that India has been placed in a category of "permanent Other." The regime of exclusion in which individuals act out fantasies such as "A Walk in the Clouds" is an intrinsic part of such an imagined community.

In this chapter, I have argued that regimes of exclusion are necessarily sensory in nature, and include the ability to insulate oneself from environmental disturbances and unpleasant smells, tastes, and sensations, but also from the very visible evidence of social injustice written into the social and physical landscape. Yet the neoliberal agenda that offers the seductive myth of fair reward (usually through consumption) for individual initiative is inseparable from the fact that it exacerbates socioeconomic inequalities wherever implemented. It must be noted as a cautionary measure, however, that such processes are not entirely new in character, given the way that Mintz credits the post–Industrial Revolution world system as having "distinguished itself by its success not only in producing the consumables, but also in specifying and defining the needs" (1996: 78). As such, it may be that the project of "teaching modern India how to eat" is in its essence little more than an elaborate set of justifications for why a small minority of individuals have the privilege of sensory indulgence while a significant number of Indians continue to experience hunger as a looming and ever-present threat.

EIGHT

"Going for an Indian"

SOUTH ASIAN RESTAURANTS AND THE LIMITS OF MULTICULTURALISM IN BRITAIN

Elizabeth Buettner

"GOING FOR AN INDIAN"—or "out for a curry"—has become an increasingly prominent aspect of British social, economic, and cultural life since the 1960s. In assessing the wide appeal of South Asian food and restaurants in April 2001, Britain's late Foreign Secretary Robin Cook proclaimed that "Chicken Tikka Massala"—one of the cuisine's mainstays among British diners—had become "a true British national dish, not only because it is the most popular, but because it is a perfect illustration of the way Britain absorbs and adapts external influences. Chicken Tikka is an Indian dish. The Massala sauce was added to satisfy the desire of British customers." Such cultural traffic did not threaten British national identity, Cook stressed; rather, it epitomized "multiculturalism as a positive force for our economy and society" (Robin Cook's Chicken Tikka Masala Speech, 2001).

Estimates reveal that Britain now has nearly 9,000 restaurants and takeaways run by South Asian immigrants and their descendants that employ more than 70,000 people and have an annual turnover exceeding £2 billion (S. Basu 2003: xi; Grove & Grove 2005: 208; Monroe 2005; L. Collingham 2006). The vast majority of their customers are white. Within the wider context of New Labour's proclamations valuing cultural and ethnic diversity after its electoral victory in 1997, Robin Cook was not alone in celebrating South Asian food, or culinary variety more generally, as a defining feature of Britishness in the early twenty-first century (Back, Keith, Khan, Shukra, and Solomos 2002). Recent scholarly work demonstrates food's central role in depictions of multicultural diversity in Britain as enjoyable and invigorating, but such assertions would have been inconceivable several decades ago (Cook, Crang & Thorpe 1999; A.K. Sen 2006). The cuisine's current cultural prominence within national identity follows a history that saw most

Britons either ignore or vigorously reject food understood as "Indian," just as many objected to the arrival and settlement of peoples from the subcontinent. While Indians were present in Britain before the end of empire, their numbers were small and their visibility and impact uneven when compared with their increase after India and Pakistan's independence in 1947 (Visram 2002; Fisher 2004; A.M. Burton 1998). Substantial immigration from former South Asian colonies, alongside that from the Caribbean and elsewhere, remade Britain in cultural and demographic terms after the Second World War, and the enthusiasm Robin Cook and others would later exhibit has repeatedly proved elusive or decidedly limited (Brown 2006; Brah 1996; Hiro 1993; Layton-Henry 1992). Multiculturalism has never indisputably been deemed "a positive force" for Britain—far more commonly, it has been imagined either as a problem or as a means of tackling a problem. Ethnic minorities and their cultural practices have long been, and to a considerable extent continue to be, widely met by racism, suspicion, and intolerance.

For many white Britons, food may well constitute what Uma Narayan and others have described as the nonthreatening, "acceptable face of multiculturalism." "While curry may have been incorporated... into British cuisine, 'the desire to assimilate and possess what is external to the self' did not extend to actual people of Indian origin, whose arrival in English society resulted in a national dyspepsia," she asserts (U. Narayan 1997: 184, 173; also see Hesse 2000; Heldke 2003; Kalra 2004). In a nation where the consumption of "foreign" food has grown exponentially since the 1950s, South Asian cuisine occupies a unique place (Warde 2000; Bell & Valentine 1997). Long considered the "Jewel in the Crown" of the British Empire, India was firmly ensconced in Britain's cultural consciousness by the late colonial period. In the postcolonial era, preexisting public conceptions evolved in tandem with mass immigration from the subcontinent. Other favored foreign cuisines, particularly Italian and Chinese, that took root in British diets and dining-out habits were not widely associated with immigration to any comparable extent, partly because Italian and Chinese communities were smaller and also deemed less culturally problematic in the postwar period (Roberts 2002; Parker 1995; Hardyment 1995; Colpi 1991). West Indians were the only minority group to compete with South Asians in terms of numbers and the level of public attention and anxiety they attracted. But Afro-Caribbean cuisine (as distinct from Caribbean-produced commodities such as sugar) never featured significantly in white British diets, nor did Caribbean restaurants become popular destinations for other ethnic groups (Cook & Harrison

2003). Whereas music has been the cultural form postwar Britons most commonly associate with the Afro-Caribbean community, South Asian food and peoples typically merged in white understandings—a distinction aptly summarized in critiques of the tokenistic multiculturalism long taught in British schools as revolving around stereotypes of "saris, samosas, and steel bands" (Gilroy 1987; Troyna & Williams 1986; Donald & Rattansi 1992; Between Two Cultures 1968).

The history of South Asian food's rise to popularity reveals an uneasy coexistence and tension between ongoing racism and exclusion and the gradual, and conditional, development of enthusiastic appreciation—what David Parker has termed "celebratory multiculturalism" (Parker 1995: 74). This particular framing illustrates the divergent, and changing, meanings of multiculturalism since it appeared on Britain's cultural and political horizon in the 1970s. While describing Britain as "multicultural" alludes to a demographic reality following immigration, "multiculturalism" refers to a succession of conscious efforts to make sense of, and manage, ethnically diverse communities at the local and national levels. The expectation that immigrants and their children would assimilate within British culture was replaced by a politics focused on integration starting in the mid-1960s. Signaling this shift in 1966, Home Secretary Roy Jenkins defined integration "not as a flattening process of uniformity, but cultural diversity, coupled with equality of opportunity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance" (cited in Favell 1998: 104).

In the 1970s, "benevolent multiculturalism" as policy was most apparent within the British education system, where it was believed that racism could be combated by dispelling widespread white ignorance of ethnic minority cultures through sympathetic teaching (Troyna 1993). As a state response to discrimination—not just at school, but in the spheres of housing, employment, and social services—multiculturalism was, as Stephen May summarizes, "a well-meaning but ultimately vacuous approval of cultural difference" as opposed to an effective strategy to counter racism and inequality (2002: 129). Multiculturalism became subjected to vituperative critique by antiracists in the 1980s, who argued that teaching about other cultures and preaching tolerance failed to confront racial prejudice (Donald & Rattansi 1992). By the early 1990s, it had largely become a tarnished cliché and faded from the public policy agenda, yet enjoyed a new lease on life after New Labour came to power (Abbas 2005; Back et al. 2002). Throughout this period, however, and regardless of whether or not policymakers explicitly endorsed versions of

multiculturalism, Britons of all ethnic backgrounds confronted the realities of living with diversity—an everyday multiculturalism involving differing degrees of social proximity and types of interaction (or lack thereof) with those seen as "other."

Yet how different was the multiculturalism displayed during the late 1990s and early 2000s from earlier manifestations that had been found wanting? Stanley Fish has called the "multiculturalism of ethnic restaurants, weekend festivals, and high profile flirtations with the other" "boutique multiculturalism," where there exists only a "superficial or cosmetic relationship to the objects of its affection"—a far cry from a full acceptance of either the cultures or the peoples in question (Fish 1997; Hall 2000). As this chapter will advance, multiculturalism as culinary celebration or as a white consumer practice constitutes only a limited form of tolerance; indeed, it can all too readily be seized upon as an easy substitute for a deeper accommodation of cultural and ethnic diversity in Britain. As will be argued below, multiculturalism in a broader, more encompassing sense proved extremely fragile in moments of crisis occurring not long after Robin Cook's speech extolling the virtues of chicken tikka masala.

South Asian restaurants and the cuisine they serve illuminate a persistent yet evolving dialectic between the rejection, and embrace, of the "other." At the same time, they call into question just what kind of "other"—or even *how* "other"—the cuisine is. Not only are restaurants in Britain labeled as "Indian" mainly run and staffed by Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, but their dishes normally differ markedly from what is consumed in the subcontinent and, for that matter, by most people of South Asian origin in Britain (Brown 2006: 145). Epitomizing a hybrid cuisine, it renders any distinctions drawn between "ethnic" and "British" food inadequate (Cook, Crang & Thorpe 2000: 113; James 1996). Calling chicken tikka masala "a true British national dish" raises the possibility that it has been, as Narayan phrases it, "assimilated" and "possessed" by a Britain in which national identity no longer hinges on what Paul Gilroy has termed "ethnic absolutism." Writing in the 1980s, Gilroy stressed how "the absolutist view of black and white cultures, as fixed, mutually impermeable expressions of racial and national identity" saw the distinction "race" and "nation" blur (Gilroy 1987: 45, 61). If "Indian" food now counts as "British," has a Britishness thus conceived replaced one that long revolved around whiteness with one that makes space for ethnic minority peoples and cultures? (see Parekh and the Runnymede Trust Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000). Alternatively, has Britishness become an identity which now validates and is predicated upon hybrid, syncretic cultural forms—and if so, in what ways? Or has the selective accommodation of a "foreign" food left older notions of Britishness largely intact by "assimilating" and "possessing" it on British terms?

In the following pages I test these possibilities by charting these restaurants' history since the late colonial era. The small handful existing before the end of Britain's Raj in India grew exponentially between the 1950s and the 1970s, when far larger numbers of Indians, Pakistanis, and (after 1971) Bangladeshis arrived to live and work in postcolonial Britain. As restaurants proliferated, their customer base changed, as did their social and cultural meanings. Although these establishments spread throughout Britain to be found even in small towns with few Asian residents aside from those involved in catering, they became particularly visible and numerous in cities with large Asian communities.[1] Starting in the late 1980s, ethnically diverse neighborhoods in London, Bradford, Birmingham, and elsewhere became self-styled "Curry Capitals" as "Going for an Indian" achieved the status of a national habit with locally specific contours.

Regardless of their expansion and popularity, Asian restaurants and their dishes always faced detractors, white and Asian alike. Positive and negative images of Britain's curry culture have remained in perpetual tension, revealing much about the changing relationships between Asian and white Britons, the class connotations of producing and consuming this cuisine, and the diversity of Britain's Asian population. Asians working in catering often become sidelined as agents with their own agendas, as was the case when Robin Cook used the active voice when describing how Britain "absorbs and adapts external influences." Such phrasing that positions Asian producers largely as passive is clearly inadequate: the standardized forms that South Asian food and restaurants typically took by the 1980s illustrate strategic choices restaurateurs made to build a solid customer base among a white population that was initially skeptical, if not outright hostile.

South Asians in the restaurant sector have played a critical role in remaking Britishness, yet at the same time form a deeply riven rather than a uniform group. Between 85 and 90 percent of Britain's "Indian" restaurants and takeaways are owned and staffed by Bangladeshi Muslims (Gardner & Shukur 1994; Eade 1989; Choudhury & Sylheti Social History Group 1993; Evans 1973). Pakistani Muslims run most others, particularly in cities like Bradford and Birmingham, whose Asian communities predominantly originate from Punjab or from Mirpur District in Azad Kashmir (Ballard 1994; V. S. Khan

1977; Dahya 1974; Rex & Tomlinson 1979; Rex 1996). In light of the widespread paranoia about Islamic religious practices, politics, and culture in Britain since the late 1980s, it is surprising that this aspect of Britain's curry house culture has received so little scholarly attention. Despite these restaurants' popularity, Islamophobia markedly shapes responses to them—not only from white Britons but arguably even more visibly from other sectors of the South Asian diaspora. In recent years, new Asian entrepreneurs have led the chorus of critics who condemn standard curry-house fare for failing to be "authentic," or even "Indian." Through offering culinary alternatives, they challenge common British conceptualizations of an undifferentiated Asian population and culture and assert distinct national, regional, class, and religious backgrounds. With restaurants as their stage, South Asians perform their own acts of ethnic absolutism that work against reconfigurations of Britishness that include curry as much as they undercut notions of a monolithic diasporic culture. The fraught history of the status of South Asian food and peoples within British society, alongside the evolving struggles to delimit what culinary offerings might properly qualify as "Indian," illuminate some of the many forms a lack of consensus about multiculturalism can take.

FROM COLONIAL BEGINNINGS TO POSTCOLONIAL DIFFUSION

Before British rule in the Indian subcontinent ended in 1947, Indian restaurants in the metropole were few and far between. Several came and went in the nineteenth century and others emerged in the early twentieth, largely in London. Most were run by and catered mainly for an Indian (and predominantly male) clientele who had come to Britain as lascars (seamen), students, or in a professional capacity. The majority were working-class establishments, particularly those providing for men from Sylhet (now part of Bangladesh) employed by merchant shipping companies who docked at British ports, most notably in London's East End (Fisher 1996; Adams 1987; Visram 2002; Choudhury et al. 1993, Choudhury 2002).[2] Of these early restaurants, the oldest that survives today is Veeraswamy's, off Regent Street. Dating from 1926, it was opened by a spice importer who became official caterer for the Indian Pavilion at the 1924 British Empire Exhibition held at Wembley outside London. Veeraswamy's served upper-middle-class and elite customers, including visiting Indian princes and other dignitaries as well as officer-class

Britons who had once lived in India (London News 1926; Veerasawmy [sic] 1953; Dining Out at Veeraswamy's 1982).

Like other early restaurants offering Indian-style dishes, Veeraswamy's was largely ignored by most Britons with the exception of repatriated ex-colonials.[3] Interwar accounts of its staff, clientele, and atmosphere suggest an establishment redolent of Raj culture. Turbaned Indian waiters provided service considered "an Oriental dream" amidst Indian carpets, chandeliers, punkahs (fans), and other decorative accoutrements intended to connote the luxurious "East." Diners who wanted to be treated like "sahibs" again by attentive "native" servants and cooks had come to the right place. Veeraswamy's allowed diners who had "been out East . . . to eat again a real curry and remember the days when they were important functionaries on salary instead of 'retired' on pension," a 1928 restaurant guide noted (Smith 1928; Bon Viveur 1937). The Indian owner of another establishment recalled the 1930s as a time when former Indian Civil Servants enjoyed being addressed as "Sahib" when they called out, "Bearer! . . . Bearer!" The waiters, not disinterestedly, reciprocated: "we wanted to have a little more tip, so why not?" (Qureshi in Adams 1987: 155).

Ex-colonials remained disproportionately numerous among white Britons patronizing Indian restaurants during the 1950s and extending into the 1960s. As the manager of London's Shafi put it in 1955, "the Indian Khichris, Curries, Bombay Duck and Chutneys and other delicacies have become a regular must" for Englishman who had lived in India (Where to Eat in London, 1955, 65). Some restaurants were described as serving food "in good Old Indian taste," a reference to British "Old India Hands" (Where to Eat in London 1955, 1960: 22). Another term former colonials used among themselves was "Koi Hais," which translated as "is anyone there?"—an expression used to summon Indian domestic servants. One "sahib" writing in *The Times* in 1964 referred to "Koi Hais" in London speaking Urdu at "our last refuge, the Indian restaurant" (The Sahib in a Graceful Thicket 1964).

British social sectors lacking personal ties to the Raj, meanwhile, showed little inclination to eat Indian cuisine (Postgate 1954, 1955). Although curry powder had been sold and added to a variety of English dishes during the nineteenth century, the wider market for establishments dedicated to serving Indian "curries" remained minute (Zlotnick 1996; L. Collingham 2006). Inasmuch as Britons contemplated them at all, Indian dishes usually carried resiliently negative connotations rooted in popular conceptions of colonial culture. In 1955 the British author of a series of Indian cookery books

described the "impression, difficult to eradicate, that curry eating is bad for you; that it causes dyspepsia, makes you evil-tempered and tends to shorten your life"—an outlook perpetuated, he continued, "by writers who depict purple-faced, curry-eating colonels who retire to rural England and vent their spleen on the natives." Successive editions of his books that appeared in the late 1950s and early 1960s attempted to counter preconceptions of curry as an underhanded method of disguising spoiled food with pungent spices and the persistent idea "that Indian cooks are dirty and their dishes permeated by disease germs" (Day 1955: 8, 1964: 6).

In such understandings two stereotypes converged: that of the arrogant, privileged colonial, and that of unhygienic South Asian peoples and food (Buettner 2004). The latter perception derived from long-standing notions of the bodily dangers facing Europeans who resided in the "tropics," the digestive problems spicy food was thought to cause, and unclean "natives" who, nonetheless, might prove pleasurably servile and offer a visually appealing spectacle when dressed in "Oriental" fashion (E. M. Collingham 2001). In retrospect, returned colonizers and newly arrived (ex-)colonized subjects alike can be recognized as forming a vanguard of consumers and purveyors of South Asian cuisine in Britain. But at the time, both groups were widely imagined as marginal to metropolitan culture and tainted either through having led a decadent life in a harsh climate or because of racial difference.

Through the 1950s and into the 1960s most Britons continued to steer clear of South Asian food even when restaurants existed to offer opportunities for sampling unfamiliar dishes. Customers at establishments run by Asians were overwhelmingly Asian themselves, who grew far greater in number as immigration from the subcontinent increased in response to Britain's manpower needs at a time of economic expansion. Most restaurants in London and other cities with substantial numbers of Asian newcomers predominantly catered to transport and factory workers: in Birmingham, Pakistanis and Indians employed on busses or in manufacturing, and in Bradford those working in textile mills. Men who ran these casual, café-style establishments often had begun as factory workers before deciding to go into business for themselves by providing a service that fellow new arrivals in Britain wanted. Typically located near factories and mills relying on Asian labor, these eateries stayed open long hours to attract workers when the night shifts ended, providing inexpensive "home cooking," sociability, and a support network for Asians who worked and lived nearby (Their British Paradise Was Waiting 1965; Allen 1971).[4] Rarely, if ever, did an English customer cross the threshold

(Imran, Smith, & Hyslop 1994; Choudhury et al. 1993). For whites living in cities with high rates of immigration, Asian food was not what they consumed themselves; rather, it served as a key indicator of the newcomers' presence and cultural distinctiveness.

By the 1960s and 1970s, food acted as a common cultural barometer charting both the spread of South Asian settlement and white attitudes towards it. Indices of changing local demographics included sights—of "exotically" dressed people from the Indian subcontinent and Urdu or other Asian-language signs on shops (often selling Asian spices, vegetables, halal meat, or sweets)—and scents, as new cooking smells joined or replaced the old. A *Yorkshire Post* reporter said of Bradford in 1973,

> If the aroma of morning meals had wafted along the fringes of Oak Lane and other pavements in the area, the smell of fried bacon would have been overpowered by the scents of typical Punjabi day-starters such as chappatis and buffalo milk ghee and chilli-pepper omelettes. . . . Bradford is still a pork pie and black pudding town but two decades of largely Asian immigration have created a north of England curry capital covering several square miles. (Tyndale 1976)

While some wrote of these shifts in purely descriptive and even moderately appreciative terms, many more cited the smell of curry as a source of deep resentment. The view that Asians and their surroundings "stank of curry" abounded and became deployed by landlords to explain why they refused Asians as tenants (Housing Plight—All Combines to Create Ghettoes 1965; Landladies' Colour Bar on Students 1966; Aurora 1967). While West Indians' cooking smells were also criticized, the racist insults lobbed in their direction more commonly revolved around their supposed immorality (particularly if men sought sexual relationships with white women), loud music, and rowdy parties (Hill 1965: 77–78; Davison 1964: 23, 25; Buettner 2009). One Indian writer, Rashmi Desai, encapsulated white stereotypes of immigrants as "the West Indians are noisy and have all night parties . . . [and] they do not conform to the sexual *mores* of the English, and hence cannot be trusted in a 'respectable' house or locality," whereas "Indians stink of curry" (1963: 20, 11). In this discourse of sensory assault on white Britons, West Indians were held responsible for that on the ears (as well as on the bodies of white women), whereas Indians and Pakistanis were the main culprits for that on the nose.[5]

White resentment of the smell of Asian food, and of Asians themselves, applied to public and private contacts alike. Desai described visiting a factory

where "English workers had refused to work with the Indians and Pakistanis because they could not bear the smell of garlic." The managers' response was revealing: they "thought it better to isolate their existing Indo-Pakistani workers and stop recruiting more rather than tell them to stop eating garlic" (R. C. Desai 1963: 75). Confronting white workers' racism, which they may well have shared themselves, appears not to have been envisioned. Such attitudes, however, were more in evidence in discussions about Asians' presence in the neighborhood than in the workplace. Resentment of Asian encroachment on the community, penetrating into the private sphere as smells carried through doors, windows, and walls, proved much more vehement. One woman accounted for her desire to leave the Birmingham street where she had lived for more than thirty years by saying, "I want to get away from the Asians. . . . It's not the colour I'm against, far from it. I have an Asian couple living next door to me and they are the loveliest people you could meet. . . . [But] all the houses reek of cooking curry" (Lovely People but We Want to Get Away 1976). Some white residents of the Smethwick area of Birmingham considered cooking odors so offensive and detrimental to the neighborhood that they demanded rate reductions on their houses from the city council (Prem 1965). "White flight" from areas where immigrants had settled became a common response or aspiration.

Countless renditions of Asian immigrants' culinary culture dating from the 1950s to the 1970s and beyond dismissed it as little more than a social and economic problem. Disparaging references to the smell; repeated accusations of cruelty to animals through Muslims' ritual slaughter of halal meat; reports of Asians' alleged dietary deficiencies and the financial burden they thus placed on the National Health Service; complaints about the added costs of providing "curry on the rates" and halal food for Asians at schools, hospitals, and other public institutions—all recurred in local newspapers for decades (Clayton 1964; Danger of Too Much Chapatti 1972; Murphy 1987; Bell 1986). White British commentators widely considered the fact that "few change their dietary habits" as a primary example of how Asians "cling to their own culture" to their detriment (Clayton 1964). As one Birmingham writer complained in 1955, "their poor English, their liking for traditional foods and their loyalty to their own religions encourages them to stay in a tightly closed circle of their own races" (Little Harlems Must Go 1955). Gastronomic preferences, in short, ranked high in the panoply of reasons why Asians were criticized for failing to adapt to English culture in reports that reflected demands for immigrants to assimilate (and, later, to integrate) within British society.

Yet while negative assessments of Asian food persisted, more Britons gradually found the smell—and the taste—of curry enticing rather than repellent (Asians Have Made This Place Thrive 1976; Don't Turn Your Back on Us 1980). Signs of curry's popularity slowly became apparent by the later 1960s and 1970s, when some establishments that originally catered almost exclusively for Asians gradually witnessed a diversifying clientele (*British Eating Out* 1966).[6] Alongside Britons who had once lived in the subcontinent came others who were attracted by low prices, enjoyed the adventure of trying an "exotic" cuisine, or sought a spicy alternative to what they considered bland English fare. Young people featured prominently among Asian restaurants' newfound customer base. In an interview in 2005, Jim Taylor described his first visits to curry houses as a teenager in late 1960s Birmingham after an upbringing when meals at home consisted of "the normal stock 1950s, 1960s diet of lamb chops, boiled potatoes and peas, with a bit salt on if I was lucky." His father was "very anti-curry," he stressed; "my old man in the war used to have curry and it was basically, he reckoned, the chef's excuse to get dodgy meat cooked up and eaten by the troops" (Interview 2005, May 27).

Born in 1950, Taylor participated in a late 1960s youth culture engaged in a process of rejecting many established norms of his parents' Second World War generation. For this teenager living in a city that had attracted many Asians, opportunities to eat out informally with friends at their restaurants offered a means of shunning the plain-tasting "meat and two veg" meals favored by mainstream English society (Burnett 2004; D. Cooper 1967). "Like a lot of young people," he said, "you always want to try something that your parents won't give you, so I started to go out for curries." Moreover, "it was a bit of fun in that you'd try the hottest curry, even if it was so fiery it blew the roof of your mouth off. . . . You'd always try to have the hottest curry, you'd have a Madras, or a vindaloo, or a tindaloo."

The newly emergent social ritual Taylor described was an overwhelmingly young, male, and working- or lower-middle-class phenomenon. "Going for an Indian," he recounted, was "very much a boys' thing, a boys' night out" for the younger members of an increasingly affluent postwar society with money to spend on leisure and consumption.[7] Masculinity was displayed through competing with mates to choke down a vindaloo or "take the piss out of the waiter"—evidence that youth culture's "resistance through rituals" might

well involve displays of racism, even when this took the arguably more benign form of reveling in unequal relations with staff in the course of consumption as opposed to more overtly aggressive forms of violence. "The waiters would all be dressed up in sort of white shirts and dickey bows, and be very servile sort of in nature," Taylor recalled, "and young people used to think, I suppose, they were a bit important, going to a place where the waiters were very servile." At the very least, other contemporary reports of young men's boisterous behavior at these restaurants suggest a lack of respect and courtesy for both the establishments and their staff. In 1968, *The Times* provided a glimpse of the casual and thoughtless conduct some diners clearly deemed acceptable in such surroundings, reporting that "Mr Dennis Scrivens, aged 22, swallowed a fork in an Indian restaurant in Wolverhampton . . . while trying to balance it on the end of his nose" (Man Swallows a Restaurant Fork 1968).

The 1960s and 1970s thus marked a transitional phase in the evolution of Britain's curry house culture. While working-class, café-style restaurants continued to serve Asian customers, many establishments opened or adapted their offerings to attract a white clientele and spread from areas with large immigrant concentrations to become a nation-wide presence. The approximately 300 curry restaurants that existed in 1960 grew to 1,200 in 1970 and reached 3,000 by 1980 (Chapman 1991: 18). Young people remained a critical market and included not only wage earners but also students in search of affordable meals and foods that deviated from their parents' choices at home. Many of the first restaurants to cater to non-Asians opened near university campuses (Jamal 1996, Rafiq 1988). Groups of male customers predominated, but diners also included young couples or mixed parties. The 1980s witnessed the most dramatic increase in curry houses in Britain, which totaled 6,600 by the end of the decade (Chapman 1991: 18). Eating at curry houses had become a familiar social practice in much of Britain, generated an enthusiastic following among self-proclaimed "curry addicts," and acquired a range of cultural and social connotations that remain strongly in evidence even as they are challenged today.

With ever larger numbers of white Britons patronizing Asian-run restaurants, a new form of multicultural interaction had emerged: that of the freely chosen leisure activity. While encounters with Asians, the "smell of curry," and multiculturalism as official policy in mixed neighborhoods, at work, and at school had been—and often continued to be—widely resented and undertaken involuntarily, curry house cuisine gradually became accepted,

appreciated, and ultimately celebrated. The growing popularity of "going for an Indian" and "white flight" from working-class neighborhoods with Asian communities occurred simultaneously. Multiculturalism as white consumption of "Indian" food produced to accommodate their tastes, enacted within the space of the restaurant, became distinct from the multiculturalism required by other everyday social interactions with Asians. As will be argued below, however, curry houses and their menus did not fully escape the contempt and racism that peoples of South Asian origin continued to experience in Britain. Rather, South Asian food and Britain's South Asian diaspora have remained closely intertwined in the white British imagination, even when the former was accepted and the latter rejected by, and as part of, British culture and society.

STANDARDIZING THE EXOTIC: REPRESENTING THE CURRY HOUSE'S PROLIFERATION

South Asian restaurants' ascent to popularity among white Britons marks but one manifestation of a modern transnational phenomenon occurring in Western Europe and North America. Following mass migrations to countries offering work opportunities, foodways altered among both immigrants and the host societies in which they settled (Diner 2001). Foreign foods associated with immigrant groups of low social status changed from being ignored, disdained, and widely deemed unpalatable to gain footholds within native food cultures. "Exotic" foods eaten only by immigrants (and, in the case of European nations with imperial histories, by colonizing and colonized populations who had resettled in the metropole) sometimes crossed over to become familiar and then eagerly consumed by wider society, often after an inexpensive restaurant introduction. Some dishes and cuisines failed to make the transition altogether, whereas others were modified to appeal to different palates. In the process, Italian, Chinese, and Mexican cuisine became Americanized; Italian food and Döner kebabs introduced by Turkish "guest workers" entered German diets; North African couscous became common in France; Indonesian and Chinese food gained acceptance in the Netherlands; and chicken tikka masala became British (Gabaccia 1998; Levenstein 1985; Roberts 2002; Cağlar 1995; Möhring 2008; van Otterloo 2002). Foods of foreign origin often led what Sylvia Ferrero, writing about Mexican offerings in Los Angeles, described as a "dual life": in this instance, "standardized food

for Anglos, and specialties for Mexican-Americans and Mexicans" (Ferrero 2002: 216). On repeated occasions, the very standardization that proved decisive to a food's gaining wider acceptance beyond the migrant group was held against it by individuals who counted themselves better judges of quality and authenticity. Such was the case with South Asian restaurant fare in Britain.

In becoming ensconced within Britain's culinary landscape, curry houses took on an instantly recognizable stereotyped image. Founded in 1982, the Curry Club—an association of curry aficionados—testified to the wide following they had developed. Its quarterly magazine described what rapidly had become the characteristic cuisine, interior decoration, and staff appearance. Such restaurants offered dishes from the northern part of the subcontinent prepared cheaply by taking shortcuts and omitting ingredients, the result being "rather similar style curries, in rich spicy sauces which lacked the subtlety of the original recipes." New proprietors copied models that had proved successful for others, until,

> within a few years, every high street in the land had its identical restaurant. . . . They could have been cloned. No-one has counted how many Taj Mahals, Rajahs, Mumtaz's Stars of India, Curry Houses, Curry Gardens and . . . Tandoori's exist in the U.K. The décor and the lighting are identical (red flock wallpaper, ornamental hardboard Indian arches, and red or orange lighting in Eastern lampshades.) The serving bowls, the candle lit warmers and, for all I know, the dinner jacketed waiters are all indistinguishable. But most fascinating of all is the menu. You are as certain to get the standard menu in the standard restaurant as you are to get a postage stamp from a post office whether you are in the coves of Cornwall or the Highlands of Scotland. (Indian Restaurant and Its Menu 1983: 12)

Significantly, this formula derived from owners' perception of its success with customers attracted by low prices, the overall curry house atmosphere, and the cuisine itself. Yet having become part of everyday life for many Britons, curry houses nonetheless were subjected to much ridicule and often to scathing criticism. Tawdry décor and poor quality, inauthentic food became the butt of jokes as seasoned customers poked fun at the "red flock wallpaper, the identical standard menu and the hot curries cooked in axle grease" (Restaurant Trade 1982: i). Restaurants and cafés geared towards a largely Asian clientele, meanwhile, received little attention during and after the 1980s. Public discussions revolved around those patronized mainly by whites, with most Asians becoming sidelined as consumers of a cuisine that was purportedly "theirs," however inauthentic such food was accused of being.

Denunciations came not only from white customers but from selected Asian commentators as well—in short, from a range of self-proclaimed experts who claimed to know better. An early critic was the Indian actress Madhur Jaffrey who, by the mid-1970s, was well on her way towards becoming the most recognizable media figure promoting Indian cooking through her cookery books and subsequent television shows broadcast in the 1980s. Jaffrey's *An Invitation to Indian Cooking* first appeared in Britain in 1976, and—not disinterestedly in light of her own recent reinvention as a key culinary spokesperson—recommended learning to prepare Indian dishes at home on the basis of restaurants' shortcomings. Dismissing the vast majority as "second-class establishments that had managed to underplay their own regional uniqueness" through serving "a generalized Indian food from no area whatsoever," she faulted the cooks as ill equipped to do justice to the foods they prepared because of their lack of skills. "Often former seamen or untrained villagers who have come to England in the hopes of making a living, somehow or other," upon opening restaurants they simply copied their competitors' menus. In consequence, sauces "inevitably have the same colour, taste, and consistency; the dishes generally come 'mild, medium or hot'" (1978: 11–12).

As will be explored further below, Jaffrey's critique of "second-class" restaurants and her promotion of regional cuisines share much in common with later assessments by other middle- and upper-class Indians opening restaurants in late-twentieth-century Britain. She had never been the sole detractor, however; accusations of inauthenticity by other self-styled connoisseurs already abounded at the very moment when these restaurants' popularity rose most sharply. Critics in the early 1980s disparaged restaurant fare as a "terrible parody of Indian food" in which "a common sauce is slopped on" and "everything tastes the same" (N. Khan 1982: 10–11; Chapman 1983: 12).

The timing of these attacks was by no means accidental. Arjun Appadurai has argued that authenticity, which "measures the degree to which something is more or less what it *ought* to be," is a criterion apt to "emerge just after its subject matter has been significantly transformed" (Appadurai 1986a: 25). The changes made to South Asian food by members of a diaspora settled in Britain with an eye towards generating and retaining new business marks just such a historical shift, one which worried and offended individuals within and outside the diverse community of South Asian origin. Claiming superior knowledge became a marker of distinction at a time when ever greater numbers of Britons became familiar with, and appreciative of, the versions

of Asian food made available to them—what Appadurai termed a "political economy of taste" or a "politics of connoisseurship" revolving around commodities that had travelled far from their place of origin (Appadurai 1986b: 44). Brian Spooner's work similarly asserts that authenticity is never simply an objective measurement but rather is determined by the choices and desires of persons seeking to establish, or strengthen, an elevated social position. When possessing a type of object in and of itself ceased to qualify as a sign of status thanks to its general proliferation and adaptation, the processes of knowing, searching for, and even (arguably) finding authenticity differentiates those with privileged access from those willing to accept generic varieties available to the supposedly undiscerning and ignorant majority (Spooner 1986). The act of consuming South Asian restaurant food in Britain involved precisely such forms of separation and association.

Stock accusations of poor, nongenuine offerings were part of the curry house's generally downmarket image that encompassed restaurant staff, diners, and their spaces of interaction.[8] Critics complained that most owners and chefs had arrived in Britain as workers and lacked formal catering qualifications, hence proving unable or unwilling to provide "the real thing"—which, in any case, few of their ignorant customers appeared to want. Waiters, meanwhile, bore little resemblance to the "servile" staff Jim Taylor remembered at 1960s Birmingham establishments, and instead were commonly accused of being "surly" and providing "service with a leer" (Restaurant Roundup 1982a). Mutual contempt characterized relations between curry's producers and consumers at many restaurants. Public understandings of mainstay curry house diners focused on the white male clientele who took advantage of late-night hours of operation to arrive drunk after pubs or clubs closed, behave disrespectfully, if not violently (most characteristically by racially abusing the staff), and possibly try to leave without paying (Monroe 2005; Alibhai-Brown 1998; Midnight Cowboys 1996).

Many customers found curry houses attractive because they were cheap, filling, informal, and open late—circumstances in which food quality often proved secondary (Shah Knows What's What 1985). As several Bradford restaurant reviews summarized when praising particular establishments, they offered "good value for a fiver" despite dishes having proved a "let down . . . no real sauce [and] too much oil"; "good grub in copious quantities"; a chance to "fill your boots for under £2"; or qualified as a reliable "soak-up curry after the pub" (Good Value for a Fiver 1989; Man! What a Great Nan 1988; Cheap without Frills and Thrills 1989; Rajshahi 2003). Epitomizing how an establishment could be damned and praised simultaneously, one 1988 review read: "Steve couldn't remember whether he'd ordered a murgh massala or the murgh korma—and was left none the wiser when his dish arrived. . . . Either way it went down well," given the price (Striking a Balance 1988). "Value for money" proved a continual source of attraction, regardless of whether the food, service, or atmosphere was assessed as good or indifferent. Curry's supposed drawbacks and risks never faded fully into the background, and anxieties about restaurants' standards of hygiene and their dishes' effects on digestion resiliently remained part of public discourse. Newspapers periodically reported establishments which violated health and environmental codes and alluded to the Asian staff's ignorance of sanitation requirements, while diners' comments about digestive "suffering the next day" featured regularly in reviews (Restaurant Food Cooked in Garage 1983; Dirty, Filthy and Disgusting 1988; Restaurant Roundup 1982b).

However much curry houses were habitually lampooned and critiqued, by the 1980s they nonetheless had acquired a loyal mass following that had diversified to include families and a cross-class clientele. Some diners may have poked fun at their kitsch décor and staff demeanor, yet most would not have patronized these establishments had they not enjoyed the cuisine on offer—regardless of its oft-proclaimed inauthenticity. British South Asian food aficionados included both those who condemned restaurant versions as nongenuine and those who actively sought out "the restaurant curry" and valued it highly in its own right. Indeed, a writer in the Curry Club's magazine commented how difficult it was to satisfy those members who sought to "recreate the flavours they have become used to in restaurants and at the same time supply authenticity" (Aziz 1982: 8). The magazine thus featured articles on "genuine" regional specialties alongside restaurant reviews and recipes instructing readers how to prepare the "definitive Indian restaurant-curry" at home (Ivan Watson Defines the Indian-Restaurant Curry 1983). Polarized attitudes remained common during the 1990s. As a reader of *Tandoori Magazine* protested in 1998, "Indian restaurants have swept to the No. 1 position in dining out choice because customers like it as it is" (Fairall 1998: 11).

Although their image was resolutely downmarket in some eyes, Asian restaurants thus acquired a range of positive associations as well. As a result, between the 1980s and the present Britain's curry tradition was reconfigured in two ways. On the one hand, standard offerings became elevated to a new pride of place by those who considered them a valued part of national or local multicultural life, while on the other, an emerging and distinct group

of entrepreneurs opened new restaurants explicitly intended to challenge stereotyped, "inauthentic," and routinely disparaged establishments.

CURRY CAPITALS AND CONDITIONAL MULTICULTURALISM

In stark contrast to the hesitancy and indeed the hostility with which many white Britons greeted the smell of curry—let alone its taste—several decades ago, South Asian food is no longer widely viewed as a social problem or an indicator of immigrants' repugnant cultural traits and unwillingness to integrate. Its mass popularity enabled fans to draw positive conclusions from the way Asian restaurateurs altered their cuisine to accommodate British tastes and, to reiterate Robin Cook's claims, made chicken tikka masala into a distinctly "British national dish."[9] What is more, selected cities and neighborhoods with sizeable Asian populations came to view their numerous restaurants as an opportunity to tell an affirmative story about local ethnic diversity. Indeed, they did so precisely in areas plagued with social and economic problems and where "race relations" proved persistently precarious. Styling themselves as Britain's "Curry Capitals" became a central plank in a succession of local regeneration efforts.

In Bradford and Birmingham, the Asian restaurant sector's expansion tellingly occurred in the same years as Bradford's textile mills and Birmingham's motor, metal, and engineering industries went into steady and irreversible decline. In the 1970s and 1980s, many immigrants and their children who initially had worked in booming traditional industries turned to catering and other forms of self-employment and service-sector jobs after being made redundant with deindustrialization (Kalra 2000; Metcalf, Modood, & Virdee 1996; Srinivasan 1995; Ram & Jones 1998). In an economically depressed city like Bradford, curry became drawn into an attempt to redefine the area in more positive ways. Starting in the mid- to late 1980s, local newspapers and the city's tourist office began promoting curry houses and producing "Flavours of Asia" brochures meant to attract visitors to Bradford on account of its restaurants, as well as other "colourful" offerings including Asian fabric, clothing, and grocery shops. Embarking on the "curry trail" offered residents and prospective visitors alike "a feast that only Bradford can offer" at one of its scores of Asian restaurants (which numbered over fifty in the late 1980s and over two hundred today).[10] Optimists described curry as

enabling a "trade renaissance for Bradford" (Curry: A Trade Renaissance for Bradford 1997). Asian families running flourishing chains like Aagrah and Mumtaz became fêted as success stories in their own right—Aagrah's owners, for example, had arrived in Britain from Kashmir in the early 1960s and started out as bus drivers and mill workers—as well as commended for bringing hundreds of new jobs to a city in dire need of employment opportunities (Aagrah 2004; A. Khan 1997a, 1997b).

Enthusiasts celebrated curry as having become central to Bradford's economic and cultural traditions. After the virtual disappearance of textiles, South Asian restaurants came to count as one of the city's "traditional industries," while the Aagrah restaurant chain earned praise as "a Yorkshire institution" (Giving a Trendy Edge to Tradition 2001; Aagrah 2004). Curry was added to the moors, the dales, and the Brontë sisters' home in the nearby town of Haworth as West Yorkshire highlights. Fresh from their visit to the Brontë Parsonage Museum, tourists could eat a meal at the Raj Mahal and enjoy "traditional Indian cuisine in the heart of Brontë country" (Raj Mahal 1998; Restaurant of the Month 2004). What was named as "Indian" became partly stripped of its foreign aspects to become appropriated within newly reconfigured constructions of Bradford's and Yorkshire's heritage. Thus familiarized and localized, curry's popularity and growing economic presence in and around Bradford made it "the positive side of the city's multiculturalism" (Cope 2002).

Bradford was not alone in actively promoting curry as part of its newly reinvented local tradition. Other cities like Manchester and Leicester followed suit, the former advertising the more than fifty restaurants serving 65,000 diners a week on a street known as the "Curry Mile" and the latter offering "Taste of Asia" weekend package tours.[11] Similarly, since the late 1990s local authorities in east London's Tower Hamlets borough have embarked on a concerted campaign to promote the Brick Lane area as "Banglatown"—on account of having the largest Bangladeshi population in Britain—or "London's Curry Capital." Efforts to publicize the scores of Bangladeshi-run restaurants and cafés alongside other Asian shops and cultural offerings in the East End aimed at de-emphasizing poverty and ethnic conflict in favor of stressing vibrant cultural diversity (Carey 2004; Tower Hamlets Council 2005; Sahid 1988; Banglatown Plan Comes Under Fire 1997; Dench, Gavron & Young 2006).

Birmingham's incorporation of South Asian food as part of its identity is arguably the most distinct example of an ethnically diverse city

deploying minority cultural products for self-promotion (Ram, Jones, Abbas, & Sanghera 2002). Home to one of the nation's most populous Asian communities, Birmingham's restaurant sector developed its own distinctly local form of curry known as *balti*. *Balti*—which translates as "bucket"—refers to the wok-like dish in which food is prepared and served in a manner that differed from other styles of South Asian restaurant fare. Developed in the 1970s and 1980s by the city's restaurateurs from northern Pakistan, it spread throughout Britain in the 1990s but remained seen and celebrated as something that emerged in Birmingham—"a Brummie thing."

Just as Asian restaurants in and around Bradford became subsumed within local and regional culture, so too did Birmingham's, with the *balti* designator foregrounding their development within a local British context as much as, and usually more, than their specifically Pakistani roots. The account provided by Jim Taylor, the early curry convert introduced above, who subsequently became one of balti's foremost champions and unofficial publicists, typifies the tendency to highlight local English particularities. While many Asian restaurants throughout Britain added balti dishes to their menus during the height of the "balti craze" in the mid- to late 1990s, Taylor noted, few offered balti cooked in "the correct way" as done by Birmingham's first- and second-generation Pakistani community. Bangladeshis who dominated the Asian restaurant sector on the national level and introduced balti dishes failed, in the eyes of Birmingham balti enthusiasts, to serve "the real thing." As he and others like him put it, restaurants outside Birmingham were "trading in on Birmingham's heritage" (Taylor interview with author; Tredre 1995).

Starting in the mid-1990s, Birmingham's local authorities began to consider how the "run-down Sparkbrook area" with its many Asian residents and restaurants might be transformed from an urban blight into a selling point (Percival 1995; Hussain 1997a; Rex & Moore 1967; Rex 1987). The Asian Balti Restaurant Association worked together with the organization Marketing Birmingham to generate promotional materials drawing attention to the Asian shops and the more than fifty eateries located within what became restyled as the "Balti Quarter," or "Balti Triangle." As the 2004–2005 guide asserted, "no longer perceived as a grey, industrial city, Birmingham has emerged as an exciting and vibrant city. . . . Canals, Cadbury's, cars and jewelry have long been synonymous with Birmingham, but undoubtedly Balti is now equally part of Birmingham's tradition" (Marketing Birmingham 2004–2005). In a city suffering from persistent and deep-seated economic problems, the Balti Triangle's annual £8.5 million restaurant turnover made it a valued player in a local economy where regeneration has been an urgent albeit often elusive goal (Ram et al. 2002: 26).

Celebratory narratives of these restaurants' spread and popularity enlist them as illustrations of Asian entrepreneurial achievement and economic success, not to mention as evidence of a thriving multicultural outlook and improving race relations. Yet such evaluations have proven overly optimistic. In economic terms, while many Asian families have built modestly successful businesses and a small proportion have become prosperous, many restaurateurs lead a precarious existence, earning low profits in a saturated catering market and struggling to stay afloat (Ram et al. 2002; Rafiq 1988). Notorious for long, antisocial hours and low pay for kitchen staff and waiters, the drawbacks of restaurant work have caused many owners' children to contemplate taking over the family business with reluctance (Hussain 1997a; Kalra 2000, 2004). A study of Bangladeshi-run Brick Lane establishments in east London revealed that those working in catering found themselves ridiculed back home as "OCs (onion cutters) and DCs (dish cleaners)"—the former an ironic allusion to "the big district police head" and the latter to the administrative district commissioner (Dench, Gavron, & Young 2006: 130). Many Bangladeshi men who start out working in restaurants upon arrival—often through kinship ties with the owners—correspondingly seek other work when, and if, more promising opportunities arise.

Furthermore, however affectionately the white British public has come to view its curry experiences, racism has never fully receded from the restaurant encounter. Rudeness and racial verbal abuse to the staff continue, although this now occurs less frequently; less common but far more serious are the ongoing incidents of racially motivated assault, arson, and other forms of violence that occur at some restaurants (Assault Fears at Balti Houses 1997; Chalmers 2000). Additionally, as most curry or balti houses are run and staffed by Muslims of Bangladeshi or Pakistani origin, they are prime targets for Islamophobia. As two second-generation restaurateurs in Birmingham's Balti Triangle reported, although most of their customers are friendly, they still periodically hear comments such as "go back to Pakistan," or get called "Paki" or "Osama bin Laden" by aggressive passers-by.[12] This has increased since September 11, 2001, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the July 2005 suicide bombings by British Muslims on the London transport network. Anti-Muslim sentiments had been apparent since at least the late 1980s, however, with the Rushdie Affair (in which protests in Bradford attracted

international attention) and the Gulf War serving as critical turning points (Asad 1990; Back et al. 2002; Modood 1992a, 2005; Abbas 2005; Amin 2002).

Such episodes count among the few direct references to the fact that nearly all of Britain's South Asian restaurants are owned and operated by Muslims. With the sharpest surge in their popularity taking place during the same years as anxieties about Muslim extremism in religious, political, and cultural terms became a recurring feature of British life, commentators worrying about British Muslims' loyalty to the nation and capacity for integration failed to give them credit for shaping Britain's now highly valued curry culture. Muslims in the restaurant sector had indeed assimilated South Asian cuisine into the British mainstream by catering to white British tastes, yet public attention remained focused on cultural practices that were seen to demonstrate that Muslims isolated themselves and lacked appropriate political and religious moderation (A. Basu 2002). South Asian food may have become seen as integrated into the nation and its localities, but not its purveyors, who still stand accused of self-segregation (Abbas 2005; Amin 2002). Multiculturalism as developed by a largely Muslim group of South Asian restaurateurs thus could be construed as reflecting a tolerant British society's success in "absorbing and adapting external influences" rather than as an indicator of producers' own agency and flexibility. Popular understandings of the curry house as "Indian," "British," or culturally hybrid equally serve to obscure Muslims' leading role within a celebrated aspect of a national culture that has grown accustomed to viewing Muslims—most of whom originated in Pakistan or Bangladesh—as marginal, intolerant, regressive, and dangerous.

Multiculturalism emerges as highly qualified, partial, and conditional in its application, both discursively and in the realm of everyday life, even in Britain's proud "Curry Capitals." Bradford's incidences of racialized civil strife in July 2001 provide further evidence of its selective nature. Riots occurring there followed other episodes in Oldham and Burnley, two other northern English former textile centers with large Asian populations. These outbreaks of civil unrest in economically depressed, ethnically diverse, and deeply divided communities attracted national attention and condemnation, resulting in a protracted struggle to assess their causes and implications. As analyses by Arun Kundnani and Ash Amin cogently stress, the roots lay in deprivation, high unemployment, and the competition for scarce jobs and social assistance. Discriminatory policies meant that social housing had largely been allocated to whites, who thus lived in separate areas from Asians.

"It was 'white flight' backed by the local state," Kundnani summarizes (2001: 107). But rather than attribute divisions and unrest to socioeconomic problems, institutional racism, and "the cultural exclusions associated with White Englishness," as Amin phrases it, many commentators placed the blame on Muslims, who were accused of self-segregation and stubbornly refusing to integrate (Amin 2002: 963).

As a sign that Bradford's longstanding ethnic divisions were not reducible to the violence of July 2001 but had already attracted considerable scrutiny, the Ouseley Report following an intensive official review appeared that same month. White Bradfordians, the report noted, often felt that Asians received disproportionate public assistance "at their expense," while Asians believed widespread Islamophobia and racism combined to create an atmosphere of "harassment, discrimination and exclusion" that resulted in unequal treatment and public marginalization. The social consequences were summarized thus: "Different ethnic groups are increasingly segregating themselves from each other and retreating into 'comfort zones' made up of people like themselves. *They only connect with each other on those occasions when they cannot avoid each other, such as in shops, on the streets, at work, when travelling and, perversely, in Asian-owned restaurants by choice*" (Community Pride not Prejudice 2001: 16, emphasis added).

While the Ouseley Report deemed the contacts with other ethnic groups occurring at Asian restaurants "perverse," they come as no surprise in light of the history of white patronage of curry houses outlined above. By 2001, voluntarily eating out at Asian-run restaurants had long been the exception that proved the rule, and was subsequently to remain so. On the first anniversary of the unrest, one Bradford Asian restaurant owner offered free food to members of different ethnic communities—"provided they spoke to each other over lunch." "Restaurants are often the only place where white people mix with Asians so it is important we present a positive image," he continued (I Provide the Food 2002; Cope 2002). Albeit intended optimistically, his point underscored the limited degree of meaningful interaction between most Asians and whites as well as the curry interface's inability to signal, or to effect, substantive positive change. As an Asian waiter interviewed several years earlier reflected, "mainly I have good contact with the white people who are customers at the restaurant. But sometimes when I meet them in the market place or in a shop, I feel like they don't want to know me" (Whitehorn 1997). Far more cynically, an Asian complained in a letter to the editor of one newspaper that "it embarrasses me greatly to hear about the 'enrichment' of

multi-culturalism in Bradford. I think the sum total of enrichment for the average indigenous person is a 'drunken curry'" (Stop Pretending 2002).

South Asian food's white British following counts as a key example of how, as Paul Gilroy suggests, "exciting, unfamiliar cultures can be consumed in the absence of any face-to-face recognition or real-time negotiation with their actual creators. The intensified desire for what was formerly stigmatized and forbidden can also be interpreted as a part of the collapse of English cultural confidence that has fed the development of anxious and insecure local and national identities" (Gilroy 2004: 137; Hooks 1992). While the profusion of self-proclaimed "Curry Capitals" within postindustrial Britain was undertaken with the aim of reinvigorating beleaguered local identities in ways that draw upon Asians' presence and contributions, the extent to which these efforts can be considered successful or merely superficial remains highly debatable.

Indeed, in the wake of the watershed events of 2001 (and again following the London bombings of 2005), multiculturalism suffered severe setbacks at the level of national government rhetoric. In moments of crisis, New Labour retreated from earlier proclamations valuing cultural and ethnic diversity, veering instead towards what Tahir Abbas, Les Back, and other scholars have likened to 1960s-style assimilationism (Abbas 2005; Back et al. 2002; Great Britain Home Office 2001). Yet in this atmosphere ridden with mistrust, food survived as a source of enjoyment and celebration when so much else that was culturally associated with Britain's South Asian community attracted increased suspicion. In part, it did so via attempts to further marginalize and discredit the contributions made by British Muslims of Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin.

FRACTURES, DIVERSIFICATION, AND AUTHENTICITY

Despite curry houses having achieved local and national prominence, their image remains predominantly a downmarket one. As such, it has come under attack from a new front opened up from within a socially and nationally divided Asian business community (Brown 2006: 111). Beginning gradually in the 1980s in London's West End, new restaurants opened for wealthier customers, joining the long-established Veeraswamy's in catering to affluent Londoners. Discerning "experts" who claimed to know how South Asian cuisine *should* be greeted the opening of the Bombay Brasserie in 1982 as an oasis in a culinary desert. Prominent restaurant critic Fay Maschler responded ecstatically: "the grip of the conventional menu was shattered and instead of the predictable list of mainly Northern Indian dishes there were dishes from Goa and the Punjab, traditional Parsi food and Bombay street snacks. . . . It will give you some idea of the incredible variety to Indian cuisine, a fact that has tended to be swamped by the popular notion of a curry." The Bombay Brasserie, moreover, moved away from the ridiculed flock wallpaper décor, opting instead for a Raj "colonial style" ambiance. "Wicker chairs, revolving ceiling fans, brass-bound chests, potted banana palms, sepia-tinted photographs," Maschler continued, "[come] off convincingly and romantically" (Maschler 1986: 30–31; Chapman 1983: 9).

The Bombay Brasserie marked the beginnings of the gradual bifurcation of the South Asian restaurant scene, in which new entrepreneurs dissociated themselves from the curry house norm on every level. Allusions to French restaurants—traditionally associated with wealth and gastronomic sophistication—through recourse to the "brasserie" appellation connoted prestige, as did invoking British colonial lifestyles of previous generations. In the 1980s and early 1990s, the image of choice was often Raj-style décor, reflecting the current of colonial nostalgia apparent elsewhere in British culture (Dyer 1997; Burton 2001; Buettner 2004, 2006). Opened in 1990, Chutney Mary similarly opted for a Raj look, "Anglo-Indian cuisine," and a "Verandah bar" to suggest affluence to its well-off clientele (Chapman 1991: 8; Hashmi 1998).[13]

Owners of such new, largely London-based establishments and their chefs seldom resembled the Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, and their British-born children running most curry and balti houses; rather, most had come from India as middle- or upper-class professionals who had begun their careers working at five-star hotels and restaurants in Bombay and New Delhi (Taj Restaurant 1999: 5; Monroe 2005). One of the most explicit statements meant to elevate newer arrivals above the "curry house formula" appeared in 2004 on the website for Masala World, a company whose portfolio includes London's revamped Veeraswamy, Chutney Mary, and the more modestly priced Masala Zone. "Owned by Namita Panjabi and her investment-banker husband Ranjit Mathrani," the site insisted on the genuine Indianness, regional specificity, and high-status origins of the cuisine served. Dishes from "regional gourmet families [and] Maharajas' palaces" made by directly recruited "Indian regional specialist chefs" were "prepared authentically, as

in Indian homes, and no short cuts are taken." The result, in sum, was "very different from the inexpensive neighbourhood curry restaurants started in Britain by enterprising non-Indian entrepreneurs who developed their own brand of curry totally different from the tastes of real Indian food."[14]

Authentic and regional Indian cuisine, elite professional Indian purveyors, and establishments serving discerning, better-off connoisseurs thus characterized one type of establishment, while fabrications made by Bangladeshis and Pakistanis of working-class origin who provided cheap food to unsophisticated customers constituted their disreputable "other." Affluent and sophisticated owners and customers alike engaged in acts of distinction vis-à-vis their curry house counterparts as a means of proclaiming social and cultural superiority (Spooner 1986: 223–26). Interviewing another British Asian culinary "moderniser"—"dressed in Paul Smith" designer clothing—in 2001, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown quoted him as wanting "to take this business away from Pakis and Banglis who are just junglee peasants with rough habits. We want to appeal to the people who spend money going to the palaces of Rajasthan, bon vivant people. This is about rebranding the food, making it 21st century" (Alibhai-Brown 2001a).

Exclusive new restaurants thus asserted their distinction in social and national terms that were often implicitly religious as well. The desire for social differentiation plays a central role in shaping this attitude, reflecting the fact that the main South Asian Muslim communities in Britain from Pakistan and Bangladesh lag far behind Hindus and Sikhs from India or East Africa in terms of upward social mobility. The association of Britain's Muslims with economic disadvantage—by whites and other Asians alike—is strong (Modood 1992, Ballard 2003, Alexander 1998). Anti-Muslim attitudes in Britain described above also arguably influence decisions by some upmarket restaurant owners and managers of Hindu, Parsi, or Sikh Indian origin to distance both their establishments and their cuisine from the mainstream eateries run by Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslims. India's own recent troubled history of sectarianism exhibited through Hindu communalist politics—which shape politics and culture among Hindus in the diaspora as much as they do at home—as well as diplomatic tensions between India and Pakistan also stoke such outlooks (van der Veer 1994, 2000).

Insistence that they serve "real Indian" food that curry houses do not provide also stems from the perception that the "discerning" customers in Britain they hope to attract are likely to be more familiar with Indian than with Pakistani or Bangladeshi culture, often through travel. Invoking

Maharajahs' palaces in Rajasthan or focusing on southern Indian regional dishes from Goa or Kerala mirrors these regions' importance as likely tourist destinations for the growing numbers of Britons visiting the subcontinent in recent years (Ramusack 1995; Tharav Roast 1999). Moreover, neither Goa nor Kerala sent many immigrants to Britain, thereby facilitating the act of dissociating such establishments from Britain's largest South Asian communities.[15] Emphasizing the Sylhetti or Kashmiri regional origins of the vast majority of Bangladeshi and Pakistani restaurant owners, by contrast, was deemed unlikely to appeal to an upmarket clientele. Not only had these establishments become firmly associated with a standardized and Anglicized cuisine, but neither Sylhet nor Kashmir rank high on tourists' itineraries. The former remains largely unheard-of by non-Asians in Britain, while the latter is predominantly associated with chronic violence resulting from its status as a disputed territory between India and Pakistan.

Owners of newer, purportedly authentic restaurants repeatedly stake claim to their modernity by reference to their "traditional" dishes, and assiduously avoid aesthetic associations with the curry house stereotype that go beyond the menu. In naming their restaurants they steer clear of ubiquitous monikers such as Taj Mahal or Koh-i-Noor, as well as names reminiscent of the Raj, like Passage to India, as these too became clichéd choices. Instead, Indian-language words with culinary associations or English-language spice names have become popular options for higher-status restaurants, as they connote a more cultivated cultural awareness of the subcontinent and knowledge of sophisticated gastronomy—hence the arrival of restaurants called Cumin, Lasan (meaning "garlic"), Tamarind, the Cinnamon Club, and Rasa (meaning "taste" or "essence") (Wahhab 1997; Hussain 1998). Nor is interior decoration that became mocked as part of the curry house tradition anywhere to be seen. Instead, the preferred style combines a backdrop of modernist minimalism interspersed with selected Indian—largely Hindu—artistic signifiers, ideally antiques (Interior Motives 1998; Vegetarian Wonders 1998; Zaika 1999).

Lastly, in defining their restaurants in opposition to the ridiculed curry house image, such newcomers universally omit dishes labeled "curry" or "balti" from their list of options. Chicken tikka masala is decidedly absent from their menus, which instead might inform diners that dishes are prepared according to Ayurvedic principles (Good for What Ails You, 1999). Ironically yet tellingly, hybrid offerings acclaimed for exemplifying multicultural Britishness, associated with working-class immigrants, and eagerly

consumed by countless "balti addicts" and "curryholics," were precisely those to which high-status Asian restaurateurs and their clientele took exception (Stein 2003). Unworthy of celebration, they were dismissed as authenticity's poor relation.

CONCLUSION

A variety of actors thus assert the value of Britain's curry tradition at the same time as others vigorously contest it, condemning its failure to be "genuine." A popular activity among much of white British society that once found the smell of curry repellent, "Going for an Indian" is now a multi-billion-pound service industry whose significance is economic and cultural alike. Yet interactions between Asians employed in the restaurant sector and white customers remain largely skin deep, with multiculturalism having become acceptable as consumer practice, yet remaining seen as disconnected from its producers. As playwright and director Jatinder Verma reflected, "I do not think that imaginatively we have become multicultural. I think that in diet we have, absolutely, but I don't think that has translated from our stomachs to our brains yet" (Alibhai-Brown, 2001b: 110).

While the profile of South Asians in certain cities and neighborhoods with large minority communities has become more prominent through the branding of these areas as "Curry Capitals," this has come at the price of incorporating and largely submerging their restaurants within local British contexts. Thus, diners in and around Bradford can enjoy "traditional Indian cuisine in the heart of Brontë country" or visit a restaurant chain promoted as "a Yorkshire institution," while balti qualifies as part of Birmingham's heritage. Within these geographical framings, a generic, homogenized "Indianness" is deployed to attract white customers and the specifically British terrain in which they are situated is foregrounded. Despite widespread liking for their cuisine, many white diners remain ignorant about, and intolerant of, Britain's diverse South Asian population, having gained little in terms of enhanced awareness or meaningful social interaction from their dining experiences. Like the multicultural policies that emerged after the 1960s, consumer multiculturalism has proven inadequate to the task of combating racism and inequality, further vindicating the doubts voiced by antiracists in the 1980s. South Asians are still commonly perceived as an undifferentiated group separate from mainstream British society that remains imaginatively white,

even now that their restaurateurs are routinely commended for reconfiguring national culinary preferences.

Indicatively, when the central role played by restaurateurs of Bangladeshi or Pakistani origin in developing Britain's curry culture has been noted, it has often been by elite Indians and affluent white "connoisseurs" engaged in the act of disparaging familiar offerings as downmarket and inauthentic. Mainstream curry and balti restaurants simultaneously became condemned for being too Bangladeshi, too Pakistani, and too British to properly qualify as "Indian." Indeed, from the 1980s on, the contest within Britain over what should properly count as "Indian" food became increasingly pronounced in tandem with the proliferation, rising popularity, and eventually the diversification of restaurants categorized as such. With many South Asians eagerly asserting their distinction not only from white Britons but also from each other in terms of their national, social, and religious origins, restaurant and gastronomic trends reveal multiple ethnic absolutisms at work within a purported multiculture that severely circumscribe what convergences and transformations have occurred.

Nonetheless, multiculturalism continues to serve as a powerful myth in contemporary Britain—despite, and largely because of, its limited impact on everyday social realities. Projecting a national self-image in which tolerance of ethnic diversity and cultural changes predominates remains as appealing today as it was for Robin Cook in early 2001 immediately prior to the challenges posed by the riots in northern England and September 11. Reminders of this purported acceptance and openness have acquired greater urgency at precisely the time when suspicion of ethnic differences has mounted, with the war in Iraq and the London bombings of July 2005 having made Muslim extremism both within and outside Britain an increasingly prominent political and social concern.

Ongoing instances of racism and social fears revolving around ethnicity necessitate repeated recourse to myths that emphasize the opposite. This became visible in 2007 when *Celebrity Big Brother,* a popular British "reality television" program, became mired in controversy surrounding racist insults directed at one of the contestants, the Indian Bollywood star Shilpa Shetty. Following a dispute about supposedly undercooked chicken, several British contestants, including Jade Goody, targeted Shetty for a protracted wave of abuse in which many of the slurs directed against her revolved around food. Refusing even to learn Shetty's surname let alone try to pronounce it, Goody angrily referred to her as "Shilpa Fuckawallah" and "Shilpa

Poppadom"—poppadom being a typical curry house appetizer. Other comments about Shetty included that she should "go home" and that she "wanted to be white"; another contestant warned against eating the dinner she had prepared, saying "you don't know where her hands have been" (Gibson 2007; Jacques 2007).

The British public responded vigorously, with tens of thousands complaining to the channel broadcasting the program about its airing of racial bigotry. For days, the story dominated the British media as well as Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown's official visit to India, which coincidentally overlapped with the *Celebrity Big Brother* incidents. When questioned there about the shabby treatment of one of India's film stars, Brown underscored that countless Britons, "like me, are determined to send a message worldwide that we want nothing to interfere with Britain's reputation as a country of fairness and tolerance. We are against any forms of racism and intolerance" (Nathan & Robertson 2007). In the end, eighty-two per cent of viewers phoning in succeeded in voting Goody off the show, and Shetty emerged the winner. Many commentators condemned such views, effectively using Goody's behavior as a platform to demonstrate their own multicultural credentials and argue that her attitudes were those of a disreputable minority (Vasagar 2007).

Later asked why she called her "Shilpa Poppadum," Goody explained that "she wanted to use an Indian name and the only word she could think of was an Indian food" (Kirby 2007). When interviewed following her departure from the show, Goody unsurprisingly denied that her comments were racist, immediately adding, "I love chicken curry" (J. [Jade] Goody 2007). Within a Britain sharply divided about the extent of racism and its forms of expression, South Asian cuisine's familiarity and popularity continues to generate narratives proclaiming tolerance at the same time that it inflects and structures racist outbursts. Once marginalized within British culture, curry became a primary vehicle for denying, masking, and articulating racism, demonstrating the mutually constitutive nature of intolerance and multicultural celebration.

NOTES

1. The spread of "ethnic" restaurants does not invariably correspond with the presence of a substantial immigrant population of the same origins within a national or local context. As Turgeon and Pastinelli (2002: 255) argue, in Quebec "the demand for ethnic restaurants appears highest where immigrants are few and far between. When foreign people are absent, they are represented, even given material form, by way of the restaurant."

2. Between 1810 and 1812, Dean Mahomed ran the "Hindostanee Coffee House" in London, which offered Indian cuisine, décor, and hookahs to customers, many of whom were men who had once served in India.

3. Other edible colonial products first found their foothold in Europe through tastes cultivated among returned colonizers. On the introduction of chocolate into Spain see Norton 2006.

4. That many of Britain's Asian eateries opening in the 1950s and 1960s owed their origins to the needs of itinerant men who moved far from their families to find work bears resemblance to the spread of what Frank Conlon calls "utilitarian public dining" within India (Conlon 1995: 98–99).

5. Portrayals of the entry of foreign food as akin to assault have recurred in other national contexts (Ferguson 2005).

6. *British Eating Out* (1966) found that 8 percent of Britons had visited an Indian restaurant at some point, with regional variations reflecting immigrants' geographical concentration. In London and Birmingham 11 and 9 percent, respectively, had done so.

7. Gender issues within the curry house culture merit far more attention than they can receive here. While the "boys' night out" clientele has been joined by more women diners, couples, and families in recent decades, what has changed little is the rarity of Asian women seen working at such establishments. Visible owners, managers, and waiters are almost exclusively male. The fact that "Indian" restaurants are largely run by Muslim families of Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin is clearly relevant in determining the inputs of family labor at these businesses—not only by restricting the visible roles of women, but also by relying upon an extended kinship network more generally (U. Narayan 1997; Srinivasan 1995; Brah & Shaw 1992; Ram, Abbas, Sanghera, Barlow, & Jones 2001; A. Basu 2002; Basu & Altinay 2003).

8. Scholars differ markedly in their assessments of the status implications of patronizing "ethnic" restaurants (contrast Warde, Martens, & Olsen 1999; Warde & Martens 2000; with Finkelstein 1989). Although many Britons opting for Asian restaurants in the 1980s appear to have been middle class, many seemingly ranked such visits as an everyday, and rather lowly, dining event as opposed to a "fancy" meal eaten on a special night out. The social position of the ethnic groups both producing and consuming the food in question, as well as the occasions when diners patronize particular establishments, clearly play a role in shaping how these dining experiences are evaluated both by the individuals involved and a wider public.

9. The emphasis placed upon Asian restaurateurs having adapted their cuisine to suit Britons is revealing. As Will Kymlicka has argued, the British government's "idea of respecting diversity is not defended as something whose benefits outweigh its costs, but rather as something that costs nothing to native-born citizens, and asks or expects nothing from them in terms of adaptation" (2003: 205).

10. For tourism information, see www.visitbradford.com.

11. See "Rusholmecurry.co.uk: An Online Service for Manchester's Curry Mile," http://www.rusholmecurry.co.uk, accessed on June 8, 2005; "Taste of Asia Weekend Restaurant Offers," http://www.visitleicestershire.com/shortbreaks/asia restaurants.htm, accessed on June 6, 2005.

12. Yunus Khalil and Omar Shakur, interviews with the author, Birmingham, England, May 26 and June 14, 2005.

13. Many "high street" curry houses also adopted colonial-inspired names as well, with establishments called Passage to India, Last Days of the Raj, Memsahib, et cetera opening throughout the 1980s.

14. http://www.realindianfood.com, accessed on June 22, 2004.

15. Foreign cuisines not associated with large immigrant groups whose members commonly arrived to work in factories may well stand better chances of gaining a reputation as cosmopolitan and upscale. Sushi's sophisticated connotations in North America and Western Europe can be linked to cultural imagery surrounding Japan (as a wealthy, high-tech nation visited by Western business travelers) without contending with the burden of a contentious history of immigration (see Bestor 2000).

NINE

Global Flows, Local Bodies

DREAMS OF PAKISTANI GRILL IN MANHATTAN

Krishnendu Ray

A DEFINITIVE STUDY of immigration proposed by the Committee on International Migration of the Social Science Research Council of the United States, titled *Immigration Research for a New Century* (Foner, Rumbaut, & Gold 2000), underlines the saliency of race, language, and gender, yet it lists neither the body nor embodiment in its index and section bibliographies.[1] Such an omission has greater significance when it persists in the new edition of a self-consciously interdisciplinary and theoretically attuned volume such as *Migration Theory* (Brettell & Hollifield 2008), where the migrant's body is once again only indirectly visible and never an object of theoretical attention. Another current instance invokes the missing immigrant body. The September 2009 issue of the *Asian Studies Review* highlights "Globalization and Body Politics," drawing attention to "how global processes play out in specific sites" especially at the level of the body (Mackie & Stevens 2009: 257). A final instigation for underscoring the need for theoretical attention to immigrant bodies is the 2011–2012 call for dissertation proposals by the Social Science Research Council of the United States, which contends that "Research on migration and gender has changed considerably since the 1980s," and yet, it goes on to argue, few scholars of migration have drawn on sophisticated theories of embodiment to investigate processes of movement.[2]

It is now almost three decades since Bryan S. Turner published *The Body and Society* (1984), which was one among a number of early sociological texts to pay sustained theoretical attention to the body.[3] Turner's synthesis sought to account for the path-breaking theorizations of Michel Foucault and practices of the social movements of feminism and civil rights that centered on this tactile, tangible thing, the color, texture and gender of the body. Now the