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Kristine Chick

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Crossing Enemy Lines in Ken Loach's *Ae Fond Kiss/Just A Kiss*

Representing Muslims and New Ethnicities in the Shadow of 9/11

Kristine Chick

- 1 No stranger to representing 'suspect communities', British film-maker Ken Loach's 1990 film *Hidden Agenda* is a fierce denunciation of Britain's shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland. Indicative of entrenched bias in British society, it was denounced in some circles as IRA propaganda while winning the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival.
- 2 A decade later, the events of 9/11 led to a different community becoming increasingly mistrusted in Britain: British Muslims, depicted as 'violent, dangerous, and threatening' (Guardian 2007) and targeted by Anti-Terror legislation. Writing about the impact of Anti-Terrorism powers on the British Muslim population, a civil liberties group noted:

The similarities between the treatment and experiences of the Irish community at the height of the IRA threat and of the British Muslim community today, are striking. Police powers have been used disproportionately against the Muslim population in the UK. [...] There is disillusionment with a government which, rather than protecting them (Muslims) from this backlash, is effectively criminalising them as a community. The group as a whole is stigmatised [...]. (LIBERTY 2004: 3)
- 3 That same year, subverting negative and facile stereotypes of this 'enemy community', Loach released his film *Ae Fond Kiss*. Set in Glasgow, the film features members of both of the above-mentioned stigmatized communities, and challenges stereotypes and bias commonly reproduced in the media: the film's narrative focuses on cultural specificities rather than simplistic generalities and revolves around a romantic relationship between Irish-Catholic Roisin (Eve Birthistle) and Scottish-Pakistani Muslim Casim (Atta Yaqub).
- 4 In the West, negative stereotypes of Muslims and Islam are not limited to the post-9/11 era, but extend back in history and surface not only in the media and non-fiction but also in literature, fine art, film, and children's cartoons. Nevertheless, this article will

focus on depictions following 9/11 and on the ways in which the dominant image of the Muslim as 'enemy' is subverted in British film.

- 5 Particular interest will be given to questions of identity, and the emergence of what social anthropologists such as Steven Vertovec (1997) label 'new ethnicities' (the development of hybrid or syncretic cultural identities) which are depicted in Loach's film. The acknowledgement of new ethnicities can serve to counter negative stereotyping and the entrenched bias that sometimes permeate mainstream British media and culture.
- 6 The films we will consider will be situated within the wider cultural discussion on the construction of the image of the enemy, addressing questions such as which groups are subjected to this enemy imaging and why, and what the consequences of these trends may be, while focusing above all on the mechanisms by which film can subvert the creation and persistence of the enemy image.

Trends in media representations of Muslims

- 7 In this first section we will evaluate the influence and role the media plays in influencing the public's perceptions and understanding of Muslims. According to the 2018 review of survey research on Muslims in Britain "the majority of people say they get their information" on Muslims from the media (Ipsos MORI Research Report 2018: 77). This is supported by the findings of a survey commissioned by the Islamic Society of Britain, where 66% of British people surveyed said that "the TV and newspapers were the biggest source of their information about Britain's Muslim community" (Ameli et al. 2007: 95). Whether it is incumbent on the media to portray a balanced image is a matter of opinion, but the extent of the media's influence on public opinion is irrefutable.
- 8 According to Saied Ameli et al. (2007: 12), among the dominant discourses relating to Muslims in the British media, "Ideological representation is one of the most common discourses, particularly when it is related to religion, ethnicity and power." Ideological representation is "a way of making a 'privileged position' for a particular idea, value, culture and even civilisation, to marginalize and mutate the rest, even to the extent of legitimizing violence against them".
- 9 Ideological representation can be broken down into three distinct areas. The first is ethnocentric discourse which can be simplified, as the tabloid press does, to discourse predicated on the 'Us or Them', "you are either with us or against us" line of argument.¹ The second is domination discourse centred on the juxtaposition between power, influence, and perceived 'superiority' and the 'Other's' perceived inferiority, weakness, and poverty. Finally there is demonization discourse, "based on malicious dishonesty, hypocrisy and fantasy". Demonization discourse is of particular relevance to a study of representation in film, as it can pertain not only to elements of script and plot development but also to the writer's and director's unstated but implied agenda. Demonization discourse of representation is "a process of destroying a reality", often by reproducing some elements of reality while falsifying others (Ameli et al. 2007: 12).
- 10 Before analysing representations of Muslims in a selection of post-9/11 British films, we will consider the representation of Muslims in the British media post-9/11. Although the attacks on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001 did not occur in

Britain, they were of global media interest and the fallout was felt by Muslims worldwide. In their 2017 meta-analysis of published scholarly studies of global media representation of Muslims and Islam during a 15-year period ranging from 2000 to 2015, Ahmed and Matthes have identified that media have closely associated Muslims and Islam with the following themes: migration, Islamophobia and discrimination, terrorism, Muslim women (specifically attitudes to wearing of the *hijab*), war, and mosques. Of the above, the most commonly topics analysed in relation to Muslims were migration, terrorism, and war, the first two of which become intertwined in the media (see below).

- 11 With regards to migration, Eliassi (2013: 43) notes that, when portraying Muslim immigrants or migrants, Western media does not generally evoke, much less document, the reasons for migration; in other words the “broader political, cultural, economic, and social contexts” that drive migration or that cause displacement of populations are eclipsed. Hussain (2007) finds that “Muslim migrants are presented as a threat to national cultures” due to a process whereby the media accentuates a “negative ethno-political consensus” (Ahmed and Matthes 2017: 234). Furthermore, migration is frequently linked to terrorism by the media: in a study of representation of British Muslims in the British media during a two-week period following the 7 July 2005 London bombings, researchers found that in the wake of the attacks, “one of the dominant themes in all of the coverage (of the attacks) was asylum and immigration.” (Ameli et al. 2007: 28) Following the 2005 bombings, in the British press “discussions on introducing anti-terror legislation and similar laws took place on all news channels” (Ameli et al. 2007: 29). Media discourse was framed in such a way as to emphasize “the foreign or alien nature of Islam/Muslims” thus evoking the manner in which the events of 9/11 were used across Western countries to promulgate the resurgence of Harvard professor Samuel P. Huntington’s ethnocentric thesis (1996) of the “clash of civilizations” between Islam and the West (Ahmed & Matthes 2017: 220; Kumar 2010: 255).
- 12 In the weeks following the 2005 bombings, the British media promoted an image of the suspects as asylum-seeking immigrants who had benefitted greatly from the state’s generosity, thus bringing asylum, immigration and deportation of foreign nationals back onto the political agenda, despite the fact that “this was a ‘home grown’ problem involving young British Muslims” (Ameli et al. 2007: 29). As Liz Fekete aptly states, an extension of this merging of the themes of terrorism and migration, even when irrelevant, is that “national security agendas overlap with the immigration control of the far Right” (Fekete 2006: 1).
- 13 In an alternative analysis of media representation of Muslim identities, Myra Macdonald identifies two narratives of Islam and Muslims promoted by the popular press in Britain. In a process of simplification, the first narrative proposed by the media is of a homogenic, unified global Muslim community, while the alternative narrative emphasizes “artificial binary oppositions that are predicated on threat” (2011: 413).

Creating polarized identities: insisting on alterity and denying nuance in identity formation

- 14 Despite the ethnic diversity of Muslims² worldwide and in America, home to the world’s most influential production of images and global popular culture, the American media

and film industry consistently persists in conflating Muslim with Arab, to the exclusion of other ethnicities, recreating in the viewer's imagination a non-representative celluloid image of Muslims as uniquely Arab, and of Arabs as Muslims (Shaheen 2009: 9-10; Pew Research Centre 2017).

- 15 Reflecting the consequences of colonial and post-colonial struggles, Muslims in Britain originate from countries as diverse as Albania, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kosovo, Malaysia, Pakistan, Somalia or Uganda. Yet despite this variety, a similar visual shorthand to that employed in the US has been exercised in the UK: press coverage and British cinema show almost uniquely British Muslims of South Asian origin, primarily Pakistani.
- 16 The diversity among Muslims in Britain pertains not only to geographical origins but extends into areas as diverse as interpretation of faith and degree of continuing ties with the country of origin. It is axiomatic amongst researchers that:

the British Muslim 'community' is 'multifaceted and fractured, with internal disagreements about interpretations of Islam, and diverse historical, political, cultural and ethnic backgrounds [...] differing traditions of Islamic belief and social divisions based on gender, family, caste, class, ethnicity or language [resulting in] multiple possible identities [...] but little of this has fed through into popular media discourse. (Macdonald 2011: 413; also Ballard 2004; Hopkins & Gale 2009; Peach 2006)
- 17 The lack of multiplicity reflected on screen lends itself to the creation of an enemy image as it facilitates a shorthand image of 'Muslim' which is subsequently affiliated with a limited set of ideals, tropes, and behaviours, easily transformed to stereotype, scapegoat or threat, on screen or in the public's imagination.
- 18 Not only do the media wilfully neglect to investigate and portray the variety of origins and diverse identities of British Muslims and Muslims in Britain, but they also engage in broadcasting

repeated visual tropes of British Muslims occupying public spaces in Britain [in such a way as to accentuate] connotations of difference through the body, repeatedly focusing on images of heavily bearded young men or *jilbab* and *niqab*-wearing women (Macdonald 2011: 412)
- 19 When this non-representative choice of press images almost exclusively of Muslims of Pakistani or South Asian origin is coupled with articles and news reports associating Muslims and Islam with a restricted set of themes (war, migration, terrorism), the beard and hijab become symbols, or a visual shorthand, evoking 'otherness', associated with the aforementioned themes, all of which are framed to evoke potential threat in the imagination of the viewer.
- 20 When politicians then focus on symbols of difference, such as the wearing of the veil, which was "an object of mystique, exoticism and eroticism" prior to 9/11 but subsequently began to be seen as a "highly visible sign of a despised difference" (Donnell 2003: 123), and when they posit these symbols as threats to a society's values, this reinforces the notion of binary opposition and incompatibility. Accordingly, researchers have found that "integration measures imposed by governments reinforce Islamophobia" (Fekete 2006: 1).
- 21 The oversimplification in the popular press's first narrative facilitates affirmation of the second, so that through "the caricaturing postures of the British popular press",

"Britain's diverse Muslim populations are reduced to a homogenous unity and increasingly associated with 'terrorism'" (Macdonald 2011: 412).

- 22 By negating the existence of diverse multiple cultures and identities of people of Muslim faith, and instead presenting the public with an idea of a homogeneous 'Muslim identity', this imagined monolithic identity can then be presented as dissimilar, even contradictory or opposed to a somewhat vaguely-defined 'British' identity and value system. Presumed 'British' and 'Muslim' values have thus been posited as contradictory and irreconcilably opposed, again echoing the ethnocentric discourse of the so-called "clash of civilizations".
- 23 Establishing this concept of polarized identities ('us/them', 'British/Muslim') in turn facilitates support for the arguments behind the shift in political discourse and official rhetoric in Britain, and the social and immigration policies and decisions that follow.³
- 24 Since 2001, there has been a shift in the UK in official discourse away from multiculturalism and towards "social cohesion" (Macdonald 2011: 412). To legitimize this change, one must first establish the concept of polarized identities ('us/them'; 'British/Muslim'). As social cohesion is predicated on an insistence of the necessity to adhere to vaguely defined 'British values', this implies that the values of those who 'ought to' adhere are necessarily 'other'. The consequence of this shift in discourse is that it presents the reader/spectator with the lingering suspicion of the existence of a social divide, and thus feeds into discourses of fear of a democratic or Western value system under threat from within, and so contributes to the creation of an imagined enemy. To more fully illustrate this point, we can return to the issue raised earlier about the framing of the theme of migration in the press: according to Fekete, the majority of researchers investigating media representations of Muslim migration have found that these media stances obstruct societal integration of Muslim immigrants and, as a result, the alleged unassimilability [sic] discourse is then raised as a vital argument to avoid immigration from countries with a high Muslim population. (Fekete 2006 in Ahmed & Matthes 2017: 234)
- 25 The emergence of the highly polarized and static official public discourse pertaining to notions of belonging and 'Britishness' and what it might mean to be 'Muslim' has had other consequences. The hardening of imagined boundaries and denial of fluidity in identity formation has led Macdonald to describe the ensuing subtler denial, in dominant discourse, of the acknowledgement (from the point of view of the 'minority' individual) of the role and validity of personal, intimate and individual memories, and the subsequent denial of the multi-layered and non-fixed nature of identity: "ambivalence and duality around belonging, home and the relation between nostalgia and current desires are retracted" (Macdonald 2011: 415).
- 26 In relation to the analysis of cinematic trends that follows, this observation draws our attention to the fact that this tendency in dominant discourse is limiting and restrictive not only for individuals, but serves to further solidify already entrenched attitudes towards citizenry, identity and inter-personal relationships when transposed to on-screen representations.

Figures 1 and 2: "Submissive maidens" attending a "greedy, black-bearded potentate"

Early examples of two of Shaheen's five basic Arab types.

Source: *The Palace of Arabian Nights* (dir. Méliès, France, 1905)

Trends in cinematic representations of Muslims in Western films since the 1880s

- 27 Jack Shaheen, in his quantitative analysis of Arab images on screen in films⁴ from a wide range of Western countries including the UK, France and Japan, reviewed more than one thousand films made from the 1880s to 2001 which feature Arabs either as a significant part of the diegesis or contain cameo roles depicting Arabs. Motivating his choice to focus on Arabs is the observation that, in cinema, being Muslim is commonly synonymous with being Arabic, and vice versa, despite the fact that "only 12 percent of the world's Muslims are Arab" (Shaheen 2009: 10). He concludes that out of roughly 1,000 films, only 14 present Arabs (and, by extension, Muslims) in a positive light.⁵ A further 54 films offer a balanced or neutral image of Arabs/Muslims, and the remaining 900+ films present the viewer with demeaning, dehumanizing, injurious and damaging stereotypes of Arabs, whilst also sometimes explicitly maligning the Islamic faith (Shaheen 2009: 579-80). This stereotyping appeared from the earliest stages of film history, from both sides of the Atlantic.⁶
- 28 With specific reference to Shaheen's findings, William Grieder warns of the far-reaching, destructive effects of such persistent and negative stereotyping in cinema, both on a personal and on an interpersonal, international level, maintaining that cinema is:

the leading source of propagandistic images that damage and isolate some citizens and can destroy the possibility of ever achieving genuine democratic relationships

among us. The power to depict certain “others” as innately strange and dangerous — as foul creatures not like the rest of us — is surely as devastating as the physical force of weaponry. (Greider 2009: viii)

- 29 It could be countered that the popular cultural product is consumed for entertainment only, and that the consequences of negative portrayals within films is of little consequence. However, and in relation to the focus of this article on British film, sociologists have found that the unique political context pertaining to British Muslims has placed a particular burden on films depicting British Muslims of South Asian ethnicity, or more specifically British Pakistani, a burden not carried currently by films representing any other diasporic community or minority. This responsibility relates specifically to “sociological analysis, reliability, accuracy and representation.” (Bolognani et al. 2011: 162) In a sociological analysis of the accuracy and reliability of representations of British Pakistanis in 5 British films released between 1999 and 2006,⁷ Bolognani et al. note that “it is the sociological rather than the artistic value that is being sought [by the spectator] in these films”, which, although works of fiction, are held to “journalistic or academic standards”. The authors stress the peculiarity of placing such a burden on artistic productions (in this case feature-length films), noting that “it is not a film’s job to sample and represent a social group” (2011: 170).
- 30 They hypothesize that the general public and critics are placing this responsibility on films in order to compensate for the media’s shortcomings due to “a fracture between overexposure and lack of explanation in the media” (Bolognani et al. 2011: 161). This analysis is echoed by London School of Economics professor of International Relations Fawaz Gerges, a specialist on the Middle East, relations between Islam and the west, and US foreign policy, who notes that Middle Eastern cultures and peoples “are not easily explained in quick two-minute network news-stories” (in Reza 2011: 238)

Figure 3. Afghanistan war veteran David Budd (Richard Madden) rescues a train from a *hijab*-wearing suicide bomber Nadia (Anjali Mohindra)

Source: *The Bodyguard*. Season 1, Episode 1 (dir. Mercurio, UK, 2018)

- 31 Within British cinema, more or less detailed portraits of British Muslims can be found in a range of genres, but most frequently in thrillers and comedies. The genre of thriller frequently overlaps with other genres, such as drama, political thriller and crime; the role accorded Muslims in this category is frequently that of terrorist, often in a minor role of significant consequence to the narrative (cf. for example *Red Mercury*

dir. Battersby 2005; *Incendiary*, dir. Maguire, 2008; *Flying Blind* dir. Klimkiewicz 2012; the television series *The Bodyguard* dir. Mercurio, 2018 –). Films in this category tend to propagate the idea that Islam and the West are ideologically incompatible and that Muslims are terrorists (*Incendiary*), potential terrorists (*The Bodyguard*), or at the very least untrustworthy traitors (*Flying Blind*). Notable exceptions in the genre include Michael Winterbottom's *The Road to Guantanamo* (2006) which crosses the boundaries between drama and documentary⁸ to tell the story of the Tripton Three, three British Muslims held in Guantanamo for two years prior to being released without charge.

- 32 Thrillers aside, fictional portraits of British Muslims are most prevalent in the genre of comedy. In comedy, there has been a shift in the last decade away from films that are imbued with transformative utopian ideals (e.g. Gurinder Chadha's 1993 *Bhaji on the Beach* and 2002 *Bend it Like Beckham*, Pratibha Parmar's 2006 *Nina's Heavenly Delights*) towards the emergence of "newly aggressive and relentlessly critical" postcolonial comedies, such as Chris Morris's 2010 *Four Lions*, Joe Cornish's 2011 *Attack the Block* (Ilott 2013: 15), Appignanesi's 2010 *The Infidel*, and Khan's 2018 *Man Like Mobeen*. This dramatic shift in the tone of popular narratives brought to the screen in British film in the last decade is directly related to "shifts in British multicultural policies and attitudes to ethnic and religious minorities in a Britain that has witnessed rising support for racist and xenophobic parties such as the BNP and UKIP." (Ilott 2013: 15)
- 33 Comedy as a genre is particularly well suited to challenging the aforementioned prejudice and satirizing society. As Sarah Ilott notes,
Comedy has the power to reflect or to challenge mainstream values. Laughing at difference or "otherness" can reinforce damaging social norms, while shared laughter at a flawed or failed system tends to work more subversively. (Ilott 2018)
- 34 Providing an example of comedy which reinforces damaging social norms is Adil Ray's *Citizen Khan*, the BBC's first situation comedy to focus on a British-Pakistani family, broadcast 2012–2017 and widely criticized for supporting "Islamophobic narratives and stereotypes" (Ahmed 2013) despite Ray's own Pakistani and Kenyan-Asian ethnicity.

Figures 4 and 5. The shared aesthetic of *East is East* (image on the top) and *Citizen Khan* (image on the bottom)

Source: *East is East* (dir. O'Donnell, UK, 1999) and *Citizen Khan* (dir. Ray, UK, 2012 – 2017)

- 35 At the other end of the comic spectrum, *Four Lions* and *Attack the Block* are examples of subversive comedies and Illot hypothesizes that the fact that the films' directors are 'white' is a salient factor contributing to the films' subversive humour and fierce criticism of society, as she supposes that the directors are "entirely unconcerned with challenging or offending white audiences." (Illot 2013: 4) However, it is doubtful that such a simple correlation between ethnic identification and ideology exists; while the composition of *The Infidel*'s writing and directing team (2010, dir. Josh Appignanesi, written by David Baddiel) would seem to support Illot's view, even four white British directors could not save the aforementioned *Citizen Khan* from crass cliché. On the other hand, BBC Three's *Man Like Mobeen* (2017–2019), directed by Ollie Parsons, created by and starring Guz Khan, is an ethnically diverse writer-director collaboration that is highly subversive in its comic stance.

Figure 6. Faisal (Adeel Akhtar) tries to train crows to become suicide bombers

Source: *Four Lions* (dir. Chris Morris, UK, 2010)

- 36 Ultimately then, we can see that there is no clear correlation between a filmmaker's (or the writer's, director's, creator's) ethnic identification and whether the film or series reproduces or challenges stereotypes. More relevant here is Harvé Bennett's observation that "stereotyping spares writers the ultimate discomfort of having to think" (Bennett in Alhassen 2018: 40). This remark takes us closer to the issue: it is a quest for originality and authenticity rather than the filmmaker's ethnicity that is most relevant in determining whether a film's imagery and narrative will reproduce negative stereotypes or seek to subvert such caricatures. A predominance of white directors associated with more radical projects may thus simply be a reflection of the still-uneven playing field for ethnic minorities in the film industry.⁹

Milieu-moving and cultural crossing in *Ae Fond Kiss*

- 37 Navigating the middle ground somewhere between narratives of transformative ideals and comedies that are "aggressive and relentlessly critical" is director Ken Loach and writer Paul Laverty's social realist drama *Ae Fond Kiss/Just a Kiss* (2004). Unique in the realm of films focusing on British South Asians, the film intertwines representations of two social groups who are defined by ethnicity and religion (Muslim South Asians and the Irish), and whose communities are or have been targeted by government anti-terrorism laws, providing rich visual, audio and thematic material for textual analysis.
- 38 The film is set primarily in Glasgow, itself commonly the victim of negative stereotyping in film, and focuses on Irish and Scottish-Pakistani communities. The city's position as a place of immigration and diasporic connection for people from former British colonies — South Asia and Ireland — is thus brought to the forefront. Loach's portrayal departs from several well-established norms. While Muslim characters' religion is typically stressed in British films in a way that suggests it is problematic, "particularly through their links with extremism or terrorism" (Macdonald 2011: 416), the themes of terrorism and extremism are absent from *Ae Fond Kiss*, despite the fact that the Muslim characters' religion is frequently foregrounded.

- 39 Glasgow is one of four filming locations to which Ken Loach regularly returns. He and writer Laverty have thus now produced five Glaswegian/West of Scotland films, with *Carla's Song* (1996), *My Name is Joe* (1998), *Sweet Sixteen* (2002) and *The Angels' Share* (2010). Unusually for Glasgow, often depicted by filmmakers including Loach as relatively bleak, barren and urban (*My Name Is Joe*), with dominating high-rises (Andrea Arnold's *Red Road*, 2006) and over-crowded filthy tenements (Lynne Ramsay's *Ratcatcher*, 1999), *Ae Fond Kiss* foregrounds the Gaelic signification of Glasgow's name, which means "dear green place".

Figure 7. Roisin (Eve Birthistle) and Casim (Atta Yaqub) are first- and second-generation immigrants to Scotland

Source: *Ae Fond Kiss* (dir. Loach, UK, 2004)

- 40 The characters are often picturesquely framed in leafy residential neighbourhoods, surrounded by the lush trees and foliage which gave the city its name. Prevailing representations of the city as working-class, crime-ridden and post-industrial are also left aside, in favour of showing more romantic, middle class, and cosmopolitan aspects of the city. The city's diasporic connection for people from former British colonies is also brought to the forefront.
- 41 The diasporic communities on which the film focuses are reflective of the demographics of Scotland, as the minority ethnic population of Scotland — roughly 100,000, or roughly 2% of the total local population — is predominantly of Asian origin,¹⁰ and primarily resident in Glasgow, Scotland's largest city. Within this group, 77% of the Glaswegian Asian community is of "Pakistani heritage, and Muslim religion" (Alam and Stuart-Smith 2011: 216). The Irish are not considered to be a minority ethnic population in Scotland, and therefore are not included in the above statistics. If they were, they would significantly outnumber people of South Asian origin.¹¹
- 42 The narrative of *Ae Fond Kiss* revolves around a relationship between Casim (Atta Yaqub), an economics graduate, DJ, entrepreneur, and member of the Pakistani-

Glaswegian Muslim community, and Irish Catholic music teacher Roisin (Eve Birthistle). Much of the concerns voiced by Casim's family reflect the importance of marriage, and marriage longevity, to the Pakistani (and Bangladeshi) South Asian communities.

- 43 Research shows evidence in Glasgow of "sharp social segregation between Asian and non-Asian girls." Even those members of the Glasgow-Pakistani Muslim community who choose to 'deviate' from traditional codes of behaviour (by drinking alcohol, swearing, socializing with members of the opposite sex, or refusing to wear the hijab) still choose to restrict their socializing to the Glasgow Asian community, thus maintaining boundaries and retaining the social segregation (Alam and Stuart-Smith 2011: 217). This behavioural trend is not limited to Glasgow, but found across Britain, where "the key feature of family life in South Asian communities is the very high rate of marriage" among South Asians (Berthoud 2000: 16), and extremely low rates of mixed marriages. Opinion questions suggest that, amongst Caribbeans, whites and South Asians, South Asians are the least likely to accept mixed marriages (Berthoud 2000: 217).

Figure 8. Tension between tradition and agency

Rukhsana worries that her brother's illicit relationship will jeopardize her own forthcoming wedding.

Source: *Ae Fond Kiss* (dir. Ken Loach, 2004)

- 44 The dramatic point of conflict in the film revolves around this sensitive and divisive issue. The source of tension within the Kahn family, representative of Pakistani families in Scotland, is the gradual development of hybrid or syncretic cultural phenomena amongst some young members of diasporic communities, such as their desire to break with tradition. This deviance from codified traditional norms is foregrounded in Casim and Roisin's inter-ethnic relationship and, no less controversially, by Casim's younger sister Tahara's desire to study and live away from home before marriage. These two areas articulate the influence on diasporic phenomena of structure and agency. In the context of evolving diasporic phenomena, such as that detailed by Vertovec (1999: 24), these two sources of tension in the film articulate the influence of agency (concrete

actions that social actors, such as Casim and Tahara, choose to practice, and the meanings they attribute to those practices) on historically conditioned structures (for example, the tradition of marrying within the same religious community, and the expectation for young people to live at home until marriage). Just as the fluidity of identities among diasporic peoples is highlighted in anthropology's non-essentialist, constructivist approach to ethnicity, the Kahn children display cultural identities that are variously described in Cultural Studies as syncretic, creolised, translated, hybrid or alternate. Vertovec reveals that:

The production of such hybrid cultural phenomena and 'new ethnicities' [...] is especially to be found among diasporic youth whose primary socialisation has taken place with the cross-currents of differing cultural fields. Among such young people, facets of culture and identity are often self-consciously selected, syncretised and elaborated from more than one heritage. (Vertovec 1999: 20)

45 In the film, cultural transformation, and the above-mentioned development of hybrid or syncretic cultural identity is shown in stages which are progressively accented through each of the three Khan children, from the more traditional older sister Rukhsana, via the hesitant middle-ground occupied by Casim, to the consciously rebellious Tahara.

46 A striking example of this self-conscious selection is found in Tahara's speech to her school and to her father. In line with the philosophy of civic nationalism and its perception of citizenship as being based on residency rather than birth or origins, she declares herself "not Pakistani" to her father, and demonstrating the self-conscious selection of identity from more than one heritage, as "Ranger supporter" (an historically Protestant Glaswegian football club) and "Muslim", both highly provocative assertions in a Catholic Glaswegian school.¹² Tahara's declarations also vividly support Roger Ballard's observation, drawing an analogy between cultural and linguistic practise:

Just as individuals can be bilingual, so they can also be multicultural, with the competence to behave appropriately in a number of different arenas, and to switch codes as appropriate. (Ballard 1994: 31)

47 Interestingly, the extent to which members of the Glasgow-Pakistani Muslim community reject mainstream British values is paralleled phonetically in their accents. A recent sociophonetic study of /t/ in Glasgow-Pakistani girls suggests that fine phonetic variation which indexes ethnicity is in fact indexical of local ethnic identity. In other words, the study found that the girls speak differently depending on their cultural affiliation; classified in three different degrees, like the Khan children, researchers found that those who identify with and conform to traditional Pakistani culture (such as Casim's older sister, Rukhsana) retain linguistic markers that indicate this, while those who clearly appropriate many aspects of the host culture and simultaneously reject elements of their own heritage adopt linguistic traits of the Glaswegian and/or British accent.

48 While Tahara's declarations and willingness to live outside the family home are audacious challenges to tradition, it is perhaps Casim who more radically engages in 'milieu-moving' and 'cultural crossing', as evidenced by his (initial) acceptance of an arranged marriage, while simultaneously pursuing a career as a DJ in the distinctly Western and *haram* (sinful) nightclub universe.

- 49 Just as Casim's family actively oppose his union with Irish Catholic Roisin, intransigence and hostility to the 'ethnic other' is reciprocated by Roisin's Catholic priest. In a surprising twist of the narrative, social boundaries engulf *her*, and *she* is more definitively trapped by the unanticipated force of her religious identity than Casim who is fully conscious of his family's and community's cultural and religious expectations. Roisin is punished for having a relationship with a Muslim man, which in the eyes of her priest merits her exclusion from the religious community and her place of employment. Casim, on the other hand, the narrative suggests, will maintain ties with his family and religion, portrayed as more humane and perhaps even justified in their scepticism of 'whites'. Their mistrust of '*goris*' (white people) is given historical context and placed in the extensive history of colonialism, British Empire and racism against Pakistanis. The racism that Casim's father has experienced since his arrival in Britain is not shown to the spectator via flashback but rather related by Casim to Roisin through dialogue, while Britain's imperial past and the devastating violence and chaos of British-designed partition are evoked through one still image when Casim shows Roisin an old black and white photograph of his father with his father's twin, and tells her of how he died in the confusion and riots of 1947.
- 50 Positioning the film in a wider geo-political context, Roisin uses music (*Strange Fruit*, sung by Billie Holiday, written by Jewish-American writer, teacher and songwriter Abel Meeropol, and described as an "early cry for civil rights" marking the "beginning of the civil rights movement" [Margolick 2000]) and photography archives to show her students a glimpse of the brutal crimes of slavery, the Jim Crow era and lynchings performed by deeply xenophobic communities in the United States, the most powerful of Britain's former colonies. Thus, a temporal and thematic link is drawn between the Glaswegian/British/Pakistani experience of religious divide (the violence of colonialism and British foreign policy in the 1940s) and the American experience of ethnic/racial divide (in the post-slavery but pre-civil rights era). Both experiences, however, be it Casim's father's experience of xenophobia or events in the U.S., are located firmly in the past.
- 51 For John Hill (2009: 100), "By making Roisin Irish rather than Scottish, the film also hints at how both Ireland and Pakistan have been shaped by a colonial legacy of partition and historic patterns of emigration." Despite this, Hill is pessimistic about Loach and Laverty's ability to offer insight into the diasporic experience in Scotland; he concludes that although their Scottish films have provided "powerful images of working class decline and deprivation [they are] rather less successful in capturing [...] the variety of ways in which the politics of class, gender, ethnicity and nationality overlap and interweave in present-day Scotland" (Hill 2009: 102). He further laments that, in comparison with *Yasmin* (2004) and *Bradford Riots* (Biswas, 2006), *Ae Fond Kiss* "appears to separate off class politics from identity politics rather than investigate the ways in which these intertwine" (Hill 2009: 102). I believe that an explanation can be found in the fact that the South Asian Muslim experience in Scotland is markedly different to that in England: specifically, the 2001 and 2011 riots in England found no echo north of the border, and Scottish Muslims (as well as members of other religious minorities) are somewhat insulated from religious prejudice due to pre-existing sectarian tensions in Scotland between Catholics and Protestants (as noted by Bonino 2016). In addition, more than a third of Scottish Muslims are self-employed, and proportionately higher percentages of young South Asian Muslims than white Scots

have higher education degrees, meaning that overall South Asian Muslims are better off than their counterparts south of the border, and are not perceived in Scotland to be competition for labouring work in the way that they might be in England.

- 52 Despite his criticism, Hill recognizes that “within Scotland the relatively small Asian community is predominantly middle class” (Hill 2009: 102), an assertion supported by an analysis of the 2011 census’ statistics which confirm that Muslims in Scotland, particularly those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, are socio-economically better off than those in England (Elshayyal 2016: 12, 36, 53-4).
- 53 Therefore, taking into account the specificities of the Scottish context for South Asian and other Muslims in Scotland, the absence of an emphasis on class struggle in the film can be read both as an authentic reflection of the socio-economic situation of many Pakistani-origin families living in Glasgow, and as an attempt to present the viewer with a much-needed alternative to the ubiquitous on-screen image of the poor working-class immigrant.
- 54 In a further example of authenticity, recent research by Stefano Bonino (2019) has analysed changing community patterns amongst Muslims in Scotland post-9/11, confirming the existence of interpersonal and cross-generational struggles that are strikingly similar to those brought to the viewer’s attention in *Ae Fond Kiss*. This suggests that Lavery and Loach’s research led them to base pivotal aspects of the narrative on interviews with Muslims in Glasgow before writing the script. This reliance on authentic material and giving voice to (an all too often-ignored) Muslim perspective aligns the filmmakers’ strategies closely with recommendations made by Muslim-Americans and British-Muslims encouraging change in the industry, in particular advocating for long-term narrative change through understanding the diversity of Muslim communities, in addition to building and expanding “creative and career pipelines for Muslim artists within the entertainment industry” (Alhassen 2018: 8).¹³
- 55 We have seen that for Hill “the couple involved are both, in their ways, ‘outsiders’” whilst David Martin-Jones (2010: 187) finds that Roisin’s Irishness and the fact that she is made redundant by her employer underlines “Loach and Lavery’s contention that all immigrants face the same level of prejudice as Muslims in the wake of 9/11”. It is doubtful that this was the filmmakers’ intention, as Roisin’s dismissal is clearly shown by the narrative to be a direct result of the prejudice of her Catholic priest against Muslims (and in particular her liaison with a Muslim man). Conversely, nothing in the film suggests that the Irish currently suffer the same mistreatment or prejudice in Britain.
- 56 This brings us directly to a further related point that critics have failed to pick up on. In *Ae Fond Kiss*, viewers witness an evolution and shifting of boundaries in the perception of foreignness. Being Irish does not signify Roisin as ‘other’ in Scotland, to such an extent that musically her character is associated with Robert Burns, the Scottish bard. The fact that an Irish character is not perceived, either implicitly by the narrative or explicitly by any character, as ‘foreign’ reflects a considerable shift in perceptions during the last decades.¹⁴ Meanwhile, while Roisin’s Irish accent testifies to the fact that she was born and raised on foreign soil (Ireland), the children of the Kahn family, especially Casim and Tahara, speak with Glaswegian accents, unlike their father, whose undulating lilt shifts between Glaswegian and Pakistani-inflected pronunciation, and thus belies both Pakistan as place of birth, and Glasgow as place of long-term residency.

And yet, the diasporic identity of Roisin (born abroad, and with Irish accent) seems to pass without comment or notice within the diegesis. On the other hand, even though Scottish-born Casim and Tahara sound Glaswegian, they are frequently positioned by characters (such as the Catholic priest) and the narrative as 'foreign': the question of their identity is central, their 'foreignness' predicated on a subtle supposition or — perhaps assumed — perception of cultural differences, especially the assumption of the role of religion in their identity-formation, rather than biological difference or indeed audible similarity (their Glaswegian accents). In other words:

"old" racisms that were based on biological difference are being largely replaced by "new" racisms that are based on the perception of cultural differences. (Procter, *Dwelling Places*: 171) Boundaries of inclusion and exclusion increasingly turn to markers of class and religion (Ilott 2013: 15)

- 57 Despite the film being made partially in response to 9/11 and the ensuing growing discrimination against Muslims, the portrayal of global politics and American and British foreign policy is understated. Tahara's speech at school denouncing state-sponsored terrorism is brief and remains disjointed from the rest of the film, for instance. Another absence that critics (such as Hill and Martin-Jones) have noted is that Loach, unusually, avoids class politics in this film, which some believe indicates that he may have been unable or unwilling to capture what Hill describes as "the variety of ways in which the politics of class, gender, ethnicity and nationality overlap and interweave in present-day Scotland" (Hill 2009: 102). However, these criticisms echo the aforementioned peculiar burden of sociological mimicry placed upon films featuring British-Pakistanis; it can indeed be argued that the film retains thematic unity and remains — from an artistic point of view — coherent, by *not* endeavouring to represent a comprehensive cross-section of Glaswegian communities.

Conclusion

- 58 Although in cultural studies and social anthropology it is widely accepted that identities are plural and constantly in flux (Vertovec 1997; Macdonald 2011), there exists a chasm between the conclusion of scholarly research and current representations of identity both in the media and in films. Instead of reflecting constant fluidity in identities, cinema's representations of Muslims and Arabs have remained remarkably static for more than a century, as evidenced by the enduring negative stereotyping.
- 59 Whilst the dominant onscreen representations of other previously marginalised, maligned and ridiculed ethnic, religious and social groups (e.g. African-Americans, Jews, women, etc.), have been altered with time towards more nuanced representations, the image of the Muslim on screen has been remarkably impermeable to change (Shaheen 2009).
- 60 This article has recalled the myriad messages of 'Otherness' and 'not belonging' emphasized and communicated by the media. Comparing government policy of the 1960s with that of the 2010s, Middle Eastern cultural expert Diana Darke (2019) writes of the contrast between, on the one hand, present-day mainstream vilification of Muslims and, on the other, official immigration policies and Foreign Office films of the 1960s encouraging Muslims to emigrate to the UK in the wake of the Suez crisis in an effort to "improve strained relations between Britain and the Arabic-speaking world".

She notes that in the 2017 general election, and in the 2016 referendum, “nearly half of Conservative voters” and “half of Brexit voters” respectively “said that Islam was not compatible with Britishness”. Currently, according to research funded by anti-fascist group Hope not Hate, “more than a third of the UK population believes Islam is a threat to the British way of life” (Perraudin 2019). Highlighting the tendency to locate the origin of Islamophobia with Isis and terrorist attacks, Darke credits Theresa May and David Cameron with having created a ‘hostile environment’ since as early as 2010, four years before the inception of Isis’ caliphate in Raqqa in 2014 (Darke 2019).

- 61 British Emmy and BIFA award-winning actor Riz Ahmed, addressing the House of Commons in March 2017, spoke of the contradictory forces behind the ongoing search for a new national narrative against a global backdrop of rising right-wing populism (Ahmed 2017). Citing the spectators’ quest to see themselves in on-screen narratives, Ahmed implied that the time for the UK’s film industry and political leaders to be furthering the myth of a monolithic cultural identity has passed, referring explicitly to the UK as a ‘multicultural goldmine’, and of the opportunities that migrants to the country can offer. He advocated the writing of a national narrative that reflects the uniqueness of the nation’s citizens’ complex realities, a narrative that embraces and empowers rather than one that excludes and alienates.
- 62 I hope to have shown the ways in which Loach and Lavery have contributed to the writing of a narrative that engages with complex realities instead of facile stereotype. In *Ae Fond Kiss*, Loach and Lavery relegate issues of class struggle to the background and focus instead on the delicate process of maintaining and forging diasporic, (post)colonial and cross-cultural identities. Just as the characters are asked to question which aspects of their culture and traditions they will identify and align themselves with, the spectator is asked to question what their culture and traditions are aligned with. Challenging dominant images and representations of Muslims spread in popular culture and the mainstream popular press of Islamic and Pakistani traditions, the Kahn family are shown to possess the tolerance necessary for their children Casim and Tahara to express and achieve their quest for individual liberties, without breaking with their religion or family, whilst the Catholic Church — and the Western woman — are revealed as trapped in intransigent and repressive traditional structures resistant to change. Loach offers a template of the forging of new identities drawing together connections between individuals from diverse and dissimilated points of origin, offering a hopeful, although peripheral, image of Glasgow’s potential global identity perceived as a work in progress.

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NOTES

1. The sentence was uttered by George W. Bush in the aftermath of 9/11 (Bush 2001).

2. The majority (67%) of the planet's 1.1 billion Muslims are in Asia, and only 27% of the world's Muslims are of Arab ethnicity. In the United States, only 14% of American-Muslims are ethnically Arabic.
3. The controversy surrounding so-called Jihadi bride Shamima Begum, the death of her newborn son in a Syrian refugee camp, and the Home Secretary Javid's handling of the situation provide particularly extreme examples of such hard lines being drawn not only in discourse but followed through with political action (revoking of citizenship, despite contravening British law in doing so). Opponents of Sajid Javid's decision note that Ms Begum was herself a child when she was groomed online and then sexually exploited after having been recruited to a terrorist organisation renowned for its sophisticated propaganda strategies, that target the young and disenfranchised.
4. Despite the fact that Shaheen's work is somewhat misleadingly entitled *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies A People* it is not restricted to an analysis of Hollywood films.
5. Of these 14, one is a UK production (*The Black Tent*, 1956), one is a joint UK/USA production (*Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves*, 1991), and one is a US production (*Gambit*, 1966) that was directed by and stars British artists (Ronald Neame and Michael Caine respectively). Of the remaining 11 films, 2 are Israeli productions (*Cup Final*, 1991 and *Beyond the Walls*, 1984), 2 Italian (*The Battle of Algiers*, 1966 and *Goliath at the Conquest of Damascus*, 1965) 1 French (*Madame Rosa*, 1977), 1 German (*Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, 1974) and 5 American (*King Richard and the Crusaders*, 1954; *Lion of the Desert*, 1981 (Libya, USA); *The 13th Warrior*, 1999; *Three Kings* 1999 and *The Thief of Bagdad*, 1924. See filmography for full details.
6. We can see early examples of two of Shaheen's five basic Arab types in an early European silent film by one of the first filmmakers in the history of cinema: George Méliès, whose *The Palace of Arabian Nights* (France, 1905) features "submissive maidens" attending a "bored, greedy, black-bearded potentate". "From the beginning, Méliès and other moviemakers conjured up a mythical, uniform [...] setting". (Shaheen 2009: 14).
7. The five films analysed in depth in their article are *East is East* (1999), *Ae Fond Kiss* (2004), *Yasmin* (2004), *Love and Hate* (2005) and *Mischief Night* (2006).
8. See Macdonald (2011) and Morey & Yaqin (2011) on documentaries and docudramas respectively.
9. Film production companies may be more willing to finance audacious, challenging projects from white directors or white writer/director teams than they are to provide financial backing for their British Asian counterparts, whose projects may be seen as riskier financial investments.
10. The British Asian community is comprised of a diverse range of intersecting communities originally from the Indian subcontinent, who speak several Modern Indo-Aryan languages (including Punjabi, Urdu, and Bengali).
11. There are roughly 50,000 people of White Irish origin in Scotland, compared with roughly 15,000 and 30,000 of Indian and Pakistani origin, respectively. Source: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/02/18876/32939>
12. Reflecting the sectarian divide which is still rife in Scotland, the Rangers is Glasgow's Protestant football club, whilst the Celtic is traditionally Glasgow's Catholic club.
13. For more detailed discussion of recommendations cf. Brooklyn-based Pop Culture Collaborative's *Haaq and Hollywood* (Alhassen 2018) or Riz Ahmed's article "Typecast as a Terrorist" (2016).
14. For comparison, see films such as *In the Name of the Father* for an example of perception and discrimination against Irish-born Irish immigrants in England, and *Ladybird, Ladybird* (Loach, 1994) for persistent residue of discrimination based on the Irish-origins of Mrs Conlan, the English-born main character.

ABSTRACTS

In the West, negative stereotypes of Muslims and Islam are not limited to the post-9/11 era, and surface not only in the media and non-fiction but also in literature, fine art, film, and children's cartoons. This article focuses on depictions following 9/11, specifically on the ways in which the dominant image of the Muslim as 'enemy' can be subverted in film through an analysis of *Ae Fond Kiss* (dir. Ken Loach, 2004). It focuses on questions of identity, and the emergence of what social anthropologists such as Vertovec (1997) label 'new ethnicities' (the development of hybrid or syncretic cultural identities). The acknowledgement of new ethnicities can serve to counter facile negative stereotyping and the entrenched bias that sometimes permeate mainstream British media and culture.

En Occident, les stéréotypes négatifs des musulmans et de l'Islam ne se limitent pas à l'ère post-11 septembre, et se font remarquer non seulement dans les médias et les documentaires, mais aussi dans la littérature, les beaux-arts, les films et les dessins animés pour enfants. Cet article s'intéresse aux représentations après le 11 septembre, en particulier sur les façons dont l'image dominante du musulman comme « ennemi » peut être renversée au cinéma à travers une analyse d'*Ae Fond Kiss* (dir. Ken Loach, 2004). Nous nous attardons sur les questions d'identité et l'émergence de ce que les anthropologues sociaux comme Vertovec (1997) appellent les « nouvelles ethnicités » (le développement d'identités culturelles hybrides ou syncrétiques). La reconnaissance de nouvelles ethnicités peut servir à contrer les stéréotypes négatifs simplistes et les préjugés enracinés qui imprègnent parfois les médias et la culture britanniques populaires.

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AUTHOR

KRISTINE CHICK

Kristine Chick is a teacher and researcher in the *Département des Langues et Civilisations* at Université Toulouse 1 Capitole. Having completed her doctorate in Cinema and Cultural Studies at the University of Glasgow, she has specialized in gender studies, postcolonialism and languages in Scottish film. Publications include articles in *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* and *Miranda*. Contact: Kristine.Chick[at]gmail.com