Asian texts because interracial friendships are not sentimentalized, but are broken or rendered transient at best. Obviously, as contemporary texts, these works speak to issues of race relations in ways that resonate with today's readers and viewers in more immediate ways than the colonial texts. Their respective light-hearted, "feel good" narratives raise important issues wherein the question of friendship becomes intertwined with questions of the nation. The interaction these texts represent between British-Asian protagonists and their white friends and community suggests how mere inclusion and celebration of diverse peoples within a given society cannot serve as the only step toward a politically progressive future for race relations. These texts emphasize how dominant peoples' cultural values cannot dictate the underlying standards by which all Other peoples are measured *if* an egalitarian world is to materialize.

Form also follows function in the British-Asian texts. Broken up by digressions (as in the case of Syal's novel) or aural and/or visual strategies (as in the case of Syal's

film adaptation and Chadha's film), these formal interventions articulate racialized peoples' cultural difference to underscore how dominant demands for social cohesion (i.e. thick, binding ties between and amongst members of the nation) are untenable. This is not to say that Syal's and Chadha's works shatter the concept of nation or disregard the necessity for improved race relations. Rather, they re-imagine the nation in terms of cultural difference by expressing how the values informing the protagonists' lives and collective identities are not always commensurable with those informing dominant cultures and peoples, even as the protagonists themselves happen to be critical insiders within mainstream society. And, while these texts disrupt the idealization of fraternal friendships, they still promote political friendship, which is attentive and responsible to issues of cultural difference. Specifically, they employ various narrative strategies attempting to foster reading/viewing audiences' consciousness about the transparent authority of dominant cultures over Other cultures. Stressing this contingency that exists between cultures cannot be undervalued since it helps makes more apparent the political and social inequalities experienced by racialized and ethnicized peoples within the very societies that celebrate them.

The progressive potential for the nation and its members as imagined in Syal's and Chadha's works resist, to borrow Bhabha's terms, that modern metaphor of the nation, the "many as one" (*Location* 222). These texts can potentially help us readers and viewers move beyond the static, pedagogical limits of what we might perceive to be the nation and imagine something more fluid and flexible not unlike that which emerges

in the concept that Ashcroft refers to as the "transnation," which, goes beyond the "tyranny of national identity" and exposes *the distinction[s]* between the occupants of the geographical entity. . . and multi-ethnic society" that characterizes innumerable nations around the world today (13-14; emphasis mine).

The distinctions and differences between and amongst the diverse members of any given nation will hardly diminish, and, in all probability, proliferate further with the ongoing mass migrations of peoples, services, and technologies across the globe. How might viewing the nation through its dimensions of multiplicity and plurality help improve race relations in our respective societies, and what egalitarian possibilities and rewards might we envision and achieve if we were to do so? Perhaps, the alternative question is the more important one to ask -- can we afford not to reconceptualize limited perceptions of the nation and what is at stake if we do not?

NOTES

Chapter 1 The Politics of Multiculturalism and The Politics of Friendship

[1] "British-Asian" is a convenient if inadequate umbrella term that refers to the diverse cultures and peoples comprising the South Asian Diaspora in the UK including, for example, those emerging from or with links to as disparate places as India, Trinidad, or Uganda.

[2] For a valuable discussion of *Cool Britannia* and the multiculturalist shift in politics under the leadership of Tony Blair and his *New* Labour party, see the Introduction of Kevin Davey's *English Imaginaries* (London: Lawrence & Wismark, 1999).

[3] On April 19, 2001, in a speech delivered to the Social Market Foundation in London, the then British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook offered the following comments: "Chicken tikka masala is now Britain's national dish, not only because it is the most popular, but because it is a perfect illustration of the way Britain absorbs and adapts external influences." Extracts from the speech can be found in "Robin Cook's Chicken Tikka Masala." *The Guardian*. N. pag. 19 April 2001. Web. 28 February 2012.

[4] Furthermore, the movement away from overtly racist public discourses facilitated by multiculturalist celebrations has benefitted writers and artists like Syal and Chadha whose texts could be more easily produced, marketed, and publicly valued in the wake of *Cool Britannia.*

[5] John Solomos explains in detail how these politicians' racist, exclusionary political discourses materialized in various anti-immigrant programs and policies. See his chapter "The Politics of Race and Immigration since 1945" in his *Race and Racism* (3rd Edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.)

[6] Brown's comments intimate that Britain's racial plurality is a relatively recent phenomenon, but we know that Black people have existed in Britain over a period of up to nearly 500 years. Several scholars make exactly this point. See, for example, C.L. Innes's *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain* (2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) or see Rozina Visram's *Ayahs, Lascars*, *and Princes: The History of Indians in Britain 1700-1947* (London: Pluto, 1986).

[7] I am indebted to Diane Dubose Brunner for bringing my attention to the critiques against multiculturalism as discussed by Chandra T. Mohanty and Henri Giroux. See Brunner's essay "Marketing Friendship: Fraternity and the Exaggeration of Other-ness" (cited below).

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[8] Cameron's speech reflects the political discourse of other European leaders including German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French Prime Minister Sarkozy who have also argued for increased efforts to foster immigrants' integration and assimilation into mainstream culture as a means to ward off Muslim religious extremism inside their respective nations' borders.

[9] For the full transcript of Cameron's speech, see "Full Transcript/David Cameron/Speech on radicalization and Islamic extremism/Munich/5 February 2011" New Statesman. n. pag. 5 February 2011 Web. 28 February 2012.

[10] Udayan Prasad's film *My Son the Fanatic* (1997) dramatizes just this point. In this film, Farid, a British-Asian college student and son of a secular Muslim father, turns Fundamental Islamic after being disenchanted with white Britain. The group incites violence against a group of prostitutes for what they perceive as their immoral ways. Despite pleas from his father to leave the group, Farid renounces his former British lifestyle.

[11] I am indebted to Kevin Robins for the discussion of Miller I offer here. It is but an abbreviated version of what Robins so thoroughly explains in his "Endnote To London: The City Beyond the Nation" in *(British Cultural Studies.* Eds. David Morely & Kevin Robins. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001: 473-493.)

[12] Also known as simply *The Parekh Report,* the report comprises the perspectives of many individuals with extensive experience on the subject of race relations and was aimed to eradicate racism, discrimination, material inequalities suffered by racialized peoples in Britain. Among other things, the report underscores how cultural diversity and conflict has always been historically present in Britain and reiterates how the notion of a single national culture is highly untenable.

[13] Again, I am indebted to Robins for his useful outline of *The Parekh Report* and the controversial debate it sparked in his discussion as cited above.

[14] I do not mean to suggest that the nation's demographic multi-culturalism is a contemporary phenomenon. Britain has, of course, always been a multi-cultural nation given not only the presence of Irish, Welsh, Scottish, and English peoples but also the longstanding presence of Black peoples inside the nation.

[15] See, for example, "The Ending of *Kim*" in which Mark Kincaid-Weekes reads the novel as a progressive text because its celebration of cultural diversity offers a radical departure from Kipling's more overtly racist fiction. See Kincaid-Weekes essay in *Kim.* Norton Critical Edition. Zohreh T. Sullivan. Ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002.

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[16] Some critics directly take up these questions. See for example Patrick Williams's essay "Kim and Orientalism" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory.* Patrick Williams & Laura Chrisman. Eds. NY: Columbia UP, 1994: 480-497.

[17] See for example, Angali Gera Roy's essay "Translating Difference in *Bend it like Beckham*" in *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*. 4(1). (2006): 55-66, which examines the issues of cultural translation the film raises through Homi Bhabha's notion of cultural difference. See also Berthold Schoene-Harwood's essay "Beyond (T) Race: *Bildung* and Proprioception in Meera Syal's *Anita and Me."* in *Journal of Commonwealth Literature.* 34.1 (1999): 159-68. As is made evident in the title, Schoene-Harwoods's essay focuses on Syal's use of the *bildungsroman* form.

[18] Mark Stein attests to a source of such resistance when he discusses A.S. Byatt's controversial introduction to *The Oxford Book of English Short Stories,* which did not include Black British writers. According to Stein, "Byatt defends her editorial policy of including only 'writers with pure English national credentials,' a policy which *invariably* excludes Black and Asian writers" (XVI). See Stein's discussion in his Introduction in his *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation.* Columbus: Ohio State Press, 2000. Countering Byatt's editorial policy, Stein's own book strives to change the dominant conceptualization of Black British literature (XV). Stein asserts that even while this literature is related to other post-colonial literatures, it is simultaneously "related to British Literature . . . and may even be thought to transform British writing into being "post-colonial" in its entirety, making it a *new* New Literature in English. . ." (XVI).

[19] Thieme's work deals specifically with postcolonial "con-texts" that self-consciously engage with colonial "pre-texts," using them as departure points for their narratives. For example, Thieme discusses Jean Rhys's *Wide Saragasso Sea,* a revision of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre,* and J.M. Coetzee's *Foe,* a revision of Daniel DeFoe's *Robinson Crusoe.* While Syal and Chadha do not consciously use *Kim* or *Passage to India* as intertexts, it is important to note how they share strong motifs in their works, lending some context for Thieme's terminology.

[20] My contextualization of Syal and Chadha as inheritors of the tradition of dominant British and British-Asian Diaspora cultural production does not preclude the links between these artists and those from other postcolonial/diaspora traditions. British-Asian Diaspora texts have frequently been included within that genre of cultural production known as Black British, a label that underscores the political affiliation of non-white peoples in Britain. Syal's and Chadha's works , then, can be discussed alongside and

within the context of Black writers/artists such as, for example, Caryl Philips, Andrea Levy, or Joan Riley.

[21] Nasta herself remedies the lamentable lack of contextualization surrounding South Asian diaspora writers' works in her own excellent and exhaustive study *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* (New York: Palgrave, 2002). Here Nasta contextualizes both well-known and not so well known writers within the long line and tradition of British South Asian cultural production.

[22] See my discussion of dominant narratives' constructions of a homogenous nation in the introduction to Chapter 5 of this study.

[23] Of course, these Naipaul's and Syal's respective narrators occupy very different subject positions. Naipaul's Ralph Singh is once colonized subject who comes to realize his in-betweeness after coming to London, where he understands both how his colonial education has segregated him from local, island culture of his youth (and even further back his Indian roots) and how the "mother colony" with which he has been taught to identify throughout his education does not literally exist as he had always imagined. Syal's protagonist's in-betweeness is a result from the protagonists difficult in reconciling her Indian ethnicity/racialized identity with her English birth and surroundings which is the only physical homeland she's ever known.

[24] Again, the connection I make is general. Rushdie explores the fluidity of all identities primarily through his treatment of the im/migrant characters comprising the main characters in his magical realist novel whose identities undergo fantastic transformations: Gibreel Farishta is transformed into an incarnation of the Angel of Revelation while Saladin Chamcha is transformed into the fallen angel Satan. Though no less significant, Chadha is far less dramatic with her narrative interventions concerning identity. Her film underscores the multiple cultural sources (i.e. English, Indian, and American) as well as individual tastes and desires informing the protagonist's identity, which is distinguished not only from the identities of her traditionally-minded parents but also from her "boy-crazy" sisters and peers who enunciate their femininity through their clothes.

[25] Nasta discusses Ravinder Randhawa alongside Kureishi as being the first to map out a new territory for the representation of Asian British lives" (183).

[26] Hall explains: "Cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'. . . Far from being fixed in some essentialised past, they [cultural identities] are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture, power . . . they are . . . unstable points of identification . . . which are made within discourses of history and culture. . .(394-395). See Hall's essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in Williams, Patrick & Laura

Chrisman, eds. *Colonial and Postcolonial Discourse Theory: A Reader.* New York: Columbia UP, 1994: 480-497).

[27] See Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His Word* (Trans. H. Iwolksy. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984.)

[28] Here I borrow the term from Dimitris Elfttheriotis who uses it in his "Cultural Difference and Exchange: a Future for European Film" in *Screen* 41:1. (Spring 2000):92-101.

[29] McLeod identifies contemporary black writing as that which has been produced since the late1990's onward. While I agree, as I mentioned above, that Syal and Chadha, through the narrative attention they afford white English subjects, are not solely concerned with British Asian lives, I do not read their work as being as disengaged with the common issues and concerns regarding Blackness that McLeod associates with the works he examines in his essay. My analysis in the following chapters will attest to this.

Chapter 2 Empty Multiculturalism and an Expedient Friendship in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*

[1] Kipling, Rudyard. *Kim.* A Norton Critical Edition. Zohreh T. Sullivan. Ed. New York & London: W.H. Norton & Company, 2002. All references are made to this edition.

[2] In "The Head of the District" (*Life's Handicap,* 1891), for example, we see the cowardice of a pompous Bengali Babu who proves to be a poor successor to his English predecessor because he flees during the first crisis and causes disaster. In the "Mark of the Beast" (*Life's Handicap,* 1891), India confounds human explanation since it falls under the jurisdiction of the "Devils of Asia" rather than an almighty benevolent Providence. In the (in)famous "White Man's Burden" (1899), Kipling posits the nonwhite as lesser breeds who are "half-devil and half-child" wholly incapable of ruling themselves and thus in need of the white man's control. Kipling's ardent belief in maintaining the racial divide between the superior whites and inferior Blacks is also reflected in his work as is made evident in the blatant racist advice offered in the opening lines of his "Beyond the Pale" (*Plain Tales from the Hills,* 1888): "A man should, whatever happens, keep to his own caste, race and breed. Let White go to the White and the Black to the Black." If British and Indian dare cross the racial divide as they do in this and some of Kipling's other stories, they are punished for their miscegenation, as Jeffrey Meyers explains, with "death, doom and disaster" (14-19). See Meyer's *Fiction and the Colonial Experience.* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield. 1973.)

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[3] As Darby notes, "the images that dominate British fiction in these years [up until the heyday of empire] are of physical and cultural separation" (92). Darby offers up Flora Steele's *The Hosts of the Lords*, to illustrate how British characters repeatedly insist on sealing off the British communities from personal and social contact with the native. In the novel, an English doctor exclaims: "So long as we don't understand them and they don't understand us. We jog on the same path amicably." Later novels of empire also demonstrate the British desire to avoid interpersonal relationships. *Passage to India,* for example, opens with a long passage detailing physical segregation between the homes of the British located in a choice location on a plateau above the rest of the city of Chandrapore whose lines of neem trees screen out the filthy Indian quarters. *Passage to India*, of course, takes up interracial friendship through the relationship between Aziz and Fielding, in order to critique empire and win support for home rule. As I explain in the next chapter, Forster uses the device of friendship in order to reveal the impossibility of racial alliances that do not take into account the political inequalities experienced by the racialized Other.

[4] As Darby is making clear here, and as numerous postcolonial theorists and critics have argued of colonial discourses, the colonizer's identity is inextricably linked with that of the colonized subject who is negatively inscribed as the Other, the alter-ego of the colonizer.[4] We can understand the economy of writers' employment of this Manichean (oppositional) relationship in justifying imperial occupation and exploitation because the colonized subject essentially functions as the foil who clarifies the superiority of the colonizer. As Abdul JanMohamed argues in his foundational essay on colonial fiction, if the "literature can demonstrate that the barbarism of the native is irrevocable, or at least very deeply ingrained, then the European's attempt to civilize him can continue indefinitely, the exploitation of his resources can proceed without hindrance, and the European can persist in enjoying a position of moral superiority" (62).

[5] John McClure's essay "Problematic Presence: the Colonial Other in Kipling and Conrad" (cited below), for example appears in a British anthology published with the intent of examining the potential roles literary texts can play in multicultural education. In such a context, then, McClure's enthusiasm for *Kim's* racial harmony situates the novel as an exemplary progressive text.

[6] In his own essay detailing the unequivocal Orientalist undercurrents lurking beneath Kim's descriptive narrative surface, Patrick Williams cites this trend in scholarship, finding it highly problematic. See Williams' essay "Kim and Orientalism" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory* (Ed. Patrick Williams & Laura Chrisman. NY: Columbia UP, 1994: 480-497).

[7] Despite the praise he offers *Kim,* JanMohamed makes an otherwise convincing and valuable argument of the Manichean divide informing *Kim* and most colonial fiction in his foundational essay "The Economy of the Manichean Allegory" (cited below).

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[8] Chandra T. Mohanty and Henry Giroux among others offer detailed discussions of the failings of multiculturalist discourses, which I discuss between pages 19-20 in my Introduction. See Mohanty's essay "On Race and Voice: Challenges for Liberal Education in the 1990's" in *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies.* H.A. Giroux and P. Laren, eds. New York: Routledge, 1994. See Giroux's *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope.* Boulder: Westview Press, 1997.

[9] See pages 16-19 in my introductory chapter, Chapter One, for my discussion concerning Bhabha's views on multiculturalist discourses.

[10] Kipling's most pro-British Indian is Huree Babu, the Indian double agent who, in an effort to win the intimacy of Russian spies plotting insurrection against the British, mimics the political rhetoric of the Indian nationalists by making remarks on the indecency of the white man and his government. Huree's mimicry is overwhelmingly suggestive of Kipling's efforts to smear Indian dissension against British Rule in *Kim.*

[11] Though the seeds of rebellion had been mounting for some time as a result British oppression, the infamous "Mutiny" of 1857 (more valiantly referred to by Indians as "the Sepoy Rebellion") "erupted," so to speak, when Hindu and Muslims soldiers believed the grease used for their gunpowder cartridges that they would have to bite off, came from beef and pork, which, violated their respective dietary restrictions as dictated by the tenets of Hinduism and Islam. For a brief but useful discussion of The Mutiny, see pages 146-147 in Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993.)

[12] Faber acknowledges that Kipling was focused on leadership -- "in the conviction of the superior ability [of the white man] "to lead and provide orderly government" for the natives whom he colonized (16). However, Faber also explains how Kipling's racial arrogance was coupled with an altruistic code that held that empire was a "force for the general good," dependent not upon a "desire for the glory" of the "British race" but, rather, on a belief in the "sanctity of work and discipline," involving "hardship," "sacrifice" and an unselfish sense of "Duty" on the part of the colonizer for the benefit of his subjects (104-5).

[13] Derrida, Jacques. "Politics and Friendship: A Discussion with Jacques Derrida" Centre for Modern French Thought. University of Sussex. Web. 1 December 1997. Derrida challenges fraternity's discursive authority and appeal in his unflattering assessment in which he calls it a "phallocentric" notion of brotherhood because it subordinates racial, social and cultural differences for the sake of social cohesion (3).

[14] The Russian and French spies are represented with no redeeming qualities whatsoever and are generally shown plotting insurrection against the British; being duped by the cunning efforts of Huree Babu; and, in their ugliest moments, violently attacking the lama whom they assume is a mere beggar.

[15] Such analysis reflects the critical investigation Said advocates when he urges us not to take canonical novels at face value, but instead, approach them *contrapuntally,* that is, through a process of reading done "with an effort to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented" (66). In short, Said advises that "in reading a text, one must open it out both to what went into it and to what its author excluded (67). The motivation, as Said explains, to pursue this kind of reading is not to condemn a given author or refute his/her artistic mastery in producing a given text but, rather, to recognize just how encompassing modern imperialism is and how its influence still circulates today. Said reminds us of what can be achieved if we engage in this kind of reading and the epistemological stakes that are involved when we do not, saying, "The question of whether or not to examine these links is, in fact, "to take a position," "either to study the connection in order to criticize it and to think of alternatives, or not to study it in order to let it stand, unexamined, and, presumably unchanged" (68).

[16] This is precisely the case that is dramatized in that other great novel of colonial India, Forster's *Passage to India,* which sees the break-up of the friendship between British Fielding and Indian Aziz as a result of their political differences at novel's end.

[17] My argument here has been influenced by Sharon Montieth's analysis of Kaye Gibbons' novel Ellen Foster, a *bildungsroman* concerning the development of a white girl protagonist and her interracial friendship with a black girl who in essence performs the role of her foil. See Montieth's essay "Between Girls: Kaye Gibbons' *Ellen Foster* and Friendship as a Monologic Formulation" in *Journal of American Studies.* (33.1 (1999), 45-64.

[18] My definition of the *bildungsroman* form is a compressed version of the characteristics of the genre as identified by notably Marianne Hirsch and Jerome H. Buckley. See Hirsch's essay "The Novel of Formation as Genre: Between *Great Expectations* and *Lost Illusions,*" *Genre,* 12.3 (Fall 1979): 293-311. See also Buckley's *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974.

[19] Here, I am indebted the observations of the narrator's insistence of Kim's whiteness that JanMohamed makes in his discussion of *Kim* in his "The Economy of the Manichean Allegory" (cited below).

[20] The choice of making Kim's best friend a foreigner rather than an Indian also speaks very obviously to Kipling's occlusion of Indian cultural difference. With no political ties or interests concerning India, the presence of the foreign priest helps displace issues of colonial rule. The lama's religious identity is also significant, as argued by Jeffrey Meyers, in its ability to inform the novel's plot. As Meyers explains, by using a "Buddhist instead of a Moslem [or Hindu] Kipling loads the plot, prepares us for Kim's

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desertion [when he goes away to the British school], and evades the problems of loyalty that would result if he were involved with an India . . . As a nonpolitical foreigner, the Lama has no strong claim on the Kim's fidelity . . . [thereby] the chela can leave the guru without feeling he has abandoned India (21). Meyers' commentary is cited below.

[21] See endnote 11 above.

[22] Rashna B. Singh references Oaten's comments in her discussion of Kipling's reading audiences on page 68 of her book *The Imperishable Empire* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1988).

[23] Belsey bases her observations on Louis Althusser's discussion of the interpellation of the subject in the context of ideology in general, which he offers in influential essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses."

[24] Vasant Shahane offers a useful general overview of the different facets of Buddhism including that of the Mahayana doctrine. See pages 64-69 in her book *Rudyard Kipling. Activist and Artist*. Carbondale & Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois Press, 1971.

Chapter 3 Boutique Multiculturalism and The Question of Friendship in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*

[1] *A Passage to India.* (1924) E.M. Forster. NY: Harcourt Brace, 1984. All references are made to this edition.

[2] The abbreviated quote is listed in the epigraphs; the larger quote reads as follows:

> " I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country. Such a choice may scandalise the modern reader, and he may stretch out his patriotic hand to the telephone and ring up the police. It would not have shocked Dante, though. Dante placed Brutus and Cassius in the lowest circle of Hell because they had chosen to betray their friend Julius Caesar rather than their country Rome" (emphasis mine).

[3] See Jenny Sharpe's "The Indeterminacies of Rape" within the chapter "The Unspeakable Limits of Civility: A Passage to India" in her *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of a Woman in the Colonial Text.* (Minneapolis and London: Univ. of MN, 1993:118-27).

[4] Parminder Bakshi argues for the narrative codes of homoerotic desire in the novel, expressing that readings of the novel which do not address this desire are "misguided.

See Bakshi's essay "The Politics of Desire," (in Tony Davies & Nigel Wood. Eds. *A Passage to India.* Buckingham & Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1994.)

[5] See my Introduction for a discussion of Derrida's critique of fraternity.

[6] Interestingly, Aziz has himself become a political friend to those whom he once loathed, namely the Hindus, so as to promote independence.

[7] See Bhabha's essay "The Other Question," in his *The Location of Culture.* (New York: Routledge, 1994.)

[8] Gikundi applies the same term in his analyses of the Creole obsession with English food and drink in Anthony Trollope's *The West Indies and the Spanish Main.* (*Maps of Englishness.* New York: Columbia UP, 1996: 93)

[9] Aziz is very unconventional in a variety of ways: He does not always follow common Muslim customs, choosing, for example, to remain unmarried after his wife's death; he is oblivious to the British presence in India, while his close friends are very involved in Indian nationalism; he skips the Bridge Party whereas many of his fellow Indians feel compelled to attend.

Chapter Four Challenging Multiculturalism: Initiating the Dialogue for Political Friendship in Meera Syal's *Anita and Me*

[1] Forster, E.M. *Passage To India.* (1924) New York & London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1984.

[2] Informed by his own nostalgic memories of Cambridge University where he received a cordial welcome and enjoyed pleasant relationships with the English people he encountered, Hamidullah's argument (wrongly) assumes that the exigencies of colonial subjugation have no bearing in England.

[3] As I mentioned in the previous chapter, *Passage*'s conclusion reflects Forster's modernist disdain for the tidy plot resolutions offered by conventional endings in realist novels. Attempting to avoid such conclusions in his work, Forster, as Daniel Schwarz explains, "conceived of the structure of a novel as a continuous process by which values are presented, tested, preserved or discarded rather than as the conclusion of a series that clarifies and reorders everything that precedes" (116). See Schwarz's chapter "The Originality of E.M. Forster" in his *The Transformation of the English Novel, 1890-1930.* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989.)

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[4] For a discussion of Asian invisibility in dominant fiction and its ideological impact and influence on British Asian writers see Chapter 5 of Susheila Nasta's valuable study *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora* (London: Palgrave, 2002). Nasta refers to Suresh Bald's survey of absence of Indians in dominant narratives, explaining that the predominant concerns for many post-war writers (including Barbara Pym, Margaret Drabble, Jeffrey Archer, John Mortimer, Kingsley Amis, and Anthony Burgess) reflected the ongoing changes in the British class structure but neglected completely the presence of racially and culturally different immigrants. Nasta adds how in many of these novels black and Asian immigrants become "flattened into the new underclass" (186-7).

[5] Syal, Meera. *Anita and Me.* London: Flamingo Press, 1997.

[6] Syal was born in 1963 and grew up in Essington, a mining village located just outside Wolverhampton in England's West Midlands region.

[7] A highly skilled polemicist and orator, Powell gained much public support for his controversial views on issues of race and immigration. In 1968, Powell delivered his infamous "Rivers of Blood" speech in Birmingham, England, in which he warned against what he believed would be detrimental consequences if immigration from Commonwealth nations into Britain continued.

[8] Syal's novel was published in a time when Britain's public attitude toward its racial diversity began shifting towards celebrations of multiculturalism under the new leadership of Prime Minister Tony Blair in 1996. Blair and his New Labour party were closely associated with *Cool Britannia*, a media campaign that publicized Britain's contemporary culture scene, highlighting its urban and multiracial arts and music scene. *Cool Britannia* (and Blair's connections with it) has since been derided by critics as being a superficial, gross misrepresentation of Britain's racial tensions. Kevin Davies offers a valuable discussion on the subject. See the Introduction and first chapter of his *English Imaginaries* (London: Lawrence & Wismark, 1999.)

[9] Here I include writers and artists as diverse as Hanif Kureishi, Cary Phillips, Sunetra Gupta, Zadie Smith, Romesh Gunesekera, David Dabydeen and Gurinder Chadha among a host of others.

[10] See Bhabha's discussion of the limitation multicultural discourses and the flawed concept of cultural diversity in his "Interview: Third Space" in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference.* (ed. Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990.)

[11] Williams is referring to the works of Hanif Kureishi, Caryl Philips, and Sunetra Gupta.

[12] I understand that my argument here runs the risk of being totalizing, but I do not mean to homogenize the vast heterogeneity of the texts produced by racially conscious British

writers. I seek only to underscore the very real limitations of race as experienced by Black British writers as a starting point in understanding the works they produce. Furthermore, what I bring up here is nothing new as the subject of the "brown man's burden" has often been discussed critically and frequently taken up, in varying degrees, in many novels such as, for example, Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*, where issues of representation figure most prominently. Kureishi has also frequently commented on having to bear the "brown man's burden" in his essays such as "The Rainbow Sign" (in *My Beautiful Laundrette and The Rainbow Sign.* London: Faber, 1986.) For a discussion of the tangible effects writers face in having to the bear burden of representation see Chapter 5 of Susheila Nasta's *Home Truths* (cited above). Nasta explains how British-Asian writers' failure/refusal to accommodate neo-orientalist exoticism has often yielded in negative consequences such as being sidelined by publishing houses or receiving harsh critical reviews.

[13] In an interview with Alison Oddey, Syal acknowledges the constraints dominant audience expectations place on her work saying, "I've been forced to be self-analytical, because I've been held up as a representative so much in my career. I don't want this label of role model particularly. I don't want to do it, it's not my job. I can't speak for everybody. I've been put in a situation of "'Do I represent a whole community?'" Whether I want to or not, it's been pushed on to me, I've had to think about it, and I think that's the only reason" [why I did think about it] (61). See pages 55-65 for Syal's complete interview in Oddey's *Performing Women: Stand-Ups, Strumpets and Itinerants.* (St. Martin's Press, NY, 1999.)

[14] Here, Syal is again making an oblique reference to Enoch Powell's racist rhetoric, which instigated fears among the white English that Black immigration threatened to swamp English culture.

[15] My reading here is in sharp disagreement with other critics who celebrate the novel's ending as a triumph for Meena. Graeme Dunphy, for example, focuses exclusively on the strength Meena derives from her hybrid identity, saying, "Meena is content . . . and has learned that she is strong enough to survive – Tollington, or wherever she chooses [to go]" (657). See Dunphy's essay "Meena's Mockingbird: from Harper Lee to Meera Syal" (in *Neophilologus.* 88.4 (Oct 2004): 637-59). Christine Vogt- Williams risks downplaying the difficulties and alienation Meena will inevitably face by emphasizing her agency over Anita, Sam, and racist discourses, arguing that "Meena has the freedom to move on to bigger and better things" because of her material success and secure family life (392). See Williams essay "Rescue Me? No Thanks!" in *Towards a Transcultural Future.* (Ed. G.V. Davis et al. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2005). Though Berthold Schoene-Harwood acknowledges that Meena does not achieve the typical the societal integration acquired by the *bildungsroman* protagonist, he does not consider this problematic, arguing that the "ending is markedly optimistic." (166). Schoene-Harwood,

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too enthusiastically, emphasizes Meena's ability to transcend her racialized body and racial discourses. He argues: "Meena's hybrid potential turns out to be a considerable advantage after all, providing her with a cosmopolitan vision of the future and enabling her to discard what used to determine and divide her. Her identity had moved on . . ." (167). See Schoene-Harwood's essay "Beyond (T)Race: *Bildung* and Proprioception in Meera Syal's Anita and Me." (in *Journal of Commonwealth Literature.* 34.1 (1999): 159-68.) Though Mark Stein is more cautious, acknowledging that Meena will still have to negotiate her way in a society that is still deeply entrenched in racism, he also underscores Meena's internal agency and the economic possibilities she can envision for herself at novel's end. See Stein's discussion in his chapter "Performative Functions of the Black British Novel of Transformation" in his *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation.* (Columbus: Ohio State Press, 2004.) Roger Bromley is one critic who does not read *Anita and Me* as the triumph of the racialized Other, but he emphasizes, as my next endnote explains further, Meena's economic advantage over her working class counterparts Anita and Sam. See pages 143-148 in Bromley's *Narratives for a New Belonging* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000.)

[16] Roger Bromley reads Anita's silence metaphorically as the inevitable reflection of class issues. Doomed to live out her existence in an economically decaying town, Anita, unlike the upwardly mobile Meena, has nowhere to go. As Bromley states, Anita "could never reply" being "fixed, silent, invisible, [and] erased" (148).

[17] As I have explained in the two preceding notes above, Meena's agency is rise into consciousness constitutes the predominant concern in existing criticism. While Roger Bromley acknowledges the narrator's role in constructing the narrative, he does not elaborate upon it in his analysis.

[18] My argument here is generally derived from the discussions of various theorists (including, for example, Linda Hucheonson, Stephen Slemon, Gayatri Spivak, Anthony Kwame Appiah, and Simon During) who have articulated the crucial differences between the often conflated discourses of postmodernism and postcolonialism. All of these theorists acknowledge in one way or another how the postcolonial, unlike the postmodern, maintains a sustained attention to the imperial process and the discursive discourses it produces in colonial and neocolonial societies, and examines how that process and its effects may be subverted.

[19] My observations here have been influenced by the argument Devon Boan makes in his discussion of subversive literary texts written by African American authors. In his analysis of Darryl Pickney's *High Cotton*, a novel which he categorizes amongst African American "Literature of Subversion," Boan argues: ". . . most critics would expect the subversion to be exposed by the author in a manner which would allow the author to declare victory over the targets of the subversion – white culture. However, the "last

word" does not always mean the "last laugh" (70). See Boan's insightful study *the black "I": Author and Audience in African American Literature.* (New York & Washington: Peter Lang, 2002.)

[20] The next chapter will discuss how the narrator continues to instigate a dialogue with her audience in the body of her narrative through her use of digressions.

Chapter Five Challenging Multiculturalism: Rewriting the Terms of Friendship in Meera Syal's Film Adaptation of *Anita & Me*

[1] Anita & Me. Dir. Metin Huseyin. Perf. Sanjeev Bhaskar, Anna Brewster, Ayesha Dharkar, Meera Syal, and Chandeep Uppal. Warner Home Video. 2003. Film. All references are made to this edition.

[2]Syal's second novel, *Life Isn't All Ha-Ha- Hee-Hee*, was adapted into TV movie in 2005.

[3] Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 *Romeo and Juliet,* hailed for its authentic rendering of its Shakespearean source text, is a classic example of what Andrew would call a "borrowing adaptation."

[4] Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins' 1961 *West Side Story,* a loose adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet,* is an example of what Andrew would call a "transforming" adaptation.

[5] See for example, *Brothers in Trouble* (1995) and *My Son the Fanatic* (1997) both directed by Udayan Prasad.

[6] See for example John Akfromah's *Handsworth Songs* (1986) that takes up the subject of two major racial riots which took place in Handsworth (Birmingham) in 1981 and 1985. See also Pratibha Parmar's short film *Sari Red* (1988), produced in memory of a young woman killed in a 1985 racist attack.

[7] See for example *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), both scripted by Hanif Kureishi and directed by Stephen Frears.

[8] See for example Isaac Julien's works that deliberately undermine traditional narrative forms including *Territories* (1984), *Passion of Remembrance* (1986; co-directed with Maureen Blackwood), and *Looking for Langston* (1989).

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[9] Two notable exceptions are Hanif Kureishi's internationally acclaimed *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1988) and Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach.* Given their realist mode and incorporation of (irreverent) humor and various comedic elements, their format and style easily makes them the obvious predecessors of *East is East*, *Bend It Like Beckham,* and *Anita and Me*.

[10] Sam unleashes his racist anger, exclaiming, "We don't give a toss for anybody else. This is our patch. Not some wog's bloody handout" (193). Though he is a neighbor and casual friend of Meena, his remains ignorant of her collective identity and attempts at novel's end to defend himself, saying: "I never meant you, Meena! It was always the others, not yow!" 313.

[11] The puzzling statement gets clarified implicitly in a later scene involving the Yeti. See my discussion above for its significance.

Chapter 6 Demographic Multi-culturalism and a Tenuous Friendship in Gurinder Chadha's *Bend it Like Beckham*

[1] *Bend it Like Beckham.* Dir. Gurinder Chadha. Perf. Parmindar Nagra, Kiera Knightly, and Jonathan Rhys-Meyers. Fox Searchlight Pictures. 2003. DVD. All references are made to this edition.

[2] As is made obvious in the "demographic" context in which I am now using the term multi-culturalism, I am making the distinction that Stuart Hall makes when he describes, as Pitcher explains, "the adjectival" term that references "the culturally heterogeneous social landscape of contemporary societies" (21) as opposed to the non-hyphenated term "multiculturalism," which I have been discussing in the previous chapters and which refers to, as Hall says, "the strategies and policies adopted to govern or manage the problems of diversity and multiplicity which multi-cultural societies throw up" (209). See Hall's "Conclusion: The Multi-cultural Question" in *Un/Settled Multiculturalisms:Diasporas, Entanglements,"Transruptions."* Ed. B. Hesse. London: Zed Books, 2000.

[3] The film is distinguished from other British Asian films which are set largely in urban scenario that is often the setting of many diaspora texts (including, for example, *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Dir. Stephen Frears, *1985), Brothers in Trouble (*Dir. Udayan Pradesh, 1995), and *East is East* (Dir. Damien O'Donnell, 1999).

[4] Chadha makes these comments in her interview with Andrea Stuart. See Stuart's "Blackpool Illumination." in *Sight and Sound.* 4.2 (February 1994): 26-27. Print.

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[5] The "Austenmania" continued even well into the new century as yet another version of *Pride and Prejudice* was produced in 2005.

[6] Neither did they go uncontested. Black British cultural production, of course, narrated the nation in very different terms, giving voice and subjectivity to the lives of racialized peoples inside the nation's borders.

[7] See my discussion of Bhabha on the limits of multiculturalist discourses between pages 16-19 in Chapter One of this study.

[8] See my discussion concerning political discourses of social cohesion, which I offer in Chapter 1 between pages 21-24.

[9] I discuss Fish's notion of "boutique multiculturalism" in my analysis of Forster's *Passage to India.* See Chapter 3 of this study.

[10] In his essay "Disjuncture and Difference," Appadurai discusses the effect of mass media on people all over and in the most remote places of the world. Appadurai considers how "the almost universal access to media images by individuals at all social levels makes resources available for the creation of new identities, "allowing for "the dreaming of dreams that were previously unavailable to ordinary people." Continuing, Appadurai believes that "Media has democratized the imagination, made it into a daily activity rather than one restricted to artistic elites."

[11] See page 267 of Beer's "Island and the Aeroplane" where she discusses the representation of the aeroplane in Woolf's *Between the Acts* as a menacing symbol of imminent war and in her *The Years* which represents the "whole First World War by the 1917 air raid."

[12] See note 7 above.

[13] See my discussion of political friendship in my introductory chapter between pages 26-29.

[14] See Mohanty's influential essay "Under Western Eyes" in *Boundry 2* 12/13. 3/1 (Spring/Fall 1984): pp. 333-58

[15] Chadha desire to appeal to mainstream, football-loving audiences is revealed in her disclosure about the film's strategic release date, which occurred a few weeks before the 2002 FIFA World Cup: "Football is like a religion in England and with the World Cup coming . . . I wanted to cash in." See Chadha's comments in Michael D. Giardina's essay "*Bend it Like Beckham* in the Global Popular" in *Journal of Sport and Social Issues.* 27.1 (2003): 65-82.

[16] See note one above.

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[17] Ironically, the commentator's remarks raise an expectation that will not be fulfilled because Jess, as we find out, ultimately breaks with the nation by choosing to play for another team in another nation.

[18] See Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His Word* (Trans. H. Iswolsky. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984.)

[19] Still focused on the close up shot of Mrs. Bhamra's face, the studio scene has cut Jess's bedroom, where we suddenly realize that Mrs. Bhamra's angry comments are directed not at us but to her daughter whom she is scolding.

[20] My discussion here and in what follows concerning the film's employment of non-diegetic music in the crosscut scenes has been greatly informed by the discussion of the significance of music in film offered by Scott D. Lipscomb and David E. Tolchinsky in their very useful essay "The Role of Music Communication in Cinema" in *Musical Communication.* (Dorothy Miell, Raymond MacDonald & David Hargreaves. Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). I am especially indebted to the authors' discussion of how music can convey the energy, emotion, and pace of what is being visually presented on the screen.

[21] Here my observations have been directly influenced by Claudia Gorbman's discussion of the "continuity" that music may provide between disparate scenes. See page. 34 of Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music.* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987.)

[22] See note 21.

[23] This version of the song is sung in Hindi by Bina Mistry. The original version of the song was performed in 1983 by musician Arrow. A second version was recorded in 1987 by singer Buster Pointdexter.

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