

representation, history and ‘black britain’: questions of context

This is an appropriate moment in which to look back at the history of Black representation on British television. 1998 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of *SS Empire Windrush* (22 June 1948) which symbolized the inauguration of postwar, permanent, mass migration and the ‘coming to the homeland’ (or in the case of those who had served Britain during the Second World War, the ‘return to the homeland’) for Black colonial people to Britain (see Figure 1). 1997 had also seen the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of India and Pakistan. One year after the Windrush anniversary, the British nation was once again confronted with the memory of a Black presence: that of Stephen Lawrence, the victim of an ugly and brutal form of British racism. These two distinct iconic moments in British history – the arrival of Windrush and the official inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence – signalled that within and despite the context of a now broad Black presence in the United Kingdom, stubborn forms of racism persist, and that there are still many battles to be won around the contested terrains of ‘race’, racisms and Britishness both on Britain’s streets and within the fabric of its institutions. There was in fact a brief mood of hopefulness, a sigh of collective relief and probably guilt, for a short time following Macpherson’s report and the Windrush celebrations; a sense that by both recognizing our failures and celebrating our achievements, we were somehow better equipped for the future. But then came the Euroscepticism, the intensified rhetoric against asylum seekers, renewed claims about ‘Black crime’, a rise in racial violence, critiques of the Left’s apparent lack of patriotism; deepening social exclusion, resulting, for example, in the 2001 Oldham, Burnley and Bradford race riots, this time alongside a cluster of apologetic cultural diversity strategies, ‘One Nation’ proclamations and official campaigns and legislation to tackle institutional racism in the public sector. And so, once again, things appear to have settled back into these paradoxical, yet collaborative strategies of ‘managing race’ in the public sphere.

This moment also calls for reflection because it is one in which ‘the age of traditional television’ is reaching an important juncture, due to the emergence of new and revolutionary information and communication technologies. What is being hailed in Britain as the ‘third broadcasting



Figure 1

The SS Empire Windrush

Source: Copyright Camera Press

revolution' (with the combined impact of broadband and wireless technology) is having important effects on the traditional framework of established legislation based around 'public service broadcasting', and on the ways in which we are each located in the new communication world.

Television's time-honoured modes of policy and address are currently under intense review and subject to further change, as interactivity, accessibility, diversity and convergence (the coming together of telecommunication, broadcast, software, computing and internet services) are becoming *the* characteristics of the postmodern media age. Through the 1990s, three distinct but related forces – deregulation, principally inaugurated by the 1990 Broadcasting Act; technological developments (cable, satellite, digital compression, internet broadcasting, pay-per-view, etc.); and increased market competition amongst the terrestrial broadcasters and between alternative delivery systems, both locally and globally – began to have a profound impact on the structural imperatives of British television, and on the simultaneously expanded options and deeper limitations for various television audiences. In the light of these shifts, television itself – its programmes, its role, its value, its past, its future, its economics, its duopoly stronghold, its relation to nationhood, citizenship and the public – is being re-evaluated and strategically modified. Television-specific policy is losing ground as the digital revolution, convergence and multimedia homogenize the distinct regulatory practices between various electronic media. The 2000 Communications White Paper, the Government's response to the new communications environment, inadvertently raises further questions about whether and how British broadcasters can provide an all-encompassing regulatory framework in the convergent media world whilst ensuring that the multiple interests of British society are vigorously upheld in the future (that is, how will they orchestrate a programming structure that is diverse, profitable, governable, locally relevant, public service-providing, and which also has commercial mass appeal)?

The BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), the cornerstone of Britain's television history (a monopoly until the 1954 Television Act and the arrival of the more commercial Independent Television in 1955), was traditionally founded on Reithian ideals which claimed to hold in place core ideals – such as access, independence of thought, diversity of expression and programming, universality and accountability – in order to cement the corporation's status as a 'public service institution' and to justify the licence-fee.¹ This discussion takes as its starting-point, the straightforward acceptance that the duopoly of public and private which has since dominated British broadcasting, has more or less worked in line with the 'public service' ideal by aspiring to make 'popular programmes good' and 'good programmes popular' (Broadcasting Research Unit, 1985: 3). But it is this 'more or less' that we are concerned with here, specifically in relation to television's alleged impartiality, cultural sensitivity and moral responsibility when it touches on racial lines. The prevailing discourse of post-Reithian public service today pertains most obviously to the BBC (which has always been funded through the sale of television licences) and, to an extent, Channel 4

(funded by advertising and sponsorship but obliged to be a public service, not-for-profit broadcaster and to support original UK production) and then to ITV and Channel 5 (both funded through advertising and sponsorship). Despite the escalating commercial impulses across the channels, they are generalist, mixed-genre broadcasters with an all-purpose mission to inform, educate and entertain all the people at least some of the time; they share a liberal ideology of universalism, professionalism and moderation which prevents outright commercialism and cross-media ownership. But apart from Channel 4's targeted minority mandate (see Chapter 3), the other channels merely have clauses in their policy documents indicating a 'common-sense', 'responsible freedom' and 'taste and decency' approach to the treatment of race on screen. Although all broadcasters are covered by certain ethical codes of conduct – the commercial sector by the relevant licensing authorities and through the Independent Television Commission (ITC) and the BBC in a more 'in-house' way and through its own Board of Governors – these arguably allow them to operate within similarly subjective parameters. Media policy, regulation and management culture within the institutional context of British television does, however, play an integral part in the way expressions of Blackness are negotiated, produced and reproduced, and in how environments which either nourish or constrain certain kinds of production are formed. For example, British television's founding ethos of 'public service' is important for how it generates and circulates meanings about nationhood, community and society and for the ways in which it marks, excludes and addresses aspects of identity and difference within the construction of the imagined community of the nation. If it weren't such a paradox, I would want to argue, using a more abstract point of view, that 'public service' is based on the generous principle that what 'we' like watching is not always all that 'we' (should) expect television to offer, but its definition of that 'we' is also part of a restrictive and unifying project. As I will go on to argue, this touches at the very heart of how television struggles over cultural difference (or *all* that is not 'we'). In fact, this struggle over formal equality and racialized difference is a key feature of British race relations and has been aptly borne out in the discourses of liberal pluralism and social Whiteness which have characterized the history of Black representations on British television.

Despite television's broad, equality-driven ideals and corporate manifestos, patterns of racism have persisted on and off screen, and the beginning of the third millennium saw nearly all the major terrestrial British broadcasters and arts organizations pledge an improvement in their approaches to cultural diversity; a response triggered both by the loss of disillusioned Black 'customers' to alternative viewing systems, and by the broader impact of the post-Macpherson climate. The need to be seen to register the report's key findings has now become an important part of the competition amongst

terrestrial broadcasters and public arts organizations. The year 2000 alone saw the launch of the British Film Institute's three-year Cultural Diversity strategy ('Towards Visibility'), the BBC's public efforts to boost diversity through its 'Diversity Tsars' and diversity database, Channel 4's Black history crusade (with *Untold 2000* and the on-line Black and Asian History Map), the newly-established Film Council's Black-targeted development funds and the introduction in October of a Cultural Diversity Network. This last initiative, a cross-industry action-plan established 'to change the face of television' (hence its 'Changing the Face of Television' Manifesto 2000), is supported by all the leading media houses including the BBC, Channel 4, Channel 5, BskyB (satellite) and ITV-linked companies such as GMTV, Carlton and ITN. They plan to set targets for ethnic minority employment (senior level included), establish an on-line talent diversity database, modernize cast and portrayal, share non-commercially sensitive research on cultural diversity and allow the government's Department of Culture, Media and Sport to monitor progress. Such moves towards 'good race relations practice' deserve support, even if many of them are driven by commercial imperatives. Of course, the way in which these visions of diversity are delivered and valued will ultimately determine their efficacy and meaningfulness.²

It is this 'pull' between the past (Britain's post-imperial history and the institutional history of British television in relation to a Black presence), and the future (of Black Britain at the turn of the century and of British television in the context of wider technological change), which forms the basis of this book. I want to point to the necessary connections between historical tradition, the unstable present and what will inevitably be a dramatic future in terms of how Black people are located and locate themselves in cultural (and specifically television) representation. These incarnations of Blackness in the cultural field – and, for that matter, new modalities of racism – are inextricably connected to issues of memory, history and race and disrupt notions of a distinct 'now' and 'then'. I want to treat 'history' here as dialogue, a never-ending story, a fluid interaction between facts and opinion, and between primary and secondary sources. Besides, new attitudes towards 'race' – while they emerge in the present – are often tied to older conceptions of 'race' and ideologies of racism from the past. It is important for us to look back, not least because one of the very facets of racist ideology is dependent on actively forgetting. It assumes that 'race' or racism is a new problem which only arrived here when 'the Blacks' did; that Britain was inherently homogeneous and conflict-free before 'the Blacks' came; that Britain's colonial and imperial past has nothing to do with newer forms of racism; and that 'race' and 'racism' operate on the margins of British society and can be made extricable from the internal dynamics of British social and political life (see Hall, 1978). Since images don't simply operate in a social or

political vacuum, the context in which they are seen and the timing of their production is just as important as the types of images which are produced. I will use this preparatory chapter to 'set the scene' as it were and to provide some important context to the rest of the book, both in terms of the sociopolitical background and of the related representational questions that define the field of (Black) British Cultural Studies, because this helps us to historicize the discursive roots of *Representing Black Britain*, and to provide a historical genealogy of critical discourse on issues of race and representation.

mapping black britain: the sociopolitical context

Although we can trace the presence of Black people in Britain back to the sixteenth century (Fryer, 1984), the mass migration of those from Africa, the Caribbean and the South-Asian sub-continent (India, Bangladesh and Pakistan) to Europe and North America in the immediate post Second World War years, was a key historical period in which 'the West' interfaced with Black people. Many were 'invited' to Britain in order to provide semi- and unskilled work because of the postwar labour shortage and, under the terms of the 1948 Nationality Act, were entitled to UK citizenship since they were members of Britain's colonies or former colonies. But not all immigrants had come to the UK to face hard labour; many were curious, had come to study, wanted the adventure or aspired towards the creation of new opportunities for themselves and their families. The 1950s saw further requests by the Conservative Government for those from the Caribbean to come to Britain to relieve its acute labour shortage in the public services (transport, health), and this resulted in a second wave of immigration from the West Indies. But Black people's largely poor employment and social status (low-paid work, multiple-occupancy in inner-city slum houses, competing for jobs with the Irish and the Poles, etc.), together with the colonial legacy and biologically and culturally essentialist racist notions of what it meant to be African, Caribbean or Asian, encouraged a specific form of hostility (or, at the very least, a confused response) towards New Commonwealth Black colonial immigrants, compared to White 'newcomers'. Black people were more likely to be the subjects of curiosity, having largely only been seen in imaginary or pictorial form. The legacy of imperialism and subjugation faced by colonial migrants, together with the fact that in Britain, 'much more than in countries more accustomed to immigration, an expectation of social conformity and a rejection of claims of distinct ethnic identity' (Donald and Rattansi, 1992: 2) existed, prompted the divide between who/what was seen as central, normal and universal versus what was perceived as marginal, alien and specific. Britain was also experiencing a turbulent period in home affairs, with

immigration and decolonization as key issues in a postwar, welfare state society. The Suez Crisis in April 1956 was particularly significant for un-hinging Britain's world standing. In that year, Christopher Mayhew, the producer of a BBC series entitled *We The British*, summed up the general national mood when he complained that, 'everyone thinks today that Britain can be pushed around' (*Radio Times*, 20.4.56: 5). An awareness of 'race' in new forms of consciousness occurred alongside Britain's postcolonial crisis, and, in time, many saw the modality of 'race' as symptomatic of that decline (Gilroy, 1993b: 22).

Early indications of racial tension were most obviously witnessed in the Liverpool-based anti-Black riots of 1948, which were specifically targeted at Black seamen (it is estimated that there were about 8,000 Black people living in Liverpool in 1948, 30 per cent of whom were seafarers). But there was also a more general 'colour bar' (in housing, hotels and restaurants, in 'no go' areas, specifically targeted at Black students and seamen) epitomized in the slogan 'No Dogs, No Blacks, No Irish'. By the mid-1950s, more blatant and violent forms of racial hostility directed at a Black-British presence emerged. These included: the White riots in Camden (London, 1954), Nottingham and North Kensington (or what was generally referred to as 'Notting Hill') (London, 1958) in which racists attacked immigrant groups; the emergence of organized racism in the form of fascist groups such as the White Defence League, the British National Party, and the League of Empire Loyalists (led by Colin Jordan, Andrew Fountaine and A.K. Chesterton respectively); the general abuse of Black workers, particularly by Teddy Boys (spurred on by the White Defence League) which fed into new moral panics around teen hooligans and troubled youth (rather than about British racism); and the first acknowledged racially-motivated murder (that of Kelso Cochrane, a Black carpenter in Notting Hill (May 1959)). This was also a time characterized by developments within the Black community such as the 'Keep Britain Tolerant' group, the growing activism of Black people in student bodies, trade unions, political parties and churches, the energies put into the organization of the first 'Caribbean Carnival' in Notting Hill (January 1959), and the work of the Association for the Advancement of Coloured People.

As Ambalavaner Sivanandan, who went on to head the Institute of Race Relations, explains in his excellent class analysis of the Black presence in Britain, *A Different Hunger*, 'the economic profit from immigration had gone to capital, the social cost had gone to labour, but the resulting conflict between the two had been mediated by a common 'ideology' of racism' (Sivanandan, 1982: 105). Asians and African-Caribbeans did not all simultaneously recognize that this 'ideology of racism' (based around fears of cultural difference, miscegenation, sharing resources, personal habits) was a process that directly implicated them; many Asians for example, saw

themselves as quite separate from the events in Notting Hill. A united (African-Caribbean and Asian) conception of 'Blackness' was yet to develop in any consistent way, and many of the various religious, cultural, class and ethnic migrant communities involved here, had not interfaced with each other until they had stepped foot on British soil. Besides, popular attitudes towards 'Asians' and 'African-Caribbeans' were generally based on and circulated around racially specific 'moral panics'. Paul Gilroy summarizes the distinction between these racist ideologies as, '[West Indians] may not be as different or as foreign as Asians who are, by comparison, handicapped by the strength and resilience of their culture. . . . Where West Indian culture is weak, Asian communities suffer from a surfeit of culture which is too strong' (Gilroy, 1983: 131). Of course, there were important differences: for example, many Asians were traditionally rural people and customarily (extended) family-oriented; and many West Indians came from a working-class background and were experienced craftsmen (Sivanandan 1982: 4–5). What they both shared, was a strong sense of determination to make their lives in Britain as comfortable and successful as quickly as possible, to work hard and invest in education.

Despite the obvious signs of racist hostility, the 1950s continued to see an apparently *laissez-faire* approach towards British racism, both from the British government and the police (Rose, 1969; Patterson, 1969), although there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the Conservative Government between 1951 and 1955 were deliberately inscribing racially discriminatory practice within internal policy and administration (Carter et al. in Owusu, 2000: 21–36). The reality of widespread racist attacks and racialized exclusion was generally glossed over in favour of a seemingly more liberal³ and complacent rationale which assumed that the best was being done in a 'difficult situation', and that these early signs of racism were just a temporary phase. A more publicly proactive, if misguided, approach to harnessing 'good race relations' began to emerge by the late-1950s and early-1960s during Britain's looming economic crisis. The spate of governmental anti-immigration legislation between 1958 and 1968, marked a critical shift towards a sanctioned and 'official racism', so that, as Peter Fryer put it, 'black settlers in Britain watched the racist tail wag the parliamentary dog' (Fryer, 1984: 381). The obsession with numbers and anti (Black) immigration legislation also contradicted the myth of equality (as inscribed in the 1965 Race Relations Bill⁴) and worked around the exclusionary logic that too many Black settlers were a problem and, more than that, posed a threat to 'good race relations'. In 1964, the Conservative politician, Peter Griffiths, successfully fought an openly racist campaign for his Smethwick (Birmingham) seat in the General Election, marking the first time that racism was used as an official reason for electoral support by a main political party.⁵ It was also by the mid-1960s that the wives and children of those from the

West Indies and India began to arrive, so that there was a more obvious sense that Black people were beginning to *settle* in Britain. (The wives of those men who had emigrated from Pakistan and Bangladesh in the 1950s mostly began to join their husbands in the late-1960s and 1970s respectively.)

There were various efforts to tackle institutional discrimination (in relation to access, immigration rights, housing, employment and welfare services). The first was by those individual luminaries who had spearheaded an anti-racist movement since the 1930s. Most notable amongst these, were pan-African figures such as Cyril Lionel Robert James,⁶ George Padmore, Ras Makonnen, Jomo Kenyatta, Wallace-Johnson and W.E.B. Du Bois, and Asian radicals such as Udham Singh,⁷ Shapurji Saklatvala and V.K. Krishna Menon (see Fryer, 1984). The second was through Black-led organizations such as the International African Service Bureau, the West Indian Standing Conference, the Pakistani Workers' Association (1961), the Conference of Afro-Asian-Caribbean Organizations (CAACO) and the Committee Against Racial Discrimination (CARD) (which was set up in 1965 as a British civil rights coalition following Martin Luther King's visit, but had broken up by 1967) (see Solomos, 1989: 140–59). Finally, radical activity was also emerging on an individual 'grass roots' level, mainly in the form of strikes, by those (often Asian) who had directly faced racism in the workplace usually in terms of inferior pay and conditions (Rockware Glass, Southall (1965), Courtauld's Red Scar Mill, Preston (1965), Woolf Rubber Company (1965), Coneycgre Foundry, Tipton (1967)) but also in terms of 'cultural rights' (for Sikhs to wear turbans in the workplace, for time off for religious festivals, etc.) (see Sivanandan, 1982). By the late-1960s, a more strident and coherent political ideology and 'counter-culture' had begun to develop amongst those who were now fighting along class and humanity lines.⁸ This was partially influenced by the awareness of the durability and extent of British racist processes, but also emerged within the broader context of the globalization of protest (largely anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist); for example, those in relation to the Vietnam War, American imperialism, US Black Power politics, and Martin Luther King's assassination in 1968.

As the new politics of Black resistance strengthened, so did the popularity of 'Powellism', a new discourse of official and popular nationalism which predicted crisis if Black people were not systematically excluded or recognized as one of the 'Enemies Within' (see pp. 44–7). In February 1967, the National Front was formed (out of the League of Empire Loyalists, the British National Party and sections of the Racial Preservation Society) and proceeded to whip up considerable anti-Black sentiment during the 1970s. By the early 1970s, anti-Black sentiment had become less specific and sporadic and more extensively inscribed and naturalized as a structured and official topic of political debate, with racial discrimination, as Sivanandan

puts it, taken ‘out of the market-place’ (Sivanandan 1982: 18) and institutionalized. Black people were now being popularly associated with notions of crisis, and interpreted through an accompanying language of racism, most obviously in relation to immigration, law and order, and specifically in the moral panics around ‘Black crime’ (‘mugging’, see Hall et al., 1978). Throughout the 1970s, the early assumption that racism was a relatively harmless, natural and temporary response to the difference of the Black and Asian ‘Other’ and that, in time (once the project of ‘integration’ was under way), the ‘melting pot’ *would* melt, was now being condemned out of its own liberal mouth. Young Black Britons – with their unique experience and hybrid (their parents’ and their own, Black and British) cultural insight – were now beginning to lead the struggle against British racism, partly as a response to vehement extreme Right campaigns. Black women also played an important role. For example, Black and Asian women were active on the Grunwick picket line in 1977, in disputes around Child Benefit provisions in the late-1970s, and in response to the ESN (Educationally Sub-Normal) schools of the 1960s, and subsequent education ‘banding’ and ‘special adjustment units’ which led to the creation of the Black Parents Movement.

By the late-1970s, there were various anti-racist interventions to harness ‘good race relations’, including race-specific public policies, training initiatives and institutional directives (see Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992: 157–98). Meanwhile, the so-called ‘Race Relations Industry’ gradually began to work with the US-inspired ideological principle of ‘multiculturalism’; an admission that our plural identities make us all different, and that we should aspire towards celebrating this cultural and ethnic diversity. Some of these multicultural approaches came under criticism, particularly by anti-racists, for providing little more than a sugary façade (a ‘saris, samosas and steel-bands syndrome’, Donald and Rattansi, 1992: 2) to a very discriminatory reality. It was argued that multiculturalism served to re-emphasize the purity and homogeneity of ‘White culture’ when not interfaced with exotic ‘multicultures’, and that many of those who had been part of the earlier Black radical struggles to tackle active racism had now been co-opted to ‘manage racism’ in inconsequential ways under the official banner of ‘multiculturalism’. New public spheres and ‘ideological spaces’, such as the media were identified as playing a crucial role in Black struggle against the state. ‘Getting access’ to the media was now recognized as a key bridge to cross in order to achieve genuine civic equity and change prevailing attitudes towards ‘race’. Besides, African-Caribbean and Asian communities both had a deep-rooted and organic tradition in the arts that many of them now felt was excluded from dominant expressions of British culture.

In January 1978, the soon-to-be-elected Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, echoed the sentiments of Enoch Powell’s infamous 1968 ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech, when she spoke on British television of the threat of being

'swamped by people with a different culture' (*World in Action*, ITV, 1978; cited in *The Daily Mail*, 31.1.78). The jingoistic bandwagon which Thatcher invited the 'authentic' members of the British population to jump onto and her appointment as leader of the Conservative government in 1979, shifted the party increasingly to the Right, and gave rise to a new voice of popular authoritarianism (mirrored in 1980s America with Reaganism). With its broad class appeal that tapped into persuasive, long-standing ideologies of deterioration, Thatcherism depended highly on producing and mobilizing discourses of difference in order to remodel Britain's domestic and social policy, so that calls for racial purity became a central device in reshaping British social, political and cultural life. 1979 also witnessed the Southall riot, which followed the National Front's direct provocation of Black people by conducting their racist campaign in the densely populated Asian suburb. On 23 April 1979, 2,756 police (and Special Patrol Groups) turned up to apparently ensure that trouble did not incur from the National Front's public anti-Black campaign (5,000 people had turned up the previous day to protest against the fact that the NF had been granted a public space (Ealing Town Hall) to state their case) (Institute of Race Relations, 1981). In fact, many of the anti-Nazi demonstrators were dealt with violently by the police, and Blair Peach, a teacher, was killed. In the same year, the research and education-orientated Institute of Race Relations (through which Sivanandan launched the seminal journal *Race and Class*) submitted *Police against Black People*, a report to the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure that documented police harassment of Black people. It concluded that the police, rather than reinforcing morality, 're-create it – through stereotyping the black section of society as muggers and criminals and illegal immigrants' (IRR, 1979).

The 1980s can, for a number of reasons, be identified as a 'critical decade' in this history (Bailey and Hall, 1992: 7), not just because of the cultural renaissance that was to take place, but also because it was the moment when the public debate about race relations opened up, and unprecedented degrees of pressure began to be placed on state institutions to alleviate racial discrimination and 'disadvantage'. A series of events during 1981 foregrounded the discontent. These included: the New Cross (Deptford, London) fire attack in January in which 13 Black teenagers died – and the subsequent indifference with which the case was dealt (both by the police and the media); the Black People's Day of Action (or the 'New Cross March') organized by the Race Today Collective on 2 March (approximately 15,000 of whom were Black); and the intensive programmes for policing introduced in Lambeth in early April (see Mercer, 1994: 6–9, and Fryer, 1984: 398). This last 'initiative', 'Operation Swamp 1981' (as part of the London-wide exercise, 'Operation Star'), further encouraged 'stop and search' procedures which had materialized as a legitimized form of discrim-

inatory policing with inordinate numbers of Black people being stopped for no good reason. These can be identified as the key episodes leading up to the uprisings, which were to follow later that year.⁹ Those (Black and White people) involved in the civil uprisings in Britain's urban centres during 1980 (Bristol's St Paul's) and 1981 (Brixton, Southall, Toxteth and most major cities) (see Fryer, 1984), as well as responding to the unusually high proportion of Black arrests, were also more generally frustrated with: the rise of neoconservative hegemony in the form of Thatcherism; with the limitations of a liberal multicultural consensus and its notions of textbook integration; and with various anti-racist strategies which, in real terms, appeared to be doing very little to eradicate extensive racial inequality produced by the state and its institutional agencies. The government's official response to the 1980s riots manifested itself in Lord Scarman's 1983 Report. Although some felt that the Scarman report reasserted the pathologies of racial disadvantage amongst Britain's Black communities, it did break with the established compliance towards law and order procedures by prescribing – although not all recommendations were acted upon – race-awareness training for police, community liaison communities and joint efforts to reduce the social and economic dimensions of racial disadvantage. This early official identification of 'institutional racism' was to serve as a precursor to many of the 'remedies' prescribed in subsequent anti-racist policies (such as special funds to be injected into regeneration programmes in rundown areas). But as the death of Colin Roach in Stoke Newington police station in 1983 was to highlight, racist processes were ongoing. 1985 saw further Black-led riots in Broadwater Farm (London) after the death of a black woman, Cynthia Jarrett, following a police-raid in her home.

These moments revealed an important shift in the way 'race relations' in Britain was now being interpreted, framed and contested. As Kobena Mercer put it, 'What was a "riot" in one discourse, was a "rebellion" in another' (Mercer 1994: 7), highlighting both an emerging 'dissensus' (Mercer, 1994: 54) from a singular language of British 'race relations' and a unifying moment between different non-White ethnic communities. Many Black people now began to identify 'inferential' as well as 'overt' racism (see Hall, 1981) and outline how discriminatory practice was not something that only occurred in state institutions (police, government, law, education), but also within welfare services (health, social-work, adoption) and the arts and media. Local government's emphasis on cultural diversity and central government's increasing investment in 'community' related programmes, and initiatives such as the Arts Council's Ethnic Minorities Action Plan, emerged out of this post-1980s riots context. The role of the Greater London Council (GLC) under the Labour Left administration between 1981 and 1986, was hugely significant not only in terms of moving the political debate from 'multiculturalism' to 'anti-racism', but also in boosting Black cultural

activities through training, development, education, funding and 'popular planning' strategies. As well as specific research projects on media, policy, race and access, the GLC, with its Ethnic Minority Arts Committee, also provided an important source of funding for the Black arts sector. To this degree, many of those who were to push 'race' onto the agendas of British television channels at this time, largely came from *outside* the broadcasting institutions themselves. The shift towards strategies of 'anti-racism' (positive action, ethnic monitoring, and contract compliance) was generally considered as a tougher and more direct intervention than the ideological struggle for 'multiculturalism'. An increasing number of Black people began to move into public administration, trade unions, business and local government, and many of them were employed as 'race advisers'. In the 1987 General Election, four Black (Labour Party) Members of Parliament (Keith Vaz, Diane Abbott, Bernie Grant and Paul Boateng) were, for the first time, elected to the House of Commons. This was more than doubled to nine (all Labour) in the 1997 election, but Black people still remain massively under-represented in Parliament.

The politically stifling atmosphere prior to the 1980s had acted as a catalyst, not only in terms of the 'riots', but also in activating creativity and a strong desire to express and find a cohesive public voice, and so the imposed labels of 'Negroes', 'Immigrant' and 'Coloured', were transformed into a new Afro-Asian public and political 'working' collectivity called 'Black' (echoing the US Black Power movement of the 1960s). This 'political Blackness', an umbrella organizational category came into usage not only to trample on a history of negation and marginalization, but also to find a unified voice in order to fight collectively for political rights and better representation. It was the shared experiences of both colonialism, racism and, for many, a post-migration history that prompted 'Blackness', in Mercer's words, to be 'de-biologized' (Mercer, 1992: 430) and helped to develop new and strong forms of identification between different ethnic minorities. The rearticulation of Black-British identity, 'showed that identities are not found but *made*; that they are not just there, waiting to be discovered in a vocabulary of Nature, but that they have to be culturally and politically *constructed* through political antagonism and cultural struggle' (Mercer, 1992: 427). For some, however, 'Black' was also an imposed identity which was not culturally specific enough (this was a complaint mostly registered by Asians, many of whom did not identify with the term 'Black') and more than that, only seemed necessary because of the ways in which 'Whiteness' functioned in British society. This was true in so far as African-Caribbeans and Asians essentially became 'Black' in Britain (or as filmmaker Ian Rashid said in relation to the term 'South Asian', 'We do require it – if for no other reason than as an antidote for "Paki" ' (Ghani and Rashid, 1994)). Besides, not all Black and Asian people were consciously involved in anti-racist struggle, so the

self-identification with ‘Blackness’ (or not) did not mean that all Black people were dissenting, either politically or economically, from the same position. Towards the end of the decade, many also began to use the term ‘Black and Asian’, signalling a general break-up of the term ‘Black’ into more specific and ‘pure’ categorical ethnicities, and the increasing difficulty of speaking, thinking and campaigning from a unified Black perspective. The end of the Black parliamentary Caucus, the more obvious economic divide between Asians and African-Caribbeans, and the cultural variations in terms of Black and Asian patterns of family life, popular culture and lifestyles all signalled this fragmentation.

‘Official’ liberalism in the form of top-down, institutionalized anti-racist strategies had brought its own sets of problems such as an extreme (and often misfired) orthodoxy, tokenism, ethnic absolutism, lip-service and perfunctory corporate manifestos. It had also triggered a popular backlash, a legacy that continues today in the form of anti ‘political correctness’ (used for example to refute equality-based gestures such as the CRE’s pre 2001 General Election pledge for parliamentary ministers to refuse to ‘play the race card’ in the election campaign, as well as the recommendations outlined in the 2000 Runnymede Trust Report and 1999 Macpherson Inquiry). During the 1980s, popular mythologies around excessive ‘political correctness’ (for example, banning the nursery-rhyme ‘Baa Baa Black Sheep’, words such as ‘blackboard’, milk in coffee, and golliwogs), settled in such a way as to undermine the serious work which was being done around issues of equality – making way for ‘anti-anti-racism’, or the ‘PC backlash’ (Dunant, 1994). The new ‘anti-racist, anti-sexist’ climate of cultural sensitivity which had begun to make itself known during the 1980s, was now being lamented (albeit mockingly) for ‘hijacking’ a more honest and forgiving era and for ‘driving racism underground’. Liberal thought, in its ‘PC’ incarnation, whilst not without its problems, was systematically trivialized, undermined and blamed for repositioning ‘the majority’ as victim, while itself having largely been invented by those of the Right. Now it was those who supported anti-racist campaigns rather than those who were opposed or indifferent to them, who were widely being seen as the ones ‘stirring up’ racial tension and ultimately obstructing Britain’s ‘right’ to be Great again. Complaints about ‘quotas’, ‘special treatment’ and ‘the new conformism’ began to be voiced (most notably in the British press) and provided a substitute for cogent critical analysis about the deeper politics of ‘race’ and community.

The political events of the 1980s saw a number of Black people now also beginning to insist and struggle over the definition of ‘British’.¹⁰ By the end of the decade, a number of material changes (such as funding cuts for local authorities and the abolition of the GLC in 1986), and the widespread closing up of ‘minority’ spaces, was a sign of the times, reflecting a more

individualistic, competitive and uncompromising code of cultural practice, a new market-oriented language around public issues. This echoed a broader paradigmatic shift from collective and politically-motivated strategies to ones based more on individualism and culture (often with a religious emphasis). But the gains of the 1980s were also apparent: there were signs of greater integration between Black and White Britons; there were more Black figures in strategic, political positions; one impact of Thatcher's entrepreneurial success culture meant that some Black people were doing exceptionally well, with some ethnic groups (and notably the Chinese and East-African Asians) thriving on the economic front. At the same time, racism persisted and equality of opportunity – although inscribed in various policies – was still not a reality for many Black Britons who remained confined to the margins of the national debate and disadvantaged in respect to education, employment, the judicial system, immigration, housing, etc. Certain ethnic groups in certain areas (Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and African-Caribbean males in particular) were suffering educationally and economically.

The 1990s continued these imbricating threads around the state and status of Black Britain. The new uncertainty, partly demographic in origin, and its accompanying nationalisms, shifted the racist emphasis from racial inferiority to the threat which new hyphenated identities ('Black-British', 'Anglo-Asian', etc.) were seen to pose to a 'pure' and 'legitimate' sense of national cohesion (amongst the older hyphenated identity, 'Anglo-Saxon'). Other recent examples which point to this resurgence in social Whiteness and national anxiety have included: the Right's persistent derision of 'multiculturalism'; the resurgence of new acts of violent racism and neo-nationalism across Europe (Harris, 1990; Ramdin, 1999; Gabriel in Cottle, 2000: 67–82); the xenophobic attitudes which continue to surface, particularly in the context of sport (for example, during Euro '96 and Euro 2000 a spate of far-right marches (2001) designed to provoke British-Asians); a depressingly large and persistent racist contingent dominating certain web forums (www.independent.co.uk/argument); the imprisonment of David Copeland for his murderous minority-targeted nail bomb attacks (2000); and the ongoing reactionary populism and race card opportunism which thrives within an increasingly Right-leaning British political environment, particularly and tellingly in the period leading up to the 2001 General Election (which saw the leading parties simultaneously play up to time-honoured conceptions of nationalism and modern ideas of diversity).

The defensive responses to the threat of the loss of national identity posed by globalization, changes in Europe and the supra-nation state developments, have exhibited assertions of singular national identity that are as absolutist and tenacious as early assimilationist models of integration and

as vehement in registering cultural sameness for the supposed maintenance of social cohesion and unity. The alterations in European nation-states (development of the single market within the European Community, alterations in border controls, a more cohesive sense of 'European law', the continuation of migration into Europe), and the new processes of devolution and globalization, have given rise to a new pan-European state authoritarianism, a renewed possessiveness over national borders and in reclaiming an 'untouched' and exclusive sense of 'Englishness', despite and perhaps because of, the increasingly 'multi-ethnic' and 'multi-religious' actuality of Britain, and the move towards 'becoming European'. This 'ethnic cleansing' and splitting between those who 'belong' and those who do not, as reinscribed in a spate of moral panics around certain political refugees and asylum-seekers to Britain since the late 1990s (and specifically since the 1996 Immigration and Asylum Act and in the Race Relations [Amendment] Act 2000), have characterized new public xenophobic responses to 'the newcomers', spurred on by the alarmist British media (endless stories on Britain as a 'soft touch', 'bogus' claims and 'welfare scroungers', particularly in relation to Czech Roma and Kosovan ones arriving at Dover in 1997 and 2000 as a result of the overflow from the Balkans across central Europe). In August 2000, the United Nations criticized the government for its record of race relations, expressing 'deep concern' over the number of racist attacks and attitude towards asylum-seekers in Britain.

In spite of this resistance towards multicultural Britain, we are continuing to see the notion of any single version of 'Britishness' being re-examined, remade and mythified by the non-English. The act of asserting ethnic/cultural difference over cultural Otherness manifests itself in the formation of new styles and modes of cultural production, which implicitly reject earlier assimilationist projects. These manoeuvres, or what we might call the pull between 'translation' (Bhabha, 1990; Rushdie, 1991) and 'tradition' (Robins, 1991) have signalled themselves as contradictory impulses: there are those which 're-identify' with places and 'cultures of origin'; those which produce symbolic forms of cultural identification; those which have developed 'counter-ethnicities'; those which have revived traditionalism, or cultural and religious orthodoxy, or political separatism, and so on (Hall, 1992: 308). In actuality, Britain is now incontrovertibly 'mixed-race' and 'cross-cultural', a fact accommodated for in the 2001 National Census, which for the first time, introduced a 'Mixed' category as a possible 'ethnic origin'. Whilst there are few signs of a tangible redistribution of resources, a broadening of access or a challenge to the disproportionate number of White male leadership within key institutions, we are also seeing a new type of corporatized commitment to multiculturalism, and an uncharacteristically sensitive response from some unexpected quarters in respect of this. The question of whether Black people can also be British has

now been replaced with the question of how far we are permitted to be so. And, perhaps more significantly, at what points are we denied Britishness?

critical approaches to reading race on television

These major turning points and continuities in Black-British social and political history have had an important bearing on Cultural Studies, the primary discipline through which race and representation has been studied. Research can generally be split into three areas: first, as part of more general debates about identity, ethnicity, culture and representation (Gilroy, 1993a; 1993b; Mercer, 1994; much of Hall's work; hooks, 1992; Dyer, 1993; Owusu, 2000); secondly, work which focuses on representations of race in British film and cinema (Pines and Willemsen, 1989; Mercer, 1988; Malik, 1996; Young, 1996; Wambu and Arnold, 1999); and thirdly, analysis of the British (Twitchin, 1988; Daniels and Gerson, 1989; Pines, 1992) or European television context (Frachon and Vargaftig, 1995). There are other studies that have looked at film and television in Britain (Givanni, 1995; Bourne, 1998), covered both Britain and America (Snead, 1994; Ross, 1996; Cottle, 2000), commented on ethnic minorities and the media in general (Ainley, 1998; Runnymede Trust, 2000; Cottle, 2000) and studies on Blacks in American cinema and/or television (Pines, 1975; Bogle, 1991; Cripps, 1993; Diawara, 1993; Gray, 1995). There have also been a number of industry-commissioned reports on the relationship between ethnic minorities and the media, which have tended to use an empirical, quantitative approach and focus on questions of policy (codes and guidelines), employment (patterns and monitoring), audience (habits, tastes and demands) and the domestic context (ownership, reception trends within a household) (Cumberbatch and Woods for the BBC and ITC, 1996; Halloran et al. for Channel 4, 1996; Sreberny and Ross for the BBC, 1996; Sreberny BSC/ITC, 1999). Within this diverse range of theoretical and methodological approaches, a number of different arguments, views and positions on Black representation have emerged, but two significant absences have prevailed. The first, relates to questions of sexuality and gender, which remain perfunctory, underdeveloped and de-emphasized (see Young, 1996). Secondly, many of these studies, while they often criticize the strategies of absence and exclusion in delineations of Black people on screen, are themselves vague in their use of the supposedly all-encompassing term 'Black', and fail to consider in any substantial way, how South Asian people have been represented. There is another problem which has arisen from the all-encompassing term 'ethnic minority media' which often fails to contextualize the distinct practices *between* different mediums, particularly television and film (Ross, 1996; Bourne, 1998). Issues which relate to television's com-

missioning structures, scheduling, exhibition, viewing practices, recruitment procedures and production frameworks, etc., need to be situated within the distinct institutional context of (public service) broadcasting. (Would we ‘throw in’ television when studying French or for that matter (non-Black) British cinema?)

representation and meaning

How we are seen determines in part how we are treated;
 how we treat others is based on how we see them;
 such seeing comes from representation.

(Dyer, 1993: 1)

The term ‘representation’ can be used in two main senses. The first relates to representing/speaking for someone/thing, thus playing a symbolic interpretative role by expressing *someone’s* viewpoint from *somewhere*. Here, there is an assumption that someone else can ‘fill the place of’ or substitute that experience for the sole purpose of ‘representing’ it. This type of representation is about acting as the embodiment of someone/thing and about standing for/corresponding to that someone/thing (e.g. claiming to represent or stand for ‘the Black community’). Here, someone/thing is being represented through or by someone/thing. This entails the belief that someone/thing is ‘representable’. The second possible use of the term is to refer to the process by which an image/impression of something or someone is reproduced. Here, ‘representing’ is essentially about portrayal and description through language (oral, visual, still, moving); it is an expressive, communicative process. In both these senses of the term, signs and symbols are used to convey meaning, often to represent or stand for some aspect of an ‘external’ reality. For our concerns, we may agree that far from simply reflecting or presenting ‘reality’, the work of representation does, in fact, (at least partially) construct ‘reality’ and, more than that, serves an important role in how social relations develop and in how ideologies¹¹ are constructed. I refer to ‘ideologies’ here because they can be understood as ‘sets of political ideas and values’ that might belong to the specific interests of a particular group, hence the Marxist notion of a ‘dominant ideology’ which is imposed arguably through consciousness (Marx) or structures (Althusser). The term ‘discourse’, in relation to ‘ideology’, helps us to understand the textual process by which meanings are constructed. Discourse analysis considers the content and context of verbal and non-verbal codes and systems of representation. It emphasizes that there are no pre-given ideologies which are adopted and then simply represented, but that ideologies themselves are

formed through discourse. Michel Foucault's work is particularly useful here for its emphasis on discourse serving not the 'will to truth', but the 'will to power' (Foucault, 1982). Foucault was less interested in 'the great model of language and signs' than in 'that of war and battle'; more concerned with the 'relations of power, not relations of meaning' (Foucault, 1980: 114–15).

The work of linguistics (the scientific study of language) and semiology (the study of signs and meaning) also plays an important part in our study of racialized representation. Just as the discursive approach emphasizes the effects and manifestations of representation (its 'politics'), the semiological approach interrogates how language produces meaning (its 'poetics') (Hall, 1997). Lacanian psychoanalytic theory can help us work through one of the ways in which television representation, a principal signifying system, works; this approach suggests that who speaks and who is spoken of are never identical. The positioning of the 'I' subject and the discourses (the mode, form or genre of language) within which they stand (the symbolic) are always therefore 'placed', and serve to structure identity. So when discourse is constructed, it always speaks from somewhere in the cultural and social field. The process of representation and 'televisualization' constructs its own relationship with the enunciator and the enunciated. It could be argued then that traditional 'unaccessed voices' (those perceived to be on the margins of a society) are commonly located as the subjects of articulation (the enunciated) with television itself as the subject in articulation (the enunciator). As such, the dialogic transaction between the enunciator and enunciated can be adjudicated by the medium. Television then, can play an important role in determining the exchange between speaker and addressee and, like other systems of representation, can guide the audience towards a particular reading which generally corresponds to the dominant social, cultural and political values of a specific time or context. Moreover, as Barry Troyna argues in relation to journalism in general, 'to a greater degree than any other profession or institution, it controls the debate about itself' (Troyna, 1981: 8). It is useful to call upon the notion of 'hegemony' here (as developed by Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci), which helps us to understand the struggle within popular culture to make particular ideologies synonymous with the 'common-sense' of the people (or what Albert Einstein called 'the collection of prejudices'). The constant state of cultural flux makes 'culture' not something which you do or do not have, you can or cannot get, you 'own' or are controlled by, but something, like politics, which we are all an active part of – even when we are silent or excluded. As Stuart Hall explains, cultural hegemony functions as an always shifting, never permanently set, form of cultural leadership, and is never totally conquered. This 'tug-of-war', the struggle between competing ideologies and interests, is precisely what allows popular cultures to function and makes television a critical site of this public cultural contestation, because 'it is always about shifting the balance of

power in the relations of culture; it is always about changing the dispositions and the configurations of cultural power, not getting out of it' (Hall in Morley and Chen, 1996: 468).¹²

Meanings (and myths), as well as being constructed through what is being represented and by whom (the sender), are also mediated through the audience or 'reader'. As such, a third 'subject-position' is at work; that of the 'overhearing audience'. 'Significations', as Joost Van Loon puts it, 'can only become myths if they are mediated by and anchored in the historicity of this third party' (Van Loon, 1995). John Fiske explains that, 'a reader is constituted by his socio-cultural experience and thus he is the channel through which message and culture interact. That is meaning' (Fiske, 1982). Following this, we might agree then that meaning is produced both through our conceptual systems and through the things around us (people, objects, events) (Hall, 1997: 15–64). As such, no representation, in itself, is meaningless; all representations mean something – although never just one thing. Since meanings and ideologies are never fixed, they can also be re-worked and re-negotiated. But whilst we are all integral to how meanings and understandings are constructed, each of us is located differently in relation to power and knowledge, and thus holds different degrees and types of power in relation to cultural production.

'Televisualization', in itself, is a process concerned with the mobilization of logos, symbols and signs (which it sometimes formulates itself) and as such, is a movement from *signification* to *representation*. The study of representations of race therefore needs to consider television as part of a 'machinery of representation' (Hall in Curran et al., 1986), which produces and circulates a number of different (and often competing) ideologies. I am concerned with those ideologies that underpin how racial identities are constructed within television representation by arguing that aspects of process and power play an integral part in how meaning, difference, identity and subjectivity are formed to produce a 'racialized regime of representation' (Hall, 1997: 245). But, what exactly do we mean by 'representations of race?' Briggs and Cobley (1998: 281) neatly summarize the 'raw ingredients' needed to develop a discourse around 'race':

- 1 the person's own 'racial' identity (e.g. 'White');
- 2 other 'racial' identities to which that person's 'racial' identity can be opposed in a power relationship (e.g. 'Black' vs. 'White');
- 3 a discourse that asserts the centrality of race as a defining feature of a person's identity (e.g. racism);
- 4 other (non-'racial') identities to which that person's 'racial' identity can be opposed/complemented in a power relationship (e.g. 'race' may be outweighed by 'gender').

analysing race on television There are three valuable critical approaches that I want to draw upon here. The first, is the active-audience thesis, an approach to media audience studies that emerged in the 1970s, and which shifted the emphasis from what the media 'do' with audiences, to what audiences 'do' with media images (Halloran, 1970). This was especially useful for the newly emerging theories around race, ethnicity and the media, because it identified that each reader/viewer was able to actively decode and interpret meaning in different ways, instead of being textually-constituted or 'locked' into any one ascribed meaning. In turn, some also recognized that our social relations (ethnicity, for example) help us to structure understanding (Morley and Brunson, 1978). The second, is Stuart Hall's model of 'encoding/decoding' (Hall, 1973) which gave this new audience studies approach a more 'workable' sociological and cultural perspective, making it possible to relate to the ways in which various media texts and readings can be actively encoded and decoded. While Hall agreed (like effects theorists) that the media do have the power to set agendas and cultural frameworks, he also stressed that viewers themselves are active, and decode messages in different ways. As such, he argued that there can be more than one reading (dominant, negotiated or oppositional) from the same message although television can promote a 'preferred reading'; this generates a dominant reading by those whose social situation or political views are most akin to the preferred reading (see also Hall in Cohen and Young, 1973). In essence, Hall stressed that there is a lack of transparency between the ways in which messages are encoded and decoded and that the media operates according to an open, not closed message system. The third useful 'tool' for our discussion, is the basic psychoanalytic framework, particularly in relation to the complicated relationship between texts and audiences and the 'politics of the look'. Psychoanalysis has traditionally revealed two limitations in relation to our focus area: the first is that its basic tenets of identification and subjectivity have been less readily applied to studies of television, which tend to be understood through more 'grounded' modes of analysis such as effects studies, social readings and textual analysis; and the second is that much psychoanalytic screen theory (such as Laura Mulvey's seminal 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' in 1975), while it has considered issues of gender, has overlooked the question of race and failed to consider racial distinctions *between* spectators). The various works of Frantz Fanon (1952/1986), Homi Bhabha (1983), Sander L. Gilman (1985), Joel Kovel (1988) and Kobena Mercer (1994) have however been critical for using psychoanalysis to acknowledge the racial aspects of identity and looking relations.¹³

The work of three specific media research centres during the 1970s and 1980s was to prove particularly influential in studies of race and television. The first was the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham,¹⁴ which developed the issue of 'agenda-setting' (of how the

media establish and organize a particular set of issues) especially in relation to news and documentary reports on race. *The Empire Strikes Back* (CCCS, 1982), a study of Black-British race relations in which a certain amount of attention was paid to questions of cultural representation, was a landmark text to emerge from the centre. The second was the Leicester Centre for Mass Communications Research. Focusing specifically on the mass media and racial conflict, Hartmann and Husband found that, although direct effects on media audiences were unlikely, news reports kept within a British cultural tradition (e.g. derogatory to foreigners). They argued that these reports worked within an established cultural framework, which in terms of Black people was, 'more conducive to the development of hostility towards them than acceptance' (Hartmann and Husband, 1974: 208). The third centre was the Glasgow University Media Group with their work on news. Through content analysis, they combined elements of the manipulative theory and hegemonic theory to critique the ways in which television news is constructed (various studies were published in 1976, 1980, 1982 and 1985). Although their work focused on specific cases such as the Miners' Strike, the Falklands War and organized labour, their basic argument was that news tends to focus on effects rather than causes, is neither neutral nor natural, and actively manufactures representations, often under the guise of impartiality. This built on the important argument laid by Althusser in relation to the media in general as an ideological state apparatus which reproduces dominant ideologies.

Stereotypes became increasingly central to debates around race and representation in the 1970s and 1980s, and were criticized for being crude simplifications that select, reduce and essentialize the definition of a type of person, style, event or institution with the effect of popularizing and fixing the difference of the original 'type'. Since the 1960s, the sociological term 'stereotype' had been widely used to refer to this representational practice by which a given social experience, person, style, etc. is simplified so as to produce a reductive image/impression. Many of those who were critical of the media's representations of Black people also began to call for 'positive images' in order to balance out the 'negative images' which were often used to depict Black people and their experiences. The emphasis, therefore, was on changing the 'relations of representation' (Hall in Mercer, 1988: 27). Important as they were in identifying the media's widespread dependence on stereotypes, there was in fact, an inherent contradiction in many of these arguments: on the one hand, there was a general acknowledgement that 'representation' and 'reality' were two distinct entities; and on the other, there was a demand that representations of Black people were drawn in more 'accurate' ways. Thus, pronouncements of 'misrepresentation' were readily applied by those who also recognized that film and television do not simply reflect reality, but construct a reality of their own. Moreover, many wanted

to see more 'realistic' depictions of Black people, whilst also resenting the supposition that there was any one 'real' Black experience that could be represented. There was also a general assumption that all stereotypes are negative, and thus by simply eliminating them, representations of race would become more 'balanced'. Of course, 'positive images' can also be stereotypes, and stereotypes can, in fact, be reproduced as forms of resistance (see Neale, 1979–80: 33–7, and Bhabha 1983: 18–36). Leaning too heavily on the 'stereotypes/positive and negative image' rhetoric can be limiting for three main reasons: in the first place, 'typing' has to be recognized as an inevitable and necessary system of representation; in the second, there can be no absolute agreement as to what 'positive' and 'negative' definitively constitute (can the image of a gold-medal winning Black sportsman only be considered as 'positive?'); and in the third, the validity of 'positive' and 'negative' as racial categories of representation themselves need to be questioned since they do little to displace the assumptions on which the original stereotypes are based (see Malik, 1996: 208–9).

It is nonetheless important (since stereotypes are the primary device through which representations of race circulate in media texts), to make some comment about the ways in which stereotypes function as a representational practice. Stereotypes are shorthand; they are ubiquitous because they help us to decode people (see Malik, 1998: 310–11). In fact, they rely on quite convoluted processes, enabling the reader to associate one aspect of a stereotype with many other things; creating a complex web of beliefs from, at first sight, a glib categorization. Hence, a representation of the 'unassimilable Asian immigrant', the 'Black street mugger' or the 'bogus asylum-seeker' tells us more than just that; our stream of consciousness builds on the basic information (issues of language, cultural values, social background etc. automatically follow) to create a quite detailed (though not necessarily accurate) profile of what that person constitutes. We often find it easier to blame/focus on the stereotypes than to focus on why, how, when and by whom they are produced. Stereotypes are social constructs designed to socially construct. They do not simply come into being from nothing and they are not 'used' in the same way by everyone. The way in which we apply stereotypes in cultural production is as revealing as which stereotypes we select to represent, so the question of *who* has the power to wield and circulate stereotypes in cultural production is an important one. For example, in his influential paper 'The Whites of their Eyes' (1981), Stuart Hall identified what he called 'television's basic grammar of race' (1981: 39) which, he argued, consisted of three types: the slave-figure, the native and the entertainer but he used the basis of this imagery to address precisely where those types had derived from, whose interest they served, when they appeared and how they manifested themselves on screen.

By the mid- to late-1980s, a series of debates began to emerge which pointed to the limitations of discussing race and representation within dualist ('right' or 'wrong', 'good' or 'bad', 'positive' or 'negative') terms, and shifted the emphasis to how a multiplicity of views, both of and from Black people, could be transmitted via the media.¹⁵ This moved from challenging stereotypes themselves as 'wrong' or 'negative' (which presumed that there was a 'right' or 'positive' way of categorizing Blackness), to a position which questioned that there are any definite (racial) categories to represent at all. This signalled a 'cultural turn' described by Stuart Hall in his influential paper 'New Ethnicities' (delivered at the 1988 ICA conference), as representing the 'end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject' (Hall in Mercer, 1988: 28); a new liberatory position from which the Black artist could speak and a more diverse expectation of 'Black representation' to articulate difference not just across communities and individuals, but within them as well. Thus, it began to be argued that rather than Black simply being good or positive (as in the 1960s Black Power slogan 'Black is Beautiful'), 'Blackness' was in fact something which could not be defined in any simple or singular way. Of course, this also involved accepting that not all Black films are good, not all 'realistic representations' are positive, not all Black artists are non-sexist, non-racist etc., and that Black audiences/critics/producers themselves had to move away from a black=good/white=bad orthodoxy (see Williamson in Mercer, 1988; Mercer in Rutherford, 1990: 43–71; Hall in Mercer, 1988).

What had become increasingly clear by the end of the decade was that, 'the polarisation between essentialist and anti-essentialist theories of black identity has become unhelpful' (Gilroy, 1993a: x). The concept of 'diaspora', advanced by leading Black-British theorists such as Paul Gilroy, emerged out of this need to produce a development of thought, and became a particularly useful system of representation and unit of analysis through which the plurality and diversity of Black-British communities could be understood. The central assertion here was that Black people are, in fact, part of a diverse people, a diaspora. A diasporian (for example, an African, Caribbean or Asian person in Britain) has multiple ideological (though not necessarily physical) connection-points including 'home', histories and new space, thus resulting in a 'diaspora space', inhabited not just by 'migrants', but also by the 'natives'. Many Black artists had used this space in the 1980s, to bypass the dominant regimes of representing 'race' and to form a new identity politics based around issues of migration, colonization, displacement and marginalization. It was precisely this new emphasis (on syncretism not integration, on fluidity not fixity, on the processes of differentiation as much as the differences themselves) that began to take centre stage in new expressions of cultural and political 'Blackness', not as something passed down from one generation to the next or from one Black person to another, but as an

indeterminate, dynamic and contingent disposition. Importantly, this timely extension of cultural thought and expression stretched beyond local boundaries and communities to transnational networks across the US, Caribbean, Europe, Africa and Asia in the form of 'diaspora politics'. This critical turn was also differentiated by its break from Western thought (British Cultural Studies included) with its traditional, orthodox, Eurocentric and gender bias and its focus on national cultures and traditions, further emphasizing its international, global perspective and proposal to review absolutist notions such as cultural difference and nationalism through the notion of a 'Black Atlantic' (Gilroy in Grossberg et al., 1992: 188).¹⁶ It was argued for example that when reviewing and commenting on new Black-British film practices, a new model of criticism needed to develop which moved away from the grammar of Euro-American mainstream film theory. Kobena Mercer wondered, 'whether a more adequate model of criticism might not be derived from the critical practice performed in the films themselves' (Mercer, 1994: 56) and developed a notion of 'interruption' which would entail a more direct relationship between the critic and the text (see Mercer, 1994: 53–66; Cruz, 1985: 152–6; Henriques in Mercer, 1988: 18–20; Gilroy in Grossberg et al., 1992: 187–98). The new emphasis on the hitherto underdeveloped fact that we are all ethnically positioned, and that we all occupy an ethnic space, also triggered a new set of discussions around 'Whiteness', an important intervention in 'defamiliarizing' and interrogating what is typically deemed 'colourless' by the group that does not want to be ethnically located. This recognized Whiteness as containing races, ethnicities and cultural identities of its own (Gaines, 1988; West, 1990; hooks, 1992; Dyer, 1997). Studies of 'Whiteness', important as they have been for their emphasis on 'race' as a social and political construct and for their concern that 'race' is not only reserved for certain categories of persons, have however, remained exceptions to the rule of 'race studies'.

Gilroy's emphasis on the 'relationship between ethnic sameness and differentiation' (1993a: xi), and on Black cultures, traditions and cultural production 'as a changing rather than an unchanging same' (1993a: 101) insisted that a break be made with both the omnipresent, polarized, totalizing and authoritative essentialism and with the anti-essentialism which absolutely overemphasizes or utterly refutes theories of tradition and cohesiveness amongst Black people. That is to say, to accept that in spite of the connections, there is no 'pure' Black cultural, political or religious form, that all identities are pluralized, and that all representations do, in fact, 'work' differently. These developments in Cultural Studies have mapped a critical lineage to the kinds of debates around race and representation that we are part of today. Gilroy has since progressed his ideas around diaspora and a Black Atlantic in *Between Camps* (Gilroy, 2000), an extension of his previous work with a renewed emphasis on moving beyond 'race thinking'

in understanding our current global scenario. Others are also criticizing the over-dependence in British, and now international Cultural Studies, of the ‘diaspora, ethnicity, hybridity’ mantra and, impact notwithstanding, are questioning its appropriateness for an extension of debates around race and representation (Bakari in Owusu, 2000; Mercer in Gilroy et al., 2000). Mercer is concerned that this ‘postcolonial vocabulary’ has become sanitized, simply replacing earlier notions and debates around integration, adaptation and assimilation (Mercer in Gilroy et al., 2000: 234). In keeping with Gilroy’s global style, many of his theories and indeed those of other leading Black British cultural commentators, are enjoying an extended, internationalized presence vis-à-vis the new technologies, particularly on the World Wide Web, which (despite its sometimes disturbing ungovernability) has become essential for the development, not just of diaspora web communities, but as an indispensable knowledge portal and area of exchange for those concerned with critical debates in the field of race and representation (between academics, critics, visual artists, writers, students and so on).

Reflecting on this introductory chapter as a whole, there are a few closing points worth making. The first, is that Black people, whether in grass-roots political struggle, intellectual discourse or on a more individualized, personal level have fought a very active campaign for equality and recognition in Britain, which has paved the way for our current claims to and relative ease with ‘being British’. The second is that British politics and culture has been characterized by an omnipotent racialization of thought and debate, be it in relation to imperialism, immigration, nationalism, citizenship, community, society, inclusion, pluralism or diversity (or through the official trajectories of Black struggle, Equal Opportunity, Cultural Diversity and now Globalization). No area of British life has gone untouched by these issues, be it education, law, government, media, welfare, and so on. And the third related point is that recent struggles around difference and nationhood, like the Empire-rooted circumstances of Britain’s postwar years, cast a certain doubt on whether Britain’s national story has ever really been fulfilled without ‘the Others’. Or to use Cornel West’s point, “Whiteness” is a politically constructed category parasitic on “Blackness” (West, 1990: 29). We shall now begin to chart some of the complicated ways in which this national story has been narrated on British television.

notes

- 1 Commercial television’s regulatory body was the Independent Broadcasting Authority until 1991, when it was replaced by the Independent Television Commission (responsible for ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5 and satellite and cable

- broadcasters in Britain). The 2000 White Paper proposed a single super-regulator, Ofcom, to oversee the standards of the entire communications sector.
- 2 The fact that they have not been laid out in any detail in the aforementioned 2000 Communications White Paper also means that we have no formal inscription of these directives in a critical piece of long-term legislation.
 - 3 See Raymond Williams' explanation of liberal and liberalism. Williams argues that 'liberalism' is 'a doctrine of certain necessary kinds of freedom, but also, and essentially, a doctrine of possessive individualism' (Williams, 1977: 148–50; 150).
 - 4 All three Race Relations Acts (1965, 1968 and 1976) were initiated under Labour governments. Note the 1965 Race Relations Act established the Race Relations Board to monitor the act; the 1968 Act established the Community Relations Council to liaise with the government; and under the 1976 Race Relations Act, the RRB and CRC merged to form the CRE. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 made it unlawful for public bodies to discriminate on grounds of race or ethnicity.
 - 5 'Official' discrimination was widespread in the form of legal quotas and laws (e.g. Edward Boyle's ruling in 1965 to restrict the proportion of 'immigrant' children in any one school, hence the implementation of school bussing procedures in heavily-represented Black and Asian areas such as Southall).
 - 6 C.L.R. James, a Caribbean who came to England in 1932, before a 'Black Power' movement had even been conceived of in those terms, 'pioneered the idea of an autonomous black movement which would be socialist and not subject to control by the leaderships of white-majority parties and trade unions' (James, 1977: 8).
 - 7 Singh, who founded the Indian Workers' Association in 1938, was hanged in 1940 after he shot Sir Michael O'Dwyer who had headed the 1919 Amritsar Massacre.
 - 8 See Sivanandan's 'Race, Class and the State' (1976) for an important class-based analysis of the Black experience in Britain.
 - 9 The SUS laws (which allowed arrest on suspicion of loitering with intent to commit an offence) had been introduced in the late-1970s, under Section 4 of the 1824 Vagrancy Act. Under SUS, research found that Black people were 14–15 times more likely to be arrested than Whites (Stevens et al., 1979). In 2000, William Hague, the Conservative Party leader, blamed the Macpherson report for introducing 'politically correct policing' and decreasing stop and search, and related this directly to the murder of a Black school child, Damilola Taylor in a run-down estate in Peckham, South London. The 2000 Home Office Report, 'Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System' directly contradicted this, noting that Black people are five times more likely to be stopped and searched than Whites, and four times more likely to be arrested.
 - 10 According to the 1991 Census, 5.5 per cent of the population (just above 3 million) were from 'non-white ethnic communities', most were concentrated in five to six cities, and about half were born in Britain. Prior to the official results of the 2001 Census, the ethnic minority population was projected to be just under 4 million (around 6.7 per cent of the population, Office of National Statistics, *Annual Abstracts*, 2001).
 - 11 See Eagleton, 1991; Strinati, 1995; Hall, 1982; and Williams, 1977.
 - 12 See Bennett (1986) for a critique of structuralism and culturalism and the usefulness of Antonio Gramsci and his concept of 'hegemony' in studies of popular culture. Also see Hall in Morley and Chen, 1996, 411–440.

- 13 See Lola Young (1996) for a detailed account of different psychoanalytic approaches to the reading of race.
- 14 Stuart Hall joined the Centre in 1964 and became its acting director in 1968 and subsequently its director until the late-1970s when he moved to the Open University.
- 15 For example, at the 'Black People in British Television' event which was held at Cinema City, Norwich (13–15.5.88) and the 'Black Film British Cinema Conference' at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in February 1988. Also see Mercer, 1988; Twitchin, 1988.
- 16 Amos and Parmar in CCCS, 1982; Gilroy in Grossberg et al., 1992: 187–98; Gilroy, 1987: 49–57; Mercer, 1994: 20–1; Isaac Julien's critique of Alan Lovell's *Screen* article on the Black workshops, 1991: 64–8; Paul Willemen's reference to *Screen*'s 'theoretical super-ego' (Willemen, 'An Avant-Garde for the 80s', *Framework*, 1982, 24).